



File Code: 1950; 1560
Date: July 19, 2022

Dear Tribal Member:

The Los Padres National Forest (LPNF) is conducting an environmental analysis of the Ecological Restoration Project, which is being proposed on four of the five Ranger Districts of the LPNF. The purpose of this project is to restore fire-adapted ecosystems, reduce fuels, and reintroduce fire on the landscape by prescribed burning on approximately 235,495 acres of land administered by the LPNF, within Kern, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties. The project, as proposed, would enhance protection for wildland urban interface (WUI) communities and infrastructure, and improve fire and drought resilience of forested landscapes. Various tools would be utilized including but not limited to masticators, road-side mowers, chainsaws, weed whips, grazing animals, and prescribed fire. This letter is being sent to solicit comments regarding potential environmental and tribal concerns to inform the content of the Environmental Assessment (EA) being prepared to evaluate this proposal. Comments received will be used to further refine the proposed action and to identify potential issues to be addressed through the environmental analysis process.

More information on the Forest-wide project, including the purpose and need, proposed action, and maps are available on the project webpage: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=62369>. This web page will be updated as the analysis progresses, and more information is available.

Approximately 8,938 acres of the project area have been previously surveyed for the presence of archaeological and historical sites (cultural resources). Our records show 1,035 cultural resources and landscapes have been recorded within the project area. Cultural resources range from single pre-contact or contact-era bedrock mortars, hunting camps, rock shelters with pictographs or petroglyphs, and village sites to historic period trails, mines, recreational sites, and administrative sites that are over 45 years old.

The Forest is committed to our trust responsibility with tribes and is inviting you to consult regarding this matter. We want to ensure that tribes have the opportunity to determine if this proposed project impacts or has the potential to impact tribal resources of concern. I am seeking your input to determine if you have any knowledge of, or concerns with cultural and/or natural resources in the area of the proposed project. Under 36 CFR Part 800.4, we seek your assistance in identifying any issues related to the project's potential effects on Traditional Cultural Properties or cultural resources. We would appreciate hearing from you by August 28, 2022 so your comments can be considered in our development of the proposed action. Your comments and feedback are welcome at any time up through completion of the Environmental Assessment.

This solicitation for comment helps serve the purpose of "scoping" under the Council of Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. It is our intention to analyze the proposed action with an EA. Pursuant to 36 CFR 218.7(a)(2), this proposed



project implements the Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan and is subject to the predecisional objection process in §218 subparts A and B.

How to Comment

We welcome your comments and questions on the proposed LPNF Ecological Restoration Project. To result in the best outcome, please send your specific written comments electronically by August 28, 2022 using the online comment form on the project webpage at: <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public//CommentInput?Project=62369>.

The LPNF will be hosting two virtual meetings:

- August 8, 2022, 6:00 – 7:30 pm, Teams Live virtual meeting, <https://tinyurl.com/LPNF-ERP-Mgtn-1>
- August 10, 2022, 6:00 – 7:30 pm, Teams Live virtual meeting, <https://tinyurl.com/LPNF-ERP-Mgtn-2>

Information about the LPNF Ecological Restoration Project will be available at the virtual meetings. If you cannot make one of these meetings, we would also be happy to meet with you about this project at another time that is more convenient for you. Because Covid-19 is still a concern, we will be flexible about how you would like to meet with us.

Written comments may also be directed to Los Padres National Forest Supervisor's Office, Attention: Kyle Kinports, Forest Planner and Vegetation/Fuels Program Manager, 1980 Old Mission Drive, Solvang, CA 93463. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00am to 4:00pm, Tuesday through Friday, excluding holidays. Please state the project name, "LPNF Ecological Restoration Project" on the envelope and your letter when providing comments by mail, or in the subject line if sending by email.

Specific written comments as defined by §218.2 should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider. It is the responsibility of all individuals and organizations to ensure that their comments are received in a timely manner. While comments will be accepted any time during the process, to establish standing for objection eligibility, this designated opportunity is between July 29, 2022 to August 28, 2022.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for these proposed actions and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents.

A 30-day Notice and Comment period for public review of the EA will be provided at a future date (§218.24). An objection period, if required, will follow the regulations found in §218.7. For objection eligibility (§218.5), only those who have submitted timely, specific written comments during any designated opportunity for public comment may file an objection. Issues to be raised in objections must be based on previously submitted specific written comments regarding the

proposed project and attributed to the objector, unless the issue is based on new information that arose after a designated opportunity to comment (§218.8[c]).

For questions concerning this proposal, please contact Kyle Kinports at 805-961-5710. Thank you for your assistance in identifying whether or not this project will affect sites or places of importance to your Tribe.

Sincerely,

X

CHRISTOPHER STUBBS
Forest Supervisor