

Transcript

Cañones Community Meeting with US Forest Service

Cañones Community Center, Cañones, New Mexico

May 23, 2024, 5:00 pm

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

[Welcome from the Juan Bautista Valdez Land Grant Advisory Group]... Last time we went through a brief introductory session. I ask that you state your name and your affiliation - so we will go around the room and do that... There will be an opportunity for a public comment period. We do have a public comment sign-in sheet, and so as soon as we're done with the presentations and discussions, we will address public comments. That doesn't mean that you can't participate in the discussions as the presenters are presenting. We want to make sure that everyone is allowed to ask questions, and that they can be answered by the professionals here today. So with that --

Ron Perry

I'm Ron Perry. I'm the Forestry Program Manager on the Santa Fe National Forest.

June Galloway

June Galloway, Forest Environmental Coordinator. Hi everybody.

Jonathan Glass

Hi I'm Jonathan Glass, reporting for Public Journal. I'm recording this meeting with the permission of the Land Grant, and I will make a public transcript available.

Gretchen Heidenreich

Gretchen Heidenreich, I'm a Cañones resident.

Sarah Hyden

Sarah Hyden, I'm from The Forest Advocate.

Lorenzo Salazar

Lorenzo Salazar, Cañones community member.

Carlos Salazar

I am Carlos Salazar. I am the executive director for the Northern New Mexico Stockmans Association. I am the past president of that Association.

Isaiah Velasquez

Isaiah Velasquez, community member, also with several different community programs here.

Peter J. Garcia Sr.

Peter J. Garcia, Senior, 7th Generation Rancher, also permitting holder for Mesa del Medio and [?]. President of the Polvadera Acequia #1 and Acting President of the Polvadera Acequia #2 and Vice President of Acequia de Cañones.

Allison Garcia

Allison Garcia, community member.

Lupita Salazer

Lupita Salazar, community member [?]

Sarah Salazar

Sarah Salazar, [?] community.

Micah Kiesow

Micah Kiesow, I'm the Watershed Program Manager on the Forest.

Jeff Marszal

I'm Jeff Marszal. I'm the Deputy Forest Supervisor on the Santa Fe National Forest.

Rian Ream

Hi I'm Rian Ream. I'm the detailed Fuel Program Manager on the Santa Fe National Forest, and before that I was the Fuels Planner on the east side of the Santa Fe National Forest.

Claudia Brookshire

Good evening, everyone. I'm Claudia Brookshire. I'm the Public Affairs Officer for the Santa Fe.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Thank you, everyone. With that, we will get started with Deputy Forest Supervisor Jeff Marszal.

Jeff Marszal

Hi, good evening. Again, I'm Jeff Marszal. I'm the Deputy Forest Supervisor on the Santa Fe National Forest. First, let me say thank you, Melissa, and everyone here, community members, [?] members, and everyone else for the invitation. It's great to be back here again. How long ago was it? About six weeks ago? So, I thought I'd start off by giving you a little bit of an introduction to myself. I thought that might benefit folks, so folks kind of know where I'm coming from. So, again, I'm the Deputy Forest Supervisor. I've been in this job for just about a year. It'll be a year, June 1st, and it's been a fantastic year working and living in northern New Mexico. You guys live in a really, really beautiful,

very special place. So, I've really enjoyed myself. It's been a good personal and professional growth experience for me so far.

Jeff Marszal

So, my work experience, you know, I've done a couple of details. That's what we call it in the government as a Deputy Forest Supervisor. I worked on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest as a Deputy Forest Supervisor, and on the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire as a Deputy Forest Supervisor. But the last permanent job I held for this one was an Ecosystem Staff Officer on the very rainy, cloudy, misty Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest in northwest Washington. You can think of a different geography from northern New Mexico. Prior to that, I was the District Ranger on the Klamath National Forest, Happy Camp Ranger District. And then I also served as the District Ranger on the Smith River National Recreation Area on the Six Rivers National Forest. And that's all up in northwestern California. And I started my permanent Forest Service career on the Ochoco National Forest in central Oregon, where I was an environmental planner. NEPA planner. Basically did the job that June does now.

Jeff Marszal

On a personal note, I'm like Jonathan. I'm born and raised in New York City. And I'm second generation, a Sicilian American. Both my grandparents were born in Sicily. My grandfather was born in Palermo, and my grandmother was born in Siracusa. So I'm very proud of my heritage. And interestingly, if you know anything about Sicily, it's a big island out in the Mediterranean. It's very close to Spain. And it was conquered by the Spanish and ruled for at least two to three hundred years by the Bourbon kings. So I like to think I have a little bit of Spanish blood in me. Perhaps that gives me a little bit of credibility in this space. Just a little.

Jeff Marszal

Anyway. So getting back to my professional experience. Through my career, I've gained quite a bit of fire experience, especially in Northern California as a ranger. I didn't come up with fire, like Rian and stuff, but as a ranger in Northern California, it was pretty much most of my job. It was managing, you know, wildfires and prescribed fires. But I think more importantly, for the purposes of this meeting, is that I also have a lot of experience building partnerships, building collaboratives, finding common ground with

different entities and organizations that represent a broad spectrum of values. And it's just something I'm really proud of.

Jeff Marszal

And, you know, a big part of that is, of course, building trust and, you know, gaining people's trust and building trust relationships. And that takes time. And I think that's part of the reason why I'm here. I think it's part of the reason why I was chosen for this position - because of my experiences. And just so folks know, I think Melissa knows this, you know, Shaun Sanchez, he's the Forest Supervisor, basically asked me to lead up this effort to engage and collaborate with this land grant. And that's why I'm here, and that's why I'm leading this effort. And we'll get to introducing my team here in a minute. You know, our hope for this meeting is that we can really lay the foundation for a strong partnership and a collaboration with the Land Grant.

Jeff Marszal

And we recognize, you know, where we tripped up in the past, but we are very much looking forward to moving ahead. And like I said, really working and building this relationship, and we're really committed to being responsive to the needs of this community. And I'd like to think you're going to hear that today. The focus of our presentation today is, one, we're going to respond to some of the very legitimate concerns that were raised at the last meeting. And a lot of our presentations are framed around that. So you're going to hear a lot about what you guys brought up at the last meeting. We're also going to talk about different ways that we think this project is going to benefit this community directly, both economically and ecologically. So we'll get into that. And then thirdly, I think we're going to look for opportunities, like I said, where we can collaborate, build trust, and partner together, because my sense is that we have a lot of shared values about what's the right thing to do for this landscape. I really believe that. That's based on all the discussion with folks individually and in the meetings that we had. So with that, I'd like to introduce my team. And well, they've already been introduced, so I don't think we really need to necessarily introduce them again, but maybe we can get into some of our presentations if we're ready for that Melissa? And I believe we're going to start with June, who's our team lead and our Forest Environmental Coordinator....

June Galloway

Like Jeff said, I'm June Galloway, I'm the lead for the Encina Vista Project, and I think I've met most of the folks in the room already. We really appreciate everybody being here, so thank you for coming. Looking forward to having some conversations about some more detailed conversations, than we thought we had previously, about some of the work that we're proposing for the project.

June Galloway

Just a quick summary of the Encina Vista Project, like a lot of you probably know, we developed it out of a need to restore some of the areas from the South Fork and the Diego fires, where there's a lot of watershed damage and forest damage, and so the project was developed to try to restore, have a focus on some of those areas that were damaged, and also to focus on some of the watersheds that had critical needs in the project area. All the watersheds in this area are functioning at risk or impaired in some way, and there's also adjoining road damage and access issues and watershed damage associated with those roads that are degraded and need restoration. One of the other key focuses of the project is to decrease the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire events, and having those wildfire events move through an area more quickly because we don't have treatments in those frequent fire ecosystems, and so a lot of the focus of the project is on those systems that are currently outside of what we call a reference condition, like ponderosa pine forest, which tends to burn more frequently, trying to kind of reset, reboot those systems so they're functioning in a more healthy way, and to also, as I said before, get those watersheds functioning at a proper level so that we have better water quality, healthier forests, and everything that's connected in that environment.

June Galloway

This project is considered a priority landscape for the National Wildfire Crisis Strategy. It was identified as part of it. The western side of the project was identified within that national mapping and assessment strategy, so that's one of the important things to know about the project. It's also a New Mexico State priority for treatment and work, and they have a lot of support from the New Mexico State Forestry for the project, and also part of the Rio Chama, the larger project, which includes four forests for that project, so that's a much larger landscape, but that is also tied to this individual project.

June Galloway

So that's just kind of a quick overview, and we have a map up here that folks can look at that matches what we have in the NEPA documents. I'd also like to talk a little bit about the timeline for the project. We're currently working on our response to comments from the comments many of you provided for our draft EA [Environmental Assessment] that we released publicly. We're working on our responses for that, and we'll have a stand-alone report that'll be part of the project record and also available that will address the response to comments, and have all that in kind of like a separate report. So we're working on that right now, and then as soon as that's done, we will finalize the EA, including some revisions that we'll make with the EA, and we'll start the opportunity to object. Period.

June Galloway

That's the next step in the process, and then it'll go through our regional administrative review process where they look at any of the comments that we received during that objection period. And that's reviewed at the regional level, and then we usually get some recommendations or instructions from that, and we comply with all of those before the decision is signed, and Sean will be signing the decision.

June Galloway

The Forest Supervisor will be signing the decision for this project... It was previously Mark Sando, and that was based on a number of reasons, but I know that we also did receive some comments about that from your community, so Shaun will be signing the decision for this document. And then expected implementation is in 2025... Does anyone have any questions about that?

Jeff Marszal

Can I just say one thing?

June Galloway

Of course.

Jeff Marszal

Originally the timeline was going to be a little bit quicker. We were looking at a decision a little bit faster. But based on some of the responses that we received from our draft and the conversations that we've begun to have here with the Land Grant, we decided that we're going to take a little bit more time doing more of this, and we really see that there's a need for this. I think we really want to listen to the concerns and we want to feel like you guys feel like we're adequately addressing those concerns. So I just want folks to know that we have slowed down the timeline a bit in order to make sure that we're getting the proper engagement and sort of as much buy-in as we can and at least as much collaboration as we can before we get to some of these other stages.

