Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact

Grizz Project Environmental Assessment

USDA Forest Service, Plumas National Forest
Beckwourth Ranger District, Plumas County, California

Introduction

The objectives in the Grizz Project Environmental Assessment (EA) are to: reduce hazardous fuels, improve forest health, support the local economy, provide access needed to meet project objectives and reduce transportation system impacts. The Grizz Project is located approximately four miles northwest of Lake Davis and seven miles southeast of Taylorsville, CA. The Grizz general analysis area is approximately 19,400 acres and the proposed treatment and alternatives within the planning area range from approximately 3,619 to 4,057 acres. The project is located entirely within the Beckwourth Ranger District of the Plumas National Forest (PNF). It is within all or parts of T23N, R12E; T24N, R11E; and T24N, R12E. The project is located within the Mt. Ingalls and Penman Peak Management Areas of the 1988 PNF Land Resource Management Plan (LRMP).

Grizz Project Background

In order to meet project objectives, planned activities include: construction of a defensible fuel profile zone (DFPZ), thinning outside of the DFPZ in the area known as Area Thin, group selection (GS) and road improvements and decommissioning.

This project was proposed according to management direction provided by the 1988 LRMP as amended by the 1999 Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group (HFQLG) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD), the 2003 HFQLG Supplemental EIS and ROD, and the 2004 SNFPA Supplemental EIS and ROD. The 2004 SNFPA allowed for the HFQLG Forest Recovery Act (FRA) to be implemented as originally intended under the 1999 HFQLG FEIS. The 5-year pilot study provided for by the HFQLG FRA was designed to test the effectiveness of certain resource management activities at meeting various ecologic, economic and fuel reduction objectives. Fuel break construction consisting of a strategic system of DFPZ is just one of the requirements of the Act. Other activities include GS, Area Thinning treatments (or Individual Tree Selection), as well as riparian management and restoration projects. In February 2003, the President signed the FY03 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, which extended the HFQLG Pilot Project legislation by five years. The Consolidated Appropriations Act for 2008 (HR 2764) extended the HFQLG Pilot Project to September 30, 2012.

Decision

I have decided to select Alternative 4, which is fully described in the Grizz Project Environmental Assessment (EA) (pgs. 50-52) and its associated planning record, because it best meets the project objectives while addressing the issues surrounding this project. I have reviewed the Grizz Project EA, concur with the analysis of the project and understand the environmental effects disclosed therein. I have also considered the comments submitted during the scoping period and the 30-day public comment period for this project. Alternative 4 will treat 2,558 acres of DFPZ as compared to the Proposed Action's (PA) 2,106 acres. Alternative 4 also proposes forest health treatments on approximately 1,061 acres of Area Thin. In addition, a total of 126 acres of GS will be harvested throughout the DFPZ and Area Thin. Alternative 4 does not propose any Area Thin or GS treatments within California spotted owl home range core areas (HRCAs). In instances where the DFPZ lies within the HRCA, there will be only treatments such as thinning or mastication. This will reduce potential effects to the California spotted owl. Alternative 4 will also decommission approximately 7.5 miles of system and non-system roads, close 2 miles of system roads and construct about 0.5 mile of new roads within the project area.

Reasons for the Decision

The two large fires that occurred on this Forest (approximately 65,000 acres for Moonlight and approximately 22,000 acres for the Antelope Complex) this last summer have clearly demonstrated that wildfires are a very real threat to wildlife habitat and the local communities. I feel it is critical to take immediate action based on the recent extreme fire behavior on the Forest. The project area is at an elevated risk of wildfire due to high stand densities, excessive fuel loadings, and unsafe conditions for fire fighters to take a stand against an oncoming wildfire. Failing to treat would allow fuel buildup and dense stand conditions to persist, leaving forests susceptible to large wildfires, insects and disease.

In reaching my decision to choose Alternative 4, I carefully considered the project objectives and the issues and concerns that were raised during public scoping and during the 30-day comment period. I believe that Alternative 4 best balances the project objectives and issues. I considered the effects of the No-action Alternative as compared to the Action Alternatives. Due to the existing potential for wildfire, I feel that there is an imminent need for fuels reduction in the area and it is critical to reduce the threat from wildfires as well as improve forest health. In addition, implementing Alternative 4 would remove timber products and provide benefits to assist the local economy and communities. I also understand the concerns regarding the effects of the project to wildlife habitat. I feel that Alternative 4 can effectively meet the project objectives while minimizing potential effects to the California spotted owl. For further discussion regarding wildlife habitat, please refer to the section below under "Effects to California Spotted Owl Habitat".

