



FINAL RECORD OF DECISION
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NATIONAL FORESTS
LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
LOS PADRES NATIONAL FOREST
KERN, LOS ANGELES, SAN LUIS OBISPO, SANTA BARBARA,
AND VENTURA COUNTIES, CALIFORNIA

DECISION

Based on my review of the issues, alternatives, and comments documented in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), I have selected the land use zone amendment described in Alternative 2a, and the monitoring strategy amendment described in Alternative B. Alternative 2a is a modification of the preferred alternative published in the Draft SEIS, and both Alternatives 2a and Alternative B are described in more detail in Chapter 2 of the Final SEIS. Alternative 2a will amend the Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan to change the zoning for approximately 293,000 acres across 16 Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) from their existing land use zones (primarily Back Country (BC) and Back Country Motorized Use Restricted (BCMUR)) to Back Country Non-Motorized (BCNM) as shown on the attached maps. There would be no change to the 5,300 acres currently zoned as Recommended Wilderness (RW). Alternative B amends the existing monitoring protocols by updating the monitoring questions and revising the process used to select projects for monitoring, replacing Appendix C of Part 3 of the Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan.

Changing the land use zones under Alternative 2a will also change the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) and Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIO) for the areas zoned as BCNM. As described in Chapter 4 of the Final SEIS, in Tables 89 and 96, the ROS will change to Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, and the SIO will change to High for areas zoned as BCNM. My decision also includes a forest specific standard (LPNF S2) that would allow motorized use of trails in BCNM if the trail construction is conditioned on permanent closure of the Toad Springs Trail.

This plan level decision does not change the status of any existing road or trail, does not authorize any specific project activities such as vegetation management, does not amend any permits or contracts or authorize any activity allowed by permit or contract, and does not modify any prohibitions, known as “Forest Orders”, issued under 36 CFR § 261 Subpart B. The decision is also consistent with the requirements of 36 CFR § 294 Subpart B, Protection of Inventoried Roadless Areas, also referred to as the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR).

BACKGROUND

Land Management Plans (LMPs or forest plans) are required by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976. They are an integrated document that describes the goals, objectives, and

management direction for each component of the National Forest System. The four southern California national forests (also referred to as the four forests) adopted revised Land Management Plans in April 2006. The LMPs consist of three parts:

Part 1 is the vision; this part of the plan looks to the future and describes a collective vision or desired condition for the national forests of southern California over time.

Part 2 is the forest-specific strategies; this part of the plan can be thought of as "the tools" that will be used to achieve the desired conditions in Part 1. This section includes descriptions of objectives, program emphasis and potential resource management strategies.

Part 3 includes the design criteria. The design criteria consist of pertinent environmental and public land management laws, standards that define the parameters for the activities the Forest Service anticipates, and other guidance (including management guides, manual and handbook direction or other appropriate reference material).

Parts 1 and 3 of the forest plans are common to all four southern California national forests. Part 2 is "customized" to accommodate the unique management requirements of each individual national forest.

The decision to adopt the forest plans was challenged in federal court by two parties in separate cases: one filed by the State of California (*California Resources Agency, et al vs. United States Department of Agriculture*), and the second by several environmental organizations (*Center for Biological Diversity, et al vs. United States Department of Agriculture*). The cases were consolidated, and on September 29, 2009, District Court Judge Marilyn Hall Patel entered judgment, granting in part and denying in part the parties' motions for summary judgment. The Court held that the Forest Service's Final Environmental Impact Statement for the revised forest plans violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the NFMA. On December 15, 2010, the parties finalized a settlement agreement determining the forms of relief. The settlement requires, in part, that:

The Forest Service will prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement ("SEIS") that re-examines forest plan management direction with regard to Inventoried Roadless Areas ("IRAs") within the Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres and San Bernardino National Forest (collectively, "four forests") and analyzes alternative monitoring protocols. The SEIS will include a description of the Forest Service's efforts to coordinate with the State Plaintiffs regarding the State's policies for management of roadless areas. At the request of the Environmental Plaintiffs and the People of the State of California, the Forest Service will consider, at a minimum, the areas listed in Attachment A, or portions thereof, for potential re-zoning to the Recommended Wilderness ("RW") or Back Country Non-Motorized ("BCNM") land use zones and the SEIS will include as a component of the proposed action, a proposal to rezone these areas, or portions thereof, to the RW or BCNM land use zones. Additional alternatives will also be considered as part of the NEPA process. The Forest Service will use best efforts to complete the SEIS and issue a Record of Decision within twenty-four months of the effective date of the Settlement Agreement.

This Final Supplemental EIS (Final SEIS) for the southern California national forests LMP amendment is prepared in response to the settlement agreement requirements, and supplements the record established for the LMP revision approved in 2006. The proposed amendment to the 2006 LMP is limited in scope and designed to address the terms of the settlement agreement.

DECISION RATIONALE

My decision to change the zoning for 293,000 acres is based on my desire to protect the undeveloped character of the areas while having the flexibility to accommodate a range of uses that are not permitted in designated wildernesses. This approach is consistent with the decisions made by the Regional Forester when the plans were revised in 2006. The zoning changes will result in the majority of the IRAs being managed in the BCNM zone. The intent in these areas is to retain much of the undeveloped character, maintain habitat characteristics for plants and animals, and to leave options (including wilderness) on the table for consideration in the future.

My decision maintains the Developed Area Interface (DAI) zoning around communities. This zoning was established in the 2006 plan to support more intensive vegetation treatments around communities to reduce the hazards associated with wildfire, and maintaining this zone contributes to community protection.

I recognize and acknowledge the support for additional wilderness designations on the Los Padres, both from the public and local elected officials, in order to provide the highest form of protection for undeveloped areas. My review of the updated IRA evaluations and the effects analysis did not lead me to conclude that the RW zoning proposed in Alternative 3 was needed to maintain the undeveloped character of the IRAs. The combination of the RACR requirements and the BCNM zoning will retain much of the undeveloped character and maintain habitat characteristics for plants and animals for these areas. With my decision, about 85 percent of the Los Padres will be managed for non-motorized public access with limited potential for further development. My review also did not indicate a need for additional recommended wilderness. All of the IRAs are located near existing Congressionally designated wilderness and 35,821 acres of wilderness already recommended during the plan revision in 2006. The Los Padres National Forest has a robust wilderness system with over 50% of the forest managed to protect wilderness values and characteristics.

I selected Alternative B as the amended monitoring strategy because it provides a framework for monitoring that will produce an efficient and effective monitoring strategy. Alternative B also updates the monitoring strategy to use indicators developed since the plan was revised in 2006. While trend monitoring for the LMP will occur every 5 years as described in Appendix 3 Table 4 of the FSEIS, implementation and inventory monitoring (Appendix 3 Table 5 of the FSEIS) and project level monitoring (Appendix 3 Table 6 of the FSEIS) will occur annually. Trend monitoring will use the results obtained from the annual implementation, inventory and project level monitoring. While Alternative C would provide more detailed information, it is not essential to meet plan monitoring requirements and comes at a cost that would impact other programs.

KEY ISSUES

The following section highlights how my decision addresses key issues. Refer to Chapter 2, Table 5 in the Final SEIS for a summary and comparison of the effects related to all the issues addressed in the analysis.

Roads and Motorized Trails

This amendment maintains the current zoning within 200 foot wide corridors (100 feet on either side of the road remains unchanged) for the Forest Service roads and motorized trails shown as open on the Motor Vehicle Use Maps. As described in Chapter 4 of the Final SEIS, there will be no change in public motorized access as a result of the amendment.

Road and Motorized Trail Opportunities

The RACR prohibits the construction of new roads in IRAs unless the proposed road meets one of the exceptions provided by the rule. Implementation of the RACR is described in more detail in Chapter 2 of the Final SEIS and the effects of the RACR on road and trail opportunities are described in Chapter 4. Road and motorized trail opportunities are also guided by travel management decisions. In addition to the requirements of the RACR and travel management, road construction is not suitable in areas zoned as BCNM.

Motorized trails are an important component of the recreation opportunities provided on the Los Padres National Forest, and new motorized trails are not prohibited by the RACR. Adjustments to the alternatives were made after scoping and in response to comment on the Draft SEIS to maintain motorized trail opportunities. Those include maintaining the current zoning adjacent to the Gold Hill road and the Quail Trail areas. As described on page 1 of the ROD, my decision also includes a forest specific standard (LPNF S2) that would allow motorized use of trails in BCNM if the trail construction is conditioned on permanent closure of the Toad Springs Trail. Based on the analysis in the Final SEIS, my decision will maintain opportunities for motorized trails.

Mountain Bike Use

My decision will not change the suitability of mountain bike use on the Los Padres National Forest. Mountain bike use is suitable in areas zoned as BCNM, but the areas zoned as RW will be managed to exclude mountain bike use.

