

(Submitted via webform.)

The following comments come from Wilderness Watch, a national wilderness conservation organization. Our focus is the protection and proper stewardship of all units of the National Wilderness Preservation System, including the 842,448 acres of designated Wilderness on the Sequoia and Sierra National Forests.

We also reference the email of November 13, 2022, from Amber Sprinkle, the Interdisciplinary Team Leader for this project, in which she confirmed that the Forest Service will accept comments on this proposal until the end of January, even though the Forest Supervisors denied our request for an extension in the comment deadline.

Wilderness Watch strongly requests that the Forest Service exclude designated Wildernesses from this project. There is no way that this kind of manipulation of supposedly “untrammeled” Wilderness can occur without violating the 1964 Wilderness Act. Indeed, it is precisely this kind of manipulation that the Wilderness Act seeks to prevent.

The maps in the scoping notice are inadequate to show which Wildernesses are affected, though the announcement claims that the entirety of both National Forests will be affected, including designated Wilderness. The scoping notice is also inadequate in describing what activities might be conducted in Wilderness. Will motor vehicles be permitted? Will chainsaws be allowed for cutting? Both activities are prohibited by the Wilderness Act.

Furthermore, the very act of starting human-ignited fire in designated Wilderness violates the Wilderness Act, even if no motor vehicles or chainsaws are used. Human-ignited fire is a manipulation of the Wilderness ecosystem, imposing human desires and desired conditions on the Wilderness.

Please exclude all designated Wildernesses from this project, and allow natural lightning-caused fires to play their role in the wilderness ecosystem instead.