

James Melonas, Responsible Official
Attention: Forest Plan Revision Team
Santa Fe National Forest
11 Forest Lane, Santa Fe, NM 87508

Dear Mr. Melonas,

Los Alamos County places a very high value on its outdoor amenities and the surrounding Santa Fe National Forest Lands are a significant part of that environment for our community. We believe a well-planned approach to forest management is appropriate and necessary and we are pleased that the Santa Fe National Forest (SFNF) is updating its plan and engaging its stakeholders during this process.

Los Alamos County generally approves of the draft and offers the following comments for your consideration as you finalize this document.

1. The draft plan appears well written, with a balanced approach. Our concern is that no elements of the plan should be interpreted to threaten this needed balance. Examples:

P. 13 “Relationships and Partners”: This section should include explicit recognition of partnership with the forest products industry, which has an important role to play in economically restoring the forest to a sustainable condition.

P. 16 “Designated Areas”: Management of presently or newly designated wilderness areas must insure that access (i.e. roads) is available to allow fire-fighting, recovery, and prevention activities.

2. We strongly support the 10-year objectives (in particular the high ranges) for mechanical treatment (p. 31 and p. 295, mixed conifer 10,000-80,000 acres, ponderosa pine 15,000-100,000 acres), prescribed/managed fire (mixed conifer 50,000-200,000 acres, ponderosa pine 150,000-250,000 acres), and 2,500-50,000 acres of vegetation restoration, for the forest. Current trends suggest that if these objectives are not met, much of the forest will burn; the cost of fighting and recovering from fires will ultimately be much greater than the cost of achieving these treatment objectives.

3. The objective for water resources (p. 72 and p. 310) “decommission or mitigate impacts on at least 100 miles of route (e.g. roads...) to restore hydrologic function” must be balanced by the need to maintain access to allow fire-fighting, recovery, and prevention activities. In the discussion of Inventoried Roadless Areas (p. 170), the approach “Prioritize roads in IRAs for road decommissioning”

should include the qualifier “subject to the need for access to allow fire-fighting, recovery, and prevention activities.”

4. Los Alamos County supports the Cross-Boundary Management approaches on page 140-141 of the Draft Management Plan. As the County considers managing and improving its own open space, it is clear to the County that collaboration across boundaries is beneficial to both owners and more importantly to the public in general. The County plans actively engage with SFNF as both entities plan and implement management strategies and activities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input and please don’t hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or need further information about any of the comments.

Sincerely,

Sara Scott

Los Alamos County, Council Chair

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