Permitted facilities

My decision maintains the current zoning for the permitted facilities within the designated IRAs. Several minor corrections were made to Alternatives 2, 2a, and 3 in the Final SEIS to maintain or adjust zoning for facilities that were missed or incorrectly mapped in the Draft SEIS. The most notable change is the removal of a BCMUR corridor in the Black Mountain IRA to reflect the non-existence of an old telephone line that had previously served the Black Mountain communication site.

As stated earlier in this Record of Decision, plan decisions do not amend existing permits. Several of the utilities requested that the decision specify the types of access or maintenance activities allowed under their permits. As described in response to Concern # 73, a plan decision does not grant or change an authorization to occupy the national forest, and the scope of the authorized activities is determined by the permit. Plan decisions do not change any statutory rights or other entitlements such as water rights that may be associated with uses on the forest.

The plan zoning does influence screening of future uses, and proposals for new activities in the roadless areas must be consistent with both the RACR and the LMP. This would apply to any decisions to re-issue existing authorizations, which are treated as new decisions.

Oil and Gas Development

My decision does not change the status of oil and gas leasing on the Los Padres National Forest. Several IRAs in this analysis are included within High Oil and Gas Potential Areas (HOGPAs) as described in the Final SEIS in Chapter 3. The Oil and Gas Leasing decision made in 2005 defines the portions of the HOGPAs that are available for lease. The 2005 decision also requires a “No Surface Occupancy” stipulation be included in any leases issued for the areas within the IRAs. If an area was not included in the leasing analysis it is not available for lease.

Based on my review of the comments on the Draft SEIS, there is a widespread perception that BCNM zoning would result in oil and gas development and that RW zoning would prevent oil and gas development. This perception is based on the suitable uses tables adopted in the LMP, which allow oil and gas development “by exception” within the BCNM zones, but not in the RW zones (see Table 61 in the Final SEIS). These general suitability tables are superseded by the 2005 Oil and Gas leasing decision. As described in the Final SEIS in Chapter 4, for the portions of the IRAs that are in HOGPAs and available for leasing, there would be no surface occupancy under any LMP zoning. The Bureau of Land Management could issue leases for subsurface development of those areas under any LMP zoning, including RW. As of this final decision, the Bureau of Land Management has not issued any leases for the areas covered by the 2005 Oil and Gas leasing decision.

Executive Order 13443, Shooting Sports

Executive Order (EO) 13443 directs federal agencies to facilitate the expansion and enhancement of hunting opportunities, to consider the effect of their actions on trends in hunting participation, and to consider the economic and recreational value of hunting. Hunting is regulated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and is therefore beyond the scope of this decision. As described in Chapter 4 of the Final SEIS, motorized access for hunting will not change under my decision. Use of mechanized equipment in RW areas will not be allowed, however foot and equestrian access will be unchanged. The quality of the hunting may eventually become higher because of a potential decrease in relative crowding, harvest, and disturbance. The economic impacts of the amendment are minimal.

Public Safety

I considered the effect of the amendment on law enforcement, emergency response, and fire suppression. As described in Chapter 4, the additional BCNM zoning will not change the existing motorized access for law enforcement or emergency response. The opportunities to detect and prevent criminal activity will not change.

Fire suppression will continue to be conducted in a manner that uses the most effective approach to keep the fire within a defined perimeter, while using Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics in RW areas. My decision will not affect my ability to protect national forest resources or adjacent communities.

Fuels Management

Fuels management options on the Los Padres National Forest will remain the same. My decision maintains sufficient Developed Area Interface (DAI) zoning around communities to provide for the more intensive fuels treatments typically used for community defense zones. Fuels management options for the additional BCNM and other land use zones will not change.

Southern Steelhead

The endangered Southern California steelhead trout occurs in several of the IRAs on the Los Padres along with critical habitat for the species. Most of those areas are zoned as BCNM under the current plan, and my decision will maintain that zoning and rezone about 1.5 miles of critical habitat to BCNM. My decision should result in beneficial effects to the steelhead trout through reduction in disturbance from future projects. My decision may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect steelhead trout. My decision will not conflict with actions outlined in the Southern Steelhead Recovery Plan.

California Condor

California condors occur throughout the Los Padres National Forest, although only a small area of critical habitat occurs within the IRAs considered in this analysis. My decision to change the zoning for much of the area used by California condors to BCNM should result in beneficial effects to the birds through reduction in development and disturbance from future projects. My decision will not affect the implementation of the 1996 Condor Recovery Plan.

Although a BCNM zoning allows certain development by exception, each project proposed in an IRA has to be consistent with the RACR, which limits new road construction to specific exemptions. Renewable energy projects such as windmills require extensive road systems, and development of wind energy projects in IRAs is unlikely because of the restriction on new road construction. Each project also is evaluated for its impact under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which provides an additional measure of protection for the condor. The combination of the RACR, ESA, and LMP zoning would restrict future development which should result in a benefit to the condors.

Other Species

The species evaluation focused on potential impacts to species known to occur in the IRAs. Species that were not known to occur in the IRAs were not directly evaluated but would also be subject to the impacts experienced by the evaluated species. Impacts to other species not currently known to inhabit the IRAs, but that may have potential or suitable habitat in the IRAs, would be evaluated in detail at the project level as appropriate. The FSEIS and this ROD clearly articulate that LMPs, including this Amendment, are programmatic documents that do not authorize ground disturbing activities. Therefore, this decision does not have an immediate direct effect on wildlife or plants; direct effects are not realized until LMPs are implemented through project actions. Furthermore, all project-specific activities must adhere to the LMP standards that protect threatened, endangered, candidate, proposed and sensitive (TECPS) species and habitat.

Other Plans

My decision considered the relationship of the LMP to other plans, including federal species recovery plans, state resource plans such as the Wildlife Action Plan, and local plans such as the county general plans. Chapter 3 describes the range of plans considered, and Chapter 4 discusses the consistency analysis for each plan. The plan amendments are consistent with the relevant plans.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A notice of intent to prepare an EIS was published in the Federal Register on Friday, April 27, 2012 (77 FR 25128). A legal notice was published in the Santa Barbara News-Press on the same day, and direct notice was sent to over 2,500 stakeholders. In addition, the proposed action was listed in the Los Padres National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions and updated periodically during the environmental analysis. In addition to these notices, people were invited to review and comment on the proposed action through news releases and public meetings. The SEIS describes scoping efforts in Chapter 1, and agencies, organizations, and people who received copies of the documents in Chapter 5.

The planning team used the comments on the proposed action to identify the relevant issues used to determine the scope of the analysis. Issues were identified for natural resources, the social and economic environment, facilities and operations, commodity and commercial uses, lands (real estate) and wildfire and community protection. The analysis also considered the relationship to other agency plans, including endangered species recovery plans, state plans for water, wildlife, and forests, and county general plans. A full description of issues considered in the analysis appears in the Final SEIS in Table 2.

The planning team also identified issues that were outside the scope of the analysis, including travel management, IRA boundary issues, wild and scenic river suitability studies, and several others. A full description of the issues found to be outside the scope of the analysis appears in the Final SEIS in Table 3.

The Notice of Availability for the Draft SEIS was published in the Federal Register starting a 90 day review and comment period on Friday, February 15, 2013. Direct notice of the Draft SEIS was mailed to over 2,500 contacts and emailed to over 8,000 contacts. A legal notice was also published in the Santa Barbara News Press (and the newspapers of record for the Regional Forester and the three other forests) on February 20, 2013. The Forest Service held seven public meetings throughout the planning area between March 26 and April 10, 2013, including two meetings hosted by the Los Padres National Forest.

Over 10,000 emails, letters, and post cards were received during the comment period. Many of the emails and letters were “form letters”, and over 450 unique letters or emails were received. Because of the exceptionally voluminous response to the Draft SEIS, the Final SEIS Appendix 4 presents a summary of the substantive comments and the Forest Service response. Appendix 4 also includes copies of all letters received from elected officials or government agencies.

As described in the Final SEIS, the Forest Service response to comments included zoning corrections to account for approved uses, adding areas outside of the IRAs to provide for logical

management boundaries, and development of Alternative 2a to reflect new information. Several areas of the analysis were clarified.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered three other alternatives related to the land use zones, and two other alternatives for monitoring, which are discussed below. Alternative 3 is the environmentally preferred alternative for land use zones. There is no environmentally preferred alternative for monitoring because the monitoring strategy does not have environmental effects. A more detailed comparison of these alternatives can be found in the Final SEIS in Chapter 2.

Alternative 1 – Alternative 1 is the No Action alternative and is based on the current land use zones established by the revised LMP in 2006. Under Alternative 1 the IRAs are zoned in a combination of BC, BCMUR, and BCNM, with smaller areas of DIA and Critical Biological (CB).

Alternative 2 – Alternative 2 is the Proposed Action that was released for public comment in April 2012 and analyzed in the Draft SEIS in February 2013. Alternative 2 would change most of the BC and BCMUR to BCNM zoning. Alternatives 2 and 2a are the same for the Los Padres National Forest.