Strategically Reduce Fuel Loads

I chose Alternative 4 because it meets the Purpose and Need for fuel reduction by creating a DFPZ where fire behavior will be moderated. Alternative 4 also provides continuity with the future planned Ingalls DFPZ, and was developed partly in response to the relocation of the Ingalls DFPZ that occurred after the Proposed Action was scoped.

Recent fires on this Forest such as the Stream Fire (2001), Boulder Complex (2006), Moonlight (2007) and Antelope Complex (2007) have stressed the need for and importance of fuel reduction treatments. A written briefing from the Boulder Complex concluded that flame lengths and fire intensity lowered when the fire entered the Antelope Border DFPZ (Moghaddas et al. 2006). The DFPZ treatments that burned because of this fire demonstrated that crown separation, as well as reduced ladder fuels are necessary to provide safe working conditions for firefighters. The DFPZ also provided Incident Commanders with a safer place to deploy firefighters and more options on how to contain the fire. The Fire Behavior Assessment Team (FBAT) in the assessment of the Antelope Complex Wheeler Fire echoed similar conclusions (Fites et. al, 2007). During this recent fire complex, FBAT identified that previous fuel treatments played important roles during fire suppression activities.

The fuel reduction treatments in Alternative 4 will moderate wildfire by reducing ladder and ground fuels and increasing crown separation in the stands. As with all of the action alternatives, canopy cover within the DFPZ will be reduced on average to 40%; fire types become surface fires after treatment; surface fuels will be between 5-10 tons/acre; canopy base heights will be raised to greater than 12 feet tall; and flame lengths will be less than 4 feet tall. Combined, these treatments will result in a surface rather than crown fire at 90th percentile fire weather conditions. The reduction of fuels will allow for an increase in fireline production rates, adding to firefighter efficiency.

The DFPZ locations in Alternative 4 will connect with the Freeman and Humbug DFPZs and the future planned Ingalls and Jackson DFPZs. The goal of the HFQLG Pilot Project is to provide DFPZ connectivity across seven Ranger Districts in the Plumas and Lassen NF and the Sierraville Ranger District of the Tahoe NF. A network of DFPZs will help slow the spread of wildfires across the landscape and protect local communities from the threat of wildfire. The larger amount of DFPZ acres treated in Alternative 4 (2,558 acres) than the Proposed Action (2,106 acres) will mean that benefits of fuel treatments shall provide greater protection for the Grizz Project area for suppression efforts to slow the spread of wildfires.

Improve Forest Health within the Grizz Project

I chose Alternative 4 because it meets the Purpose and Need for improving forest health in stands outside of the DFPZ known as the Area Thin. Like all of the Action Alternatives, the treatments in Alternative 4 will reduce stand density, improve forest health and increase growth rates in stands within the Area Thin.

As a forest becomes crowded (overstocked) with trees, the competition between individual trees may increase. This increased competition can stress forested stands and/or individual trees as they compete for limited resources, making them more susceptible to insects and disease. Trees that die can become fuel for wildfires. Treatments in Alternative 4 will focus on reducing competition between trees in a stand. A reduction in stand density will increase a stand's resiliency and lessen susceptibility to insect and disease outbreaks.

Treating stands in the Area Thin will improve the growth rates of trees. Stands usually increase their growth rates after thinning as a result of decreased inter-tree competition. For example, in the Area Thin, the quadratic mean diameter (QMD) of California Wildlife Habitat Relationship (CWHR) Sierra mixed conifer (size class 4 with an average canopy cover of 40-59%) is predicted to grow from a QMD of 7" to a QMD of 13" in 20 years. This forest vegetation type is the most common type treated within the Grizz Project Area. QMD is a weighted average of diameter at breast height (dbh) that gives a better representation of the trees in a stand. In contrast, if no thinning were to take place (No-action Alternative), trees would only grow from a QMD of 7" to a QMD of 10" in 20 years. Thinning will directly enable these stands to progress into larger size classes and provide the large tree component that is currently in low representation. Alternative 4 is predicted to improve growth rates on a majority of the forest vegetation types within the Grizz Project area. For growth rates on forest vegetation types treated in Alternative 4, please refer to the Grizz Project Forest Vegetation Report in the Grizz Project record.

Emulate Small Natural Disturbances

I chose Alternative 4 because it meets the Purpose and Need for emulating small natural disturbances by placing GS in Area Thin and DFPZ units. The GS treatments will remove pockets of true fir and/or disease when practical. The GS in Alternative 4 will also help diversify species, age and size classes across the PNF.

Alternative 4 plans a total of 126 acres of GS in the DFPZ (73 acres) and Area Thin (53 acres). GS treatments are ½ to 2 acre treatments that remove all conifers up to 30" dbh. GS in the Action Alternatives would emulate small natural disturbances and create early seral stage habitat by removing insect and disease pockets, opening up the stand to encourage pine regeneration and move some of the forest vegetation within the Grizz Project area towards a balance of age and size classes. GS are meant to emulate small, natural disturbances such as localized mortality or what small, patchy fires might do. The GS treatments in Alternative 4 where possible, will be placed in pockets of dead or dying trees. This usually helps distribute different age and size classes due to the natural heterogeneity of disturbances. GS are also intended to help move the PNF towards a regulated stand condition of uneven-aged management. Currently, there is a greater amount of uniformity of age classes with less structural complexity than past, historical conditions. In a regulated stand condition, the size class of a stand serves as a proxy for age class. Ideally, all the age classes would be distributed across the landscape with half of the area having

trees 24” dbh or larger. GS are ideal for encouraging the regeneration of pines because of the large amount of sunlight that is able to reach the forest floor. White fir tends to regenerate under more heavily shaded conditions. GS will give pine regeneration an advantage over white fir. Areas of high concentration of fir will also be targeted for treatment when deemed feasible. GS will either be replanted or rely upon natural regeneration.

Reduce Fuel Loads in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas

I chose Alternative 4 because it meets the Purpose and Need of fuel reduction in riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCAs) by treating approximately 322 acres of RHCAs. Treatments within RHCAs will reduce fuels while maintaining important riparian habitat components such as canopy cover while minimizing soil disturbance.

Fires within treated RHCAs are expected to behave similarly to a treated DFPZ unit. Avoiding treatment in RHCAs puts valuable habitat at risk. Without any treatment, these areas are at an elevated risk of being lost to crown and stand-replacing fires. Untreated RHCAs can contribute to extreme fire behavior, which may compromise the effectiveness of the DFPZ. Untreated RHCAs within DFPZs can act as “wicks” allowing higher intensity fire to possibly bypass the protection of the DFPZ. The Boulder Complex report and the HFQLG FY 2006 Monitoring Report both acknowledge that fire behavior was greater in the untreated RHCA portions of the Antelope Border DFPZ (Moghaddas 2006). This resulted in a stand-replacing fire event and the loss of important riparian habitat.

Fuel reduction treatments in RHCAs will not enter the inner equipment exclusion zone. By treating in RHCAs and not entering the inner equipment exclusion zone, important riparian habitat components such as shade and water temperature will be maintained. In the inner zones of perennial fish-bearing streams, canopy would remain at 60% or greater, where available. I believe that this will help mitigate any disturbances to streams while protecting them from wildfire.

Reduce Transportation System Impacts

I chose Alternative 4 because it meets the Purpose and Need for reducing transportation system impacts in the Grizz Project area. Like all of the other action alternatives, Alternative 4 plans to decommission approximately 7.5 miles of system and non-system roads, close 2 miles of system roads and construct about 0.5 mile of new roads. I realize that many of our public use roads as part of their recreational experience for woodcutting, hunting and exploration of the forest. Roads are important for the Forest Service as well, to implement project activities and for fire suppression. The roads proposed for decommission in this project are a small fraction of the roads within the Grizz Project area and have negative impacts on watersheds and riparian areas within the project area.

The roads that will be decommissioned have been coordinated with decisions in the Forest-wide OHV Route Designation Project and access is still provided to meet the needs of the public and the Forest Service. Decommissioning and closing roads would restore hydrologic function to

26.4 acres within the project area and reduce 26 road stream crossings, therefore lessening potential sources of sediment transfer into streams.

The roads proposed for decommissioning and closing impair hydrologic function, contribute excessively to stream sedimentation and affect water quality downstream. These roads are in poorly located areas and/or are contributing to watershed impacts. Decommissioning usually involves subsoiling and recontouring an existing road bed, restoring the hydrologic function; essentially removing it from the landscape. Closing roads usually implies blocking access to the public through the use of gates or some other physical means. Although the road remains on the landscape, closing will allow the road to be "reopened" if needed at a later date.