Jonathan Glass

I have a question. So, like the project milestones on the Encino Vista Forest Service project site, a Decision [points to project milestones slide on screen] is indicated for the fall.... Why are you predicting [the timing of] a decision before deciding whether to do an EIS [Environmental Impact Statement]? Or have you already decided not to do an EIS?

June Galloway

So part of that administrative review process that I talked about will determine whether an EIS is considered warranted, needed.... So that is part of that process. We have a regional level review. And those teams include people from different forests. It's an objective review. Nobody from this entity is involved in those reviews. It's people pulled from different forests. And that's run actually through our Regional Forester. And that process, we sometimes, one of the recommendations we would get would be to prepare, or instruction, excuse me, would be an EIS. And that will be determined whether it's the analysis that we have sufficient for an EA. And so that will be determined. And this is the tentative decision based on what we know now.

Jonathan Glass

So based on what you know, the agency still does not think an EIS is necessary? ... If you're making the decision through these discussions with people from other forests, why is the agency publishing project milestones on its site that say a decision is going to be made and the project is going to start in January, instead of saying, we don't know what

we're going to do, it might not start for two years? It makes it seem like it's [the decision not to prepare an EIS] already happened and it's [the project's] happening.

June Galloway

We actually have to have a timeline developed, ... for that's the way the NEPA process works, how our projects proceed so that we can plan our priority work accordingly. And these take a lot of time to do, working on these projects takes a long, long time. So, and the decision, just to clarify, the decision that I just talked about for an EIS doesn't come from other forests. That administrative review team is a separate kind of entity. It's very strictly managed and the decision would be actually from the regional forester whether they felt that we should pursue an EIS. And part of the reason why we feel like we can still do an EA is because we have very complex and very specific PDFs and design criteria that reduce the impacts. And that's why we feel right now comfortable with an environmental assessment.

Jonathan Glass

Okay, so just to be clear, where it says [on the screen] "Decision" there in late fall... from there it doesn't seem like it's a decision whether to make an EIS or not, because that has to be a FONSI right there, an EA and a FONSI, because there's no time for an EIS. So you're saying that the agency is required not to have a bifurcated chart that says maybe we have an EIS and maybe not? Instead of just a straight through that ignores an EIS and just assumes that there's not going to be an EIS prepared by the agency.

June Galloway

We're not, we're not ignoring an EIS.

Jonathan Glass

But that timeline [on the screen] does, correct? There's no suggestion that there could be an EIS, because if you know how it works, the decision has to be a FONSI [Finding of No Significant Impact], right?

June Galloway

So this is based on what we're currently doing and what we believe is the right path, which is an EA, and so that is our timeline based on what we're looking at currently and the information that we have and also the direction, the support that we have from our leadership, including the Regional Office on this project. So until we hear otherwise, then we would definitely be letting everybody know. If that decision was made, we would develop a new timeline and we would adjust accordingly and we would do exactly what we were required to do and develop the EIS.

Jonathan Glass

Right now you're saying that the opinion of the agency's leaders is that the project is not likely to have a significant effect on the human environment. Is that fair to say?

June Galloway

Well, I don't think it's something that we can say right now. We're moving forward with the response to comments, and we're working on the EA. So that's not a decision that we're making at this point.

Jonathan Glass

Thank you.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Thank you, June. I think that... for the sake of time, we can move on to the watershed management. There are no questions regarding timeline?

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Micah?

Micah Kiesow

Alright. Thanks for putting these slides together Claudia, and thanks everyone for the comments. I think what it shows me is a lot of people care about this landscape, a lot of people care about this project. I appreciate the comments because it gets me thinking a little more about how I state my assumptions and my rationale and explain things better to the public.

Micah Kiesow

A couple of things before we dive into here. I think I'm going to jump to the modeling. Some of the comments specifically from this community question why Canones watershed was not modeled the same way as Coyote Creek watershed.

Micah Kiesow

What I'll say is Coyote Creek sub-watershed within this project area has the most acres of any watershed in the project area. Canones is a close second. It also has the most proposed treatments. So by modeling Coyote Creek, it gives us the most extreme outputs from those models across the project area.

Micah Kiesow

If we were to model Canones Creek for peak flow as we did Coyote, it would likely be less because of the proposed treatments there. I did want to start off with that. A little explanation. I'm definitely open to questions on that.

Micah Kiesow

The rest of the watersheds were modeled and were assessed. We used a couple of different models. We did use the Forest Service Peak Flow model for Coyote Creek. We used the Watershed Erosion Prediction Project model.

Micah Kiesow

That gives you erosion and sedimentation for the existing condition and, kind of, for a high severity wildfire. Then we also used, let me get my name right on this one, the Fuel Management Erosion Analysis Model.

Micah Kiesow

That model is really specific towards prescribed fire. We did those, the WEPP and the Fuel Management Erosion Analysis Model in all watersheds, catchments within there. So all watersheds were analyzed.

Micah Kiesow

The Coyote Creek again for the peak flow analysis was chosen as kind of stating the most extreme response we would see of the landscape due to project activities. The other thing I want to touch on is, let's see, we do have another decision of the Northern New Mexico Riparian, Aquatic, and Wetlands Restoration Project decision that was signed in 2021.

Micah Kiesow

That focuses on restoring riparian aquatic and wetland resources. In this country, last year we did implement some structures on Polvadera Creek. There were beaver dam analog structures. There were post-assisted log structures.

Micah Kiesow

We will continue to implement those on Polvadera Creek in the future. They'll do a bit of willow planting as well. Today I was actually just out with [?] and the contractor looking at [?] Creek for some very similar treatments in those areas.

Micah Kiesow

Again, trying to add structure to these systems that have none at this point in time. Trying to really restore that natural water storage of the landscape. In some areas, really reaching for potentially that beaver habitat recovery restoration.

Micah Kiesow

I did want to get those two things out. The response to the fuels treatments, I guess what I can say for the analysis is that we did look at a high severity wildfire across the landscape as the no action alternative. Then our fuels treatments as well as the timber treatments as our action alternative. There's about a five fold increase in erosion and sedimentation across the landscape if the high severity fire were going to happen, as opposed to doing the treatments that we're proposing in this landscape.

Sarah Hyden

So you're assuming for the no action that high severity fire would cover the entire landscape, and that's how you're basing your --

Micah Kiesow

That's how we modeled the Canones Creek Watershed for treatments as well, so it was a one-to-one comparison.

Sarah Hyden

Isn't that kind of unrealistic?

Micah Kiesow

Well, um, maybe not. I think of some of the fires I've seen across the landscape, specifically on Gila, 500,000 acres.

Micah Kiesow

I look out at California, a million acres. I look across our forest, 350,000 acres. So I don't think it's unrealistic at all.

Sarah Hyden

It contains an assumption that the field treatments are going to greatly reduce the probability of high severity fire, and so what backs up that assumption?

Micah Kiesow

I'll probably defer to Rian on that one next, but yeah for that assumption -- and then I guess I'll back up too, to make it a one-to-one comparison for this modeling. When we did model Coyote Creek, we modeled it as if we were going to do all the treatments in one go.

Micah Kiesow

And that stated the assumption that this is not realistic, but to get to that one-to-one comparison of a high severity wildfire with our treatments, that's how we felt the best way to do modeling was.

Micah Kiesow

In reality, you know the treatments will be done over a 15 year time frame, so broken up into much smaller chunks. And so what we see from the models, again predictive models, will be far less in my opinion.

Sarah Hyden

Well when 10-15 years comes, some of their earlier treatments, will no longer be functional.

Micah Kiesow

[?] treatments will be functional. We'll have increased herbaceous cover, we'll have more organic matter in the soil, we'll have more water over the passing of the landscape.

Carlos Salazar

Question: has the New Mexico Acequia Association been brought in as a resource, as a team member to discuss watershed management, because they have been an integral part

in assisting all of the acequias in the watersheds in the counties of Mora and San Miguel as well, as a result of the Calf Canyon - Hermits Peak wildfire?

Carlos Salazar

Have they been brought into the loop and been consulted and requested as a resource?

Micah Kiesow

Um - not to my knowledge, but I don't know if anyone else knows better than that. Sounds like that would be a great resource. I know we're on the Hermits Peak Calf Canyon we are working with them as well. And when you say watershed, to just make sure we're talking the same thing, you are talking stream, riparian, and not necessarily the uplands, or are you talking about the watershed as a whole.

Carlos Salazar

The watershed as a whole - that's where we're receiving our water for the essentials - from the watershed.

Micah Kiesow

I just wanted to clarify, right, when we say watersheds... our minds go straight to the streams and the watershed really is --

Jeff Marszal

Our next step is meeting with the acequias, the two acequias that are within the project area. So we're going to get something on the calendar here really soon to engage with them...

Carlos Salazar

Three acequias.

Jeff Marszal

Three acequias, one of them in either [?]. And then we'll have Mike involved in those conversations and work with you guys, and then collaborate and have more consultations about it

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

There are 24 [acequias] here.

Jeff Marszal

24. There you go. I stand corrected.

June Galloway

Melissa said that she would share the schedule, and so we'll start making sure we have some attendance?

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

A lot of them are private acequias, private landowners. But 24 total in the community. About four that are government entities.

Jeff Marszal

Do you feel that that would be a sufficient, if you meet with them, that would be a sufficient representation of...

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Um, yeah, I would recommend, like, maybe six?

Jeff Marszal

Okay. We can talk more about that. Let's get that in the schedule.

Micah Kiesow

[?] ... I'm open to conversation and discussion, again for awareness and probably the need to do a little more outreach on this as well. So we have entered into an agreement with [?] to do a watershed assessment for Canones Creek.

Micah Kiesow

The focus of that watershed assessment is really on the riparian aquatic and wetland resources. That could include springs, actually could include roads that have direct sedimentation to the creek. But the idea is, out of that watershed assessment, we'll get a better understanding of what may be covered under that riparian decision, the Northern New Mexico Riparian, Aquatic, and Wetland Restoration Project.

