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Record of Decision

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit



Forest
Service

Pacific Southwest
Region

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This document is the final Record of Decision for the Land Management Plan.

It incorporates the instructions from the pre-decisional objection period.

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**Record of Decision
for the
LTBMU Land Management Plan**

**Record of Decision
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1 Introduction

The Forest Service has revised the 1988 Land Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU). Plan revision provides an updated Forest Plan for the LTBMU that will guide management of National Forest System (NFS) lands in the Lake Tahoe Basin for approximately the next 15 years. The LTBMU manages 154,850 acres of NFS lands within a mix of forested lands and urban communities that surround Lake Tahoe. The public has expressed strong feelings about the importance of sustaining and enhancing the natural resource values and benefits that make the Lake Tahoe Basin unique.

This Record of Decision (ROD) represents the end of a planning process that started over 10 years ago. The current Forest Plan was implemented in 1988 with major amendments in both 2004 and 2007, and numerous minor amendments over the life of the Forest Plan. This decision revises the LTBMU Forest Plan under the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA, 16 U.S.C. 1604, et seq.) and the provisions of the 1982 planning regulations (36 CFR Part 219, 1982). The 2012 regulations currently in effect allow use of the previous regulations for plan revisions initiated before the 2012 regulations took effect (36 CFR 219.17 (b) (3)). In this ROD I will explain the decision that I have made and how I have taken into consideration all of the public comments that I heard throughout the process.

1.1 Consideration of Objections

In accordance with subpart B of the current planning regulations at 36 CFR 219, individuals or entities who had participated in the planning process were given an opportunity to object to a November 2013 draft version of this ROD, along with a draft Forest Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). An independent review team identified and considered more than 200 individual issues from the 12 objections submitted. Many were similar enough in nature to be consolidated into a broader set of resource and topic areas, including recommended wilderness designations, wild and scenic river eligibility and suitability, wildlife habitat management, fire suppression and fuels management, winter recreation and ski area permits, climate change, soils, water and air quality. Objectors also expressed concern that the draft ROD violated NEPA, NFMA, the Wilderness Act, Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and others.

2 My Decision

I considered the 12 objections received during the Objection Period in making my decision. After meeting with the objectors and discussing the objections, the Reviewing Officer responded to all the objectors in writing and provided me with specific instructions to complete before signing this final ROD. This decision includes modifications to the Forest Plan described in the Objection Reviewing Officer's instructions. These instructions made it necessary for my decision to utilize elements of Alternative A for management of California spotted owl habitat and for expansion of ski areas and slopes.

I have complied with the instructions as described in the Addendum to this ROD. Four of the instructions involve ongoing processes and discussions: (1) continue the collaborative approach to resolving winter travel management issues, (2) work with ski area permittees on permit authorization and implementation pursuant to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, (3) work with the Region 5 Forests currently in revision to collaboratively identify focal species and develop a monitoring strategy for those species, and (4) revise Plan components for California spotted owl after the California Spotted Owl Conservation Strategy is completed.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) released in 2012, identified Alternative B as the preferred alternative. Alternative E is a modification of Alternative B, and was identified as the preferred alternative in the November 2013 FEIS. Alternative E includes elements from within the range of alternatives and considers the public comments received during the 90-day comment period. I have reviewed the range of alternatives, read the public comments, contemplated the objections, and considered the evaluation of the alternatives in the FEIS. Based on all of this, **I have selected Alternative E – Modified for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit land management plan.** Alternative E – Modified incorporates all changes necessary to bring the Forest Plan and FEIS into compliance with the Objection Reviewing Officer’s instructions, including elements of Alternative A for spotted owl habitat management and ski area expansion.

My decision applies only to the LTBMU and does not apply to any other federal, state, or private lands, although the effects to these lands and the effects of my decision on lands surrounding the National Forest have been considered. This decision does not alter the management of the Grass Lake Research Natural Area, which is administered by the Pacific Southwest Research Station in conjunction with the Pacific Southwest Region.

By selecting this alternative, I am approving the Forest Plan that describes in detail the strategic vision and guidance for the LTBMU, including the Desired Conditions, Objectives, Suitable Uses and Management Areas, and Standards and Guidelines described in Parts 1, 2, and 3 of the Forest Plan, and the Monitoring Program described in Appendix A of the Forest Plan.

2.1 Components of My Decision

The following are the fundamental components of my decision:

1. Establishment of Forestwide multiple-use goals and objectives, including desired conditions (36 CFR 219.11(b)–1982)

I am establishing goals, stated as desired conditions, for each resource or program area in Part 1: Vision of the Forest Plan (36 CFR 219.11(b), 1982). The desired conditions are long term strategic goals, some of which may not be achieved in the expected 15-year planning period.

Objectives are concise projections of measurable, time-specific intended outcomes. Objectives indicate progress towards the desired conditions and are planned to be accomplished in this 15 year planning period. Objectives are in Part 2: Strategies of the Forest Plan.

Both objectives and desired conditions are aspirations, not commitments or final project decisions.

2. Establishment of management direction (36 CFR 219.11(c)–1982)

I am establishing four management prescriptions, called management areas, which will guide the design and implementation of future actions. These management areas (displayed in Table 1 of this ROD), are fully described in Part 2: Strategies of the Forest Plan. Management area descriptions convey the general management emphasis and intent for broad areas of the forest. The four management areas are:

General Conservation – General Conservation lands are suitable for a broad range of activities and uses. These areas range from highly developed recreation sites to relatively pristine lands beyond the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Active management is conducted on these lands to meet a variety of social, economic, and ecological objectives.

Santini-Burton/Urban Forest Parcels – This management area is largely comprised of sensitive lands purchased under and governed by restrictions in the Santini-Burton Act.

Backcountry – Currently designated Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) comprise most of the Backcountry Management Area. The suitable uses and activities for Backcountry are limited to those that will perpetuate the roadless character of these lands, and maintain landscapes that are predominantly free from human influences. In addition to IRAs, this decision designates an area between Ward and Blackwood Creeks as the Stanford Rock Backcountry Management Area.

Designated Wilderness – This management area is comprised of areas currently included in the National Wilderness Preservation System. These include portions of the Desolation, Granite Chief, and Mount Rose Wilderness Areas within the LTBMU administrative boundary.

Table 1. LTBMU Forest Plan Management Areas

Management Areas	Acres	Percent of NFS Lands
General Conservation	67,078	43%
Santini-Burton/Urban Forest Parcels	13,935	9%
Backcountry	49,172	32%
Wilderness	24,665	16%
Total NFS Lands	154,850	100%

3. Determination of lands suitable for various uses and an allowable timber sale quantity

I am establishing the suitable uses within the management areas and the land suitable for specific uses (36 CFR 219.11(c) –1982). The suitability of different lands for different uses is described in the management area descriptions and in the accompanying Suitable Uses table in Part 2 (Table 4) of the Forest Plan and the descriptions of uses and activities that follow the table.

In accordance with NFMA and its implementing regulations, the Forest Plan (Part 2, Table 5) classifies lands suitable for timber production (36 CFR 219.14 - 1982). Chapter 3 and Appendix G of the FEIS detail the criteria and process used to determine the forest lands tentatively suitable for timber production. These are lands capable of producing commercial volumes of timber on a sustained-yield basis, where regularly scheduled timber harvest may occur. Areas legislatively withdrawn from timber harvest are not included. I have determined that under Alternative E - Modified, no lands are suitable for commercial timber production. Consequently, the Forest Plan does not have an allowable sale quantity for a sustained output of volume for commercial timber sales.

My decision allows removal of timber to achieve the Desired Conditions expressed in Part 1 of the Forest Plan. Examples of the reasons that timber harvest could occur may include, but are not limited to:

- Timber harvest to meet healthy forest and hazardous fuels objectives as part of community wildfire protection plans.
- Maintaining or recruiting mature forest characteristics in areas where final regeneration of a stand is not planned.
- Restoring meadow or riparian ecosystems being replaced by forest succession.