Contribute to the Local Economy

I chose Alternative 4 because it meets the Purpose and Need for supporting the local economy by contributing jobs and forest products to the community. It also responds to the issue of the Proposed Action's lack of cost effectiveness by modifying various units to lower the cost of treatment per acre.

Like all the Action Alternatives, Alternative 4 provides jobs to the local community and timber products for the local mills. Alternative 4 is estimated to provide 94 full-time jobs, produce approximately 6.3 million board feet (mmbf) of sawlog volume and generate roughly a total of $4,028,000 in employee related income.

Plumas County's geographic location has historically isolated it from urban job markets. It's reliance on natural resources ties much of the local economy to the proper management of natural resources. The decrease of logging since the mid-1980's has caused the number of sawmills within the area to dwindle from six to one, located in Quincy. Economic stability is an important factor for community health. The QLG was formed, partly in response to the need for economic stability within Plumas County. The HFQLG Forest Recovery Act directs the Forest Service to "develop a resource management program that promotes ecologic and economic health for certain Federal lands and communities in the Sierra Nevada area." Forest products have been and still are an important component of the local economy, history and culture.

Effects to California Spotted Owl Habitat

The Grizz Project Area was extensively treated in the past, both by private landowners and by the Forest Service. Previous insect salvage, logging sales and private timber harvesting within the Grizz Project area have left isolated pockets of habitat, which are important to the California spotted owl. Although the project area will greatly benefit from thinning and fuel reduction treatments, further influences to California spotted owl habitat at this time are a concern. Alternative 4 responds to this issue by eliminating Area Thin and GS units within HRCAs (Home Range Core Areas). In Alternative 4, DFPZ fuel treatments will still occur within HRCAs so as to maintain DFPZ connectivity and effectiveness. However, no GS will take place within a DFPZ unit unless it is outside of a HRCA. As a result, Alternative 4 only treats 258 acres of HRCA compared to Alternative 1 (485 acres treated) and Alternative 3 (701 acres treated).

Alternatives Considered In Detail, But Not Selected

Alternative 1 (Proposed Action)

Alternative 1 proposes to treat 2,106 acres of DFPZ, 1,580 acres of Area Thin and 110 acres of GS. I did not choose this alternative because the proposed treatment had a greater effect to the existing California spotted owl habitat, and the DFPZ location did not provide continuity with the future planned Ingalls DFPZ. It also was less economically efficient than Alternative 4.

Alternative 2 (No-action)

Alternative 2 does not propose any treatment within the Grizz Project area, except ongoing administrative activities. The No-action Alternative does not meet the intention of the HFQLG FRA or the Purpose and Need of the Grizz Project. It does not create a DFPZ, reduce hazardous fuels, improve forest health, reduce transportation system impacts, or contribute to the local economy.

The Grizz Project area was extensively treated in the past, both by private landowners and by the Forest Service. All this previous activity within the Grizz Project area has left many of the forested stands fragmented and created isolated pockets of habitat with a large amount of fuel loading. In light of the recent large fires near the Grizz Project area, the No-action Alternative would put species such as the California spotted owl, which depend on such habitat, and the remaining forest at greater risk from wildfire.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 proposes to treat 2,558 acres within the DFPZ, 1,499 acres in the Area Thin and 143 acres of GS. I did not choose Alternative 3 because it has the greatest effects to the landscape, especially within California spotted owl HRCAs. Alternative 3 developed in response to the issues of DFPZ connectivity and economic efficiency that arose during public scoping. Alternative 3 placed additional units in the DFPZ to connect with the future-planned Ingalls DFPZ. It also adjusted and increased units in the Area Thin to increase the viability of the project, including 443 acres of Area Thin treatment within HRCAs. Although Alternative 3 does produce the most jobs and timber volume, it does so at greater effects to California spotted owl habitat.

Public Involvement

Notice of the Proposed Action (PA) first appeared in the Plumas National Forest quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) issued in April 2005 and has been updated in the SOPA each quarter since. The Beckwourth Ranger District started the NEPA scoping process with publication of the legal notice of the PA in the Portola Reporter and Feather River Bulletin on August 23, 2006. A total of 18 PA description packets (PA, figures and maps) were sent to various individuals, organizations, government agencies and tribes. The scoping period ended on September 22, 2006, although the District continued to receive and consider comments after this date.