Micah Kiesow

And so, again, reading the comments, it's not that we're leaving anything out. I think it's just me doing a better job of explaining what's happening and the rationale and the assumptions. So, again, I do appreciate... [?]

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Thank you.

Sarah Salazar

This may be addressed in what we just referenced of the further documentation or evaluation set, but just to ask, so in the EA, in the environmental assessment, there is a statement that there are anticipated negative impacts to the Canones Creek Watershed that may last a few years or a few growing seasons, and it's not quantified or qualified?

Micah Kiesow

... Where that statement comes from is, as we're predicting in the landscape of how we go about prescribed fire, the idea is really the low to moderate intensity. We do know that moderate to high intensity can happen in the landscape, and some of those negative impacts could come from that high intensity that leads to some of the highest [?].

Micah Kiesow

And so really some of those negative impacts that may occur are really in the short term, short duration. Two to seven years, you know, my experience with a lot of the close fire work has been, even in high severity landscapes, by three, four, five years, you're starting to get some of that stability out there, you're starting to get some of that herbaceous cover back in the landscape.

Micah Kiesow

When you see the low severity fire out there, the low fire intensity out there, you really have some quick vegetative response, especially with your herbaceous ground cover, and that can happen as quickly as a year.

Micah Kiesow

And so some of those short term effects really come down to what is the outcome of the prescribed fire, potential prescribed fire, and leading to the assumption that most of it will be low to moderate, and get back to the mitigation measures that the EA mentions.

Micah Kiesow

So Appendix C does have a number of mitigation measures, best management practices, I think for water specifically there are 45, and that comes down to, you know, how we burn, when we burn, how we log, when we log ... {?}

Sarah Salazar

So for the purposes of downstream users, I didn't notice in Appendix C there being any mention of specific intention to monitor water quality for example, so that those users downstream users who rely on it for their livelihood, for example, farming or ranching, know whether it's safe to use. So will that be addressed in the additional documentation you're talking about?

Micah Kiesow

Yeah, so, you know, the state actually has some good products on post-fire water quality, right? And it's not that it's not safe to use, you know, it's more that, you know, when you have the ash and sediment in there, it's not necessarily a chemical, but... [?]

Micah Kiesow

The State Environment Department [doesn't ?] do water quality testing. They are on, like, an eight- to ten -year time frame, and they go across the watershed, so it is a bit of a time frame. But that's really who we rely on for ... [?].

Carlos Salazar

I have a question.

Carlos Salazar

I think the picture that you guys are painting here sounds really good, but in reality, if you do prescribed burning and you don't do mechanical thinning and get all that dead and down, all that standing dead out of the way, our community is going to suffer catastrophic problems.

Carlos Salazar

We've already experienced them with past wildfires, and there was no [?]. We had to bear the total cost. I think we still have a useless [?] that's suffering from the aftermath... [?]

Carlos Salazar

I mean, this sounds good, but in reality, I've seen some of the wildfires, prescribed fires, and to me, they've been in wildfires. They totally burn everything if you don't get in there mechanically.

Carlos Salazar

I work for the Indian tribes. We couldn't burn until we get mechanically thinned and remove at least 90 percent of the fuel. If you guys don't do that, you know, you guys leave in a few years. You guys are somewhere else.

Carlos Salazar

We're left here for the aftermath if something goes wrong. The people that have been with you guys, the Forest Service in the past years, when there was wildfire - there's not a single one in this room, not a single one.

Carlos Salazar

Okay, those burns that we've already had, there's a lot of trees that got hung in our forest floor... [?] ... In the headwaters of Canones Creek... [?]... there's a lot of dead and down. I don't think you can run a prescribed burn in there unless you remove the fuel. I was talking to this gentleman -- maybe there's some roads need to be put in roads in there and have people going in and remove as much of that firewood as possible.

Carlos Salazar

If not, I have to say that we are in the county just recently passed a county ordinance opposing the prescribed burning. You're going to have to come up with an extremely good plan, and you're going to have to sell it to them.

Carlos Salazar

Otherwise, the county sheriff is going to be running to ... [?] and we're going to stop the burning. We don't want to see what happens... [?] We don't want it to happen here. This sounds great. If everything goes well. I think an EIS is more necessary than the EA.

Carlos Salazar

The EA is just whatever opinions you want to put in there, but the EIS goes a lot deeper, and you have to meet with different resources, like Peter was saying - the acequias. There's a lot of players that I don't see here. that should be involved.

Carlos Salazar

I haven't been to the Coyote, and I wasn't here personally because of other commitments, but I am sitting here. I didn't see a scope of work. It's a little general scope of work, but I want to know the specifics of what exactly are you guys going to be doing?

Carlos Salazar

I want to know. Are you going to go in there mechanically thin? I don't want you to burn until that area is safe to burn, because if it's going to get out of control, we're the residents here in Canones, Coyote, or whatever.

Carlos Salazar

We're the ones that are going to, again -- repeating myself -- ... [?] ... We have to pay all the costs to refurbish our diversions. In fact, there was an engineering company that came in and helped.

Carlos Salazar

They didn't do a very good job because it got washed out. They didn't anticipate the flooding that we were going to get. This is what I'm afraid of here... Looking at your map, I don't know how many total acres you're planning on burning. But I've seen on horseback a lot. And I see nothing's been done to the forest. Nothing. I don't know how many years. Probably 50 years, since the last log in the 70s.

Carlos Salazar

There's been no thinning. There's a lot of dead trees standing...[?]. You're going to have to do a lot of thinning. And I think you need to log. Sometimes I wonder if the Forest Service and the environmental groups aren't in it together.

Carlos Salazar

You don't want to log. You don't want to thin. But a fire is more devastating than those fears of thinning and logging. Way more devastating...[?].

[?]

Perfect segue.

Rian Ream

Hi I'm Rian Ream. I'm the Fuels Program Manager right now on the Santa Fe National Forest. A little bit of background about me. I'm originally from Oregon. You know, I got involved in all this. I have a natural resources degree in biology, and I worked for a small timber organization with these small landowners for thinning in southern Oregon. A similar fuel type, you know -- ponderosa pine, high fire danger, frequent fire ecosystem, and I was interested in fire, so I got into fire.

Rian Ream

I worked on the Truckee hotshots for a year in northern California, and then I went down to Durango, Colorado, and I worked on the San Juan hotshots for six years, and then I came here in 2011, worked on the Santa Fe hotshots, so a total of 11 years on a hotshot crew, and then I worked for Española on an engine for five years before I got the fuels job, and I was a fuels tech for a couple years and moved up into the fuels planner, and just recently got the fuels program manager.

Rian Ream

So I've got a strong background in fire, and I totally agree with you, sir, that we have to thin. The forest is too thick. We've got 150 years of fire suppression, and the forest is overgrown, and as a result, we're getting a lot of bug kill and disease.

Rian Ream

We've got a lot of dieback in the forest. We're not getting the understory grass and vegetation for your cows. It's in a pretty sad state. I was on the Las Conchas Fire. You know, I've been on a lot of those multi-hundred thousand acre fires, and the fire nukes out everything, and what comes back is locust and oak brush, and at high elevations you get aspen, but for the most part, you've completely nuked out everything, and what you get is a lot of downstream flooding, and that's what would happen here in Canones Creek with a large scale wildfire.

Rian Ream

I want to address the Hermits Peak Calf Canyon because it's the elephant in the room. I, myself, am pissed off about that too. It shouldn't have happened. There was a lot of mistakes that were made there from the thinning being too heavy and not dealing with the slash that was left over.

Rian Ream

There was not good communication between the timber and the fire people to know how we were going to lay out units in there, and how we were going to deal with the slash after things were cut, all the way to up when we did the burn.

Rian Ream

There were units there that had been burned before that could have been burnt and successfully at that time of year, in the the spring burn. Where it was lit was in an area that was lopped and scattered.

Rian Ream

It was cut thinking that the timber wood haulers were going to come out and remove the fuel wood, but it was too steep and too inaccessible to get in there and remove that fuel, and so there was a lot of slash on the ground.

Rian Ream

Then we had a whole bunch of our fire resources in training over there at the Buffalo Thunder. We do every year, but there were a lot of resources available, and we could have had double, triple the number of resources on that fire, and we didn't.

Rian Ream

So when we got spot fires, we weren't able to go in there and contain those spot fires. When we did burn plans in the past, we did big programmatic burn plans. We did a burn plan for a whole watershed. It was for the whole Gallinas WUI.

Rian Ream

You all know that on one side of the watershed is going to be completely different fuel conditions than the other side of the watershed. So we were analyzing for that whole thing, but the idea that the burn boss is going to come in and know what the right prescription for that particular piece of ground is. Now we write our burn plans for individual units, and we're analyzing the fuels outside those units and modeling that for those specific units, and there's a specific prescription for that specific unit, so you end up with the right number of people.

Rian Ream

We're also doubling our burn organizations within those burn plans. That's some of the stuff that we're doing differently. We're also doing a step-up plan, or a holding plan... we're going to keep our burn organizations, and much like a wildfire, once we get the fire contained, we mop up the perimeter.

Rian Ream

We dig out all the heat, and we move in all the [?] off the line, so there isn't that chance of them re-forming outside the line. We're going to keep our burn organizations after we've lit to do that mop up, so our burns are secured, until the burn box determines that they're secured, much like we do a wildfire.

Rian Ream

And then, before we call those burns out, we're going to use thermal imagery, either with drones or planes. We've been using the handheld ones for quite a while, but that's limited. That's just what you can see from on the ground. Where you get aeriels with thermal imagery, you can determine the smallest amount of heat that's in that burn. So we're using multiple thermal imagery flights to determine that it's completely out before we consider them out.

Rian Ream

That deals with the Herman's Peak fire. Now we have the Calf Canyon fire. That was a pile burn. So, you know, a lot of the areas are steep and inaccessible. Should we build some roads? Maybe. I don't know the answer to that. It definitely would give us better access for our engine crews and our crews.

Rian Ream

It would allow people to get in and remove more of this material, but that's pretty controversial building roads, especially in the spots like Canones Creek that are a proposed Wild and Scenic River corridor.

