
Appendix G
National Forest Management Act Findings

Appendix G: National Forest Management Act Findings

Finding of Facts Pursuant to the National Forest Management Act

Based on the environmental analysis and prescriptions for stands in the Watdog Project Area, the following finding of facts pursuant to the National Forest Management Act, as follows:

- A. **The minimum specific management requirements to be met in carrying out projects and activities for the National Forest System are set forth in this section. Under 16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(E) a Responsible Official may authorize project and activity decisions on NFS lands to harvest timber only where:**

1. Soil, slope, or other watershed conditions will not be irreversibly damaged

The Plumas National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines as amended by *Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act* (HFQLG Act) and the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Record of Decision (SNFPA FSEIS ROD) relating to soil cover, water quality, and riparian system protection, along with Scientific Assessment Team guidelines and Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be implemented to protect and mitigate potential impacts to soil and water quality.

The District Hydrologist has determined through a Cumulative Watershed Effects (CWE) Analysis that no irreversible or irretrievable commitments of soils, riparian, or water resources are expected for any alternative (see Hydrology and Soils Reports).

2. There is assurance that such lands can be adequately restocked within five years after harvest

All trees proposed for removal under the Watdog Project would be by thinning from below for the Defensible Fuel Profile Zones (DFPZs) and group selection, which is an uneven-age (all-aged) method. Therefore, no regeneration harvests are proposed under this project. However, the areas proposed for harvest under group selections can be regenerated using standard reforestation techniques.

3. Protection is provided for streams, streambanks, shorelines, lakes, wetlands, and other bodies of water from detrimental changes in water temperatures, blockages of water courses, and deposits of sediment, where harvests are likely to seriously and adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat

The Plumas National Forest LRMP forestwide Standards and Guidelines as amended by the HFQLG Act SNFPA FSEIS ROD relating to soil cover, water quality, and riparian system protection, along with Scientific Assessment Team guidelines and BMPs would be implemented to protect and mitigate potential impacts to soil and water quality.

4. The harvesting system to be used is not selected primarily because it will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output of timber.

All trees proposed for removal under this project are in segments of DFPZs called for by the HFQLG Act. The purpose of removing trees is to reduce ladder fuels and crown density. Harvest and treatment methods are used to implement this direction within the limits imposed by the SNFPA EIS ROD. In those areas where trees are removed for commercial purposes, the primary silvicultural method is intermediate harvest (thinning from below) and utilizes ground-based equipment.

It is not likely there would be no economic timber sale with this proposal, but there would be service contracts with an embedded timber sale. Wood products would be removed from the area for use in local mills or energy plants but not in the quantities anticipated with the HFQLG Act.

SNFPA FSEIS ROD standards and guides reduce most opportunities for an economical return and produce nominal timber outputs. The various treatment methods and systems were prescribed to provide a viable method of meeting a wide variety of resource management objectives without optimizing one resource at the expense of another.

B. A Responsible Official may authorize project and activity decisions on NFS lands using clearcutting, seed tree cutting, shelterwood cutting, and other cuts designed to regenerate an even-aged stand of timber as a cutting method only where:

Even-aged management would not be applied to the stands at this time.

1. For clearcutting, it is determined to be the optimum method, and for other such cuts it is determined to be appropriate, to meet the objectives and requirements of the relevant land management plan (16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(F)(i))

Group selection harvests (0.5 – 2.0 acres) are an uneven-aged management method and are allowed by SNFPA EIS ROD, Table 2, page 68.

2. The interdisciplinary review as determined by the Secretary has been completed and the potential environmental, biological, esthetic, engineering, and economic impacts on each advertised sale area have been assessed, as well as the consistency of the sale with the multiple use of the general area (16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(F)(ii))

The interdisciplinary team (IDT) used a systematic, interdisciplinary approach to analyze the affected area and estimate the environmental effects. The analysis included input through public involvement. The interdisciplinary analysis was based on LRMP direction, as amended by HFQLG Act and SNFPA FSEIS ROD of 2004.

3. Cut blocks, patches, or strips are shaped and blended to the extent practicable with the natural terrain (16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(F)(iii))

Even-aged management would not be applied to the stands at this time. However, group selection areas are dispersed, and the shapes are, indeed, naturally appearing.

- 4. There are established according to geographic areas, forest types, or other suitable classifications the maximum size limits for areas to be cut in one harvest operation, including provision to exceed the established limits after appropriate public notice and review by the responsible Forest Service officer one level above the Forest Service officer who normally would approve the harvest proposal; provided, that such limits shall not apply to the size of areas harvested as a result of natural catastrophic conditions such as fire, insect and disease attack, or windstorm (16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(F)(iv))**

The Watdog Project is designed to fulfill the management direction specified in the Plumas National Forest LRMP, as amended by the HFQLG ROD (1999) and the SNFPA FSEIS ROD (January 21, 2004).

To implement group selection harvest from 0.5 to 2.0 acres in size, as directed in the HFQLG Act (Section 401 (b) (1) and (d) (2)) and the HFQLG Forest Plan Amendment, to test the effectiveness of an uneven-aged silvicultural system in achieving an uneven-aged, multi-story, fire resilient forest; provide an adequate timber supply that contributes to the economic stability of rural communities; and promote ecological health of the forest.

The HFQLG Act specifies treating annually 0.57 percent of the pilot project acreage with group selection harvests. In the HFQLG EIS (Appendix E – Group Selection Analysis) there is a calculation of 8,700 acres being treated annually over the pilot project land base. The proposed group selection harvests (231 acres) are within the calculated 20-year re-entry levels (271 acres) of group selection targets for the Watdog Project area.

- 5. Such cuts are carried out in a manner consistent with the protection of soil, watershed, fish, wildlife, recreation, and esthetic resources, and the regeneration of the timber resource (16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(F)(v))**

No harvest cuts are designed to regenerate even-aged stands. However, soil, watershed, fish and wildlife, recreation, and aesthetic resources would be protected. Also, as stated above all areas can be regenerated using standard methods.

- 6. Under 16 U.S.C. 1604 (m) even-aged stands of trees scheduled for regeneration harvest generally have reached culmination of mean annual increment of growth, unless the purpose of the timber cutting is excepted in the land management plan (FSM 1921.17f)**

Even-aged management would not be applied to the stands at this time. Group selection harvests (0.5–2.0 acres) are an uneven-aged management method.