Alternative 3 – Alternative 3 is the Recommended Wilderness Emphasis alternative, and majority of the areas within the IRAs were allocated to RW. Alternative 3 used the same criteria as Alternative 2 and 2a to avoid conflicting uses with RW allocations, and included some additional areas adjacent to the Sespe-Frazier IRA as RW in response to comments on the Draft SEIS.

Alternative A – Alternative A is the No Action monitoring alternative, and is based on the existing LMP monitoring strategy as currently implemented by the forests.

Alternative C – Alternative C is the Extensive Monitoring alternative, and provides for more intensive inventories and surveys than the current monitoring plan or Alternative B. It is based in part on the concepts promoted by the conservation groups during scoping.

The Final SEIS also considered a number of alternatives but eliminated them from detailed study. Those alternatives include allocating the IRAs to less restrictive land use zones, establishing wider corridors for road and utilities, developing a new land use zone definition, modifying the land use zone definitions, adding additional IRAs to the analysis, and adopting a monitoring strategy based on extensive baseline studies. The Final SEIS Chapter 2 describes these alternatives in more detail and explains why they were not considered further in the analysis.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

National Forest Management Act

This decision is consistent with the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600 et seq.) (NFMA). Consistent with these requirements, the amendment was prepared by an interdisciplinary team with public involvement. The analysis was conducted in conjunction with the other southern California national forests, and the amendment maintains the integrated plan that was approved in 2006.

The Record of Decision for the revised LMP concluded that the management strategies adopted in the LMP are expected to provide the fish and wildlife habitat and other ecological conditions necessary to maintain well-distributed viable populations of vertebrate species in the planning areas, and maintain the diversity of plants and animals. My decision does not change the management strategies adopted in the 2006 revised LMP, and the implementation of Alternative 2a will provide improved habitat conditions consistent with this finding. My decision is consistent with the NFMA diversity and viability standards.

My decision is also consistent with the transition provisions of the new Forest Service planning rule found at 36 CFR § 219.17. The transition provisions state that plan amendments may be initiated under the provisions of the prior planning regulations (see Federal Register volume 74 number 242 page 67062, December 18, 2009 for more information on the prior planning rule). Under those transition provisions, this plan amendment was conducted under the 1982 planning rule.

Under the provisions of the 1982 planning rule, I have determined that this amendment is not significant. Policy direction in the Forest Service Manual section 1926.5 discusses the amendment process, and section 1926.52 identifies two criteria used to identify significant plan amendments.

Under Criteria 1, changes that would significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goods and services originally projected are considered significant.

The goods and services expected from plan implementation are described in the Prospectus section of Part 2 of the Los Padres LMP. Expected outcomes are described for six functional areas, including Management & Administration, Resource Management, Public Use & Enjoyment, Facility Operation and Maintenance, Commodity & Commercial Uses, and Fire & Aviation Management.

The expected outcomes are described in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Quantitative measures include things like treated acres, permits to standard, PAOT days, miles of roads and trails, approved mining operations, and grazing allotments.

The Final SEIS describes the effects of the proposed amendment on each of these areas. As described in the Final SEIS the relationship between expected goods and services will not change significantly under Alternative 2a. There will be some positive trends for certain resource areas such as watershed condition and habitat, and limited reductions are expected in the commodity resource areas. The limited effects are in large part due to the design of the preferred alternative, which maintains the existing zoning for any developed areas on the edges of the IRAs, while

proposing more restrictive land use zones for the undeveloped areas within the IRAs. The preferred alternative also maintains the current land use zones along all roads and motorized trails shown as open on the Motor Vehicle Use Maps.

Monitoring has little effect on the output of goods and services.

Under criteria 2, changes that may have an important effect on the entire land management plan or affect land and resources throughout a large portion of the planning area during the planning period are considered significant.

Alternative 2a is limited in scope. The land use zone amendment doesn't change the definitions of suitable uses, doesn't change or add any land use zone prescriptions, and doesn't change the forest-wide standards and guidelines. The Alternative B monitoring strategy makes only minor changes to the current monitoring strategy. Implementation of the overall plan will not change significantly with this amendment, supporting a conclusion that the amendment will not have an important effect on the entire land management plan.

As shown in Table 120 in the Final SEIS, the Alternative 2a planning area examined 24 percent of the Los Padres National Forest (which is the planning area at the forest plan level).

Alternative 2a will amend the land use zones for 17 percent of the Los Padres National Forest. When aggregated at the forest level, the changes in land use zones under Alternative 2a do not affect a large portion of the forest.

In summary, the proposed amendment of the land use zones and monitoring strategy will not change the expected goods and services, and will not be a significant plan amendment. The proposed amendment does not have an important effect on the entire land management plan, nor does it impact a large part of the planning area addressed by the forest-wide land management plan.

Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act

As required by NFMA, the amended plan must be consistent with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. 528–531) (MUSYA). Under the MUSYA, the Forest Service manages the National Forest System to sustain the multiple use of its renewable resources in perpetuity while maintaining the long-term health and productivity of the land. Resources are managed through a combination of approaches and concepts for the benefit of human communities and natural resources. My decision benefits human communities by maintaining appropriate zoning around both motorized access routes and urban infrastructure such as powerlines, communication sites, and utility corridors. The amendment also benefits natural resources by increasing the area of BCNM zoning for the forest. The BCNM land use zone restricts development and should help improve and restore the overall resource environment.

The existing RW zoning is consistent with the MUSYA. As described in the Final SEIS Appendix 4 response to comments (Concern # 19) Section 2 of the MUSYA provided that the establishment and maintenance of areas of wilderness are consistent with the management of the national forests for multiple uses.

Endangered Species Act

Under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, a federal agency that authorizes, funds, or carries out a project that “may affect, but not likely to adversely affect” a listed species or its critical habitat may informally consult with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries (NOAA Fisheries) and seek concurrence with that finding. The Forest Service submitted Biological Assessments (BAs) for the species within each agencies jurisdiction on August 22, 2013. The BAs are available in the project record. The findings are summarized in Chapter 4 of the Final SEIS and range from “no effect”, to “may affect, but not likely to adversely affect – possible beneficial effects”. The FWS concurred with these findings on November 14, 2013 and NOAA Fisheries concurred with these finding on December 2, 2014.

Clean Water Act

Implementation of Alternative 2a is expected to improve watershed condition and overall water quality by managing the IRAs under more restrictive land use zones, allowing those watersheds with greater disturbance levels an opportunity to recover over time. The amendment does not change any of the existing LMP standards that are designed to protect water quality, and the Forest Service policy to implement Best Management Practices for water quality protection is also not affected by this decision.

Clean Air Act

Air quality impacts from the amended plan are not expected to change from the current condition. Air quality impacts are evaluated at the project level and projects are designed to manage air quality to meet the required standards.

National Historic Preservation Act

In 2006, the four southern Forests entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the California State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the Southern California Forest Plan Revision, in order to account for anticipated effects to historic properties under the plan, pursuant to the fulfillment of the Section 106 process. That MOA dictates that the LMP design criteria, standards, strategies, and tactics govern the undertaking and all of its parts for the life of the Forest Plan until the MOA is either superseded or is terminated by its signatories.

The current amendment process is a supplement to that 2006 LMP process, and the Design Criteria, Standards, Strategies, and Tactics defined in the Plans remain unchanged. This process is limited in scope and does not affect the broad range of suitable uses within Land Use Zones identified in the former consultation; rather, it re-allocates those activities within the existing scope of the former undertaking.

As the analyzed alternatives in the current process collectively consist of a land-use planning effort, and do not authorize any specific undertaking, there is no material change to the 2006 process in a way that creates further potential to affect historic properties. As such, per 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1), there are no new obligations under Section 106 outside those already governed by the current MOA.

Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898 “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Population” requires that federal agencies make achieving environmental justice part of their mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. As described in the Final SEIS Chapter 4, my decision will not disproportionately impact minority or disadvantaged groups.

IMPLEMENTATION

The new zoning will apply to all project decisions made on or after the effective date of this decision. The new zoning does not apply to any projects that have had decisions made prior to the effective date of this decision. Projects currently under contract, permit, or other authorizing instrument are not changed by the decision; however, projects may be modified to adopt all or part of this direction where Forest Service managers deem appropriate. Re-issuance of existing authorizations will be treated as new decisions, which must be consistent with the new zoning adopted in this amendment.

The decision to amend the land use zone changes the strategic framework within which project-level decisions are designed and implemented. As noted above, all projects for which a decision has not been made prior to the effective date of this decision must be consistent with the suitable uses associated with the land use zone in the area where the project is proposed. The amended forest plan does not provide final authorization for any activity, nor does it compel that any contracts or permits be advertised or awarded.

OBJECTION PROCESS

This plan amendment was subject to the pre-decisional objection process described in 36 CFR 219, Subpart B.