- Cutting trees to promote the safety of forest users. This includes hazard tree removal in campgrounds, picnic grounds, and administrative sites, and along roads and trails open to public travel.
- Timber harvest to meet early seral habitat objectives for wildlife.
- Timber harvest to meet scenic objectives that may include viewing areas or that increases scenic quality and integrity of an area.

4. Establishment of Forestwide standards and guidelines (36 CFR 219.13 to 219.27–1982)

I am establishing the Standards and Guidelines described in Part 3: Design Criteria of the Forest Plan. Standards and guidelines govern resource management activities. Some standards and guidelines apply forest-wide, others to specific Management Areas or Special Designated Areas. Standards and Guidelines are constraints on project and activity decision making which are established to help achieve or maintain the Desired Conditions over the life of the plan.

5. Establishment of requirements for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the revised plan (36 CFR 219.11(d)–1982)

I am establishing the monitoring and evaluation requirements described in Appendix A of the Forest Plan. The monitoring program is designed to help the LTBMU evaluate progress towards meeting Desired Conditions and to help identify necessary future Forest Plan adjustments. Monitoring is clearly emphasized and must be accomplished. Monitoring is a key element to assure the achievement of desired conditions over time. This monitoring plan does not include all monitoring conducted by the LTBMU, but rather describes in broad terms the monitoring required to measure the degree to which on-the-ground management is maintaining or making progress toward the Forest Plan desired conditions and objectives. The monitoring plan will test assumptions, track changes, and measure management effectiveness, primarily through status and trend monitoring and effectiveness monitoring. The monitoring plan provides a framework that will be supplemented by more specific monitoring plans and protocols. It will be adjusted as needed to respond to new information and unanticipated changes in conditions.

Some members of the public have requested more extensive monitoring than we have proposed. The monitoring proposed in Appendix A reflects the base level of what we can afford based on current and expected future budgets. If more money is available through appropriated funds or funds from other sources, additional monitoring could be accomplished.

The objection instructions direct the LTBMU to coordinate with the Region 5 Forests currently in revision under the 2012 planning rule to collaboratively identify focal species and develop a monitoring strategy for the identified species as part of the monitoring transition required by the rule (36 CFR 219.12 (c) 2012) . This process is currently underway.

6. Recommendations for additions to the Wilderness Preservation System, the Wild and Scenic River Systems, and establishment of new research natural areas or other administrative designated areas (36 CFR 219.17(a), 219.18, 219.21, 219.25–1982)

I am not recommending additional areas for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The FEIS includes an evaluation of the potential wilderness areas (Appendix C, Evaluation of Areas for Potential Wilderness). This evaluation was based on Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 70 (2007), which describes three tests—capability, availability, and need—to evaluate the wilderness potential of an area.

In 1999, the LTBMU Forest Supervisor's recommendation to designate a segment of the Upper Truckee River as Wild under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was documented in the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Eight Eastside Rivers FEIS. The Regional Forester approved the decision at the time but no further action has been taken to designate this segment. Since that time, the river has been managed to ensure that eligibility is maintained by protecting the free-flowing status and the outstandingly remarkable river values identified in the Eight Eastside Rivers ROD. Based on the information presented in FEIS Appendix B -Wild and Scenic River Inventory and Evaluation, my decision reaffirms the original recommendation to designate the identified segment of Upper Truckee River as a Wild River pursuant to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. It also adopts the Forest Plan Standard that requires management to maintain the eligibility of this segment.

The LTBMU was instructed by the Objection Reviewing Officer to complete and document a comprehensive evaluation and systematic inventory of the potential for rivers in the unit to be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. An inventory and evaluation was conducted using the most current direction, including FSH 1909.12 Chapter 80, (January 2015).

Based on this inventory and evaluation and the response to comments on the inventory, I find that Taylor Creek, Eagle Creek, and Glen Alpine Creek are eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System with a preliminary classification of Recreational. In addition, I find that the three tributaries of the Upper Truckee which support Lahontan Cutthroat Trout populations are eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System with a preliminary classification of Wild. These rivers and tributaries are shown on maps in FEIS Appendix B as well as in the Land Management Plan.

We received many comments requesting that a suitability analysis be conducted for the eligible rivers. I have decided not to undertake this analysis at this time, but the LTBMU may do so in the future as funding and staff time permit.

My decision also reaffirms the previous decision to not recommend the Truckee River for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The Truckee River has retained the Outstandingly Remarkable Values described in the Eight Eastside Rivers ROD, but its suitability is still challenged by the same issues that existed in 1999. In addition, the Truckee River has benefited from the more recent adoption of the 2008 Truckee River Operating Agreement (TROA), which provides many of the protections originally sought under the Wild and Scenic River designation. The Lake Tahoe Basin is one of the most heavily regulated landscapes in the United States. Federally designated as an Outstanding National Resource Water, Lake Tahoe and its surrounding watersheds have evolved into a rigorously scrutinized environment in which a cadre of federal, state, regional, and local regulatory agencies cooperatively manage and protect this precious natural resource.

My decision establishes the management direction in the Forest Plan for Special Designated Areas, but does not recommend the establishment of any new research natural areas or other administratively designated areas. The existing Grass Lake Research Natural Area (RNA) will continue to be a component of the national RNA system.

Other than Wilderness, discussed above, no additional areas were brought forward for consideration by the public, other agencies or the Forest Service during the Forest Plan revision process. Special Designated Areas are described in Section 2.4 of the Forest Plan.

Tribal Relations

The relationship of the Forest Service with American Indians is important in the management and restoration of ecosystems in the Lake Tahoe Basin. As a part of this decision, in order to meet our trust responsibilities and to encourage the participation of American Indians in national forest management, I reaffirm the following commitments which were made in the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA) ROD on behalf of the Forest Service:

- We will work with tribal governments and tribal communities to develop mutually acceptable protocols for government-to-government and tribal community consultations. These protocols will emphasize line officers' and tribal officials' roles and responsibilities.
- We will consult with appropriate tribal governments and tribal communities regarding fire protection and fuels management activities that potentially affect rancherias, reservations, and other occupied areas. We will develop fire protection plans for such areas in consultation with appropriate tribal or intertribal organizations. We will coordinate with tribes and appropriate tribal organizations regarding training, outreach, and other items of mutual interest in order to support tribal and national forest fire programs.
- Traditional American Indian land use practices, tribal watershed and other ecosystem restoration practices and priorities will be considered early in national forest planning, analyses, decision making, and adaptive management processes. During landscape analyses and similar activities, we will assess vegetation community conditions where a specific area has an identified importance to an affected tribe or tribal community. We will consult with affected tribes, and, or tribal communities to consider traditional and contemporary uses and needs.
- We will consider traditional American Indian vegetation management strategies and methods, and integrate them, where appropriate, into ecosystem restoration activities. We will cooperate with tribes, tribal communities, and intertribal organizations to develop ecosystem stewardship projects.
- We will consider the relationship between fire management and plants culturally important to American Indians. Where fuels treatments may affect tribes or tribal communities, or plants culturally important to them, we will consult on the development of burn plans, and consider approaches that accommodate traditional scheduling and techniques of fire and vegetation management.
- When implementing noxious weed management programs we intend to maintain or, if appropriate, increase the availability of plants traditionally used by American Indians. We will consult with appropriate tribes, tribal communities, or tribal organizations to identify areas of new or worsening weed infestations and develop plans for appropriate weed control.
- We will, where appropriate, include culturally significant species in monitoring protocols related to management activities.
- We will maintain appropriate access to sacred and ceremonial sites and to tribal traditional use areas. We will consult with affected tribes and tribal communities to address access to culturally important resources and culturally important areas when proposing management that may alter existing access. After appropriate assessment and consultation, we will consider proposing mineral withdrawals and other protection of inventoried sacred sites.
- We will protect all sensitive and proprietary information to the greatest extent permitted by law. We will secure permission to release information from the tribe, tribal community, or individual who provided it prior to release to others.