Rian Ream

Those decisions are above my level. But... Calf Canyon was a pile burn. So, you know, steep and inaccessible areas where you can't remove material. There isn't, the stuff there isn't necessarily a [?] that we're thinning.

Rian Ream

And we do a lot of thinning before we burn. We have to have piles. We have to remove that fuel before we can do a broadcast. And we do our pile burns in the snow. Calf Canyon, when we burned those piles, there were two feet of snow.

Rian Ream

But conditions have changed. Climate's changed. And when I started burning piles, piles burned out, and we'd walk away. Now, you know, I've gone out on pile burns, you know, in the last few years. You have a log. Any part of that log sticking out of the top of the snow, and it gets an ember, it burns right down to white ash. In two feet of snow. So, what's happening? That snow is [?]. Conditions have changed. Climate change -- it changed. And so, you know, it held over in those [?] until spring. They went in, they caught the fire -- an acre and a half -- and then they walked away. Seven days later, they got up in high winds, 70 mile an hour winds, and got out of there, and created most of the damage in the Calf Canyon part of the Hermits Peak Calf Canyon.

Sarah Hyden

I've just been wondering this for a long time. So they did the overflight over the Calf Canyon Piles. In fact, I know the person who reported the first smoke in the Calf Canyon area. And they didn't determine well enough that the piles were out in order to prevent them from lighting up again.

Sarah Hyden

So I'm wondering how that happened, because they were doing the thermal imaging from aircraft -- as in what you were saying, that's the way to do it -- but it didn't prevent those piles from escaping again when the high winds came.

Sarah Hyden

And secondly, given that the piles were spreading, why wasn't there more of an effort to just address every single pile...[?]..., even for firefighters to come in and address them.

Rian Ream

I wholly agree with you. We should have. I can't make excuses for those. Those people are no longer with us. It's inexcusable. It pisses me off. I worked, I hiked all over that area laying down units. Gallinas Canyon, it's a beautiful canyon.

Rian Ream

It's nuked. It's gone. You know, like the downstream flooding -- it's horrible. I am as enraged as anyone.

Sarah Hyden

But to me it seems it demonstrates the limitations of overflights for thermal imaging. Because they did do that.

Rian Ream

Well, the heat was there. We determined the heat was there. I remember seeing the heat.

Sarah Hyden

Well then the overflights determined at some point that the heat wasn't there. And then it just like came back. So it really was there.

Rian Ream

Don't we have a picture of thermal imagery in here from this layer? Can we pull that up? Is that the next slide?

Rian Ream

So we flew in the summer, we flew at Pacheco Canyon and we got on our pile burns and we did this [?]. And it was a little stumble. And it picked it up, bright little light on the thermal imagery and it gets [?]. And you go right into it. I never was a big fan of drones, but two years ago I was working in northern California on the Six Rivers, on a wildfire.

And that area, heavy inversion. All the fog and smoke settles into the valleys and you can't see anything.

Rian Ream

I had a fire way down in the canyon, in a bunch of blowdown. I knew it was going to eventually come cooking out of there. And we had to get some containment up above.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Rian, I don't want to interrupt you, but for the sake of time, can we cover more appropriate topics related to Encino Vista?

Rian Ream

Yes.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

And then if there's other questions regarding drone photography or imagery, we can address those at a later event.

Rian Ream

So that was a little stumble. It didn't last long. Send the firefighters in there. Put it out. Mop up in snow is really easy. You got snow, you put it in the stump hole, you dig it around, you put your hand in there, it's cool. You're good. You come back to that area and check it again with your hand, it's cool.

Rian Ream

So, those are some things that for one, we're briefing for every burn, we're doing on the public [?]. So we're getting people involved where we have a supervisor briefing, and then we have a congressional briefing, and we'll have public meetings before each prescribed burn -- that's one of the things we're doing differently.

Rian Ream

There's a checklist for every burn. Every day you have to go through, we talk about drought, we talk about as conditions change every day rather than doing one checklist and then for several days. Increasing the burn organizations, more site specific unit for our burn plans, more people, we put a patrol plan in our burn plans so we're always patrolling.

Rian Ream

There's always somebody in charge until it's declared out, there's somebody in there for weather events. We have a step up plan so if there's gonna be a wind event, we bring in more people to move in and up the organization through that windy event so we have people on site.

Rian Ream

So those are some of the contingencies. So a little bit of firefighting 101... I bring this up because of fire suppression, and the forests are thicker, and climate change, our fires are getting thicker.

Rian Ream

That's just a fact. All across the country, California, you've seen it. Fires are huge and I've been doing it on the hot shot crew, and now I'm on the incident management team. You have a big fire over here... this fire behavior is creating its own weather. This is summertime, this is the way a wildfire burns, and as the fire is burning, it's preheating all the fuels ahead of it by the heat and so when the fire gets to that, all those fuels are completely dry, and so they're ready to combust, so it's heating all the fuels.

Rian Ream

That's the way a fire burns. It'll start down at the bottom of the hill and it'll go all the way up the hill and it'll go with the wind and it'll preheat the fuels. When we do a prescribed burn, we start upwind and we start at the top of the hill and so the fire's only burning up

to the top of the hill or to the containment line and then we bring fire down the hill and into the wind and that's how you moderate the fire behavior is because this fire's only going however wide the strips are, 20 feet, 50 feet, just enough that you're consuming the fuel until it burns back into itself.

Rian Ream

Why I bring up the wildfire is because we've got these big wildfires. You can't put line on it, you can't dig line on it, you can't put a dozer line on it. 150 foot flame lengths, it's burning the ground.

Rian Ream

So what you do is you back off several miles. You back off several miles to a road, or a ridge line, or whatever, and the crews will prep this stuff along the edge there, just enough that they can reestablish fire, and then we burn, a back burn.

Rian Ream

And we burn along that road and we do the same thing I was describing here. We start at the road, and we let the fire burn into itself, so we're moderating the fire behaviors so we don't get spots on the other side of the road.

Rian Ream

I've been doing this all over the country for the last 25 years. Pretty successful. And then eventually this fire starts getting pulled into the main fire, and that's where it stops, unless you get spot fires miles ahead.

Rian Ream

But you do it far enough ahead that you build enough black and the fire stops there. I've had a lot of success with it in the middle of the summer when things are bone dry. It can be done, and we do it.

Rian Ream

And that's the same concept that we use when we're prescribed burners. Now, what we do is they're prepping along the edge there. They're thinning. They're removing the fuels along the edge there... you're removing the ladder fuels, that's what you're doing. You can burn the understory without the fire getting up into the crowns. And I've got reams of literature, fuels treatment effectiveness literature, that says that thinning alone can create more fuel if you're not dealing with slash.

Rian Ream

... We're going to be opening everything up that is along roads when I'm doing my small diameter thinning, and we're doing our commercial logging in here. And we have been doing commercial logging. These are small operators, locals, that have been fitting up here in Ojo, Cordova, Poleo. You can drive out there and see the thinning work, and we've burnt a lot of those units successfully. Now these areas are pretty much flat, and it gets a little more complicated when you get into a steeper country because it's harder to get the material out.

Rian Ream

So where we can, we're going to open it up for fuel haulers to come in and get wood. And where we have available, we're going to remove some in our commercial timber units. We're going to open it up to local operators to do some logging in there.

Rian Ream

But where we can't remove the fuel, it's going to be cut and piled. And it's removing the ladder fuel, so we can safely and effectively reintroduce fire. And that might be a lot of the area. We're not going to reintroduce fire until we have removed enough of that fuel to reestablish fire.

Rian Ream

Now before I stop, I'm just going to go into Canones Creek because that's the major concern here.

Rian Ream

And if you want do only quick points, we can talk about pre-commercial thinning and the piling. So really what the piling is going to be is of the limbs and the tops. The boles of those trees are going to be left on the ground for wood gathering.

Rian Ream

We're not going to burn everything that's removed within PCT [pre-commercial thinning]. It's just going to be limbs and tops. Boles will be stacked along the road for people to gather.

Rian Ream

So people can't see the map, but they can see this [drawing on easel]. So you've got Canones Creek, we're down near Canones, and you've got Canones Creek running up the hill here. You have Mesa del Medio, and you have the mesa top over here.

Rian Ream

Our line goes across the canyon, and what that line is, is a higher elevation. You've got your spruce fir. The spruce fir is wetter. It burns less frequently in high intensity, and down here you have your ponderosa pine and your dry mixed conifer.

Rian Ream

The reason that I'm not particularly concerned about the spruce fir -- I am, but it's a different fire regime, and it burns less often and higher intensity. The ponderosa pine is where we get most of our starts, and it is available for a longer period of the year.

Rian Ream

It's drier earlier, and until later in the season. So in our spring and fall, this right here [higher elevation spruce fir area] is not available. We wouldn't be able to even light it up

in this spruce fir and wet mixed conifer. But in the ponderosa pine and dry mix conifer, it's available earlier.

Rian Ream

So what I am proposing is we're going to treat the mesas first. We're going to thin them. What we need to provide for fuelwood and burn it in piles to reduce the slash and get rid of the fuels. So we have the mesa tops.

Rian Ream

And I'm also going to be doing some thinning in the canyons, and the fuel is not accessible in there unless we build roads. That's going to be cutting and piling and removing the fuels just enough that we can safely and effectively re-introduce fire to keep a low to moderate intensity.

Rian Ream

And somewhere along this area here [points to drawing on easel], we'll build a nice fuel break across. And once everything has been treated as far as removing the fuel, we'll introduce a prescribed burn in here, and back it off the rim, and keep it low to moderate intensity because we're bringing it downhill slowly from the top to the bottom, and working upwind and downwind.

Rian Ream

And then if you get a major fire, these containment lines give firefighters somewhere to go, because they've got black there, somewhere to go, to go in there and have an anchor point and a safe spot to get in there and suppress that fire from continuing down into the spruce and knocking out the whole watershed.

Rian Ream

Just one last thing here. We've been burning for the last two decades. We thinned pretty much the whole Santa Fe Watershed. We've been burning the Santa Fe Watershed for the last two decades, and the City of Santa Fe monitors that water quality really closely.