Objections Filed

Objections were filed by the California Chaparral Institute, the California Native Plant Society, the California Off Road Vehicle Association, the California Wilderness Coalition, the Center for Biological Diversity, the Central Coast Motorcycle Association, Los Padres Forest Watch, Keep Sespe Wild, the Western Watersheds Project, and the Wilderness Society. A resolution meeting was convened by the Reviewing Officer with objectors on July 17, 2014. Concerns discussed during this meeting included: those related to the requested changes identified below; the suggested designation of the Antimony IRA as RW; concerns regarding cumulative effect of RW designation or lack of RW designation on wildlife species; and larger forest management scale effects on wildlife. The objectors asked to change the amendment in the following ways:

- 1) Reconsider the California Chaparral Institute’s recommendation to develop a baseline for the remaining old-growth stands of chaparral that includes historical analysis (California Chaparral Institute (CCI))

- 2) Use best available science, including the work of Dr. Jack Cohen, to design fuels treatments near communities, in order to promote health of the chaparral community and provide cost-effective structure protection (CCI).
- 3) Consider revising the proposed decision to include more frequent monitoring and to adopt additional science-based monitoring protocols that will provide adequate information to managers regarding key resources in order to ensure resources are protected and adaptive management is utilized where needed (LPFW et al.).
- 4) Revise the FSEIS to incorporate the information outlined in comment letters from the objector and USFWS regarding California condors (Los Padres Forest Watch (LPFW), Center for Biological Diversity, The Wilderness Society, Western Watersheds Project, California Native Plant Society, California Chaparral Institute, California Wilderness Coalition, Keep Sespe Wild, et. al., Jeff Kuyper and Ileene Anderson).
- 5) Adopt a Recommended Wilderness designation for certain IRAs in the final ROD to ensure the fullest protections for California condors and all special-status species, with particular emphasis on those IRAs identified by the NOAA Fisheries for protection of steelhead critical habitat (LPFW et al.).
- 6) Revise the FSEIS to incorporate information and data on special-status species that may occur in IRAs based on surveys and/or the presence of suitable habitat (LPFW et al.).
- 7) Revise the FSEIS to evaluate all direct and indirect impacts to critical habitat, both inside and adjacent to IRAs (LPFW et al.).
- 8) Analyze an alternative that includes in the range of 75% or approximately 150,000 acres of BCNM for the Los Padres. Retain BC zoning in locations for key connecting routes to provide continuity of the transportation system or opportunities for rerouting problem sections of road and trail (CCMA & CORVA).
- 9) Establish a minimum 300 ft. buffer for all system roads and trails to allow for trail reroutes and/or trail relocation in the future should this become necessary to maintain the routes of travel (CCMA & CORVA).
- 10) Revise the IRA Analysis for the Antimony IRA (and six other IRAs: Cuyama, Diablo, Fox Mountain, Juncal, Sawmill-Badlands and White Ledge). In the alternative, the USFS may wish to place a Recommended Wilderness land use zoning classification across much of this area, with certain minor adjustments as necessary (LPFW et al.).
- 11) Recommend that the IRA Analysis contain a scoring system so that the public can gain a better understanding of how the wilderness capability, suitability, and need criteria are weighed to guide the agency's decision on whether to recommend an area for wilderness protection (LPFW et al.).

Response to the Objections

In regard to the first objection, the Reviewing Officer found that the Los Padres National Forest (LPNF) appropriately applied the 1982 Planning rule requirements to "obtain and keep current inventory data appropriate for planning and managing the resources." Baseline/inventory chaparral data exists for the LPNF and it can be found in the 2006 SoCal LMP analysis. The LPNF has a clear, well-articulated strategy for the development of monitoring questions related to chaparral based on National Strategic Plan desired conditions and goals and objectives that will serve to inform an adaptive management process related to forest planning. No planning requirement exists for the development of a chaparral historical analysis.

In regard to the second objection, the Reviewing Officer found that the Forest's response to the objector's comment that the use of research to design fuels management treatments is best considered at the project level is correct. As stated in the Response to Comments, the issue related to use of best available science in project design is beyond the scope of this analysis, which is to amend LMP land use zone allocations for select IRAs and to amend LMP monitoring and evaluation protocols in response to the terms of the Settlement Agreement between the Forest Service, State of California, and other settlement parties.

The Reviewing Officer stated it would be appropriate to consider the research suggested by the objector in designing site-specific projects. It is important to consider recent and emerging science on chaparral ecology and structure protection when choosing the best management strategies for these plant communities and the adjacent urban areas. The Forest Service has not rejected the objector's suggestion to use best available science, but rather has stated that the science suggested by the objector is more appropriately applied at the project level than at the Land Management Plan level.

In regard to the third objection, the Reviewing Officer found that the LPNF appropriately applied the 1982 Planning Rule monitoring and evaluation requirements for "periodic determination and evaluation of the effects of management practices..." (36 CFR 219.11 (d)); a quantitative estimate of performance; (36 CFR 219.12 (k)(1)); "documentation of the measured prescriptions and effects..." (36 CFR 219.12 (k)(2)); and "a description of ...the actions, effects, or resources to be measured, and the frequency of measurements" (36 CFR 219.12 (k)(4)(i)). Tables in Appendix 3 of the FSEIS clearly display this required information.

No particular periodicity of evaluation is required and the Forest used their discretion to determine that 5 years was an appropriate and cost effective reporting interval for trend analysis, supported by annual accomplishment and project level monitoring. This interval is the same interval as exists in the current LMP. However, the Reviewing Officer did direct that a statement be added to the ROD clarifying that accomplishment monitoring and project level monitoring do occur annually.

In the FSEIS, the LPNF considered three monitoring alternatives including alternative C which provides for more intensive inventories and surveys than the current monitoring plan (Alternative A) or Alternative B. With the three alternatives, the LPNF considered a full range of alternatives. Including additional monitoring as suggested by the objectors in Alternative B would have created a less distinct range of alternatives.

Objections four through seven contain related concerns and are addressed together. The Reviewing Officer found that the analysis in the project record supporting the FSEIS and Biological Assessments (BA) was adequate to evaluate the impacts to special-status species (including the California condor) and critical habitat. The analysis determined that special status species would experience beneficial impacts by the shifting of Land Use Zones (LUZs) to more restrictive types of uses (from BCMUR to BCNM). Species that were not the focus of the evaluation (because they were not known to occur in the IRAs) would also experience these beneficial impacts. Impacts to the species not known to occur in the IRA at this time would be evaluated in detail for any future proposed projects or actions.

The Reviewing Officer also found that the FSEIS clearly articulates that LMPs, including the Amendment, are programmatic documents that do not authorize ground disturbing activities. Therefore, the decisions do not have an immediate direct effect on wildlife or plants; direct effects are not realized until LMPs are implemented through project actions. Furthermore, all project-specific activities must adhere to the LMP standards that protect threatened, endangered, candidate, proposed and sensitive (TECPS) species and habitat.

It is important to note that the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued Biological Opinions (BOs) and Incidental Take Statements for the revised LMPs on September 30, 2013 and August 2, 2013, respectively. Both BOs concluded that the proposed action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a federally protected species or result in destruction or adverse modification to designated critical habitat for any species. The USFWS and NMFS issued concurrence letters for the plan amendment and concurred with the Forest Service that the proposed new land use zoning is not likely to adversely affect federally protected species (including the California condor) or federally designated critical habitats (USFWS November 14, 2013; NMFS December 2, 2013).

With reference to the specific assertion by an objector that the Forest Service failed to evaluate impacts of the potential activities or uses on the California condor, the Reviewing Officer found that the FSEIS and BA discuss the potential types of effects that may occur under the alternatives and analyze how the proposed change in LUZs may influence future trends in activities. The ROD on page 6 in the discussion of effects to the California Condor clearly states that the combination of RACR and LMP zoning, in addition to project-level NEPA and endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance, would restrict future development (especially from projects considered permissible “by exception” in IRAs) which should result in a benefit to condors.

An objector asserted that the Forest Service failed to evaluate potential impacts to federally designated critical habitat outside of the IRAs that would be subject to LUZ changes. The plan amendment does not change land use zoning for federally designated critical habitat outside of the evaluated IRAs. Furthermore, under Alternative 2a, all designated critical habitat on the LPNF that overlaps the evaluated IRAs would change to land use zones that are more restrictive than current designations (FSEIS, pp. 154-155). Therefore, effects are expected to be largely beneficial.

This potential for a beneficial effect for federally designated critical habitat is also true for special-status species, including the California condor. Under Alternative 2a, all affected acres in the IRAs on the LPNF (not just acres of critical habitat) would change to LUZs that are more restrictive than those under current conditions. Therefore, effects are expected to be largely beneficial and if additional species were to occur in the IRAs that weren’t formally evaluated in the FSEIS, the Forest Service states that these species would also be “subject to the same beneficial effects.”