2.2 Context for the Decision

In making my decision I have considered how the revised Forest Plan addresses the following areas of national interest:

National Strategic Plan – The revised Forest Plan is responsive to the Forest Service’s 2015-2020 National Strategic Plan (FS 1045) and to the goals relevant to the management of individual national forest units.

Sustainability – The Forest Plan is designed to maintain the health, productivity, diversity, and overall integrity of the LTBMU. The plan integrates environmental, social and economic values and accounts for future as well as present needs.

Climate Change – Adaptation and mitigation strategies to enhance the ability of natural and social systems to adapt to a changing climate are an integral part of the Forest Plan, which provides a flexible and adaptive approach that can be adjusted as national policy emerges.

Wildfire and Hazardous Fuels – The Forest Plan continues to prioritize treatment of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) which comprises roughly 75% of NFS lands in the Tahoe Basin. Collaborative interagency planning has been undertaken with federal, state and local agencies and community organizations. Implementation of initial WUI treatments is expected to be complete during this planning period, at which time the vegetation management focus will shift to maintenance treatments and treatments outside the WUI designed primarily to improve forest health and habitat.

Invasive Species – Forest Plan direction for management and eradication of invasive species is greatly expanded from the 1988 Forest Plan. More specific direction for terrestrial species (weeds) is included. Aquatic invasive species such as quagga mussels and Eurasian water milfoil have emerged as growing threats to the health and beauty of Lake Tahoe and its tributaries. In response to this threat, Forest Plan direction for control of these species is included, with a strong emphasis on collaboration with other agencies and groups.

Adaptive Management – Management within the context of an adaptive management framework is a key attribute of this decision. The Forest Plan is adaptive in that new knowledge and information can be analyzed and the plan amended, if appropriate, at any time. It provides overall intent and guidance, but also allows the flexibility needed for the Agency to work with the public and adapt management strategies to changing demands and conditions. This allows the latest science and public input to be considered at the time a project-level decision is to be made (Forest Plan, p.1).

2.3 Rationale for My Decision

My decision balances human and natural resource needs and maximizes net public benefits by providing management options that will enable future generations to continue to enjoy sustainable recreation opportunities, healthy forests and watersheds, and appropriate community protection from wildland fire. My decision adopts measures that will continue to provide a broad range of recreation opportunities for an estimated 5.7 million annual visitors as well as conserving and restoring the health of NFS lands - reducing risks from wildland fire, invasive species, and other threats, restoring forest health and watershed processes and protecting water quality, and conserving and restoring habitat for a multitude of plant and animal species. My decision also includes strategies for enhancing the ability of natural and social systems to adapt to a changing climate.

Although the responsibility for this decision is mine, I have made the decision using the information and help of many others. Over 18,000 comments were received during the development of the Forest Plan.

My decision is consistent with national direction and focuses on the outcome of management activities rather than the production of outputs; the Forest Plan emphasizes the importance of the condition of the land when management is completed rather than what is taken from the land. The decision places a clear emphasis on restoring ecosystem health and natural ecosystem processes, while continuing to provide a broad range of recreation opportunities, and protecting the valued scenic character of the Lake Tahoe Basin. My decision recognizes the value and need for partnerships and collaboration in managing NFS lands. It also recognizes the need to manage adaptively with an eye to strategies that will enhance the ability of natural systems to adapt to a changing climate and provide the flexibility to adapt recreation opportunities. Alternative E - Modified is based on the concept of sustainable multiple resource uses and conservation, and incorporates ideas from the public to help resolve the challenges stemming from the issues.

Issue Areas

This section describes how my decision to select Alternative E - Modified responds to the issue areas from the FEIS. These issue areas emerged during the public involvement process and formed the basis for the alternatives analyzed in detail. In this section I also describe how my decision responds to public comments and to the Objection Reviewing Officer's instructions.

Watershed Health and Aquatic Ecosystems

Watershed restoration theory and techniques have changed in recent decades. Given a changing climate, there is a need for restoration strategies and techniques that enhance the ability of stream systems to adapt to the more extreme weather and climate conditions that are predicted. My decision reflects these changes, and provides appropriate guidance.

My decision also updates management direction for water quality protection and enhancement, and reaffirms our commitment to execute applicable elements of the Lake Tahoe Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Plan and other tributary watershed TMDL Implementation Plans.

Aquatic invasive species are a new management concern not addressed in the 1988 Forest Plan. My decision incorporates management direction to control and eradicate these species, in collaboration with other agencies and groups.

The status of the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog changed from Proposed Endangered with critical habitat to Endangered on April 29, 2014, after publication of the FEIS and draft Record of Decision in November 2013. We have updated the status of this species in the final documents, but this status change did not necessitate any changes in the revised Forest Plan.

Terrestrial Ecosystems

There is a growing recognition of the need to manage hazardous fuels in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Since the adoption of the SNFPA, new science relating to hazardous fuels and forest health has emerged (e.g. GTR-220 – North et al. 2009). We now recognize that forests must be able to adapt to the weather conditions accompanying climate change, such as increased frequency of both extreme wet and extreme droughty periods. The Forest Plan has been updated to reflect this new science and provide appropriate guidance.

Management direction to perpetuate habitats which support old growth-dependent species has been updated to be consistent with the best available scientific information, as described in the FEIS. Based on the many comments and the objections received, my decision includes revised standards and guidelines to

clarify our intentions for management of old growth habitats. Our intention is to perpetuate current late seral closed canopy stands, and promote development of selected mid-seral stands to late seral.

In accordance with the Objection Reviewing Officer's instructions, my decision retains the management direction in Alternative A –No Action for California spotted owls, and includes the desired conditions for marten in the Forest Plan. The standard governing removal of trees greater than 30 inches in diameter has also been modified to comply with the instructions.

During the latter part of the planning period the LTBMU expects to shift vegetation management focus from hazardous fuels management within the WUI to maintenance of WUI treatments and restoration of forest health. The Comstock logging in the 19th and early 20th centuries has resulted in overly dense, even-aged forests. Restoring forests to a more natural structure includes both increasing old-growth (late seral) stands and increasing young forest (early seral) stands. This is generally accomplished by creating forest openings and allowing natural seedling and sapling regeneration.

My decision responds to the many comments received by revising management direction for creating openings to enhance and restore forest stand structure. Contrary to many public comments, it is not our intention to clear-cut large areas of the forest. While my decision places an upper size limit of 10 acres on openings, we expect that few will be that large; creation of many large openings would not be consistent with the Desired Conditions in the Forest Plan or with recommendations in the recent General Technical Reports (GTR 220 and 226) published by our Pacific Southwest Research Station. My decision also clarifies standards and guidelines to ensure that when openings are created, they are compatible with Desired Conditions for wildlife habitat, scenery, and other resources.

In response to comments, my decision adds management direction that recognizes the importance of burned forest habitats to certain species. This includes greater emphasis on retaining snags resulting from wildfire and prescribed fire, and provisions for creating snags where appropriate. Additional changes to post-fire management Forest Plan direction were made in response to the objection instructions; these changes further strengthen the provisions for retaining the complex early seral habitats that result from wildfire.

Recreation and Access and Travel Management

Recreation demands have changed dramatically since 1988 and continue to change. Mountain biking was a new activity at time of the 1988 Forest Plan decision, and snowboarding did not exist. New activities continue to be developed, and the popularity of current activities changes along with population demographics. Climate change brings uncertainty about the future availability of traditional winter recreation opportunities such as downhill skiing, snowboarding, cross-country skiing and other snow sports. My decision recognizes the need to provide for changing demands and to provide year round opportunities to support recreation demands and the local economy.