Rian Ream

And we've had negligible effects, as far as erosion, in the Santa Fe Watershed. And another thing is when you're burning, it's why the Midwest farmers burn their fields, is it stimulates the herbaceous response.

Rian Ream

And when you thin, you open up the overstory and you allow sunlight in and you stimulate. What you're doing is you're removing the needle cast, so the grass can actually grow in the understory.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Thank you, Rian. If we have any more questions, we'll go further.

Ron Perry

Gain I'm Ron Perry, the Forestry Program Manager on the Santa Fe. A little background myself, I have 30 plus years with the agency, so I'm one of the old guys here in the room. Started my career in Oregon and bounced around California for several years. I was looking for an excuse to get out of California, and the opportunity was here, so here I am.

Ron Perry

I'll tell you what, we're loving it here. My wife and I, we got here kind of on a whim, sight unseen. We've been here for six months, and no regrets. This area is amazing. It's beautiful. The culture, the history, the traditions, it's amazing. So thank you for letting me live in your area. This area right here, this is amazing. This is one of the most scenic areas I've seen in the area.

Ron Perry

So I was asked to come in here and talk about the different types of products that are being produced on the Encino Vista, and the options and avenues that will be used to get those products removed.

Ron Perry

The first thing I want to mention is the clarification of the non-marketable material. I've seen it in the comments that there was a lot of scrutiny over calling the smaller material non-marketable.

Ron Perry

I think where we're getting at here is that actually it should have been called non-merchantable. In the Forest Service, on the timber side of things, we categorize two products. We have saw timber, and we have non-saw timber.

Ron Perry

Your saw timber, that's your merchantable, commercial, that's where we get the commercial acres, because it has a saw timber component to it. The non-saw products, that's the non-marketable, that's your pre-commercial, non-commercial, or non-merchantable types of materials.

Ron Perry

So the definition of saw timber: that is a tree that is 14 inches DBH and greater. It will produce a minimum 10 foot length to a 6 inch top, minimum. That's saw timber. Any tree that is 14 inches DBH greater, you can get at least a 10 foot piece to a 6 inch top, that's commercial. That's what we're referring to. That is a product that can be taken to a mill and cut into dimensional lumber. Non-saw products: those are your products that are fuelwood, vigas, latillas, posts, poles. Those will range in size from 2 inches DBH -- diameter breast height -- to 13.9. 13.9 and less: non-commercial. 14 and greater: commercial saw timber. So that being said, we've identified 7,200 acres of commercial, potential commercial treatment out on the ground.

Ron Perry

Within those commercial acres, we are going to produce saw timber, firewood, vigas, latillas, posts and rails. Then within that 26,750 acres that we have identified for pre-commercial thing, we will produce on those acres firewood, latillas, posts, and rails.

Ron Perry

So there's going to be a potential product coming off of every acre out there, depending on access, availability. There are lots of parameters, but there's potential for product to be coming off of every acre.

Ron Perry

Removal of forest products will be made available to public through several different options here. We have permitting processes. We have contracts. And we also have agreements. So permits - that's probably the one most everybody's most familiar with. That's our over-the-counter permit sales that are available at the district offices. And under those permit sales, we can sell firewood, vigas, latillas, post and poles. We cannot sell saw timber with a permit.

Ron Perry

Saw timber has to be advertised in the available open market, available product to everybody. So that kind of determines how we're going to move these projects forward. So if we have a large saw timber component in a scan, we have no option but to go out and offer it as a timber sale to the public.

Ron Perry

Now if we have a small component of saw timber that doesn't justify it, that won't pay its way out of the woods, then we have the option of offering it [with] over-the-counter permits. So there's a lot of variables to it, but if there is a large component of saw timber, they will be offered as timber sales.

Ron Perry

So getting back to the permits, 2400-1 permits [using Forest Product Permit Form FS-2400-1], those products may be permitted and sold to you over-the-counter. They could be standing trees, they could be felled trees, they could be decked trees, just depending on which process, which route we want to move that product through.

Ron Perry

You know, if we have a cascaded[?] deck contract, and we're working with the State for a fuels reduction that the value of the timber won't pay its way out of the woods, we'll have that material stacked deck, and then we'll open it up to you and the public to come and pick it up in the deck form. So there's your decks. Or we may have the State come in cut the material, lop it, scatter it, and move the boles on the ground, kind of like the PCT stuff that was mentioned earlier. That would be down material that would be available to you.

Ron Perry

And then we have the option of opening up a green stand and allowing people to go in and do a selective cut for green fuelwood. So those are all options for over-the-counter permitting for fuelwood.

Carlos Salazar

What sort of spacing are you looking at? How many trees that you're going to leave behind?

Ron Perry

Well the spacing -- I don't have that item, because everything we've designed right now is based on basal area, [?], so that would have to be correlated to a spacing. Rough spacing is probably going to be approximately 30 feet, 25 to 30 foot spacing, depending on the size of the tree. Larger trees you space a little further. Smaller diameter trees, you leave them a little tighter. So usually we'll put a spacing guideline together for something like that. It's going to be somewhere in the ballpark of 15 to 25 foot with a 10 percent variance on either side. So it could be anywhere from 10 to about 30 feet.

Ron Perry

So over-the-counter permits -- we do have some restrictions on those. So it's not just going across the board for everybody. So when we use helpers, when we use firewood permits, everybody's limited to 20 cords per acre annually. Vigas, everybody's limited to 2,000 linear feet annually. Latillas are 24,000 feet annually. And posts and rails are 2,000 foot annually. So just a little tidbit of information for you. So if you're in the business of cutting latillas, and you run up against your 24,000 linear feet for the year, then we can go out and designate an area as a commercial latilla cutting area.

Ron Perry

So a lot of these products, we could make them all commercial to you, but it's going to be kind of on a supply and demand type of basis. Commercial fuelwood is one that we will probably make more readily available because there is more of a demand for commercial firewood. So that's one thing we're looking to build into our program. It's actually setting blocks aside, pre-measured, knowing that that block of land will have a designated 10 cords there we can sell, or 100 cords we can sell, and turn around and offer that up as a commercial sale for 100 cords of firewood. So, lots of options. There's going to be tons of firewood available. So there'll be multiple ways for us to get this out and available.

Ron Perry

Any questions on permits?

Jeff Marszal

Just one thing -- from the last meeting, there was some question around how the community could benefit from some of these global contracting options for our timber sales, and maybe you can probably do that fairly briefly.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Sure, I also have some comments on that, but if you want to go through it briefly, it's fine.

Ron Perry

Let me run through this real quick. So, like I mentioned, for the timber sale, you know, the saw timber size material, we have to offer that up in timber sales. And I just wanted to mention the different types of contract packages that we would use.

Ron Perry

There's a 2400-2 contract, that's for deck sales. I mentioned we could do deck sales or offer decks up for fuelwood cutting. We can also offer those up as contracts. So if we have a deck of logs that are viga size, or saw timber size, we can offer up 2400-2 deck sale contracts.

Ron Perry

We also have 2400-3 and 2400-4, those are small low value timber sale contracts. And then you're getting into your bigger contracts. These are the complex large sales, large acres, large volumes. Those are usually 2400-6 contracts.

Ron Perry

So if you get into the market where you're gonna start bidding on timber sale contracts, these are the type of contract packages that you're going to be looking for. We also have 2415-IRRTC, that is an integrated resource timber contract. That is a contract that will include service work, but the value of the timber covers the service work. So all of the timber sale contracts that I mentioned previously, those are straight up timber sale contracts, no service work if you're tied to those contracts. The value of the timber covers all the work that will be done in the contract, and all of the work that's in the contract will be tied to the removal or the harvest of the timber. But the IRRTCs, those are timber sale contracts that we can actually put service items in there.

Ron Perry

So there could be additional work like road obliteration, hand piling, digging hand line for prescribed fire. So we could put those additional service type contract tasks in the timber sale contract that the value of the timber will pay for it.

Ron Perry

So just one of the contracting tools that we have available to us. If anybody is interested in seeing our timber sale offerings, we have a timber sale prospective bidder mailing list that we track every time we have a sale package that's going out to the public.

Ron Perry

Everybody that is on that list will receive a copy of the announcement, the notification for timber for sale, and you'll also receive an email notification. So if anybody is interested and would like to start monitoring our sales that we're going to be putting up, which are few [?] of course, but we will be putting a few out. Come see me after this, and I'll collect your information and we'll be sure to get you added to the list.

Ron Perry

One last thing. I know we're running out of time, but agreements. Agreements are another tool that we use quite often to get these projects implemented. The agreements can include a multitude of tasks. We enter into an agreement, a stewardship agreement, participating agreement, there's multiple agreements that we can use. And we enter that into that agreement with these groups to help us with implementation. And that can be with planning, it can be with solicitation for contractors, it could be bringing people on the ground to hack and stack -- it's wide open. And I just want to break that up because on some of these projects we may be using partners, and there are always avenues for the locals to get involved with these packages, with these contracts, who are partners.

Ron Perry

So, and I'm also going to mention ...[?]. timber sale contracts as well. It doesn't have to go just to that contract and whoever's awarded it, or that contract can sell that out. So there's tons of opportunities whether you buy the timber sale yourself, or you know somebody who's going to buy that sale.

Ron Perry

There are opportunities for sub-contractors to get involved with timber sale contracts and with our other [?]. I'll stop there.

Claudia Brookshire

Hi everyone, my name is Claudia Brookshire. I'm the Public Affairs Officer for the Santa Fe, and I just want to thank all of you for having us here today. I really enjoyed our meeting a month ago. I enjoyed meeting all of you, and listening and answering questions you had.

Claudia Brookshire

And I was really looking forward to coming today and having these discussions again. I want to say I can't defend the decisions of the past, but I can say myself and the focus of our group here today is really to learn from all of you.

Claudia Brookshire

Right - you are the experts in this landscape, and we are here to learn and to work with you, and that's really our focus. We want to continue to meet with you. We want to continue to come out here to plan field trips.

Claudia Brookshire

And we have identified some ways that we can collaborate, but we again can learn from you. So we want to meet you where you are and to learn what works for you, and to talk about different ways we can implement this project.

