Eldorado National Forest

View 88 Fuels Reduction Project

Project Area: The View 88 Fuels Reduction Project is located adjacent to Highway 88 in the Eldorado National Forest in Amador County, beginning approximately 10 miles east of Pioneer. The landscape of the View 88 Project is the western slope of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, with elevations ranging between 3,880 and 7,680 feet in an area that is primarily forested federal and private lands.

Goals and Objectives:

- Maintaining and enhancing Highway 88 as a designated state scenic highway
- Protecting private property in the WUI defense zone
- Reducing surface fuels and altering the vegetation structure in strategic locations
- Reducing stand densities in order to increase forest resilience to insect attack and density-related mortality
- Enhancing the function and natural diversity in the vicinity of oaks, aspen, and meadows
- Conducting treatments in an economically effective manner

Project Summary: In order to meet the multiple goals and objectives listed above, the following activities will be performed for approximately 2,106 acres in the wildland-urban interface along 22 miles of Scenic Highway 88. The treatments for this project are limited to ¼ mile from Highway 88.

Mechanical Treatment: In general, small conifers (4-10 inches in diameter) that contribute to ladder fuel will be removed. Larger conifers (10-30 inches in diameter) will be removed to meet the desired trees per acre and canopy density prescription. Roadside hazard trees within or adjacent to the project area will be removed for public and employee safety. Conifers that overtop oaks and encroach on meadows and aspen stands will be removed. Temporary fences will be built around aspen stands to prevent damage to young aspen sprouts from browsing animals. In existing plantations, small trees (4-10 inches) will be removed and the rest of the trees will be pruned and the slash scattered.

To meet the Visual Management objective, trees (less than 30 inches in diameter) will be removed around selected natural focal points; such as, rock formations, unique character trees, large pines, and oaks. Some trees that impair views from Highway 88 of meadows, aspen groves, and panoramic vistas will also be removed. In some units trees will be removed to create small openings (less than two acres) or wider spacing (40 foot spacing) to enhance visual and ecological diversity. Small trees (4 to 10 inches diameter) will be pruned or removed to create a more park-like appearance in overstocked stands.

Prescribed Burning: After the hand or mechanical treatments are accomplished, low intensity prescribed burning will be utilized.

Treatment: Commercial harvest, pre-commercial thinning, hand cutting, grapple, dozer and hand piling, hand and dozer lines, low intensity pile, jackpot, and understory burning.

Total Acres: 2,106 **Implementation:** 2017, multi-year

Responsible Agency/Organization: U.S. Forest Service, Eldorado National Forest

Partners: The National Wild Turkey Federation will provide biomass removal under a cooperative agreement with the USFS Eldorado National Forest.

Cooperators: Other organizations that have been involved in developing the project include: Amador, Alpine, and El Dorado counties, the Federal Highway Administration, and the California Department of Transportation.

Values to be Protected: High sierra scenic character, Highway 88, Scenic Byway features, cultural resources, public safety, evacuation route for homeowners and recreationists, and local communities.

Highlights:

Recreation & Access

The Highway 88 corridor is designated as an emergency egress route for evacuation, and is one of the routes across the Sierra Nevada that is kept open year-round. Highway 88 is heavily used during summer and fall seasons when wildfires are more likely to occur, and the location of the project area above deeply incised canyons at the headwaters of the North Fork of the Mokelumne River and the Middle Fork of the Cosumnes River provides pathways for wildfire to Highway 88.

Highway 88 Scenic Byway Management Guidelines

Highway 88 is a designated California Scenic Highway and a Forest Service Scenic Byway. In 1985 a six-agency Planning Agreement was signed by Amador, Alpine, and El Dorado counties; the Federal Highway Administration; the California Department of Transportation; and the Eldorado National Forest providing long-term direction to ensure a scenic and safe highway experience for forest visitors traveling the highway. The Highway 88 Scenic Byway Management Guidelines emphasize maintaining visual integrity through creation of visual diversity, while minimizing visual evidence of vegetation management.

Visual Resource Management

There is an opportunity through vegetative management to enhance the attractiveness of the corridor. Some of the areas along the highway consist of long road segments lined with overstocked, monotonous vegetative stands creating a tunnel effect with little variety. This project will break up the tunnel effect by creating vistas of the nearby canyons; and maintaining more open and random spacing of trees which allows filtered views of the adjacent forest floor. Some of these areas offer opportunities to enhance the visual quality by opening up pockets surrounding attractive focal points along the corridor.

Wildland Urban Intermix

The entire View 88 Fuels Reduction Project analysis area is classified as Wildland Urban Intermix, as defined in the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision (SNFPA ROD 2004). Pioneer was identified in the Federal Register as a community at risk, and is 5 to 6 miles from the project area. Five locations, Dew Drop, Ham's Station, Cook's Station, Lumberyard, and Peddler Hill Maintenance Station, are classified as defense zone and the rest of the area is classified as threat zone. Existing fuel conditions present a high risk to lives and property.

Fuels

Amador District's most critical fuel break along Highway 88 from Cook's Station to Lumberyard Fire Station.

Biomass

In the western third of the project, where fuels are heaviest, ground fuels would be piled and available to supply a co-generation plant or other biomass product.

Aspen & Oak

Aspen and oaks are currently declining due to conifer encroachment and competition. Aspen is shade intolerant and needs full sunlight for successful establishment and growth. The aspen stands in the View 88 project are currently being overtopped by conifers, resulting in a lack of successful regeneration and declining stand health. Removing competing conifers maximizes sun exposure and reducing the insulating surface fuel layer will stimulate sprouting. Oaks are being shaded out by conifers, resulting in small crowns and declining health. Removing conifers in and around overtopped oaks will improve conditions for oak vigor, regeneration, and mast production.

Meadow Restoration

Natural successional processes are resulting in conifer encroachment in many meadow communities and in turn, diminishing the size and function of the meadows. In a region dominated by dense coniferous forest, subalpine meadows create natural fire breaks, support distinctive plant and animal communities, provide habitat and summer forage for wildlife and offer unique recreational opportunities.

Project Area Map: