August 11, 2022

Chris Stubbs, Supervisor
Los Padres National Forest
U.S. Forest Service
1980 Old Mission Drive
Goleta, CA 93117

Dear Mr. Stubbs:

I am writing today to respectfully request that the Los Padres National Forest (LPNF) extend the comment period to 120 days for the Ecological Restoration Project, as well as undertake an Environmental Impact Statement related to the Project.

Currently, the LPNF is pursuing the use of an Environmental Assessment process for this Project, which will be evaluating 235,000 areas of LPNF. As you know, the LPNF is the third largest National Forest in California, encompassing almost two million acres. Its diversity ranges from sub-alpine forests to chaparral and from riparian areas to ocean beaches. With such diversity and immense terrain, an Environmental Impact Statement will provide a more complete analysis and give more opportunities for public comment. It will also provide for a deeper examination related to rare and endemic flora within inventoried roadless areas and potential wilderness areas.

Additionally, Forest Service NEPA regulations state that actions that normally require environmental impact statements include “Proposals that would substantially alter the undeveloped character of an inventoried roadless area or a potential wilderness area,” 36 CFR 220.5(a)(2). As you know, the House of Representatives has passed the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act (CCHPA). The Central Coast community has provided unshakable support for this legislation. Furthermore, I understand that these areas lack current surveys related to the biological resources within them. As such, I also respectively ask that you consider the proposed wilderness areas within CCHPA carefully as you move forward.
Lastly, I have been supportive of the Forest Service and other land managers to implement projects that make communities and infrastructure safer and landscapes more resilient to wildfire, but I also believe that a robust environmental analysis will safeguard the unique characteristics of the LPNF.

For these reasons, I request the LPNF conduct an Environmental Impact Statement for the Ecological Restoration Project with full and fair consideration, consistent with all relevant rules and regulations.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

SALUD CARBAJAL
Member of Congress