The Reviewing Officer directed that the ROD be modified to clarify that the evaluation of potential impacts focused on species with known occurrences in the IRAs because of the programmatic nature of the amendment, and that the plan amendment does not authorize ground disturbing (project) activities. An evaluation of the impacts to all potential habitat and species would be conducted during project development based on current data for species occurrences and protection status.

In regard to the eighth objection, the Reviewing Officer found that based on the requirements in the Settlement Agreement, the Forest Service correctly developed alternatives to address IRA land use zoning. The current zoning constituted the No Action alternative (Alternative 1). Alternative 2 emphasized rezoning to BCNM. Alternative 3 emphasized rezoning to RW. A fourth alternative including zoning drawn from Alternatives 3 and 2 was developed in response to comments on the Draft SEIS (Alternative 2a). The Reviewing Officer found that this range of alternatives included many land use zone possibilities and all were analyzed in detail in the FSEIS. Since all the zoning in the No Action Alternative was analyzed, the specific option requested by the Objector was included in the analysis, although not separately.

In regard to the ninth objection, the Reviewing Officer found the decision would retain the current Developed Area Interface (DAI) zones and maintains current zoning for roads and motorized trails through designation of a 200 foot buffer on either side of these routes (LPNF ROD, pg. 3). Thus, current motorized recreation opportunities would be maintained by the decision.

The Reviewing Officer found that the FSEIS and ROD specifically considered motorized trails. Adjustments to the alternatives were made after scoping and in response to comments on the Draft SEIS to maintain motorized trail opportunities, including retention of current zoning adjacent to the Gold Hill road and the Quail Trail areas. In addition, a forest specific standard (LPNF S2) was included in the ROD that would allow motorized use of trails in BCNM if the trail construction is conditioned on permanent closure of the Toad Springs Trail.

Alternatives 2, 2a, and 3 included corridors that varied in width in areas with known problems. Increasing the corridor width for all roads for the purpose of a possible reroute in the future would unnecessarily decrease the acreage of BCNM and RW land allocations (FSEIS, pg. 22). The 200' corridor was selected to allow for flexibility of road management and maintenance and in some areas wider corridors were retained to address route problems.

The Reviewing Officer noted that roads shown on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) were retained with 200' corridors (LPNF ROD, pg. 3). The roads and trails that are shown in Appendix 1G of the FSEIS are currently part of the National Forest Transportation System and buffers are established along the existing managed route system. While reroutes may be needed, it is not prudent to assume that a reroute would occur or the location of the reroute known until NEPA analysis has been completed and a decision made. Project specific analysis would include any required plan amendments to adjust zone boundaries, MVUM updates, Travel Analysis, and resource analysis as required by NEPA. As noted in the response to comment #77, (FSEIS, Appendix 4, comment #77, pg. 84-88) "The best approach in our view is to work through any site specific issues, relocation proposals, or other new opportunities through the normal project level planning and analysis process. Any project would need to be consistent with the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR), which does allow relocation of roads for resource protection under conditions outlined in the RACR (see 36 CFR 294.12)."

With regard to objection #10, the Reviewing Officer found the LPNF appropriately applied FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70, Wilderness Evaluation. Areas were evaluated for potential recommendation as wilderness by completing assessments of wilderness "capability", "availability" and "need" for each roadless area. The evaluation in the FSEIS Appendix 2 adequately describes the capability, availability and need for the various IRAs as RW. An

objector states that LPNF used ineligible criteria, but the Reviewing Officer found that the criteria used are identified in the FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70 and displayed in Appendix 2 of the FSEIS.

An objection was raised specific to the Antimony IRA. The Reviewing Officer noted that there appears to be some inconsistencies needing clarification in the ROD. Specifically, the evaluation in Appendix 2 of the FSEIS seems to point out some moderate to high wilderness values, but the decision rationale in Appendix A of the ROD do not thoroughly explain why. Despite these moderate to high valued wilderness characteristics, the area was not recommended as wilderness. The Reviewing Officer directed that a clearer connection between the evaluation in Appendix 2 of the FSEIS and the rationale in Appendix A of the ROD should be made, including any limiting factors that would preclude the various IRAs from being recommended as wilderness.

With regard to objection #11, the Reviewing Officer noted that recommending wilderness is a process of weighing numerous characteristics against each other. One resource or need does not automatically outweigh another resource or need.

Completion of Instructions

The Reviewing Officer directed that a clarification be added to the ROD that the LPNF collects monitoring data every year, but that five year intervals are used to evaluate trends. This clarification was added to the Decision Rationale on page 3.

The Reviewing Officer directed that the rationale in Appendix A of the ROD designating or not designating IRAs as RW (particularly the Antimony, Cuyama, Diablo, Fox Mountain, Juncal, Sawmill-Badlands, and White Lodge IRAs) be reviewed and updated to provide clarification that supports and clearly connects to the information provided in the IRA evaluation in Appendix 2 of the FSEIS. The Reviewing Officer also directed that I include how any higher value factors influenced the final decision. Appendix A of the ROD was edited to provide clarification and a more clear connection to the information in Appendix 2 of the FSEIS.

Add a clarification to the ROD to clearly explain that the evaluation of potential impacts focused on species with known occurrences in the IRAs because of the programmatic nature of the amendment. Clarify that the plan amendment does not authorize ground disturbing (project) activities and that an evaluation of the impacts to all potential habitat and species would be conducted during project development based on current data for species occurrences and protection status. A section, Other Species, was added on page 6 of the ROD to provide the required information.

Correct the date for the Condor Recovery Plan to “1996” to reflect the most recent year the recovery plan was published. This correction was made on page 6, paragraph 1 of the California Condor section of the ROD, replacing “1974” with “1996”.

With these corrections to the ROD, my decision is consistent with the direction provided by the Reviewing Officer in response to the objections



TIMING OF THE DECISION

This decision is effective on the date of my signature.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Kyle Kinports at kkinports@fs.fed.us or 805-961-5710.

ROBERT BAIRD
Forest Supervisor
Los Padres National Forest

10/30/14
Date

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APPENDIX A

Sixteen Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) within the Los Padres National Forest were evaluated for their capability, availability and need as Recommended Wilderness (RW) land use zones. It is my decision to classify an additional 293,282 acres as Back Country Non-Motorized (BCNM) land use zone (for a total of 379,803 acres) in the selected Alternative 2a. My decision will also maintain the existing 5,306 acres already classified as RW. This combination of Forest land use zones will maintain the undeveloped character of the areas while ensuring preservation of the unique values and unimpaired conditions associated with RW.

Antimony (40,848 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from Back Country Motorized Use Restricted (BCMUR) to BCNM on 35,832 acres (for a total of 35,832 acres) in the Antimony IRA.

Rationale – The Antimony IRA has some scenic attractiveness and is relatively natural in appearance with a healthy plant community. California condors use the area and a portion of Antimony is included in the San Emigdio Mountains Globally Important Bird Area as recognized by the National Audubon Society. There are limited opportunities for wilderness challenge as the natural integrity and opportunity for solitude has been compromised by numerous Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) trails and mining. The linear shape of this unit (24 miles long by 3 miles wide), which is adjacent to major roadways and has multiple roads and motorized trails, indicates that wilderness management could be difficult. There are six primitive campgrounds and three active grazing allotments within this IRA along with a reforestation unit and a number of old roads from previous mining and timber harvesting operations. It is adjacent to the privately managed Wind Wolves Reserve to the north. Adjacent to the south and eastern boundary are the Pine Mountain Club, Cuddy Valley, Lake of the Woods, Frazier Park, and Lebec communities.

More than 500,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness are within 20 miles of this IRA. Much of the Mt. Pinos area non-wilderness land encompasses similar landscapes. While I recognize that the Antimony IRA has some unique and valuable characteristics, it also has some challenges associated with the existing roads, uses, and configuration. Furthermore, recommending wilderness adjacent to the communities and within wildland urban interface could limit the possibilities for vegetation management activities and the establishment and management of fuel breaks for community protection. It is my decision that changing the zoning to the BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Antimony IRA while maintaining the character of the land. With large areas already designated as wilderness nearby, the Antimony IRA is not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system.

Black Mountain (16,814 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from Back Country (BC) and BCMUR to BCNM on 14,267 acres (for a total of 15,423 acres) in the Black Mountain IRA.

Rationale – The Black Mountain IRA has an appearance that is relatively intact and natural with few distinctive features. California condors use the area. The Black Mountain Communication Site lies in the middle of the IRA with a PG&E powerline running to it. There is one active grazing allotment. The sights and sounds of OHV activity within and adjacent to the Black Mountain IRA influence the ability of the unit to provide solitude, the feel of remoteness and the lack of human influences. This area has an extensive wildfire history, and contains old dozer lines from fire management operations. The potential for trespass from private properties on the north and west may be high, and there are recently active gold and uranium claims within the IRA. In summary, the IRA has low wilderness values and characteristics with uses that cannot be effectively managed as wilderness. It is also not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with approximately 250,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness within 25 miles of this IRA. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Black Mountain IRA.