Population growth in areas adjacent to the Lake Tahoe Basin continues to increase the demand for recreation opportunities, and this increases pressure on our developed recreation facilities. While the Forest Service recognizes the need to accommodate some of this increasing demand, we also recognize that we cannot accommodate all of it. My decision prioritizes maintenance and renovation of existing recreation sites over expansion and development of new sites, and continues the emphasis on retrofitting existing sites to provide universal accessibility and protect water quality.

My decision allows a modest expansion of recreation sites, day use parking, overnight accommodations, and retains the current limits for expansion of ski areas and slopes. Limits on developed recreation expansion are specifically defined in a Forest Plan Standard (SG 107); exceedance of these limits would require a Forest Plan amendment. The Objection Reviewing Official's instructions require removal of the

expansion limits for ski areas and slopes from this standard. The No Action Alternative is the only alternative analyzed in detail that does not include a standard with acreage based limits; therefore it is the only alternative analyzed that is consistent with the Reviewing Officer's instructions. My decision will retain the alpine skiing prescription boundary that was in the 1988 Forest Plan (incorporated as SG 109 in this plan). Maps displaying these areas have been added to the resource overlay section of the Forest Plan (Section 2.3.7 Resource Overlay Maps), along with an explanation of the changes. The Suitable Uses definition in Part 2 of the Forest Plan has been adjusted accordingly. This Forest Plan applies only to lands within the administrative boundary of the LTBMU, it does not apply to lands within the Heavenly Ski Area permit boundary which are administered by the Humboldt-Toiyabe NF.

The Reviewing Official also instructed the LTBMU to "work with permittees on permit authorization and implementation pursuant to applicable laws, regulations, and policies." I have asked the Forest Supervisor of the LTBMU to work with the ski areas to resolve any permit boundary issues through the permit administration process.

My decision to limit recreation expansion is also based on a need to balance the demand for facilities with the need to preserve the scenic qualities valued by residents and visitors, while also conserving habitats and maintaining water quality. Recognizing that well-informed forest visitors are better able to assist us with stewardship of the natural resources that draw residents and visitors to the Lake Tahoe Basin, my decision also includes management direction for environmental interpretation and education programs. Balancing all these factors is essential to a sustainable recreation program that benefits the recreating public, the environment, and the local economy.

Roads and Trails

The road and trail system allows access to the more remote areas of the LTBMU, for a variety of recreation and management activities. My decision does not include a programmatic increase in the road system, but rather focuses on maintaining the current system and completing the program of water quality improvements (BMP retrofits) during the planning period, as described in the Forest Plan Objectives. An increase in the trail system will focus on "adopting" user-created trails, bringing them up to National Forest Service standards and including them in the maintenance schedule.

Parking

We received many comments on the availability of summer and winter parking. While many people would like additional parking, others oppose the creation of more parking areas. My decision maintains the current volume of summer parking while addressing some of the safety and natural resource concerns related to current roadside parking along basin highways. A small increase in parking at developed sites is allowed to accommodate some of the demand; it is limited because significant increases in parking would also increase crowding at popular sites, and could also increase the potential for natural resource damage.

Our ability to create additional winter parking is constrained by budgets and also by road ownership and jurisdiction. Many of the roads that people would like to see plowed in the winter are city, state, or county roads. The Forest Service is open to collaborative solutions to addressing the challenge of winter parking.

Over Snow Vehicle Use

A large volume of the comments received surrounded the issue of over snow vehicle (OSV) use. The term OSV commonly refers to snowmobiles but includes any other motorized vehicle designed to travel over

snow. Comments ranged from one extreme to the other regarding OSV use, with some wanting OSVs banned completely from NFS lands and others wanting all NFS lands open to OSV use.

Some commenters suggested that OSVs damage the environment. The FEIS has been updated to include analysis of the effects of on-going use of OSVs to multiple resources. I concur with the FEIS finding that OSV use in the current designated OSV use areas does not result in significant consequences to the environment.

Overall, there were notable misconceptions about the current situation. The group favoring non-motorized use incorrectly portrayed that there were areas closed or unavailable to them. Currently 100% of the LTBMU is open to non-motorized use. Approximately 52% is open to OSVs, which means 48% of LTBMU lands are free of OSVs. Additionally there are over 19,600 acres of state lands (CA State Parks, CA Tahoe Conservancy, and NV State Parks) open to non-motorized use but closed to OSV use. Cumulatively this increases the area in the Lake Tahoe Basin that is free of OSVs by about 12%.

Desired Conditions promote a range of recreational opportunities within the context of a rustic outdoor experience appropriate to NFS lands. On a small area such as the LTBMU (only about 155,000 acres) with such a high use and many different kinds of use, there is simply not the area available to separate all users in a manner that gives them all exactly the part of the landscape they want to use. To achieve the Desired Conditions presented in the Plan, several major winter activities are accommodated on the LTBMU: downhill resort skiing, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, OSV use and snow play. They are provided in proportions that allow participants full enjoyment at least somewhere within the boundaries of the LTBMU.

The National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) results for 2010 show that 98% of visitors to the LTBMU were “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their recreational experience. The national target is 85% (FEIS Ch. 3, Sec 3.4.17). The Forest Plan does serve the majority of users by providing a very diverse and high quality recreational experience, which has led to a very large, satisfied group of users.

The designated areas open and closed to OSVs are well known and have been in place for over 25 years. There was no agreement amongst commenters as to what the appropriate proportion of each activity should be and no one proposed a systematic, science-based method for developing an appropriate and fair allocation, so my decision carries forward the current designations of areas open to OSV use, as shown on the map included in the Forest Plan and the published LTBMU Snowmobile Guide.

The LTBMU initiated a collaborative process for winter recreation in 2011 intended to find areas of agreement between opposing factions and propose solutions acceptable to all. This process yielded no tangible results and was abandoned by the involved parties in May 2015. The LTBMU is developing a proposal for environmental analysis under Subpart C, Travel Management (36 CFR 212).

Wilderness Recommendations

Currently, 16% of LTBMU lands are part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The current proportion of Wilderness contributes to a balanced distribution of recreation opportunities and land management strategies across the LTBMU landscape. With a current estimate of 5.7 million annual visits, this balance is vital to maintaining and restoring the health of the land and supporting the local economy.

While Wilderness designation does provide some additional protection for natural resources, it also limits management and restoration of those resources. The LTBMU manages 78% of the lands in the Lake Tahoe Basin, and roughly 75% of those lands lie within the Wildland Urban Interface. Strong concerns were expressed in comments and objections by Tahoe Basin fire management organizations regarding the ability to protect adjacent communities if additional Wilderness were recommended.

The areas considered for Wilderness recommendation in Alternatives C and D are Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs). The protections conferred by IRA status have proved adequate to maintain the characteristics that make the IRAs eligible for wilderness recommendation during the past planning period; it is reasonable to expect that these characteristics will continue to be retained under the revised Plan.

Additional Wilderness would eliminate mountain bike use and preclude development of additional trails in those areas. The LTBMU trail system is well-known nationally and also attracts international visitors. We received many comments from the people who enjoy mountain biking, many of whom are members of partner organizations who assist with trail building and maintenance.

Recommendation of the Freel IRA (Alternative D) was the most controversial because in addition to reducing areas open to mountain bikes, this designation would eliminate a large and very popular OSV area that many residents currently access from their backyards and neighborhoods.

Some members of the public suggested modifying the boundaries of the Dardanelles and Freel Roadless areas in order to exclude mountain bike trails. These suggestions were not adopted because while those exclusions would retain current opportunities for mountain bike users, recommendation of Dardanelles and Freel roadless areas with the modified boundaries would preclude any future opportunities for mountain bike trails in those locations and would still eliminate a large and very popular OSV area in the Freel IRA.

