



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Coronado National Forest
Supervisor's Office

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File Code: 1950-3/2470

Date: August 2, 2007

Dear Friends and Neighbors of the Coronado National Forest:

I'm writing today to let you know that the Coronado National Forest is about to begin a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis of a proposed action, the Pinaleño Ecosystem Restoration Project (PERP), which would affect 3,705 acres in the Pinaleño Mountains of Graham County, Arizona. Using both prescribed fire and non-fire treatments, the Forest Service plans to remove standing dead trees and downed woody debris and to thin the very dense forest for the purposes of restoring a fire-adapted ecosystem and aiding in the recovery of the Mount Graham red squirrel population and habitat.

The Pinaleño Mountains on the Safford Ranger District have been and continue to be a sky-island refuge from the surrounding desert for local citizens, wildlife, Native Americans, and recreational users, and they provide many varied opportunities for scientific research. At present, those attributes that characterize the mountains as a special place are in extreme danger of being lost because of catastrophic wildland fires and declining forest health. Recent fires, drought, insect infestation, and disease have all contributed to an increased probability of severe wildland fires, and habitat loss, which, along with direct mortality from fires, has contributed to a continuing decline in the red squirrel population. In fact, the red squirrel population is at its lowest average since population surveys were initiated, and viability of the species is of paramount concern.

The general consensus among land management and wildlife agencies is that immediate action is necessary to reduce the probability and degree of potential losses. To facilitate this, the Forest Service developed the PERP, based on several years of collaboration among Forest managers, fire management specialists, biologists, scientists, and state and Federal wildlife management agencies. The PERP balances the short-term need to protect the Mount Graham red squirrel occupied habitat and the need to provide long-term ecosystem health.

To start the NEPA review, a Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which will publicly disclose the potential environmental impacts of the PERP, is about to be published in the Federal Register. In addition to officially beginning the NEPA review, the NOI provides general information about proposed project activities and solicits input from you, as a member of the public, to assist in developing the scope of the impacts analysis.

Your comments about the PERP are important to me and to the interdisciplinary team of



resource specialists who will evaluate the potential impacts of the proposal. To be considered in the EIS analysis, comments about the nature of the proposed action, issues, alternatives, and other concerns must be provided to us within a 30-day period beginning on the date above*.

Written comments may be submitted to us by U.S. mail, facsimile, electronic mail or delivered in person. Comments may be mailed or delivered to Mr. Craig Wilcox, Forest Silviculturist, Coronado National Forest, Safford Ranger District, 711 S. 14th Ave., Suite D, Safford, Arizona, 85546; sent by facsimile to Mr. Wilcox at (928) 428-2393; or submitted by electronic mail to cpwilcox@fs.fed.us. Envelopes and the subject line of electronic mail messages or faxes should be labeled "Pinaleño Ecosystem Restoration Project EIS."

Hand-delivered and oral comments may be submitted in Safford at the address above between 8 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays. In Tucson, oral comments may be submitted by telephone or in person to Mr. Bob Lefevre, Watershed and Forestry Program Manager, Coronado National Forest, Supervisor's Office, 6th Floor, 300 W. Congress St., Tucson, Arizona; telephone (520) 388-8373. Office hours in Tucson are the same as for Safford.

For additional information about the PERP, please contact Mr. Wilcox or Mr. Lefevre, or look for the proposal on the Coronado National Forest website at www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado. Questions on the Forest Service NEPA process may be directed to Ms. Andrea Wargo Campbell, Forest NEPA Coordinator, at awcampbell@fs.fed.us.

Thank you for your interest in the activities of the Coronado National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Kent Ellett
JEANINE A. DERBY
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

** Please be advised that comments and personal information associated with them, such as names and addresses, become part of the Project Record for this NEPA review. As such, they may be made available to a third-party upon request, pursuant to authority of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). If you do not wish for your personal information to be released under the FOIA, you may choose not to include it with your comments. Alternatively, you may request an exemption from FOIA with your comment submittal. Should you choose the latter, you would be informed by the Forest Service as to whether or not your request qualifies for an exemption. If it does not, you would be afforded the opportunity to resubmit your comments without personal information or to withhold them.*