

Imler-Jacquez, Sandra R -FS

From: Lupita Salazar <justlupitasalazar@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 19, 2019 9:46 PM
To: FS-comments-southwestern-santafe
Subject: Encino Vista Landscape Restoration Project

12/19/19

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Ana Maria Salazar. I am a young farmer and run a local non-profit for youth in art and agriculture. I am from and currently reside in Cañones, one of the villages that will be very much affected by the actions taken in the proposed Encino Vista Landscape Restoration Project. I am writing to oppose the Encino Vista Landscape Restoration Project, in the hopes that you will take my concerns and those of others in my community into consideration as you propose actions.

I am concerned that there is not a defined proposed start date for the project, or a general timeline in which the project is to be carried out in the proposal. I am advocating for a longer timeline to properly study and attain the data necessary to properly treat the diverse landscape mapped out in the proposal. If the forest service could work on small land parcels bit by bit, not only would it be safer to our watershed, but it would also protect the diversity of the forest. As cutting and clearing diminishes diversity for a certain time period, working to restore smaller plots preserves the diversity of the rest of the forest. The surrounding older forests protect the particular restoration plot as it regenerates after treatment with adequate vegetation to protect the soil from erosion, and help hold water.

The proposed area of "treatment," especially the canyons that our community is most concerned about is prime habitat for a variety of species, yet there is no mention in the Restoration Project of any surveys to understand exactly what species are currently living and breeding in the "treatment" area, or how they would be protected, as per the Forest Service Plan and its proposed amendments if they are endangered species. There are various species that call this ecosystem home, such as elk, bear, various birds, and reptiles, is there data on what creatures live and coexist here with each other and humans and livestock? I would like to request more study to take into consideration how the actions of the forest service could impact our land based community in the long term both economically and socially, as our fate is tied to that of the lands and waters that we rely on.

Our particular watershed draws water from a large area, when we experience heavy rains, our river can triple in size. If our watershed is further damaged, we could experience river flows of higher velocities, which will cause detrimental erosion. As well as potentially bringing down ash from the fires and killing agricultural crops, as occurred with the Polvadera fire on the other side of our canyon. This particular project is a larger area, and closer to our village, and the canyons steeper, so any negative effects of the treatment could prove devastating to our community. We are concerned over the quality of water that can be compromised, our natural springs that could potentially be damaged, and our lands, animals, and crops that could be wiped out in the incident of a devastating flood. What practices is the Forest Service willing to enact to protect our watershed from potential damage? And how can we hold them accountable? Without our water we cannot live here, threatening our watershed threatens our existence.

As our irrigation water source, the acequias are the veins that have brought life to our village and ranches for hundreds of years. Inadequate protections for the top of the watershed could result in destruction of our acequias and lack of water to provide our crops for our animals and families.

I am concerned about the effects of the proposed treatment, especially burning on our river water quality. What efforts can be enacted to protect our waters from flooding due to lack of vegetation, excessive ash in our water from burning, and intense erosion resulting in sediment in our river and

acequias, and eventually our fields and gardens? What compensation is available if our crops are ruined due to flooding, or if there are losses of homes, barns, or any other structures?

There was no mention about any hydrological study in the proposal, or studies to see what kinds of plant and animal species reside in these ecosystems, and how they are to be protected. The previously endangered cutthroat trout is one of the residents of our rivers, and the residue from fire can harm their habitat as well as the other species that reside in the rivers, and downstream in the acequias. There is no mention in the plan of how our rivers will be protected from the residues of the proposed treatments.

I am in agreement that there needs to be treatment to clean certain areas of our watershed yet I oppose the Encino Vista Landscape Restoration Project. I advocate for more thorough study of the area, ecosystems, and hydrology to help make a more informed plan. I also hope you take into consideration the devastation that fire can have on our entire watershed and community when it is used in treatment, and use it only as a last resort, rather than a go-to. I write so my own concerns can be heard and I also write in solidarity and agreement with the comments and suggestions of the Juan Bautista Land Grant Advisory Group.

Gracias

~Ana Maria Salazar