The need for a balanced distribution of recreation opportunities and land management strategies on the LTBMU is the primary reason I am not recommending any additional Wilderness.

Backcountry Management Area

Currently designated IRAs comprise most of the Backcountry Management Area. My decision continues to limit the suitable uses and activities for Backcountry to those that will perpetuate the long term roadless character of these lands, as described in Part 2 of the Forest Plan, and perpetuate a landscape character that is predominantly free of human influences. It is my intention that Backcountry areas fill a recreation niche between Wilderness and General Conservation. Dispersed recreation opportunities include hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, camping, and wildlife viewing. Summer motorized recreation is prohibited while winter motorized use (Over-snow vehicle use) is limited to existing designated areas.

My decision creates the Stanford Rock Backcountry Management Area located between Ward and Blackwood Creeks. The Stanford Rock Backcountry Management Area is 3,619 acres, and includes within its boundary an additional 933 acres of Santini-Burton lands; together this totals 4,552 acres. Stanford Rock Backcountry Management Area has been delineated to exclude the WUI threat and defense zones, so that hazardous fuels reduction may continue adjacent to area communities.

My rationale for designating this area as Backcountry includes several factors. The area is mostly relatively steep and inaccessible, and is unroaded except for one road that is not currently in use, and is not expected to be needed in the near future. The Pacific Crest Trail and Tahoe Rim Trail pass through the area, providing high-quality dispersed recreation opportunities.

Stanford Rock, in combination with the adjacent Granite Chief North and Granite Chief South IRAs and the Santini-Burton parcels, brings the contiguous roadless acreage on NFS lands in this part of the LTBMU to 5,741 acres. The Stanford Rock Area contains portions of four California spotted owl and northern goshawk Protected Activity Centers (PACs), and will expand the area available for wildlife migration corridors on the western side of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Most of Stanford Rock is within the semi-primitive non-motorized ROS class and the area will remain closed to motorized summer uses. My decision to designate this area as Backcountry retains the current designation of this area as open to OSV use as an exception within the ROS class, similar to the Freel Peak area. The full length of Blackwood Creek is very popular with OSV enthusiasts, and includes a CalTrans SnoPark parking and staging area just outside Stanford Rock at the base of Blackwood Creek. Retaining the open OSV designation in this area is consistent with my decision to carry forward existing OSV area designations and ROS class exceptions throughout the LTBMU.

2.4 Relationship of the Revised Plan to Existing Decisions

This decision does not affect the direction in the following plans and projects:

1. Eight East-Side Rivers Wild and Scenic River Study Report, Record of Decision and FEIS. Published Feb. 1999. USDA Forest Service, Tahoe NF and LTBMU.
2. Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines, Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision. Published Nov. 1998, USDA Forest Service, Eldorado NF and LTBMU.
3. Cave Rock Management Direction Record of Decision and FEIS. Published Aug. 2003, USDA Forest Service, LTBMU.
4. Tallac Historic Site Master Plan, FEIS and Record of Decision. Published July 14, 1994, USDA Forest Service, LTBMU.
5. Existing designated communication sites, 1988 Forest Plan, as amended, are depicted in Forest Plan Map 11. Existing communication sites are as follows:
 - a. East Peak
 - b. Angels Roost
 - c. Ward Peak
 - d. Spooner Summit
 - e. Brockway Summit
 - f. Zephyr Heights Lookout
 - g. Meeks water tank
 - h. Tahoe Mountain
 - i. Angora Lookout
6. Land Acquisition Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin Final EIS, January 1982, as amended.
7. Sierra Nevada Forests Management Indicator Species Amendment FEIS and Record of Decision. Published December 2007, U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region. R5-MB-159.

2.5 The Environmentally Preferable Alternative

NEPA regulations require agencies to specify the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable (40 CFR1505.2 (b)) in a Record of Decision. Forest Service policy (FSH 1909.15, Section 05) defines environmentally preferable as:

“...the alternative that will best promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA’s section 101 (42 USC 4321). Ordinarily, the environmentally preferable alternative is that

which causes the least harm to the biological and physical environment; it is also the alternative that best protects and preserves historic, cultural, and natural resources. In some situations, there may be more than one environmentally preferable alternative. (36 CFR 220.3)”

Alternative E-Modified is the environmentally preferable alternative because it provides the best balance of management and protection of the landscape. Alternative E-Modified provides appropriate opportunities for active management to work in concert with natural ecological processes to restore and sustain forest and watershed health while conserving plant and animal habitats into the future. Alternative C includes the most aggressive fuels management program as well as the greatest amount of allowable recreation facility expansion; thus of the alternatives analyzed in detail, Alternative C has the greatest potential risk to adversely impact the physical and biological environment. While Alternative D has the least short term risk, due to a largely passive management approach, it has the greatest potential for long term adverse impacts, because needed restoration activities would be precluded. See FEIS Chapter 2, Comparison of Alternatives.

2.6 Alternatives Considered

Alternatives Considered in Detail

In addition to the Selected Alternative (Alternative E-Modified), five other alternatives were developed in response to current management challenges and public issues and concerns, and considered in detail:

Alternative A (No Action)

Alternative A is the no action alternative; management would continue as described in the 1988 LTBMU Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), as amended and implemented. A 7-mile segment of the Upper Truckee River is recommended for Wild and Scenic River designation (common to all alternatives).

Alternative B

Alternative B (DEIS Preferred Alternative) does not significantly change the overall goals and management course set by the existing Forest Plan as currently implemented. It does, however, respond to present natural resource management concerns such as climate change, provides management direction that reflects current science, and provides direction that will better respond to contemporary recreation demands. Management Areas are reduced from 21 to 4, providing more uniform direction. Developed recreation emphasizes retirement of deferred maintenance and allows for a small increase in capacity.

Alternative C

Alternative C proposes a more aggressive approach that would achieve fuels and forest health desired conditions more rapidly than other alternatives. This alternative allows for a modest expansion of developed recreation facilities, more than other alternatives. The Dardanelles Inventoried Roadless Area is recommended for Wilderness designation. No major changes are proposed to the road and trail inventory, but a greater percentage of roads and trails would provide easier access for people and for vehicles of all kinds.

Alternative D

Alternative D is characterized by a passive management approach to watershed restoration and forest health. After currently planned projects are completed, natural processes rather than active management

would be relied upon to achieve the desired conditions. This alternative emphasizes dispersed recreation opportunities, limits expansion of developed facilities, and recommends both the Dardanelles and Freel Inventoried Roadless Areas for Wilderness designation. No major changes are proposed to the road and trail inventory, but they would be managed to emphasize more primitive routes with more challenge.

Alternative E

Alternative E (FEIS Preferred Alternative) was added in response to comments on the DEIS. It is similar to Alternative B, but adds approximately 3,619 acres to the Backcountry Management Area (from the General Conservation Management Area). It allows for recreation expansion with limits between those in Alternatives A and B (10% expansion in overnight accommodations and 5% expansion at ski areas). Changes in plan direction were explained in the response to comments on DEIS/Draft Plan (FEIS, Appendix N).

Alternatives Not Considered in Detail

Eight alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed study. These alternatives are described in FEIS Section 2.5 and are listed below.

1. Conduct Revision as Part of a Sierra Nevada Ecoregion Plan
2. Recommend Additional Wild and Scenic Rivers
3. Revise the Over-Snow Vehicle Use Designations
4. Increase the Pace and Scale of Ecosystem Restoration
5. Citizen's Inventoried Roadless Areas
6. No Grazing Alternative
7. 2001 SNFPA Alternative
8. Consider the Document "National Forests in the Sierra Nevada: A Conservation Strategy" as an Alternative.