Cuyama (19,570 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC and BCMUR to BCNM on 19,429 acres (for a total of 19,477 acres) in the Cuyama IRA.

Rationale – The Cuyama IRA has a natural-appearing landscape that serves as a scenic backdrop for the State Highway 166 corridor and the small communities of the Cuyama Valley. California condors use the area. This IRA provides a low sense of solitude, adventure, and self-reliance due to the proximity of State Highway 33 and the agricultural development in the Upper Cuyama Valley. The area could be difficult to manage as wilderness due to the large amount of interface with private land and the general inaccessibility of that interface to monitor for trespass activities. This area also has a complex fire regime that makes access for fire suppression activities, fire prevention and maintenance of fuel breaks an important resource protection tool. Fuel break maintenance is especially important in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) threat zone and alongside roaded fuel breaks such as Sierra Madre fuel break. There are three active grazing allotments. The area is available for oil and gas leasing and is identified as possessing high oil and gas potential. In summary, the IRA has low wilderness values and characteristics with uses that cannot be effectively managed as wilderness. It is also not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with more than 500,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness within 20 miles of this IRA. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Cuyama IRA.

Diablo (19,597 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC and BCMUR to BCNM on 19,148 acres (for a total of 19,148 acres) in the Diablo IRA.

Rationale – The landscape of the Diablo IRA lacks a variety of landforms, vegetation or water that would make it distinctive. The unit is natural appearing and free of any noticeable disturbances. The Diablo IRA is a remote location with opportunities to experience adventure, self-reliance and solitude. It is almost completely bordered by administrative access roads primarily utilized for resource and fire management. The Potrero Seco Road borders the area to the east and is managed for motorized public access by permit. There is the potential for vehicle trespass from this road. Maintaining wilderness character could be difficult adjacent to the heavily used Agua Caliente Hot Springs, Agua Caliente Road and Pendola area. A developed picnic area and two campgrounds lie within the unit as do several miles of Forest system road. The Diablo IRA has low to moderate wilderness values, and characteristics with uses and boundary conditions that could make effective management as wilderness difficult. It is not also needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with more than 330,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated and recommended wilderness within 20 miles of this IRA. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Diablo IRA.

Dry Lakes (17,043 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC to BCNM on 1,137 acres (for a total of 16,185 acres) in the Dry Lakes IRA.

Rationale – The natural appearance and integrity of the Dry Lakes IRA is mostly intact and there are also vistas of nearby mountains and the Channel Islands. Opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation exist. The area contains the 400 acre Dry Lakes Ridge Botanical Area that preserves remnant stands of ponderosa pine. The Ortega OHV trail bisects the lower one third of the unit, and mechanized equipment is utilized to keep the route adequately maintained for public use and to prevent resource damage. There is a special use authorization for a buried gas pipeline and associated road providing heavy equipment access to complete maintenance. There is an established history of periodic large wildfires, and fire management operations have utilized dozer and helicopter equipment within the unit. Much of the IRA has a fire frequency in excess of the natural fire regime diminishing the natural ecosystem. In summary, the Dry Lakes IRA has low wilderness values and characteristics with uses that cannot be effectively managed as wilderness. It is also not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with almost 550,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness within 20 miles of this IRA. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Dry Lakes IRA.

Fox Mountain (52,069 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC and BCMUR to BCNM on 48,300 acres (for a total of 48,300 acres) in the Fox Mountain IRA.

Rationale – The appearance of the Fox Mountain IRA is characteristic of the adjoining landscapes, steep mountain slopes and chaparral covered hillsides of dense vegetation. There is solitude, adventure and self-reliance. California condors use the area. Sierra Madre Ridge Road adjacent to the southern boundary of the unit is the center of a key and intensively managed fuel break. The northern boundary of the unit is bordered extensively by private land. In addition, there are four campgrounds located along the IRA boundary, and three active grazing allotments within the unit, including numerous associated developments. There are also special use authorizations for water development and associated access roads. The area is available for oil and gas leasing and is identified as possessing high oil and gas potential (but the area between Montgomery and Salisbury Potrereros is withdrawn from surface occupancy). The Olive Canyon Communication Site and associated road are located in Castro Canyon. In summary, the Fox Mountain IRA has low to moderate wilderness values, and characteristics with uses, including an extensive interface with private lands that would make it difficult to effectively manage as wilderness. It is also not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, with more than 500,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness within 20 miles of this IRA. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Fox Mountain IRA.

Garcia Mountain (7,852 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC and BCMUR to BCNM on 5,849 acres (for a total of 7,017 acres) in the Garcia Mountain IRA.

Rationale – The appearance of the Garcia Mountain IRA is generally uniform in appearance. The overall landscape attractiveness is lacking in variety and distinctive features of unique landform or vegetation. The appearance of the unit is typical chaparral and oak woodland on gentle hilly terrain. There is opportunity for solitude. Physical and mental challenge, spirit of adventure and awareness, and sense of self-reliance and inspiration are low to moderate. A high degree of private land interface could result in incompatible activities (trespass) occurring adjacent to the unit if designated wilderness. There are three active grazing allotments. The southern part of the unit includes 1.4 miles of Forest system road and 4.6 miles of Forest system motorized trail. There is moderate oil and gas potential. Garcia Mountain has low wilderness values and characteristics with uses that cannot be effectively managed as wilderness. It is not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with about 235,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness within 25 miles of this IRA. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Garcia Mountain IRA.

Juncal (12,289 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC and BCMUR to BCNM on 11,047 acres (for a total of 11,047 acres) in the Juncal IRA.

Rationale – The Juncal IRA is a rugged landscape of steep mountains and narrow canyons with dense chaparral and sandstone outcroppings. The overall landscape attractiveness is lacking in variety and distinctive features of unique landform or vegetation. There are moderate

opportunities to experience solitude and isolation because of limited interior access. Similarly, physical and mental challenge, spirit of adventure and awareness, and sense of self-reliance and inspiration are moderate. This unit has a history of large, extensive wildfires, which has diminished the forested environment. There are more than 15 miles of Forest system road within the unit adjacent to the perimeter. These roads are also used by mountain bikes, access during fire operations, and as fuel breaks. In summary, the Juncal IRA has low to moderate wilderness values and characteristics with uses that cannot be effectively managed as wilderness. It is not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with about 300,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness within 20 miles of this IRA. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Juncal IRA.

Machesna Mountain (12,268 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC and BCMUR to BCNM on 6,517 acres (for a total of 11,363 acres) in the Machesna Mountain IRA. An additional 8 acres of Forest adjacent to the Machesna Mountain IRA remains unchanged as BC.

Rationale – The Machesna Mountain IRA has a natural-appearing landscape. The center of the adjacent Machesna Mountain Wilderness is dominated by Machesna Mountain. The surrounding areas that comprise this IRA are at lower elevations in a rolling chaparral landscape. California condor use the area. Physical and mental challenge, spirit of adventure and awareness, and sense of self-reliance and inspiration are low to moderate. OHV use is popular in this area. While parts of the IRA could provide a feeling of solitude, the well-traveled roads surrounding most of this area could reduce the wilderness experience due to vehicle noise. Restricting motorized use on the established and popular Pine Mountain OHV route could be difficult. American Canyon Campground is located within the unit. There are four active grazing allotments within the IRA. This IRA has an extensive history of large wildfires, and mechanical equipment has been used during fire management operations. There are more than five miles of Forest system motorized trails. In summary, the Machesna Mountain IRA has low wilderness values and characteristics with uses that cannot be effectively managed as wilderness. It is not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with almost 250,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness within 20 miles of this IRA. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Machesna Mountain IRA.

Madulce Buckhorn (14,177 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC and BCMUR to BCNM on 1,895 acres (for a total of 7,074 acres) in the Madulce Buckhorn IRA. The RW land use zone classification will remain unchanged at 5,306 acres.

Rationale – The Madulce Buckhorn IRA has a natural-appearing landscape. The large sandstone outcrops and steep sheer mountain faces are prominent geographic features on the southern edge of the unit and are visible from scenic points outside the area. The Mono Basin Special Interest Area is within this unit as is the Indian Creek Critical Biological Land Use Zone. California

condors use the area. The Madulce Buckhorn roadless area within the Santa Barbara Ranger District (SBRD) is relatively remote with outstanding opportunities to experience adventure, self-reliance and solitude. However, the area within the Mt. Pinos Ranger District (MPRD) provides a low sense of solitude, adventure and self-reliance due to the proximity of State Highway 33, motorized forest trails and roads, and the rural development in the Upper Cuyama Valley. There are more than nine miles of Forest system road and the Camuesa and Buckhorn Road OHV routes are partially in this unit. There is one active grazing allotment and an oil and gas pipeline with an associated temporary maintenance road. The MPRD portion of the unit is available for oil and gas leasing, part of which has high potential. The SBRD unit has historic and current fire lines and fuel breaks adjacent to the Buckhorn Road that is a critical wildfire control point, and is part of network of fuel breaks in the area. A portion of the Madulce Buckhorn IRA has low wilderness values and characteristics with uses that cannot be effectively managed as wilderness. It is not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with more than 600,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness within 20 miles of this IRA. A portion of the IRA is already RW. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Madulce Buckhorn IRA.