Claudia Brookshire

One of the things I do want to say is that even though many of us are not from northern New Mexico, most of us got into land management because we do have a connection to the land. And I know personally I grew up in North Dakota, and it is as cold and empty as you can imagine.

Claudia Brookshire

But I grew up hunting and fishing with my dad, and I remember going out hunting, and his knowing every plant on the landscape, every animal, how the seasons changed. And knowing that when I was deciding what I wanted to do with life, that I wanted to have a career where I have some connection to the land. And really could contribute to leaving this land and this landscape for younger generations. It was such a joy to see the boys on the ATVs, and these projects are really to make sure that these landscapes are resilient for our youth. That we can pass these areas down to younger generations, and keep these landscapes healthy with good water and air quality. And we all have a similar hope that we can work together to really be an asset to your community.

Claudia Brookshire

So I really encourage you all to reach out to myself and our team, and we want to continue to work with you and collaborate. So in the interest of time, I'll just quickly talk a little bit about what that looks like, what that collaboration looks like.

Claudia Brookshire

We heard from you that we want to get onto the landscape and to talk about some of these projects, and to talk about ways we can implement this project. And so we have looked at a few places where we can meet for field trips and we're hoping that today we can maybe start to plan some of those field trips.

Claudia Brookshire

I have up on the screen, we have Mesa del Medio, the Cordovas project, [?] tank, and then any ideas of where you all would want to show us the landscape, or where we can meet you to talk about this project.

Claudia Brookshire

Again, talking about leaving this land for younger generations, we really want the youth of this community and this area to have some ownership in this project to help us with implementation. The Forest Service has a lot of connections with youth groups that we can help with, like Rocky Mountain Youth Corps and YCC.

Claudia Brookshire

I know Lupita, last time, I believe you mentioned that you are a leader of a youth group, and so we'd love to work with you and to identify ways that we can have young people out helping with this project as well.

Claudia Brookshire

And then, as I said, moving forward, we're here to listen, we're here to collaborate. We want to be open about our decision-making process. It can be, oftentimes, I think in the past, a lot of these decisions were made behind closed doors, and we want to be more collaborative.

Claudia Brookshire

And that really is our focus, and we hope that we can continue to work with all of you and to talk about this project. So we'd love to have more meetings, and we can maybe talk about how frequent that would look like, if you'd like us to continue to come here, or if we can meet you somewhere else, whatever's ideal.

Claudia Brookshire

And then again, I'm here to learn what ideas you have for outreach, and how we can reach all of you. So again, I just want to thank all of you today, and really appreciate you having us out here, and we look forward to continue working with all of you.

Carlos Salazar

May I ask a question? I didn't see anything addressed -- is there going to be an impact on livestock grazing by any possibility? Because many of the folks here depend on livestock grazing. If you prescribe burn, are people here going to be asked not to put their cows in? Is that something that may happen? Because otherwise, we wouldn't support this project. And I'll tell you why. We've already lost 82% of the permit holders on the Santa Fe and the Carson since the 1940s. Right now we have less than one hundred [?].

Rian Ream

So, like I mentioned, prescribed burning will benefit your allotments. Thinning opens up the canopy, allows light into the understory, and then prescribed burning removes that needle cast layer and stimulates the understory's growth.

Rian Ream

We definitely want to work with the permittees, because -- okay, my major experience with this is Rowe Mesa. And if there isn't the grass there, there's no reason to remove the cattle off of the allotment before we burn it. There's no reason. But if you do remove the cattle for a season before and allow the grass to come in, and we burn it, you're going to get a much bigger yield after burning it. That's proven because, you know, ranchers across the continental United States burn their pastures, and that's to stimulate the grass growth.

Carlos Salazar

I kind of have to disagree there with you because we have too many elk. I mean, if we would remove our cattle, it's not going to do any good because the elk are just going to come in right behind you. That's why I'm saying I'm concerned that if you do burn the Forest Service[?] once, then withhold[?] the grazing permittees from going in. That's my concern.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Perhaps that can be addressed at a grazing meeting ...

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

I'm going to try and be brief. Just to remind everybody, we have the Juan Bautista Valdez Land Grant Advisory Group here. I'm the leader of this group, and it's different from the Land Grant, in that it's a working group. And so we're tasked with really addressing issues that may affect the local community here, and we prioritize those issues as they come in.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

We've really prioritized Encino Vista as one of those issues, and we've been following it really since 2018. So we do serve as a vital conduit between the rural community and outside institutions. I don't need to repeat this. But we are a working, collaborative group, and these are all academic research disciplines, specialized professionals that kind of work on these responses to the U.S. Forest Service.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

I think that's important, because it isn't just interacting with the rural community, but it's interacting with other professionals that also have these disciplines and the education to sort of back these assertions.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

So... Just a comment overview. So these are comments that have come up from just the series of meetings with the Forest Service. And so one of the concerns that I wanted to address, and again I represent as the group leader, my local community here, so it's really number one - the prescribed burning.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

What mechanisms are in place to make sure prescribed burning is adequately monitored both short term and long term? Public users: over 95% of this community is opposed to prescribed burning. What is the protocol, and can the Forest Service consider views in land management decisions reflective of the public and what their concerns are?

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Financials: you know, is prescribed burning the most feasible, and therefore the sound choice? Are there alternatives to prescribed burning? Costs: what are the cost differences of prescribed burning to other alternatives? And does the cost drive the Forest Service's decision making policies and projects? Targets: can you explain target acres imposed on the Santa Fe National Forest and why do local districts need to achieve these targets?

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

These are all concerns that have come up through various meetings, and we think it's valid to bring them up. Some of the proposed solutions that we have in regards to the Encino Vista project -- can there be a limit to the amount of acres that are slated for prescribed burning?

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

It's one of the largest projects that I've ever seen sort of initiated on the Santa Fe National Forest. I think the only one that comes close is the Jemez Mountains Landscape Restoration Project. All other projects have been much smaller in magnitude, and so I think there is genuine concern of why such a large project.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Explain the methodology of site selection of acres targeted to burn. I know that there's always sort of these assertions that are brought up, that it's to reduce catastrophic wildfire that would have otherwise burned the landscape, but do we have any real data that shows where lightning strikes would have hit the landscape and where those areas may have burned in the past?

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Why are we setting fires to areas that perhaps would have never burned naturally in the first place? I think that's kind of something that I'd definitely like to look at. Why are we selecting these specific areas for prescribed burning?

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Identify the areas for broadcast burning and/or pile burning. Explain and identify the high intensity, low intensity burn areas. Provide a prescribed burn plan that can be released to the public for review.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Provide an annual progress report of what is planned for the year, and the outcomes of the previous year. I think that would be extremely helpful in sort of monitoring these prescribed burning projects, and provide safe measures and contingency plans for local communities prior to project initiation.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

I agree, I think the Hermits Peak Calf Canyon was a disaster, and it really impacted some of the most disadvantaged communities in northern New Mexico, and I would definitely hate to see that happen to my small community and the surrounding rural communities that surround us.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Second concern, so prescribed burning is number one; number two: aggressive logging. What mechanisms are in place to make sure substantial logging needs to occur? I didn't actually even see logging and thinning addressed in the initial scoping document, and then it sort of just appeared in the proceeding documents, and so I was just wondering where did that come from, and what was the need behind that?

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Public uses: what is the magnitude, how much, and why, and who really benefits. Is logging feasible? Who is awarded these contracts? I know I've been involved in several meetings with the collaborative resource, Forest Landscape Restoration Plan CFLRP, and you know, they sound amazing in theory, but in reality these contracts are being awarded to very few families, and many times it's the same families that are benefiting from these contracts. That doesn't assist rural communities as a whole, because many times rural communities aren't educated as far as the contracting process. We don't know when bids are coming out, we're not getting the emails, and many times maybe we don't have the equipment.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Another thing is [Spanish], we don't speak the language. And so I think it's very important that Forest Service really tries to get the word out to where it's really reaching

communities. Just by reaching a few families and saying, hey, we're awarding local contracts to local people. Many times I've seen it's the same people over and over again, so I'd really like to see something that's addressed to where that's not always the case, and we're really reaching [?] public.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Who is identifying these logging areas? Why is logging prioritized at a larger scale first? The Cordovas project: you can correct me on the acres, but it's not a very large project. It certainly doesn't cover the magnitude or the span of Encino Vista. I'm wondering, can we not start with smaller priority areas that are not covering such a large amount of landscape?

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Costs... let's see, targets, can you explain the target area? ... And then I just have some of the solutions that we propose as really limiting the amount of acres slated for thinning, logging, and treatments in general, explaining the methodology of site selection of acres targeted to thin, and what is wrong with working on a limited scope, rather than on such a massive scope to begin with? Provide us any plan that can be released to the public for review, provide an annual progress on what is planned for the year and previous year reporting, provide safe measures and contingency plans, and I have sharing the wealth, streamlining the process to allow more people to participate.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Perhaps it's not a large thinning project, and they don't have the equipment, like semi-trucks, backhoes, excavators, but maybe they can help on the ground, like you said, taking fuelwood out of the areas for free, not having to go to the district offices and pay those permit fees.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Many times people are really just struggling to survive in this area, and that's an extra cost incurred on these families, and I think that some of these contracts awarded to members of my own community could really help put them at an advantage and really

rise to really support their families, and so I think that's really something that I'd like to see personally.

Ron Perry

I actually had some of that in my presentation that I cut off at the end, but we do have a response to it.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

The parameters of this project really concern me, and I'd just like to address it. Really mapping the project parameters to process the choices behind some of these decisions and just really considering the project risks.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Perhaps reconsidering the project goals and considering the resources available. I know that we've talked a lot about 2018, and we met with the Forest Service. I don't think any of the same personnel is sitting in the room today.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

And for me that's unfortunate. Because I know Forest Service personnel turnover is high, and I know people take other jobs, retire, etc. As Mr. Salazaar pointed out earlier, we're the ones that are here.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

We have been here, we will be here, and we will suffer the impacts and the long term effects of this project. For us, it's important. I think we really are the voices in the room because we're going to see what's going to happen in the future.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

And then again, how much of this project is really needed? I've talked a lot about scaling back this project. 15 years is a long time. Why are we not looking at something with a shorter amount of time frame and limited amount of acres to begin with?