3 Public Involvement and Pre-Decisional Administrative Review

Public participation is essential to the Forest Plan revision process. I am grateful to the many individual members of the public, interest groups, and other agencies who have contributed to the revision of the LTBMU Forest Plan; your participation has improved both the Plan and the accompanying analysis, and I expect that in turn, management of our NFS lands will also be improved.

The LTBMU initiated Forest Plan Revision in 2004. Public involvement opportunities began with an inter-agency collaborative process called Pathway 2007 (Pathway). Through Pathway, the partner agencies and the public developed a shared vision for the future of the Lake Tahoe Basin which has been incorporated in the Desired Conditions of the Forest Plan.

Beginning in the winter of 2008 and continuing through 2013, 11 public meetings and workshops and one online webinar were held to solicit input and provide information on Forest Plan Revision. Additional meetings were held with local, state, and federal agencies and interest groups to discuss plan content during this period.

The DEIS was available for comment from June 1 through August 30, 2012. Over 18,500 emails and letters commenting on the DEIS and supporting documents were received. All comments from these letters were sorted, grouped by subject and analyzed. The Response to Comment document can be found in Appendix N of the FEIS. Additional details about the public involvement process are available in Chapter 1 of the FEIS and in the project record.

This plan revision was subject to objection under 36 CFR 219 Subpart B, 2012. Twelve objections were submitted and accepted. Five requests from interested persons in one or more of the objections were received and granted.

Two meetings were held at the LTBMU (May 20, 2014 and July 1, 2014) between the Objection Reviewing Officer and Objectors in order to allow Objectors to clarify the issues and suggest improvements to proposed instructions for the final response to objections.

I find that the LTBMU has fulfilled the requirements for public participation in the revision of a land and resource management plan (36 CFR 219.6 and 219.10b, 1982) and the requirements for pre-decisional administrative review (36 CFR 219 Subpart B, 2012).

4 Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

The Forest Service manages the LTBMU in conformance with many federal laws. In this section I consider the major laws involved in this programmatic-level decision.

4.1 National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)

The NEPA requires that federal agencies prepare detailed statements on proposed actions that significantly affect the quality of the human environment. NEPA's requirement is designed to serve two major functions:

- To provide decision makers with a detailed accounting of the likely environmental effects of a proposed action prior to its adoption; and
- To inform the public of, and allow comment on, such efforts.

I find that the environmental analysis and public involvement process complies with each of the major elements of the requirements set forth by the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508).

First, the FEIS considered a broad range of reasonable alternatives. The five alternatives considered in detail in the FEIS represent only part of the total number of alternatives considered over the course of analysis. Eight additional alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed study for various reasons, as described in Section 2.5 of the FEIS. Alternatives presented in the FEIS encompass a broad range of responses to issues. Over the course of the analysis, public involvement was a collaborative effort where people had the opportunity to fully participate and contribute to alternative development, as well as give formal comments on the DEIS. Substantive comments made on the DEIS are responded to in Appendix N. Changes made in response to the comments included clarifying explanations in the FEIS, additions and revisions to Standards and Guidelines, and addition of approximately 3,600 acres to the Backcountry Management Area.

Second, the FEIS discloses cumulative effects of the alternatives by evaluating past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the planning area. Moreover, although non-federal lands are outside the scope of this decision, effects from their use have been considered in the FEIS to a degree appropriate for a programmatic NEPA document at this scale.

Third, the FEIS makes use of the best available scientific information. This use has been reviewed using a science consistency evaluation process that considered the quality of the information used, how the information was used, and whether risk and uncertainty were acknowledged. The available scientific literature was used to help estimate environmental consequences. Complex vegetation and wildlife habitat models were employed to better understand the relationships between management actions and potential impacts to forest vegetation and wildlife habitat. All of these tools, taken together, constitute use of the best available information.

My decision does not directly authorize any new ground disturbing activities or projects; ground disturbing activities and projects will be subject to additional site-specific environmental analysis that will tier to the FEIS for the Forest Plan and follow applicable public involvement and administrative review procedures.

4.2 National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

The NFMA implementing regulation specifies a number of requirements that guide Forest Service planning. The Forest Plan complies with each of these management requirements, as explained in this ROD and accompanying FEIS and Appendices.

The implementing regulation calls for fish and wildlife habitat to be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area (36 CFR 219.19, 1982). Appendix E describes how the Forest Plan will meet the regulatory requirements to maintain species diversity and viability, and lists the species analyzed in the FEIS.

Management Indicator Species

The implementing regulation for NFMA prescribes the use of management indicator species (MIS), whose response to land management activities can be used to predict the likely response of other species with similar habitat requirements. Details regarding the identification and selection of these MIS, including the reasons for their selection, as required under the Planning Rule ((1982: 36 CFR 219.19(a) (1)), can be found in the 2007 Sierra Nevada Forests Management Indicator Species (SNFMIS) Amendment Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) (USDA Forest Service 2007a) and SNFMIS Amendment Record of Decision (ROD) (USDA Forest Service 2007b); these documents are hereby incorporated by reference.

4.3 Endangered Species Act (ESA)

Consultation requirements under Section 7 of the ESA, as amended, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have been completed. A final Biological Assessment has been completed and is available concurrent with this Record of Decision, and a Biological Opinion has been issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

4.4 Clean Water Act

Full implementation of the Forest Plan is expected to maintain and improve water quality and satisfies all State water quality requirements. I base this finding on the extensive standards and guidelines contained in the Forest Plan, the application of state and nationally approved “Best Management Practices” specifically designed to protect water quality, and the discussion of water quality contained in Chapter 3 of the FEIS. Additionally, project level analysis for subsequent activities under the Revised Forest Plan will be required to demonstrate compliance with the Clean Water Act and state water quality standards.

4.5 Clean Air Act

At the scale of a programmatic plan such as this, the overall level of activities proposed under this decision is not anticipated to degrade air quality or violate state implementation plans. This finding is based on information presented in the FEIS. Conformity determinations and more detailed air quality impact analyses will be made at subsequent levels of planning and analysis where emissions can be more accurately quantified, reasonably forecasted, and local impacts assessed.

4.6 Flood Plains and Wetlands (Executive Orders 11988 and 11990)

These Executive Orders require federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, short term and long term effects resulting from the occupancy and modification of flood plains and the modification or destruction of wetlands. Forest-wide standards and guidelines for soil and water, wetlands, and riparian areas are

designed to minimize effects to flood plains and wetlands, and require use of the National and Regional Best Management Practices.

4.7 Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)

This decision is consistent with Executive Order 12898, which requires that all federal actions consider potentially disproportionate effects on minority and low-income communities, especially if adverse effects to environmental or human health conditions are identified. Adverse environmental or human health conditions created by any of the alternatives considered would not affect any minority or low-income neighborhood disproportionately.

In no case was the management direction in the Forest Plan based on the demographic makeup, occupancy, property value, income level, or any other criteria reflecting the status of adjacent non-federal land. Federally owned lands covered by this land management plan are distributed throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin and are intermixed with non-federal lands. My decision would not affect any non-federal land that would impact minority or low-income neighborhoods disproportionately. There is no evidence that any individual, group, or portion of the community would benefit unequally from this decision.

4.8 Civil Rights Laws

Civil Rights are defined as “the legal rights of United States citizens to guaranteed equal protection under the law” (USDA Forest Service Manual 1730). Civil rights impact analysis for environmental or natural resource actions is part of the social impact analysis package in a necessary environmental impact statement and is not a separate report (USDA Forest Service Handbook 1709.11). The Forest Service is committed to equal treatment of all individuals and social groups in its management programs in providing services, opportunities, and jobs. Because no actual or projected violation of legal rights to equal protection under the law is foreseen under the Revised Forest Plan for any individual or category of people, no civil rights impacts are reported in the FEIS.

