

JULIA BROWNLEY
26TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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August 7, 2020

Mr. Kevin Elliott
Los Padres National Forest Supervisor
U.S. Forest Service
6750 Navigator Way, Ste 150
Goleta, CA 93117

Dear Mr. Elliott:

On behalf of my constituents in California's 26th Congressional District, I write to express my concerns with the Reyes Peak Forest Health and Fuels Reduction Project on Pine Mountain Ridge in the Los Padres National Forest.

As I understand, the U.S. Forest Service intends to use the categorical exclusion process under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA) to approve this project, which will exempt the project from the full environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Many of my constituents have expressed concerns to me about the use of such categorical exclusion, which limits opportunities for public review and input. As you know, the HFRA requires projects that use categorical exclusions to be developed using a collaborative process. However, I am told that many interested parties have not been invited to collaborate on the project. Further, I understand that one-third of the proposed project area is currently part of a roadless area, the Sespe-Frazier Inventoried Roadless Area, a violation of the Roadless Rule's prohibition on timber harvesting.

Finally, as I understand, the U.S. Forest Service's own assessment of potential and existing fuel breaks in the southern Los Padres National Forest ranks this project as 118 out of 163 in terms of priority. Given the project's low priority, it is unclear to me why this project has been selected to bypass complete environmental analysis.

For the reasons outlined above, I urge the U.S. Forest Service to either withdraw this project or to start the process anew by collaborating with key conservation interests and committing to the development of a more thorough Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

Thank you for considering my comments regarding this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julia Brownley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a checkmark at the end.

JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress