



April 5, 2010

Corbin Newman, Regional Forester  
U.S. Forest Service-Southwestern Regional Office  
333 Broadway SE  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Re: Southwest Jemez Mountains Restoration Project

Dear Mr. Newman,

On behalf of WildEarth Guardians and our membership, I would like to convey our support for the Southwest Jemez Mountains Restoration Project being collaboratively planned by the Santa Fe National Forest and Valles Caldera Trust.

The Jemez River watershed is important to WildEarth Guardians and our members because of its ecological and recreational values. WildEarth Guardians is committed to the restoration of ecosystems in the SW Jemez Mountains as evidenced by our on-going work on both the National Forest and National Preserve. These ecosystems and the services they provide to New Mexicans and the nation as a whole are at risk more now than ever with climate uncertainty. In particular, water quality and quantity are in peril due to the combination of past-management and climate change.

We believe the risk of unnatural fire behavior can be carefully lessened in the forests of the Southwest Jemez Mountains and that water quality and quantity as well as wildlife habitat can be restored with guarded intervention. We expect the results of the Southwest Jemez Mountains Restoration Project to include the restoration of fire to its ecological role in the landscape, reduced spread of invasive species, improved habitat for vulnerable wildlife and plants as well as improved hydrological conditions resulting in overall superior watershed health.

WildEarth Guardians has participated in the collaborative process to develop the restoration strategy, and we plan to continue our engagement throughout project planning and implementation. WildEarth Guardians was a principle in the development of the New Mexico Forest Restoration Principles and is encouraged that these principles will be put into practice in the project.

In partnership with the Forest Service and Valles Caldera Trust, WildEarth Guardians plans to invest in implementation of riparian restoration treatments included in the 10-year strategy. These projects are currently funded through the state of New Mexico River Ecosystem Restoration Initiative and funding is being sought through the state's On-The-Ground Watershed

Improvement Projects (319) program. Much of this restoration work is accomplished with contributions of our organization's staff time and volunteers.

We encourage you to recommend this project for consideration at the national level, and to assist the many partners improve ecological health, ecosystem services and public enjoyment, in this unique and imperiled landscape.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bryan Bird', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Bryan Bird  
Wild Places Program Director