4.9 Accessibility

The Forest Service and its cooperators are required to incorporate access standards into all of the agency’s “Federally Conducted” or “Federally Assisted” facilities, programs, services, or activities. This direction is mandated in the following laws and regulations: Architectural Barriers Act of 1968; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 1978; Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title v, section 507) and 7 CFR 15(e). The LTBMU has incorporated accessibility requirements into the Forest Plan components.

4.10 Tribal Government Consultation (Executive Order 13084)

Tribal representatives of the Washoe Tribe were involved throughout the revision process. Prior to the release of the Notice of Intent to revise the Forest Plan, meetings were held with the Washoe Tribe to understand their unique issues and concerns. Information from personal meetings, phone calls, and correspondence with tribal representatives was considered in the selection of the Preferred Alternative.

4.11 The Wilderness Act (Public Law 88-577 [16 U.S. C. 1131-1136])

Implementation of this Plan will comply with the provisions of the Wilderness Act (1964). The Management Area direction and Suitable Uses are consistent with the Act. The Plan also includes a Guideline requiring management of wilderness areas in compliance with specific wilderness management plans or stewardship components identified through national guidance.

5 Implementation

I am providing the following transition direction to ensure the orderly implementation of the Forest Plan that is established and approved in this Record of Decision.

The revised Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Land Management Plan becomes effective 30 days from the date of the publication of the Notice of Plan Decision in the Federal Register (36 CFR 219.17(a), 2012).

New decisions:

All NEPA decisions for projects, activities, contracts, permits, and other authorizing instruments initiated on or after the effective date of this revision must be consistent with the Forest Plan established by this decision. Reissuance of existing contracts, permits and special use authorizations will be treated as new decisions.

NEPA analysis in process:

Decisions for projects, activities, contracts, permits and other authorizing instruments for which NEPA analysis is in process at the time this decision is signed may be completed consistent with the 1988 Forest Plan, as amended, if:

- A Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement was published prior to the effective date of this decision, or
- A legal notice of the availability to comment on an Environmental Assessment was published prior to the effective date of this decision, or
- A Categorical Exclusion was listed in the online Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) prior to the effective date of this decision.

However, in the above circumstances, the line officer has discretion to require consistency with the revised Forest Plan established by this decision.

Signed decisions:

NEPA decisions for projects, activities, contracts, permits, or other authorizing instruments remain in effect until changed circumstances (e.g. listing of a threatened or endangered species, expiration of a permit or authorization) require amendment or revision of an existing NEPA decision or initiation of new NEPA analysis.

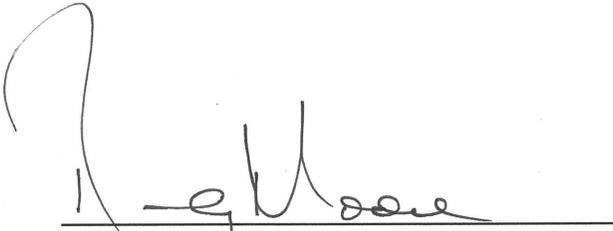
Contact Person

For additional information about the Final EIS, Revised Plan, and Final ROD, contact

Mike LeFevre, Forest Planner
530 543-2840
mlefevre@fs.fed.us
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

6 Approval

I am pleased to announce this decision to approve the revised LTBMU Land Management Plan. In the coming years, we have the opportunity to work together to achieve the desired conditions and objectives of this Forest Plan. We will carefully monitor our activities, and we will adapt the Forest Plan based on what is learned from the planning and implementation of projects. This Forest Plan provides strategic guidance informed by the best available scientific information to restore and sustain NFS lands in the Lake Tahoe Basin for future generations.



RANDY MOORE
Regional Forester
Pacific Southwest Region

6/20/16
Date

Addendum: Objection Instructions

Note: Page numbers in all Response Locations in the following table refer to the final documents published in August 2015 and June 2016: R5-MB-293a (Plan), R5-MB-293b (FEIS), R5-MB-293c (FEIS Appendices), and R5-MB-293d (ROD).

Issue Area	Instructions	Response Location
Wild and Scenic Rivers	1. Complete and document a comprehensive evaluation and systematic inventory of the potential for rivers in the unit to be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Upon completion, document other appropriate river assessment process steps as necessary, consistent with FSH 1909.12, Chapter 80 – Wild and Scenic River Evaluation. This includes documenting (1) final eligibility and/or ineligibility determinations based on the comprehensive evaluation and systematic inventory, as well as (2) preliminary classifications for each tributary determined to be eligible. Current documentation is adequate to support the “changed circumstances” analysis for the Truckee River and Upper Truckee River segments found eligible and evaluated in the Eastside Rivers Study.	FEIS Appendix B
	2. The LTBMU is not required to complete a suitability study for eligible rivers as part of the LMP revision process. If LTBMU decides to complete a suitability study in the LMP revision process, that study must comply with FSH 1909.12 (83-84). If LTBMU decides to delay a suitability study, “the land management plan shall provide for protection of the eligible river corridor until a decision is made on the future use of the river and adjacent lands.” FSH 1909.12 (83.1)	Plan Section 2.5 pp. 99-104 and Section 3.5 pg. 134
	3. If LTBMU decides to complete a suitability study for the upper Truckee River tributaries or any other eligible stream segments, that study must comply with FSH 1909.12 (83-84).	Not Applicable- suitability study is postponed
	4. If LTBMU decides to delay the suitability study, “the land management plan shall provide for protection of the eligible river corridor until a decision is made on the future use of the river and adjacent lands.” FSH 1909.12 (83.1).	Plan Section 2.5 pp. 99-104 and Section 3.5 pg. 134
	5. Revise the existing Backcountry Management Area narrative to state that a suitable WSR (classified as wild) is located within the Management Area. Reference the map of the corridor in the revised LMP in the special areas section.	Plan Section 2.3.3, pg. 76 and Section 2.5.1, pg. 99

Issue Area	Instructions	Response Location
Wild and Scenic Rivers cont.	6. Clarify in the documentation that the Upper Truckee River has been found “suitable” for designation and classified as “wild.”	Plan Section 2.3.3, pg. 76 and Section 2.5.1 pg. 99
Wilderness/Roadless	1. Clarify in the documentation the inventory process used to identify potential wilderness areas to be carried forward for evaluation; including rationale for what was or was not included in the inventory.	FEIS Appendix C, pg. 1
	2. Enhance the rationale for the recommended wilderness decision. If areas are recommended for wilderness, clarify in the documentation how those areas will be managed.	ROD pg. R-11 to R-12
	3. Clarify in the documentation how areas recommended for wilderness will be managed in the future.	Not Applicable – no recommended Wilderness
	4. Clarify in the documentation that approximately 12,000 acres of the CIRAs were added to the Backcountry MA in Alternative D but were not analyzed for wilderness potential or considered for wilderness recommendation under that alternative.	FEIS Chapter 2, pg. 2-11
	5. In the final ROD, enhance and clarify the rationale for why Objectors’ recommendations to modify the boundaries to the Dardanelles and Freel Roadless Areas were not explored further.	ROD pg. R-12
Dispersed Winter Recreation	1. Continue the collaborative approach to resolving winter travel management issues in the LTBMU. If the existing collaborative group can resolve issues and reach agreements with respect to non-motorized and motorized winter recreation areas in LTBMU, the forest shall consider the results of such an agreement in an alternative in its environmental analysis under Subpart C, Travel Management as required by 36 CFR 212.	Project Record Section B - Objection Period, documents <i>2015_0701 SOPA LTBMU.pdf</i> and <i>2015_0515 Snowlands letter.pdf</i>

