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KAIBAB PAIUTE

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Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians



November 11, 2004

Harv Forsgren
Southwestern Regional Forester
Attn: Goshawk SEIS Team
USDA Forest Service
333 Broadway Blvd., SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Dear Mr. Forsgren;

Thank you for your notification regarding the opportunity to comment on the Draft Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment of Forest Plans in Arizona and New Mexico. We appreciate your recognition of our tribe's sovereign status. The Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians consider issues relating to the forests of northern Arizona to have special significance as they are ancestral homelands.

Clearly, the management of these forests by your agency has been unsatisfactory in providing suitable conditions for the full complement of flora and fauna that were functioning as a system when delegated to your care roughly a hundred years ago. Cattle grazing, road building and industrial logging in these areas are not stresses which the system evolved to handle, nor did tribes employ them in pre-Columbian times. Today's mitigation measures are undertaken merely as lip service to species conservation, often failing to promote their recovery. Make no mistake: species extinction, whether local or *in toto*, is a grievous assault on our tribal culture.

We support scientific feasibility studies and alternatives for managing the forests in a manner that truly emulates their condition prior to western colonization. We are confident that this, alone, will resolve threats to the existence of these species.

KBP-1

Regards

LeAnn Skrzyński
Environmental Program Director

Tribal Affairs

HC 65 Box 2
Pipe Spring, Arizona 86022

Phone (928) 643-7245
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KBP-1

The Agency is confident that it has done a thorough and extensive review of the available science related to presettlement conditions, the northern goshawk species, and its habitat needs and habitat characteristics. The Agency has reviewed over 450 northern goshawk related materials that include peer-reviewed scientific papers, published journal articles, masters' theses, unpublished non-peer reviewed scientific papers, correspondence, and alternative views and scientific perspectives.

REC'D USDA
REGIONAL FORESTER'S OFFICE
SOUTHWESTERN REGION

OCT 06 2004



Mr. Harold C. Reynolds
181 College Ave.
Alamogordo, CA 92010

RECEIVED
OCT 03 2004
EAP/WSA STAFF

R.F. Forsgren:

Many thanks for sending me
a copy of the Draft Supp.
to the Final EIS for Amend.
of Forest Plans.

Since I am not an expert
about either the Spotted
Owl or the Goshawk, and
since I am not familiar
with problems on other
Forests, I will confine my
remarks to the Lincoln N.F.,
and more particularly to the
Sacramento R.D.

The First Priority on the
Sac. R.D. is to Thin the
Forest and Reduce the
Hazards of Fire, Insects
and Disease, As Soon

(2)

As Possible!

We have been suffering a Drought here for about 15 years.

We have already lost thousands of acres of Forest to Fire and Insects.

Also, we have lost Owl Habitat and Owls. Probably, we have lost Goshawk habitat and Goshawks.

Therefore, the Thinning Process, both Commercial and Pre-Commercial, Must Proceed as Fast as Possible!

This will take People and Money!

③

Therefore, You Must do all
that you can to Secure the
Needed Funds!

Constraints on the Thinning
Process to "Protect the Goshawk
Habitat" Must Not Slow the
Thinning Process!

If they do, we will Lose
Goshawk Habitat and Goshawks
to Fire, Insects and Disease!

HCR-1

The Bottom Line Here is:

Thin It or Lose It!

Help the Good Folks on the
Lincoln N.F.!

OVER! Harold Reynolds, BSF
Forester Emeritus
Sierra Club Member

P.S.

So far, the Lincoln People
have done an Excellent
Job of Thinning and
Hazard Reduction!

HCR

HCR-1

There is a fine line between protecting and damaging wildlife habitat. It is important and necessary to define what wildlife species and associated habitat are under discussion before one can determine whether management actions are protecting or damaging wildlife habitat. The generic term “wildlife habitat” fails to recognize that different wildlife species can have tremendously different habitat needs. The use of “indicator species” to represent specific habitat conditions is an approach used by the Forest Service that helps further define and categorize various wildlife habitats and whether proposed actions will help or damage key wildlife habitat components.

Increased occurrence of stand-replacing fire and insect epidemics in overly dense stands during times of drought appear to be the major environmental threats to those Southwestern forests that historically experienced frequent, low-intensity burns. Those species unable to utilize habitat following a stand-replacement fire are negatively impacted as the frequency and number of acres burned in this fashion increase. Current management philosophy recognizes that both mechanical thinning and the reintroduction of fire into fire-dependent ecosystems is key to the restoration of forests throughout the Southwest.

As one example of the Agency’s continuing management, the North Kaibab Ranger District has been implementing the MRNG for 8 years, harvesting an average of 4,372 MBF per year over an average of 2,380 acres per year under the management guidelines. During this time, territory occupancy has remained stable (Reynolds and Joy, 1998). The Agency is also thinning an average of less than 100 acres per year of wildland-urban interface on the district.

GOVERNOR
Bill Richardson



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
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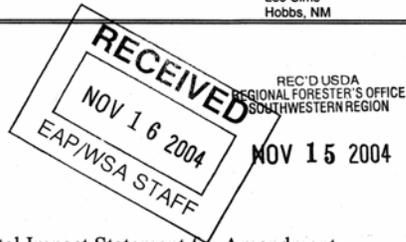
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DIRECTOR AND SECRETARY
TO THE COMMISSION
Bruce C. Thompson

Visit our website at www.wildlife.state.nm.us
For basic information or to order free publications: 1-800-862-9310.

November 12, 2004

Harv Forsgren
Southwestern Regional Forester
Attn: Goshawk SEIS Team
333 Broadway Blvd., SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102



Re: Draft Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment
of Forest Plans NMGF Doc. No. 9638

Dear Forester Forsgren:

The Department of Game and Fish (Department) has reviewed the Draft Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Amendment of Forest Plans (Supplement). The Supplement updates the FEIS, which amended the 11 Forest Plans in Region 3 for the Northern Goshawk, Mexican Spotted Owl, and old growth standards and guidelines in June 1996. The Supplement to the FEIS addresses an opinion filed November 18, 2003, by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which held that the FEIS failed to disclose responsible scientific opposition that was a part of the project record.

The Department acknowledges the selection and future implementation of Alternative G, which according to the Supplement, represents an ecosystem management approach. Page 9 states: "The approach used for managing goshawk habitat areas provides for many wildlife species, timber and forage. As a result, the standards and guidelines for ecosystem management in goshawk habitat areas are not focused on any single species or element."

Both the Department and the Arizona Game and Fish Department initially supported implementation of Alternative D, which required that the same percentage of old growth (VSS 6, 24"+dbh) and mature forest (VSS 5) be protected or created as Alternative G proposes, but with the objective of preserving these quantities of old growth and mature forest in large blocks across the landscape. Alternative G proposes to maintain these levels in smaller groups across the landscape. These two alternatives also differ in that Alternative D proposed 1) canopy closure restrictions not just at the smaller group/patch scales, as Alternative G does, but also at the site and larger scales; 2) retaining guidelines for hiding and thermal cover allocations for goshawk prey and other wildlife; and 3) allowing up to 20 percent of the landscape for even-aged management for sites up to 100 acres in size. Alternative G, however, will implement uneven-aged management and therefore will create a more complex forest structure at varying scales

Mr. Harv Forsgren

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November 12, 2004

across the landscape than created by even-aged management. As stated in Table 4, Alternative G calls for no hiding and thermal cover allocations, as it was not needed with the change from even-aged to uneven-aged management. Both Alternatives D and G call for the same target tree age of 250+ years for areas designated as post-fledging family areas.

The Department recognizes the inherent complexity of understanding required for managing forests to create or maintain a mosaic of habitat types, ages and structures at a landscape scale for conservation of a diverse wildlife fauna. We also recognize that uncertainty and disagreement still exist with regard to research findings on habitat needs for Northern Goshawks at multiple scales across the forest landscape. However, we do believe that ultimately, the move from even-aged forest management to uneven-aged management is a major step in the right direction and will better replicate the habitat conditions under which southwestern forest fauna evolved.

NMD
GF-1

We advise, however, that new initiatives and laws such as the Healthy Forest Initiative and the Healthy Forest Restoration Act should not trump or be allowed to substantially modify this management scenario that is designed to protect old-growth dependent species such as the Mexican Spotted Owl and Northern Goshawk, except in immediate and localized wildland/urban interface situations designed to protect human life and property.

NMD
GF-2

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this project. Should you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact Mark Watson, Habitat Specialist, of my staff at 476-8115, or <mwatson@state.nm.us>.

Sincerely,



Lisa Kirkpatrick, Chief
Conservation Services Division

LK/MLW

- CC: Susan MacMullin (Ecological Services Field Supervisor, USFWS)
- Tod Stevenson (Deputy Director, NMGF)
- Luke Shelby (Assistant Director, NMGF)
- Area Operations Chiefs (NMGF)
- Area Operations Habitat Specialists (NMGF)
- Sandy Williams (Non-game Ornithologist, NMGF)
- Mark Watson (Conservation Services Habitat Specialist, NMGF)

NMDGF-1

The 1996 amendment emphasizes the use of the uneven-aged silviculture system. However, the use of the even-aged silvicultural system is not entirely excluded. Any use of even-aged treatments must be justified and documented during the analysis process.