Quatal (7,253 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC to BCNM on 7,150 acres (for a total of 7,150 acres) and BCMUR on 52 acres (for a total of 52 acres) in the Quatal IRA.

Rationale – The southern portion of the Quatal IRA has been affected by minor roads (used as OHV routes in drainage bottoms) but it mostly retains a natural appearance. Sandstone clay and shale crop out on steep canyons with highly eroded slopes generally known as ‘Badlands.’ There is very little human impact here. The unit is large enough to offer some feeling of remoteness, however much of the area includes views of the roadway or the adjacent minor developments. This IRA could be difficult to manage as wilderness because adjacent OHV use in the Ballinger OHV Area and an active gypsum mine on private lands west of and adjacent to the unit could present significant conflicts. Traditional uses, such as pinion nut and wood gathering, often require the use of motor vehicles. There is one active grazing allotment. There is moderate potential for oil and gas development. In summary, the Quatal IRA has low wilderness values and characteristics with uses that cannot be effectively managed as wilderness. It is not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with almost 525,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness within 20 miles of this IRA. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Quatal IRA.

Sawmill-Badlands (51,362 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC to BCNM on 44,895 acres (for a total of 44,895 acres) and BCMUR on 161 acres (for a total of 2,076 acres) in the Sawmill-Badlands IRA.

Rationale – The Sawmill-Badlands IRA includes steep mountains with rounded summits and narrow canyons. The western portion of the IRA is generally described as badlands with mostly

pinyon-juniper vegetation and some areas of brush and grassland and the eastern portion is primarily mixed conifer. The unit contains the entire Quatal Canyon Special Interest Area (SIA) and nearly all of the Mount Pinos Summit SIA. California condors use the area. The area provides a low to moderate opportunity to experience adventure, excitement, challenge, initiative, or self-reliance due to the proximity of rural development in the western portion and urban interface in the eastern portion as well as the proximity of state, county, and forest development roads or private property. The natural integrity of the area is largely intact; however, there are a number of temporary and unclassified roads, primarily associated with grazing allotments located in the western portions of the area, including numerous associated improvements. There are almost six miles of Forest system road, 15 miles of designated OHV routes, six active grazing allotments, Dove Springs Campground, and multiple special use authorizations for water systems, transmission lines, communication site, and an organization camp within the IRA. There is a high potential for oil and gas development in the western portion of the unit. Overall, the Sawmill-Badlands IRA has low to moderate wilderness values and characteristics with uses that cannot be effectively managed as wilderness. It is not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with more than 515,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness within 20 miles of this IRA. In addition, a portion of the IRA might also be needed to develop an alternative route to the Toad Springs road corridor in accordance with The Los Padres Condor Range and River Protection Act of 1992. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Sawmill-Badlands IRA.

Sespe-Frazier (106,885 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC and BCMUR to BCNM on 67,091 acres (for a total of 99,989 acres) in the Sespe-Frazier IRA. An additional 41 acres of Forest adjacent to the Sespe-Frazier IRA remains unchanged as BCNM.

Rationale – The Sespe-Frazier IRA includes a number of small sections around the perimeter of the Sespe Wilderness. The IRA reaches across several ranger districts. It is a large, rugged, diverse, and complex chaparral-covered landscape with canyons and mountain peaks that provide orientation but are not scenically distinctive. Natural integrity and appearance vary. The Foster Bear Pond Special Interest Area is located within the unit. California condor use the area. Solitude, physical challenge and spirit of adventure in much of this area is dominated by OHV riding on the extensive, developed motorized trails. Other sections are more remote. The upper reaches of Piru Creek, which has been determined eligible for wild and scenic river designation, traverses a portion of this unit. Special use authorizations exist for roads to private in-holdings, water developments, a buried gas pipeline and transmission lines. There are five rustic campgrounds and three trailheads; five active grazing allotments; a number of patented and mining claims and more than five miles of Forest system road and 67 miles of Forest system motorized trail within the IRA. Fuel treatments are ongoing in Alamo Mountain and Frazier Mountain areas, and multiple fire lines within the IRA have been used during fire management operations. Overall, the Sespe-Frazier IRA has low wilderness values and characteristics with uses that cannot be effectively managed as wilderness. It is not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with more than 850,000 acres of lightly-visited

existing designated wilderness within 20 miles of this IRA. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Sespe-Frazier IRA.

Spoor Canyon (13,741 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC and BCMUR to BCNM on 1,420 acres (for a total of 11,706 acres) in the Spoor Canyon IRA.

Rationale – The Spoor Canyon IRA has a natural appearance; free from any major disturbances and a character of steep lands, narrow canyons and overall rugged landscapes. There are no prominent peaks or distinctive features. This IRA has some opportunities to experience adventure, self-reliance and solitude, but it is limited by the proximity of a few roads. It is of sufficient size but of poor shape or juxtaposition to be effectively managed as wilderness. There are two active grazing allotments. The unit has an extensive history of large wildfires, and there are existing fuel break and fire lines that have been used on recent fires. The Sierra Madre fuel break is a key area for vegetation management and fire suppression activity along the southwestern boundary of the IRA. The northeastern boundary is abuts private land. With no distinguishing landmarks to establish a boundary, it could be difficult to manage and protect from trespass. The unit is within a designated high oil and gas potential area. In summary, the Spoor Canyon IRA has low wilderness values and characteristics with uses that cannot be effectively managed as wilderness. It is not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with almost 250,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness within 20 miles of this IRA. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Spoor Canyon IRA.

Tequepis (9,080 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC to BCNM on 6,346 acres (for a total of 6,346 acres) in the Tequepis IRA.

Rationale – The Tequepis IRA presents a rugged, wild-appearing, highly scenic backdrop for the coastal communities. It is a long and narrow unit (1.6 miles wide on average). California condor use this area. There are limited opportunities to experience wilderness characteristics due to the high level of human activity. A moderate sense of adventure, sense of self-reliance and inspiration are apparent in this area. Portions of a gun club target range are located in this IRA. There are special use authorizations for water systems and transmission lines, and 2 adjacent major communication sites. The West Camino Cielo Road follows the southern boundary of the unit and is part of a key fuel break. Unauthorized OHV use from the road and fuel break is difficult to prevent and a management challenge. There is one grazing allotment. In summary, the Tequepis IRA has low wilderness values and characteristics with uses that cannot be effectively managed as wilderness. It is not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with almost 265,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness within 15 miles of this IRA. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the Tequepis IRA.

White Ledge (18,632 acres)

Summary of the Amendment – The selected Alternative 2a will change the land use zone classification from BC and BCMUR to BCNM on 2,328 acres (for a total of 18,179 acres) in the White Ledge IRA.

Rationale – Most of White Ledge IRA is on or near a ridgeline, offering panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean, Channel Islands and remote backcountry. The unit is natural appearing, and California condor use this area. There are some opportunities to experience adventure, self-reliance and solitude. There is one active grazing allotment. This unit has an extensive history of large wildfires. The Divide Peak OHV route is cherry stemmed on the western side of the unit. Portions of the route and adjacent ridgeline have been maintained as a fuelbreak during fire management operations, including the area from Divide Peak to Murietta Saddle. Part of the Ojai Community Defense Zone is within the unit on the southeastern side, and WUI exists within the southern portion. The unit is border by a road to the north, and a few private inholdings to the south. The adjacent private lands could make this unit difficult to manage, and would restrict public access. There is an electrical transmission line adjacent to the western boundary, and a gas pipeline adjacent to the eastern side. In summary, the White Ledge IRA has low wilderness values and characteristics with uses that cannot be effectively managed as wilderness. It is not needed as part of the national wilderness preservation system, particularly with about 550,000 acres of lightly-visited existing designated wilderness within 20 miles of this IRA. It is my decision that this additional BCNM land use zone classification will provide the best mix of suitable uses for the White Ledge IRA.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE
Pacific Southwest Region



Los Padres National Forest

Central

October 2014



LMP Amendment

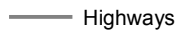
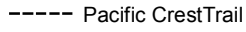
Final Record of Decision

Alternative 2a Selected


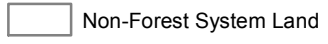
Land Use Zones

Legend

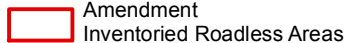

 Supervisor's Office
 Ranger Station

 Highways
 Pacific Crest Trail

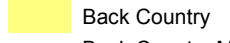
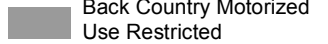
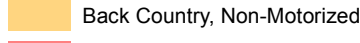
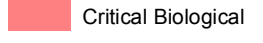
Land Ownership