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

I don't know if that's related to sort of NEPA decisions, reviews that the Forest Service has to address. But it's something that I've definitely shared views with Supervisor Sanchez about -- really needing to scale back this project, and looking at it in more short term limited duration, and limited acres to begin with.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Who's to say that it can't be a project that's phased over the next 20 years? But I think looking at it in increments is a lot more tangible and really feasible for both local communities and probably the Forest Service as an agency.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

You don't know your budget in 15 years. How can you sit in the room and kind of share with us that it's going to be carried through and that follow-through is going to happen. So those are some concerns.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

So yeah, reconsider the project parameters. Limit the size and scope. Consider the budget and schedule. Consider the quality of the project. Begin with the smaller project area. Provide short and long term monitoring.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Allow the public to review each scope and phase on the project on an annual basis. Compare it with other projects. Not initiating simultaneous projects that may cause overload. And focusing on community protection first, if catastrophic wildfire is certainly a concern. And considering the long term impacts to rural isolated communities. I want to show you [a slide]. So this is from the top up here in the watershed. So we're coming

south to north. So I just want to show you, and Rian will probably recognize. But these are the deep canyons that we have coming into the town. And you can see right through here just the terrain alone...

Carlos Salazar

Melissa, how come the folks here in this room weren't given an opportunity to select areas that could be thinned or that we see really could use thinning? Rather than Mesa del Medio - I don't know how many years they've been doing work there. It seems like every five years, ten years, they're doing some kind of thinning. Like Melissa was saying, the upper watershed, or spruces -- that really needs to be cleaned up. And when we had one of the wildfires, they did the long highway, I mean Forest Road 144. They thinned that, both sides ...[?]. Those are areas that also have to be thinned.

Micah Kiesow

You want to log the spruce up there?

Carlos Salazar

Why, you're not from here, man. We're the ones that are from here. We know what we need.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Thank you, Carlos. So if I could just get back to the map. So this is, this is from the south, right at the top of the watershed coming down. These are all of the steep canyons, just really rough terrain.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

This is just a little bit north. This is right closer to the monastery area on the south end of this canyon down here. Still you can see all of the steep terrain. This is a snapshot of the community up here.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

We're sitting right over here. You can see my mouse cursor. This is where we're at right now. You have these two riparian systems that meet right here, and just on a regular monsoon event, the flows through these streams are just incredible, and it just really concerns me.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

If we're doing these massive thinning projects on the top of these mesas, how much more are these flows going to increase? And this is probably relevant for Micah. Is there modeling that would sort of demonstrate just how much of an increase of flow we would get?

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

If you don't already know that just the monsoon seasons alone, and you're not tabulating and calculating and quantifying that kind of data, how can we really predict what's going to happen if we're thinning those areas?

Micah Kiesow

I'll respond to that. You know, they're doing a paired watershed study from the Santa Fe Watershed. Treated basin, untreated basin, that has that exact information. So no prediction's necessary monitoring and research that came from that.

Micah Kiesow

And it did show that under significant precip events, the treated basin actually had less of a peak flow than the untreated basin. And that goes back to what Rian was saying: opening up that overstory, creating that herbaceous ground cover, more of a [?] matter, that watershed was able to keep the water in the landscape longer, and not [?] to be gone at once.

Micah Kiesow

So I think that'd be important study to share with you all.

Rian Ream

And also, back to the Santa Fe watershed, you know, it's 1,500 plus vertical feet from the Santa Fe River to the top of the ridge. 8,000 acres in there. We have a thinned, piled, and have introduced a couple of treatments of prescribed burning in there.

Rian Ream

And that's 40% of the City of Santa Fe's water supply [?], and the pollution effect is negligible. [?}... the two ...[?}... comparisons.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

It'd be really great to have those so we can look at those. [points to map] This is sort of on the northern end, as you're driving out of the community center. And as you see, the green valley is really where the local community is dependent on the riparian area and also where they actually hold their private lands.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

And so I think it's just really crucial, because any drastic changes to the riparian streams or riparian areas is just detrimental. There's some guys in there that can talk about some thinning and logging projects that happened in the 1960s, and just the detrimental effects that they had from the ash, I mean from the logs coming down, all of the stuff that wasn't picked up.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Then fires burned through there, and then ash filled streams that basically made the water unusable for crops and things of that nature. This is right at the northern end. This is the Abiquiu Lake. In a conversation that I had -- she's now a District Ranger on the Espanola Ranger District --but it was Sandy Imler-Jacquez. And when this project first initiated, I asked her point blank, why this project? What's the purpose behind this project? And at

one point she had actually shared with me that it was really to increase water supply for the southern areas.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

And I thought, wow, that's never really been addressed in the public meeting. And so I guess that's my, some of my main questions, is why this project? ... I had that conversation with her, and it was about water supply. I know I talked to rangers in the past, and this project was supposed to be the Canones Vegetation Project where it just was a project initiated to support just our community and make sure that this community was primarily protected.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

And then, over time, it just grew to this enormous proportion. I think I mentioned that the last time. But I'd really like to know, on behalf of this community and the advisory group, what happened there? What caused that massive increase? I know that the response that we were provided was, well, the community told us that we thought it would be appropriate. But I've been to, I think almost every community open house, and I don't ever recall the community ever raising that.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

And so, if it was raised, it probably occurred in a private conversation with maybe one community member. I think that's a drastic change to go from, this is intended to support this one small rural community with these really deep canyons, to now it's a 130,000 acre project.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

And so perhaps all of these questions can't be answered today. Perhaps it will take a few meetings to answer all of these questions. But that really is, on behalf of this community, our concern. We really feel like the clock is ticking, and the project's moving forward, but we're saying, hey, slow down. We're not quite there yet.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

With that, we can go to public comments, and I'm going to go grab the sheet.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Lorenzo Salazar. And you have about two minutes, so if I cut you off, I'm not being rude.

Lorenzo Salazar

I consider it...[?]. The heavy rains [?] Also where I asked last time around is [?]. They're going to prescribe an area for burning, and they want to keep the cows out, and the elk will graze there all summer long and everything, and only the cows pay the price.

Lorenzo Salazar

That's not fair for the cows, you know, as they have every right to be out there. When the Forest Service doesn't [?] everybody, so cows have every right to be out there. And that's how my concern is certainly, because it's going to affect everybody...[?]

[?]

What do you propose?

Lorenzo Salazar

Get rid of the elk. That's the first thing. [?]

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

So, as I said the last time, that's probably something that probably needs to be addressed with New Mexico Game and Fish, as the Forest Service isn't responsible for managing wild game populations. I would highly recommend that you set up a meeting on behalf of the permittees with New Mexico Game and Fish.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

And I don't know how involved New Mexico Game and Fish has been involved in this project, but they're probably the agency to contact with.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Peter Garcia, Sr.?

Peter J. Garcia, Sr.

Okay, [?], as I look out that window, you'll see all those young children here from the age of 4 to 18, 19, the community members. That's our future here. So, our concern, our major concern is what Ms. Velasquez was stating about the size of this project, and the accessibility to where the logging, the thinning, the burning is going to be occurring. What about the accessibility in the roads? As Mr. Salazar here stated, we weren't involved in the planning process to decide or speak on what area should have been selected primarily, and of course, smaller projects.

Peter J. Garcia, Sr.

And my biggest concern, and I know this, is that when it came to the Calf Canyon and Hermits Peak Wildfire, they stated they had sufficient personnel and equipment on the ground while that was still a controlled burn.

Peter J. Garcia, Sr.

That very afternoon, it blew up into this enormous, giant disaster that occurred. And I don't know if you've been up into these areas, into these allotments, where we have to go up into to access, and manage the forest, because we are stewards of the forest.

Peter J. Garcia, Sr.

We have been stewards for generations, we've been here, our families have been here, and I don't know if you've traveled these roads. They're totally inaccessible. All it is, is an arroyo. All the roads are arroyos.

Peter J. Garcia, Sr.

So, primarily, let's get our ducks in a row and start managing the forest, start managing these roads, begin with selection processes for the areas to begin the logging and the thinning. And like Mr. Salazar here said, is the mechanical aspect before we decide to turn on [?], turn on a lighter and start the burning. Because it's going to be a major disaster down here in Canones. Not only with the watersheds, but also the health of the community members.

Peter J. Garcia, Sr.

There's a lot of older individuals that have had health issues, asthma, and so on and so forth...

Peter J. Garcia, Sr.

Right now, there's the Indios Fire burning in Coyote, that was not human-caused, it was of natural cause. Why hasn't it been turned off? You state that there's sufficient personnel and equipment to manage these fires. If that's the case, that should have been turned off. Monday, maybe on Sunday, we're Thursday, with sufficient personnel and equipment, that should have been completely extinguished within a day or so.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Thank you, Peter. I would recommend that I'm sure there's a public meeting that will happen for the Indios Fire. I would recommend that you address those issues at that time.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Carlos Salazar?

Carlos Salazar

I think I've already said what I needed to say, other than perhaps in the aftermath, after this project and we have flooding -- is the Forest Service gonna be responsible for all the damage to properties like bank erosion or the breaching of our diversions and this and that?

Carlos Salazar

We don't wanna be left holding the bag. And the same thing with livestock raising, like my brother was saying, we're not gonna stay out, as we were here first. The elk were introduced; they are not indigenous to this area.

Carlos Salazar

So, I mean, it's something that the Forest Service is gonna have to consider when you burn. And I think you need to treat that entire watershed, not just portions of it, especially the upper reaches as well.

Carlos Salazar

All that spruce, too many dead standing trees, the forest floor is a mess, so. You can't even get around on horseback.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Isaiah Velazquez?

Isaiah Velasquez

Real quick, just wanted to comment on something that's already been addressed, but I'm going to turn around [?] and maybe address the Deputy ourselves. We are cattle people, you know, we established this good report with the Forest Service.

Isaiah Velasquez

And we're butting heads. It seems like pretty much nobody's here that we've talked to. We create all these programs such as proposed ideas for riparian areas, instead of fencing and stuff like that.