The purpose of the scoping process was to inform the public about the Purpose and Need for the Grizz Project and the PA. The scoping comments were used by the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) to identify project issues, potential alternatives and information that should be presented in the Grizz EA. The Forest Service received comments from three organizations including:

- The Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign (now known as the Sierra Forest Legacy)
- Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI)
- Frank Stewart, Quincy Library Group (QLG) Forester

The 30-day public comment and review of the Grizz EA began with the publication of the legal notice in the official newspaper of record, Feather River Bulletin on October 3, 2007. An identical legal notice was also published the same day in the Portola Reporter newspaper. In addition to the publication of the legal notice, 12 copies of the Grizz EA and 7 letters indicating online internet availability were sent to various interested agencies, individuals, organizations and tribes. Comments received during the 30-day comment period, were addressed by the Forest Service in a *Response to Comments*, which is included in the Grizz project file. A total of five comment letters were received. The commenters included:

- Linda Blum, QLG member
- Sierra Forest Legacy
- Frank Stewart, QLG Forester
- Bill Wickman, American Forest Resources Council
- Tom Downing, SPI

The major comments centered on impacts to wildlife habitat, cost effectiveness and economics of the project, cumulative effects analysis and the range of alternatives considered and analyzed by the ID Team. These and other comments and the appropriate responses have been documented in the "Grizz Response to Comments", which is in the Grizz Project record.

Finding of No Significant Impact

In finding that the Grizz Project has no significant impact, I looked at the projects effects, both in context and in intensity. I have looked at the action in several contexts such as the affected region, affected interests and the locality. I have addressed the intensity of the project and the extent of its impact. Taking both into consideration, I have determined that there are no significant impacts based upon the following:

1. Both beneficial and adverse effects have been taken into consideration in the alternatives, analysis and decision notice.
   - **Prescribed burning smoke emissions**—Air quality impacts from prescribed burning in the Grizz Project are expected to be minimal and non-significant. As detailed in the Grizz EA, smoke emissions from prescribed burning would occur under carefully managed conditions (Grizz EA, pgs. 107-109). In comparison, wildfires would consume the entire fuel bed and generate smoke in one event, under potentially

unfavorable weather conditions. It is projected that in a wildfire, the amount of carbon monoxide (CO) released could be 20,988 pounds per acre while in an underburn situation, it would only be 4,170 pounds per acre. Likewise, in a wildfire, particulate matter (PM) at 10 microns and 2.5 microns or less would be 1,879 pounds per acre and 1,592 pounds per acre, respectively. Under a prescribed burning situation, it would only be 374 pounds per acre of PM 10 and 317 pounds per acre of PM 2.5 (Grizz EA, Table 3.20). In addition, burn managers are required to file for and comply with air quality permits issued by the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District prior to ignition (Grizz EA, page 281).

- **Watershed threshold of concern (TOC)**—TOC serves as a "yellow flag" warning regarding the health of watersheds. A TOC value of 100% does not represent the exact point at which cumulative watershed effects will occur, but rather it is an indicator that a more thorough investigation of the watershed is warranted. None of the activities planned in Alternative 4 will cause any of the subwatersheds to exceed TOC (Grizz EA, pgs. 62, 64, 130-132). When compared to the existing condition, Alternative 4 is projected to only increase the percentage of the project area with a moderately high TOC from 12.1% to 33.6% and with a moderate TOC from 26.8% to 31.2% (Grizz EA, Table 2.10). The only subwatershed that is over the TOC is the "Bearing" subwatershed, which has been heavily impacted by previous activities on private land and therefore will not be treated by the Forest Service at this time due to its current high TOC value (Grizz EA, pgs. 64 and 130).
- **Soil ground cover**—The activities planned under Alternative 4 will potentially affect ground cover, but I feel that they will be relatively minor and not significant. As discussed in the Grizz EA, it is difficult to predict treatment effects on effective ground cover (Grizz EA, pg. 135). Currently, there are no acres outside the standard for ground cover. Alternative 4 is predicted to temporarily take approximately 591 acres of the treated area out of the standard for ground cover. However, disturbances to ground cover are most likely very temporal in nature and can be mitigated with standard operating procedures (SOPs) such as leaving chips on site to meet soil quality standards (Grizz EA, pg. 68, 283).
- **Soil compaction**—Project implementation will require the use and construction of skid trails. There will be no significant increase in skid trail density because it is expected as many as three-quarters of currently existing skid trails will be reused (Grizz EA, pgs. 61, 283). However, currently in the Grizz Project, 154 acres do not meet the less than 15% skid trail and landing density threshold. It is predicted to increase by 62 acres to a total of 216 acres as a result of project activities (Grizz EA, pg. 63). However, after project implementation, any skid trails (temporary and existing) showing signs of compaction may be subsoiled if deemed appropriate by the District Hydrologist and

Forest Service Sale Administrator, therefore reducing the impacts from skid trail density caused by the Grizz Project (Grizz EA, pgs. 61, 283).

