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September 23, 2014

Michael Dietl
U.S. Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region
1323 Club Drive
Vallejo, CA 94592

Re: Opposition to Sequoia National Forest Wilderness recommendations

Dear Mr. Dietl:

The Kern County Board of Supervisors opposes any Wilderness recommendations or Wilderness designations within Kern County.

The Wilderness designation would place more publicly owned land out of reach of much of the public and would leave only 25 percent of the Sequoia National Forest available for multiple recreational uses. Although the areas of public land being considered for recommendation as Wilderness are under the management of federal land management agencies, the County of Kern and its citizens are affected by restrictions placed on these areas. Wilderness designation or the recommendation for Wilderness is too restrictive in its permitted activities and management. No motorized or mechanical equipment, including trail bikes, mountain bikes, snowmobiles and other motor vehicles, would be permitted in these recommended or designated Wilderness areas, many of which already contain existing motorized roads and trails.

Many of these lands have been studied in the past and have been determined to be unsuitable for Wilderness recommendation. These lands do not fit the intent of the Wilderness Act of 1964 as having been "untouched by the hand of man." The lands contain motorized and mechanized vehicle roads and trails, mining operations, communication facilities, and structures.

Our Board has historically supported multiple-use management of public land. The Kern County Board of Trade has noted increased visitation of public lands in Kern County, not only by our own citizens, but also by those who live outside our area. The general public, including seniors, the disabled, and families with children who currently participate in such activities as camping, hunting and fishing, use motorized or mechanized means to travel to their destination. Recommending Wilderness would eliminate public access on a large number of the remaining multiple-use trails in Kern County, denying public lands access and negatively impacting tourism.

Since non-Wilderness lands are where the vast majority of the public recreate, additional Wilderness recommendation or designation would displace recreational activities not allowed in Wilderness onto fewer non-wilderness areas, resulting in greater crowding while concentrating environmental impacts in those areas.

Michael Dietl
U.S. Forest Service
Sequoia National Forest Wilderness Recommendations
September 23, 2014
Page 2

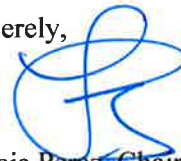
Trail operation and maintenance, which are already inadequate, would be further eroded by additional Wilderness recommendations or designations. Neither trail maintenance nor construction currently comes close to meeting existing needs on non-Wilderness lands. The recommendation or designation of the lands for Wilderness would devastate trail maintenance by eliminating the largest source of volunteerism, which is motorized and mechanized trail user organizations, as well as eliminating the largest source of non-agency trail maintenance funding, which comes from motorized user fees.

Given limited Forest Service and agency budgets, there is no way to replace this lost volunteerism and funding. Chainsaws and motorized tools can be used to efficiently maintain trails outside of Wilderness. However, maintaining trails in Wilderness, where only hand tools are normally allowed, is an extremely costly and nearly impossible task. Wilderness recommendation or designation would cause the trails in these areas to fall into disrepair, contributing further to the huge backlog of maintenance on Wilderness lands.

As evidenced by California wildfires, Wilderness designation places additional restrictions on wildland fire management. The recommendation of Wilderness would prohibit the removal of fuel buildup as well as require firefighting agencies to adhere to a more cumbersome system of fire incident management and on-the-ground tactics that place our firefighters at greater risk.

We therefore urge the Forest Service not to add substantial amounts of wilderness designated land to the inventory that already strains the agency's ability to effectively manage. Thank you for considering our views on this issue.

Sincerely,



Leticia Perez, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

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CF 1000.20

cc: Stewards of the Sequoias
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
The Honorable Barbara Boxer
David Wetmore, Carpi & Clay