



File Code: 1950
Date: May 17, 2018

Dear Interested Party:

The Los Padres National Forest (LPNF) is pleased to announce the availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and draft Record of Decision (ROD) for the Strategic Community Fuelbreak Improvement project on the Monterey Ranger District. The purpose of this letter is to provide notification of the availability of the FEIS, draft ROD, and opportunity to file an objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218 Subpart A and B.

The Strategic Community Fuelbreak Improvement Project is an outcome of Firescape Monterey; a local collaborative effort that has brought together local community members, environmental organizations, federal, state and local governments, and others to identify key social and ecological values, activities that threaten those values, and strategies to manage those threats. The threat of wildland fire to human communities prompted Firescape Monterey to focus on helping communities become fire adapted. Through collaborative learning, the Forest Service has utilized input from local stakeholders as we focus on planning for future wildfire events. As a result, this project is designed to focus on the wildland/urban interface with strategies to reduce wildfire risk to life and property, helping to transform local communities into safe and resilient places to live.

The FEIS evaluates the environmental consequences of re-establishing and maintaining approximately 24 miles (~542 acres) of historically used fuelbreaks, all of which originated as firelines, within the wildland urban interface threat zones on National Forest System lands. To effectively reduce wildfire risk and reduce fire suppression impacts on wilderness resources, approximately 10.4 miles (~169 acres) of fuelbreaks are located at strategic locations within the Ventana Wilderness near the communities of Big Sur, Palo Colorado, Cachagua, and Jamesburg. Upon re-establishment, maintenance of the fuelbreaks would occur every 3-6 years.

Alternative 4, the selected alternative in the draft ROD, is a combination of treatment methods designed to minimize impacts to resources and at the same time allow for safe and efficient implementation of the project. Within wilderness, methods include a combination of manual treatments utilizing traditional tools and handheld motorized tools for cutting vegetation, piling and pile burning. Traditional tools will be emphasized with the option to use handheld motorized tools for reasons of safety, ability to implement the project within reasonable timelines considering time constraints, and efficiency. To determine the minimal tool in wilderness, a Situational Report will be prepared by a team of relevant specialists for each wilderness fuelbreak segment following adaptive management criteria. Outside of wilderness, chippers, masticators, and hand application of herbicide will also be allowed.

The LPNF studied alternative courses of action, including completing no treatments, treatments without the use of herbicides, and treatments using traditional handtools only in wilderness. The selected alternative (Alternative 4) is preferred because it addresses the purpose and need for the



project, to proactively reduce the risk and threat of wildfire to communities in the wildland urban interface and to reduce adverse fire suppression impacts on the wilderness landscape. Alternative 4 will also result in less duration and frequency of treatments resulting in less costs, lower safety risk, and fewer associated impacts to wilderness character.

The FEIS and draft ROD are available for review at the Monterey Ranger District office, 406 South Mildred Ave, King City, CA 93903, and at the Supervisor's Office, 6750 Navigator Way, Suite 150, Goleta, CA 93117. It can also be viewed on-line at the following internet address: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=40713>

How to File an Objection

Objections will only be accepted from those who submitted timely project-specific written comments during any designated opportunity for public comment (36 CFR 218.5). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted comments unless based on new information arising after the designated opportunities for comment. Individuals or representatives of an entity submitting objections must sign the comments or verify identity upon request. Federal agencies may not file objections (36 CFR 218.5(e)).

Objections must be submitted within 45-days following publication of the legal notice announcing availability of the FEIS and draft ROD in the Santa Barbara News-Press, the newspaper of record. The date of this legal notice is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Those wishing to object should not rely upon dates or timeframes provided by any other source. It is the objector's responsibility to ensure evidence of timely receipt (36 CFR 218.9).

Objections must be submitted to the reviewing officer: Randy Moore, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service; Attn: Strategic Community Fuelbreak Improvement project; 1323 Club Drive, Vallejo, CA 94592. Ph. (707) 562-8737. Objections may be submitted via mail, FAX (707-562-9229), or delivered during business hours (M-F 8:00am to 4:00pm). Electronic objections, in common (.doc, .pdf, .rtf, .txt) formats, may be submitted to: objections-pacificsouthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us with Subject: Strategic Community Fuelbreak Improvement project.

Objections must include (36 CFR 218.8(d)): 1) name, address and telephone; 2) signature or other verification of authorship; 3) identify a single lead objector when applicable; 4) project name, Responsible Official name and title, and name of affected National Forest(s) and/or Ranger District(s); 5) reasons for, and suggested remedies to resolve your objections; and, 6) description of the connection between your objections and your prior comments. Incorporate documents by reference as per 36 CFR 218.8(b). Names of objectors will be part of the public record subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

Timing of the Project Decision and Implementation

When the objection filing period has ended and responses have been made to any objections by the Reviewing Officer, the Responsible Official may make a final decision on the project. The Reviewing Officer shall issue a written response to any objectors within 45-days following the end of the objection filing period (36 CFR 218.26(b)). If no legitimate objections are filed, a decision can be made on the 5th business day following the close of the filing period

(36 CFR 218.12). Implementation may begin immediately after the decision is made.

For additional information, contact Kyle Kinports at the Los Padres National Forest Supervisor's Office at kkinports@fs.fed.us or 805-961-5710.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'KEVIN B. ELLIOTT', with a large, loopy flourish extending to the right.

KEVIN B. ELLIOTT
Forest Supervisor