Issue Area	Instructions	Response Location
Ski Areas	<p>1. Remove “ski area & slopes” expansion limits of 200 acres from SG 100(d). Continue to work with permittees on permit authorization and implementation pursuant to applicable laws, regulations and policies.</p>	<p>Plan Section 3.3 pg.120-121, SG107 and SG109 pp.120-121 (Note: SG100d now SG109);</p> <p>Plan Section 2.3.7 pg.91, Resource Overlay Maps/Ski Areas and Slopes Figures 11-14, pg. 92-95;</p> <p>Project Record Section B – Objection Period document <i>2015_0429_Meeting_Notes_Heavenly.pdf</i></p>
	<p>2. Clarify documentation regarding terms “recovery” and “recovery plan” and how they are used, strictly as they relate to the Endangered Species Act (ESA).</p>	<p>Plan pg. 32</p>
	<p>3. Clarify documentation regarding use of the term: “Conservation Strategy” as used only to describe broad scale strategies (usually at least Basin-wide) intended to proactively prevent the listing of species under ESA. It is appropriate to designate species habitat areas for Whitebark Pine.</p>	<p>Plan Section 2.1.6 pg. 57 Special Status Species Habitat Areas</p>
	<p>4. Change the name Species Refuge Area to Special Status Species Habitat Area</p>	<p>Plan Section 1.1.3 pg. 32-34, Section 2.1.6 pg. 57, Section 2.1.7 pg. 59, Section 2.3.7 pg. 89, and Section 3.2.3 pg. 119, Maps 13 and 14</p>

Issue Area	Instructions	Response Location
Ski Areas cont.	5. Clarify in all documentation that the LTBMU revised LMP only pertains to the portion of NFS lands for the Special Use Permit for the Heavenly Ski Area which spans the LTBMU, and not the lands administered by the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.	Plan Introduction pg. 5; ROD pg. R-10.
Fire Management	1. Add specifications for flame length and fire weather conditions in the WUI similar to those in the 2004 Sierra Nevada Framework Plan Amendment ROD.	Plan Section 3.2.2 pg.108 SG 23
	2. Enhance the language in the revised LMP regarding community protection and priority of protection when choosing suppression tactics in all management areas.	Plan Section 2.1.4 pg. 50 Fire Management Program strategies.
	3. Clarify in the documentation that unplanned ignitions do not include any human-caused ignitions, but only natural ignitions, such as lightning fires. Clarify that all human-caused ignitions would be immediately suppressed, regardless of their location.	Plan Section 2.1.4 pg. 50 Fire Management Program strategies
	4. Add the California and Nevada defensible space regulations In the Other Sources of Information section in the fire management SGs.	Plan Section 3.2.2, pg. 112
	5. Clarify that more than 100 feet of defensible space may be needed depending on site conditions.	Plan Section 3.2.3 pg. 108 SG22
	6. Clarify that ownership and land use vary throughout the WUI and through time. Management practices are applied and adjusted according to jurisdiction.	Plan Section 2.3.7 pg. 86 Resource Overlay Maps
	7. Clarify how adjacent management area direction applies to Santini-Burton and Urban Forest parcels.	Plan Section 2.3.5 pg. 79 Santini-Burton/Urban Forest Parcels Management Area

Issue Area	Instructions	Response Location
Fire Management cont.	8. To understand DC34 as it applies to Red fir stands in the WUI, it needs to be read in combination with DC25, DC33, and DC35. To provide additional clarity, add a clause: "Where this type overlaps the WUI, fires occur as surface fire due to fuels treatments," as was done in DC31. Add this clause to the corresponding Jeffrey Pine DC.	Plan Section 1.1.2 pg. 22 DC28 and pg. 24 DC34
Forest Management/ Wildlife Habitat	1. Adopt the revised SG33 as written above with the following exception: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clarify SG33 clauses c and f: Create a new standard if necessary to clarify when 30 inch dbh or larger may be removed. b. Revise and clarify SG33(c) to be consistent with desired conditions for the forest type (DCs 27-35), including retention of clumps of large trees. 	Plan Section 3.2.2 pg. 110 SG33, SG34, and SG35
	2. Reword SG37 and SG38 to clarify intent: retention of late seral closed canopy and percentages of closure.	Plan Section 3.2.2 pg. 111 SG38 and SG39
	3. Ensure restoration is clearly defined and clearly linked between the DCs and general definition in the glossary.	Plan Section 1.1 pg. 13 Ecological Sustainability
	4. Clarify in the documentation why the graphs are relevant in spite of not reflecting disturbances and why large tree removals were not modeled in Spectrum	FEIS, Chapter 3, pg. 3-205, first and fourth bullets and pg. 3-221, last paragraph. Project Record Section B – Objection Period document <i>2015_0521_dfournier_email.pdf</i>
	5. Use the same FIA data that was used to construct Table 3-42 to produce another table with stems per acres by size class and forest type with a format consistent with other tables in the FEIS.	FEIS, Chapter 3, pg. 3-219 Table 3-43

Issue Area	Instructions	Response Location
Forest Management/ Wildlife Habitat cont.	6. Clarify the intent of SG62 to focus on snag distribution and not focus on specific numbers for specific species. SG62 includes distribution. SG59 covers distribution for post fire conditions. Add more specifics in SG62 from SG59. Evaluate SG88 to ensure there is an emphasis on removal of smaller trees contributing to canopy closure objectives.	Plan pg. 113-114 Note: old SG59 now SG 62; old SG62 now SG66; For old SG88 see SG92
	7. Clarify tables 1 and 2 in the plan. Relate to DC23 which provides guidelines for developing project-level prescriptions that include measurable forest restoration standards to guide vegetation management and wildfire risk reduction efforts.	Plan Section 1.1.2, pp. 20-21, DC 23 pg.18, DC 27 pg. 21, DC 30 pg. 22, and DC 33 pg. 24
Post-fire Management	1. Revise Objectives for creation of early seral habitat (Obj. 6, 9, 11) to clarify that areas disturbed by wildfire, insects, or disease would be utilized to meet these objectives when available.	Plan Section 2.1.5 pp. 51-52
	2. Add a desired condition and a strategy that addresses complex early habitat.	Plan Section 1.1.3 DC68; Section 2.1.6 pg. 55, 7 th bullet
	3. Revise Standard 59 to require retention of snag habitat, when appropriate.	Plan Section 3.2.3 pp. 113-114 SG62
	4. Enhance documentation to reflect literature review and synthesis of post fire logging effects for California Spotted Owl.	FEIS pp. 3-490 and 3-514; project record Section B - Objection Period document <i>2015_0330 Coppeto email objection instructions.pdf</i>

Issue Area	Instructions	Response Location
Wildlife Viability, MIS, and Monitoring	1. To move towards adhering to CFR 219.12, coordinate with the Region 5 Forests currently under the LMP revision process using the 2012 Planning Rule to collaboratively identify focal species and develop a monitoring strategy for the identified species.	Project Record Section B – Objection Period document <i>2015_0327_Focal Species meeting notes.pdf</i>
	2. Clarify in the documentation how the quality of habitat and trends of MIS varies by alternative.	FEIS Chapter 3 section 3.4.14 pp.267-315
	3. Reinstate the 2004 Sierra Framework management direction related to CASPO habitat until such time as the California Spotted Owl Conservation Strategy is completed. At that time revise plan components for CASPO.	Plan -numerous revised and removed standards and objectives, detailed in project record Section B – Objection Period documents <i>2014_CASPO changes to Plan</i> and <i>2014_0711_late seral and PAC SG replacements</i> . Plan Appendix D Limited Operating Periods; FEIS Appendix E Limited Operating Periods;
	4. Add Desired Conditions for Marten (missing in FEIS/Plan, use existing direction from 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment -SNFPA.)	Plan DC 67 pg. 30
Planning and NEPA	No instructions.	