Isaiah Velasquez

And I wanted to touch base on the fuel [?] project that we've been in touch with. We brought things like that up before in the past, and it seems like it's a good idea, and everybody's gone. And nobody keeps a record of what we proposed, I guess.

Isaiah Velasquez

[?] the flood. It seemed to always be in the flood, but all the records were there. So we're back to square one, if you would say. Which is something that's a [?]. But we have proposed ideas like this before to help, especially the riparian areas.

Isaiah Velasquez

And as far as burning, it's a pretty dangerous [?].

Carlos Salazar

For area restoration, don't put any wire fence in. They've done that in the past, and all that wire is loose. You're there on horseback, and your horses get tangled up, and the animals get bucked up. So, we did last year on the Polvadera, we told them, you can go in and do whatever treatments you want, but no wire fence, because who's going to maintain it?

Carlos Salazar

There's no maintenance. The elk will tear it down [?] to the forest floor.

Lupita Salazar

I guess some of the things that -- and I don't want to say I speak for the community because I don't -- these are just my thoughts. But I think that there's a big opportunity

with trying to figure out how we can coordinate timber sales and using the resources that are up in the mountains and making them accessible to folks.

Lupita Salazar

I think part of that will have to be in education, and potentially having workshops, or figuring out not only how we can facilitate folks getting permits or learning how to get permits but also, are you interested in this?

Lupita Salazar

You may not have the skills to do it, but you might be interested in it. Maybe we can host a workshop. Claudia has said something about partnerships, and I think that's a really good thing that we can think about.

Lupita Salazar

Because there are not a lot of jobs around here, and I think Peter was talking about the kids outside. We have to teach them how to be creative, and one thing we do have is we have [?] water, and that's why we're all here right now.

Lupita Salazar

I'm going to talk about it, because it is what we have. There was a program, the Wood for Life program, that I thought was really interesting. Melissa and I both went to the field day out in Ojito[?]. I went late, so I only did the field trip, but it was pretty cool.

Lupita Salazar

But they have a Wood for Life program, where they help people get wood out of the mountains and get them to people who are like elders or disabled or whoever, because there's so much material that they can sustain or that they can get to people, and I think that's a really good program.

Lupita Salazar

I agree with Mr. Salazar about the mountains up in the mobote[?], which is like the headwaters of our creek. I haven't been up there for, I don't know how old I am now, but for a couple of years. But it was hard on horseback, and it was really hard on foot because of all the dead and down timbers, so I think maybe if we want to get a really intense adventure field trip, that might be one, just so we can understand why we're so like, oh my gosh, you guys want to burn up there?

Lupita Salazar

Because it's really, really difficult terrain, even on horseback or on the foot. So maybe we could go on a horseback field trip. Why not? Let me see. I would be interested in what kind of protections we could put along the river or what things have worked in the past.

Lupita Salazar

Before there's a burn, or even before cutting, what could be done? Even if we're building roads. I'm excited about what you said about beavers, and what we all are doing about beaver dam analogs, which he was talking about, which is imitating how beavers hold water in the rivers to create an area where the fire won't come in and help the water sink into the soil.

Lupita Salazar

And just one more thing: where you're talking about the YCC and the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps. I think that's, I guess I'm saying it again, but I think that's a really good way to think about it, is opportunities.

Lupita Salazar

And one thing I haven't heard yet, and we had talked about it at the last meeting, was if there was a large scale emergency in this village that doesn't have cell phone service or electricity goes out all the friggin' time, and our Wi-Fi is a bit spotty, what would be a good way to go about making a plan?

Lupita Salazar

Because there is only one way out, unless you are really good at running across a field. Even that is [?] fire. But that's all.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Thank you. So that's all we had signed up for public comments...

Sarah Salazar

I just wanted to say thank you so much for everybody coming back as you said you would. I just want to acknowledge that. That's really very helpful to see everybody here. I wanted to also mention with regard to all the modeling that's being done, the EA seemed to indicate that there was some data gaps, and that there was some assumptions made.

Sarah Salazar

And so I wondered as we're considering opportunities for partnership and particularly local expert involvement, if there's been any thought toward how could those data inputs be improved with some more local input.

Sarah Salazar

And if somebody [?] local [?] were to say gosh it's really windy today, and your data input says there's no wind today because it's based on Los Alamos which is the closest official weather station for us. I don't know if that's true. Maybe there's some opportunities to think about. Not volunteering anybody to do anything specific.

June Galloway

I think there's actually a lot of weather stations out in Abiquiu. Yeah, I know that our meteorologist works with the data from that one. Carey Jones, who is actually on this project, is part of the IT team.

Micah Kiesow

I'd be curious to see what ideas have been passed around in the past for your riparian stream restoration stuff. I can touch base. I think that would be great. One more quick comment to your protection around riparian areas.

Micah Kiesow

One of the protections is riparian management zones. There are generally 100 foot buffers around the perennial streams. For prescribed fire, prescribed fire would be permitted within that buffer, would be allowed to back in.

Micah Kiesow

But there are some of the protections that keep that vegetative buffer intact. Some things they can do to set these systems up for success is really looking holistically at this landscape. So as we're working the drainage bottom, and potentially working in the tops of the forest, we're setting up the drainage bottoms to take additional inputs of water, sediment, and nutrients. And so if the restoration practices can do that holistically, from the top down to bottom, around the same time, for success as well.

Lupita Salazar

So you think of it from the top to the bottom versus the bottom to the top? Or is it like you start here and you go down and doing different parts of the river as you go, so they're ready in case there's a reason.

Micah Kiesow

So part of this restoration is actually working from the bottom up. So you can see as you're putting in [?] structures, you can actually see the areas you're inundating so you know where your next structure should go.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Thank you, so concluding remarks from Jeff Marszal, and then I will close the meeting with the wrap-up, and then we'll adjourn.

Jeff Marszal

Well you guys, this is an impressive group. And I always walk away -- well this is the second meeting now -- I always walk away having learned something, and like we've been saying, we were here to listen, and I just listened a lot, and I made so many notes that I kind of lost track of exactly all the things that you have comments and have concerns about, and then you made a bunch of recommendations. And I guess someone asked me what questions do I have for you. I think obviously we're not going to address all these questions right now, and I don't know exactly what the outcome is or the recommendations that you made, but I think maybe the question for you under this group is what's next, right?

Jeff Marszal

We mentioned that we're here and committed to the relationship. We're committed to collaborating with you. You raised a lot of really good issues, I think we agree with many of the things that you raised, and there's just so much here that I think obviously we need another forum. I'm not sure if this is the right forum. I think we keep talking about a field trip, and maybe we - Claudia and I - can work with you on this or whomever, and identify specific areas that we can go to at the same time. You can show us what you want, but also hopefully it will address some of the concerns, and then perhaps some of the recommendations. But we can do that, and I think it will be so much more interesting, and I think meaningful, if we're doing it out in the field together. Because you say these things, but I haven't been there, a lot of us haven't been there, clearly that would be a huge benefit for us.

Jeff Marszal

So I guess that's just a question for you -- and Claudia touched on that -- we're really interested in trying to figure out what the next steps are. But for me, the way I see it, assuming you agree, is why don't we do a similar thing outside in the field and get at some of those concerns. And you will send those to June and us, so we can kind of catalog those, and then that will give us a little chance to spend some time internally and start thinking about some of the concerns and some of the recommendations, and this

way we can be prepared, like we are today, to address some of those. So I just want to thank you again for the opportunity. I hope this was helpful for you all, having us come out here and talk about these things and address some of the concerns from the last meeting. It sounds like there's more work to do, and we're committed to that, we're committed to the relationship and following up, and all these things, and I think there's a lot that we can accomplish together, so I'm pretty excited about where we're going, and that's it for me. Thank you.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

I just wanted to, yeah, I think it means a lot. I think I shared this the last time, just having you come here and talk about our concerns with the local community, in front of the local community, giving them an opportunity to ask questions.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Just to wrap up, you know, today we heard about the project summary, the NEPA process timeline by June Galloway. We heard from Micah Kiesow. That was a watershed management.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

Rian Ream talked a little bit about -- well, quite a lot about -- implementation and sequencing, changes that they were doing to prescribed fire and its management. Ron Perry, thank you for the information on commercial wood products, covering fuelwood, latillas, vigas, and local sourcing and contracting.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

And Claudia Brookshire, who serves as a Public Affairs Officer and talked a lot about community, and engagement, and how the Forest Service would really like a lot more community involvement.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

I did mention the last time, we are just one of the small rural local communities affected by the project, and I'm wondering what the Forest Service is doing to reach out to the communities of, like Mesa Poleo, for example, Arroyo de Agua, Coyote, Youngsville, all of these other communities that will also be heavily impacted by the project. We're sort of [?] here, because we're a more organized team of individuals, but we'd be glad to entertain those communities in a forum.

Jeff Marszal

I really appreciate that, and that's something we talked about a lot. There's a lot of energy with your organization, for good reason, because we feel like we're developing a relationship, and there's a lot of communication going back and forth.

Jeff Marszal

But we have a long list, like you mentioned, the acequias, the other land grants, the communities of Coyote and Gallina, and the other ones that you mentioned. All of those are on our list. We're going to continue our roadshow and do the things that we said that we're going to do, and that's engage, collaborate, partnership, and listen.

Jeff Marszal

So we're committed to engaging with all those different communities that you identified. If you can help us, we're talking about partnership, it goes both ways. You can help us identify individuals and leaders within those communities that you think would be beneficial for us so we can get on this stuff. That would be greatly appreciated.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

I think we talked about that, and that's something I kind of messed up today, but really the language barrier and making sure that these forums are available in Spanish.
[Spanish]

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

So just so you know that a lot of your public base is Spanish speaking. And so if they're not participating, it may not be because they don't want to. It's because they don't understand you. So I think we're all ready to go home. But I'd really like to see more continued meetings, even if it's with a smaller team of us, and definitely something as far as a field trip in the future. So I think we're going to start slowly breaking more into the team effort.

Jeff Marszal

So for field trip planning, should we reach out to you specifically then?

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

I think that would be helpful.

Melissa-Roxanne Velasquez

This meeting is now adjourned.