Optimum landscape diversity will not result from any single silvicultural system. Even-aged management emphasizes between-stand diversity. Uneven-aged management emphasizes within-stand diversity. Optimum landscape diversity will result from a mix of the two silvicultural systems.

Several major shifts in silviculture treatments in the Southwest have occurred since forest plans in the Southwest were amended and since the National Fire Plan was developed. The first adjustment has been a shift from even-aged management to uneven-aged management. Uneven-aged management features multistoried stand structures over single or two-storied stand structures and features within-stand diversity rather than between-stand diversity.

Both even-aged and uneven-aged silvicultural systems include regeneration treatments (regeneration cuts) in order to control age-class distributions, but the two systems vary as to when regeneration is established and how much regeneration is established. Both spatial and temporal variations in regeneration cuts result in the differing stand structures. Under the uneven-aged management system, continuous forest cover is favored, though stand density may be somewhat open to encourage shade-intolerant tree regeneration such as ponderosa pine. Under the even-aged management system, stand density can often be retained in a more dense condition, but at some point, even-aged stands must be substantially reduced in density to encourage shade-intolerant regeneration.

The second major shift that has occurred has been a shift from regeneration treatments (under both even-aged and uneven-aged management) to non-regeneration treatments—thinning. A thinning is not considered a regeneration treatment, and as such, does not fall under either the even-aged or uneven-aged silvicultural systems. The primary objective of thinning is species and stocking control to achieve management objectives. Thinning treatments (regeneration is not the objective) can occur under both silvicultural systems, therefore, thinning itself does not indicate a particular silvicultural management system. Thinning-from-below taken to its purist form, however, can produce stand structures that more closely resemble even-aged stand structures than multistoried stand structures.

With an increased emphasis on fuels reduction since the creation of the National Fire Plan (2000) and the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (2003) and emphasis on treating wildland-urban interface (WUI), many of the fuels reduction treatments fall under the category of thinning. Treatments that encourage regeneration tend to increase “ladder fuels” when tree seedlings becomes established and grow into saplings and pole-size understories. Although a failure to provide for an adequate amount of regeneration is counter productive in maintaining a balance of VSS stages in the long term, short-term emphasis for now appears to be on thinning with less emphasis on regeneration treatments.

Most of the present day thinning performed in the Southwest retains the larger, older trees and removes the smaller, younger trees. This form of thinning is often referred to as thinning-from-below. This form of thinning does not require that a diameter cap be applied for the prescription

to be effective, provided a description of what is to be retained is included in the detailed prescription. Thinning-from-below applied in its purist form can result in post-treatment stand structures that are more even-aged. Current emphasis by the region is to promote free thinning. This form of thinning still allows for the retention of the largest trees in the stand, however, more flexibility is allowed in the size of trees removed to better achieve multistoried stand structures and fuels objectives. Current forest plan direction emphasizes multistoried stand structures, not single-storied stand structures.

Reviews of recent fuels projects within the Region by the Forestry and Forest Health Group (FFH), where diameter limits have been applied (9", 12", or 16"), found that treatments often result in even-aged stand structures because of the complete removal of size classes below the established diameter limit. The heavy removal of the smaller size classes is often done to accomplish as much fuels reduction (ladder fuels) in the understory as possible, because canopy fuel loading is often left untouched due to the imposed diameter limits. Treatments that only reduce surface and ladder fuels may reduce stand-replacement fires from initiating onsite, but without adequate canopy fuel reduction, little can be done to reduce the threat of crown fire entering an area from offsite.

NMDGF-2

Project planning on vegetation management projects, including those authorized under the Healthy Forests Initiative which includes the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, must adhere to the standards and guidelines included in the 1996 "Amendment of Forest Plans in Arizona and New Mexico." Any deviation to these standards and guidelines by an individual project will be handled through the site-specific National Environmental Policy Act analysis and disclosure requirements.



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
P.O. Box 26567 (MC-9)
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87125-6567



November 10, 2004

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ER 04/744

Harv Forsgren, Regional Forester
c/o Goshawk Supplement Team
333 Broadway SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Dear Mr. Forsgren:

The U.S. Department of the Interior has reviewed the Draft Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Amendment of Forest Plans, Arizona and New Mexico. In this regard we have NO COMMENT.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this document.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Spencer
Regional Environmental Officer