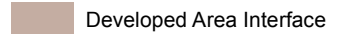
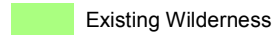
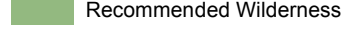
 National Forest Boundary
 Non-Forest System Land

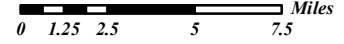
Special Designations

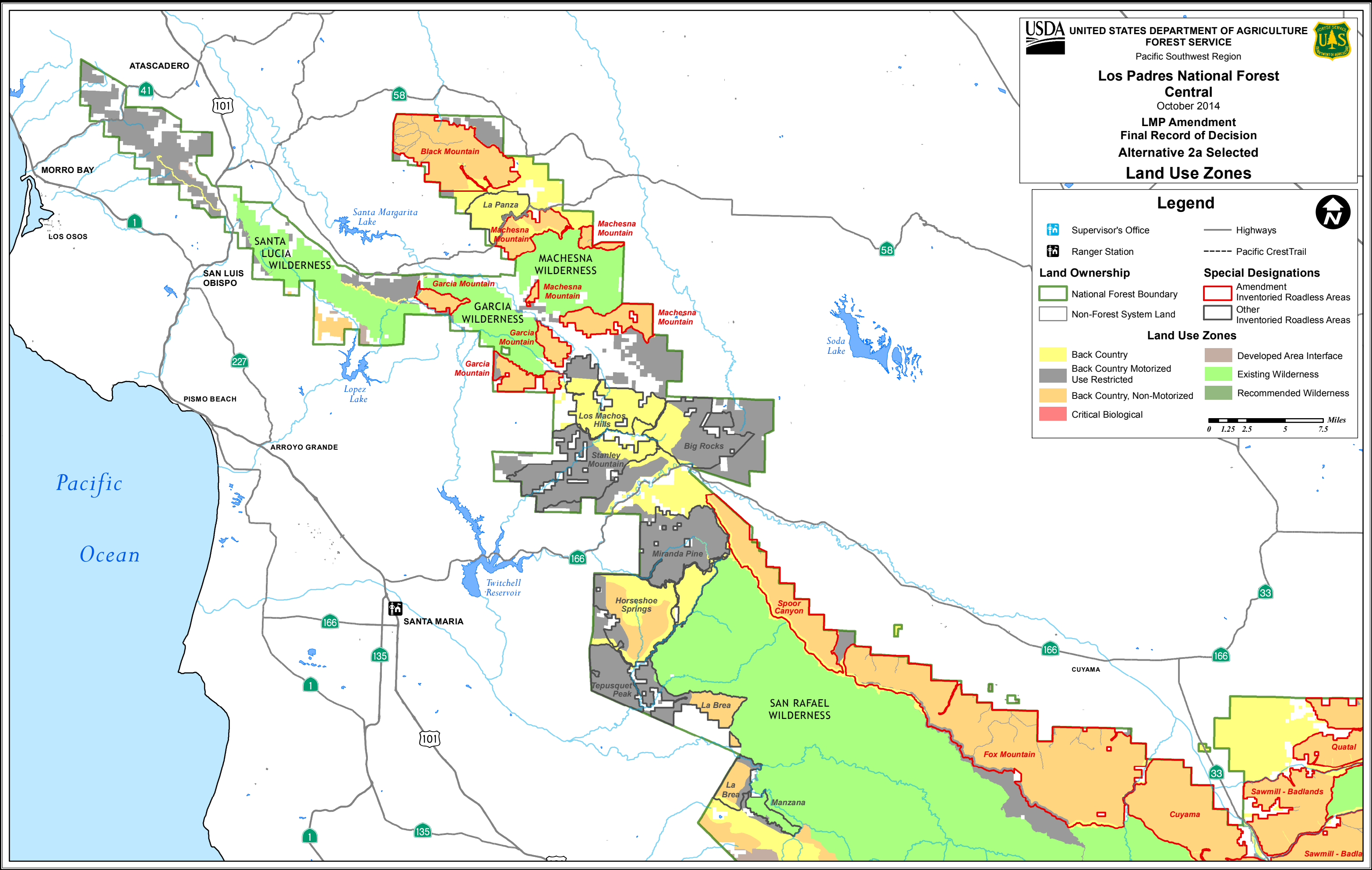
 Amendment Inventoried Roadless Areas
 Other Inventoried Roadless Areas

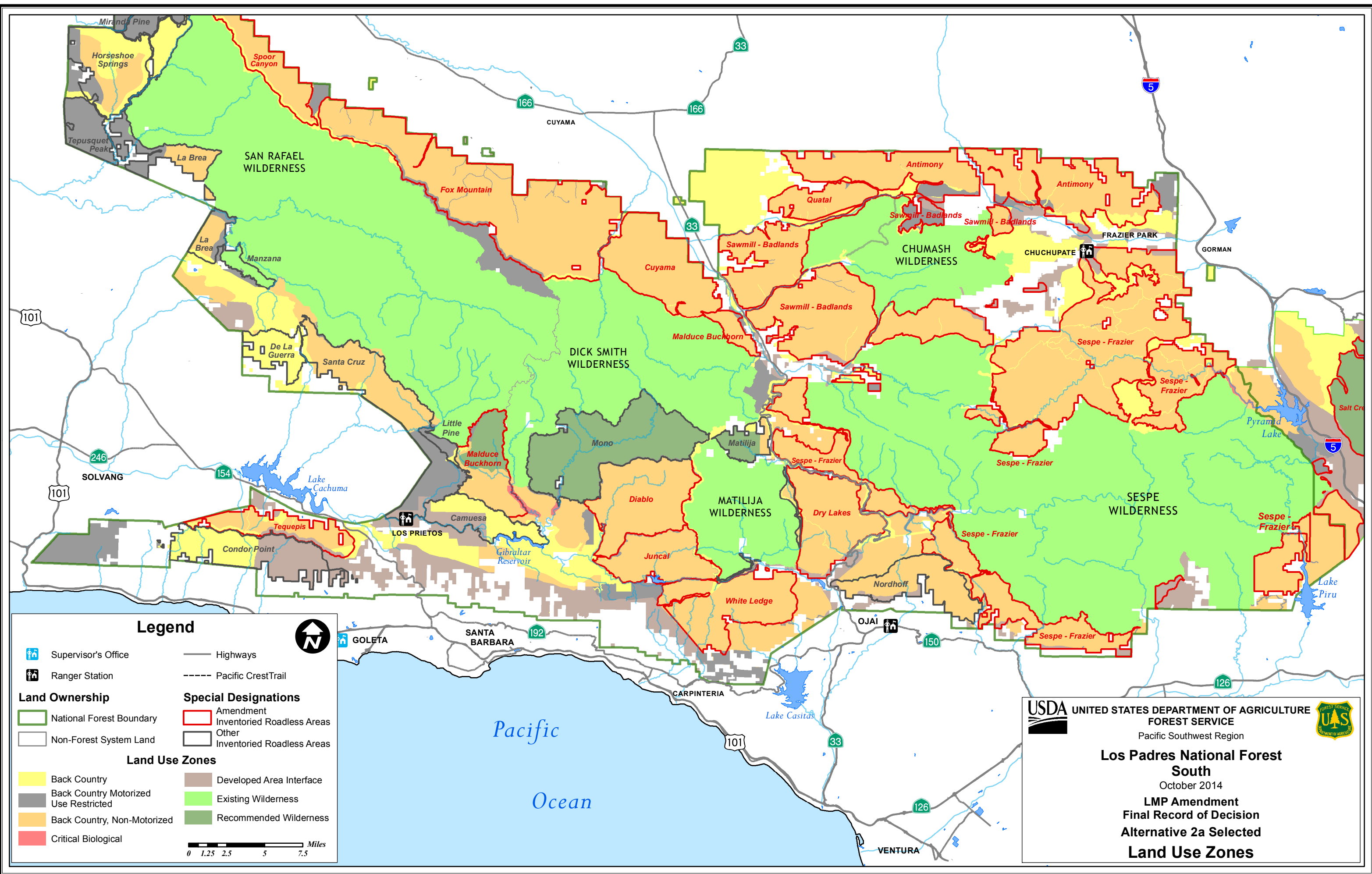
Land Use Zones

 Back Country
 Back Country Motorized Use Restricted
 Back Country, Non-Motorized
 Critical Biological

 Developed Area Interface
 Existing Wilderness
 Recommended Wilderness


0 1.25 2.5 5 7.5 Miles





USDA UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE
Pacific Southwest Region

Los Padres National Forest
South
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LMP Amendment
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Alternative 2a Selected
Land Use Zones

U.S. FOREST SERVICE
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