

My name is Sam Hitt. I am the President of the Santa Fe Forest Coalition. We are an all volunteer group whose mission is to participate in management decisions by giving voice to local forests and wildlife.

NEPA has been America's environmental charter for nearly 50 years. Like the 400 years old Magna Carta, NEPA gives **ALL** citizens a place at the table—a right to be involved—when major decisions are made concerning our public lands. NEPA is clear on this point. To quote:

Federal agencies **shall to fullest extent possible** encourage and facilitate public involvement in decisions which affect the quality of the human environment.

Our birthright to be involved is unfortunately under assault. The public is barely notified when major operations are proposed affecting thousands of square miles of public lands. Decisions to clear forests in the name of fire safety are rushed to completion before a hard look can be given to the environmental consequences.

Some voices are listened to more than others. Peer review evidence supporting the views of some are ignored or dismissed out of hand. While the opinions of others — that advocate massive manipulation of forest ecosystems—have undue influence on management decisions. The result is outcomes we will likely to regret.

The Forest Service has a long history of ignoring ecological wisdom that runs contrary to the narrow view that forests can be managed like crops. In 1964—the year *Silent Spring* was published—the entire city of Santa Fe was sprayed with DDT in a futile attempt to suppress native forest insects. The Forest Service continued this ineffective program for another two decades—spraying over two million acres of Santa Fe and Carson national forests with a variety of pesticides.

Following WWII the Forest Service and the timber industry virtually eliminated old growth forests in the Southwest. Less than 3 percent of the once vast ponderosa pine forests remain today. Thousands of miles of logging roads still bleed sediment into mountain streams and dozens of species of wildlife have yet to recover.

Today NGOs with huge budgets and close corporate ties virtually co-manage the Santa Fe national forest. In their view, the American public—the deed holders of public lands—are mere customers not citizens with the rights and duties that come with ownership.

This body should demand that all voices be heard—that an Environmental Impact Statement be prepared that examines alternatives, including preserving forests in their natural condition, as well as document unavoidable adverse impacts, insisting that enforceable standards are in place to mitigate foreseeable harm.

Our obligation is to leave a livable planet for the next generation—and not to repeat the mistakes of the past—a past when the moderating voice of citizens enabled by NEPA was silenced and national forests were mismanagement and abused.

A non-binding resolution requesting that an EIS be prepared that engages the public and provides a full and fair discussion of significant environmental impacts is the least you do.

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