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Text

NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA) Encino Vista Landscape Restoration Project USDA Forest Service Santa Fe National Forest Coyote Ranger District Rio Arriba County, New Mexico The Santa Fe National Forest (SFNF) is requesting comments on the proposed Encino Vista Landscape Restoration Project Environmental Assessment (Encino Vista or EVLRP), an approximately 130,305-acre vegetation management project located on the Coyote and Cuba Ranger Districts (RD), with most of the project occurring on the Coyote RD. The purpose of the draft EA is to provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the project or to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact. The goal of the project is to improve ecosystem and watershed resiliency while reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire events to the surrounding communities of Caones, Coyote, Gallina, and Youngsville in Rio Arriba County, New Mexico. Currently, frequent-fire forest types within the project area have departed from reference forest and fire return interval conditions which promote healthy, resilient forest. To accomplish this, the proposed action includes thinning (commercial & non-commercial), prescribed burning and road maintenance aimed at improving overall watershed health and resiliency. Specific project design criteria and best management practices would be implemented to minimize resource impacts. The Encino Vista Landscape is a priority landscape for the Santa Fe National Forest, NMED State Forestry Division and the Rio Chama Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP). One of the nationally identified Wildfire Crisis Strategy high- risk fire sheds (WCS) is included in the western portion of the project area. How to Comment and Timeframe The SFNF is informing you of a 30-day comment period, beginning on March 15, 2024, for the proposed project. **No additional comment periods will be provided.** The responsible official (decision-maker) for this project will be Mark Sando, Coyote District Ranger. To reduce paper use and increase efficiency, the Forest Service is emphasizing electronic correspondence. **Digital comments must be submitted through the project website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=54965>.** **Written comments can be submitted by mail or in-person:** Mark Sando, Coyote District Ranger, HC 78, Box 1, Coyote, NM 87012-0001 or to Mark Sando c/o the Santa Fe National Forest Supervisor's Office at 11 Forest Lane in Santa Fe, NM. Hand delivery is acceptable on weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to the Coyote Ranger District, 20 Private HC 78, Box 1, Coyote, NM or to the SFNF Supervisor's Office on weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. It is the responsibility of all individuals and organizations to ensure that their comments are received in a timely manner. It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of established comment periods. Only those who have submitted substantive formal comments will be eligible to file an objection. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to object must meet the information requirements. Names and contact information submitted with comments will become part of the public record and may be released under the Freedom of Information Act. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, staff will not be able to send further project information to anonymous commenters. Those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to file an objection under 36 CFR 218 for the project. Journal: March 14, 2024