- **Threatened and endangered plant species**—There are no threatened or endangered (TE) botanical species within the Grizz Project. Therefore, there will be no effects to TE plant species (Grizz EA, pgs. 60, 63, 203-205).
- **Sensitive plant species**—There are four sensitive plant species within the Grizz Project area. However, project design and mitigation measures will protect these plant species from project impacts. It is expected that impacts to sensitive plant species will be minimal if at all (Grizz EA, pg. 212, 284).
- **Threatened and endangered wildlife species**—There are no TE wildlife species within the Grizz Project. Therefore, there will be no effects to TE wildlife species (Grizz EA, pgs. 144-146).
- **Sensitive wildlife species**—There is a possibility that project activities may affect individuals, but are not likely to result in a trend towards Federal listing or loss of viability (Grizz EA, pgs. 144-146). The project retains over 92% of HRCA and 90% of foraging habitat for the California spotted owl, over 92% of nesting habitat for the Northern goshawk, and over 96% of denning habitat for forest carnivores (Grizz EA, pg. 63).

2. Based upon past experience with similar projects on the Beckwourth Ranger District, other Ranger Districts on the Plumas National Forest and similar areas across the region, there will be minor, if any, public health and safety effects. These types of activities (logging, hauling, and burning) have historically occurred near developed properties in the area without creating public health and safety problems. In addition, the Grizz Project will be implemented under other various public safety laws such as the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act (Grizz EA, pgs. 239-240).
3. There are unique features in the Grizz Project area. However, appropriate project design features and mitigation measures have been incorporated that would either avoid or minimize any impacts.
   - Cultural and heritage resources will be protected during project implementation with an expected “no effect” from project activities (Grizz EA, pg. 236). The standard operating procedures (SOPs) are designed to mitigate project activities to prevent impacts to cultural resources (Grizz EA, pgs. 286-287).
   - All wetland and riparian areas would be protected as Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs) and managed according to the Scientific Analysis Team (SAT) guidelines. The SOPs (Grizz EA, pgs. 281-282) and the Riparian Management Objectives (Grizz EA, pgs. 303-311) provide mitigation measures and management objectives to protect wetland and riparian areas within the Grizz Project.

- There are no Wild and Scenic Rivers, prime farmlands or ecologically critical areas within the Grizz Project.

4. There are no project specific effects that are likely to be considered highly controversial. The Grizz Project only proposes to treat roughly 18-21% of the planning area. In addition, the standards and guidelines incorporated into the project design of the Grizz Project have been followed on other HFQLG projects.
5. The Grizz Project effects are not highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks on the human environment. The effects of the Grizz Project are anticipated to be similar to past projects done on the Beckwourth Ranger District such as the Last Chance Project (2001), Crystal Adams Project (2001), Humbug DFPZ Project (2002), Mabie (2004), and Freeman Project (2004) and other fuel reduction and understory thinning projects. The Beckwourth Ranger District has a history of dealing with fuels reduction, harvest, riparian treatments and road relocation activities, and I can reasonably estimate their associated effects.
6. The actions and treatments proposed in the Grizz Project will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. Nor will they represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Any future decision will need to consider all of the relevant scientific and site-specific information available at that time.
7. The actions proposed in the Grizz Project are not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. This project does not present significant cumulative adverse effects when considered in combination with other past or reasonably foreseeable actions including grazing, timber harvest, and fuel management on both private and public lands, rural residential or town site development on private lands in the project area, and firewood gathering and recreational activities on public lands.
   - **Wildlife**—This project does not present significant cumulative adverse effects to wildlife when considered with other similar projects within the Wildlife Analysis Area. Because of the project design, effects to sensitive wildlife species such as the California spotted owl, great gray owl, Northern goshawk and forest carnivores appear to be minimal (Grizz EA, pgs. 159-161, 171, 179-180, 189-190).
   - **Watersheds**—Cumulative impacts to subwatersheds within the Grizz Project area are expected to be low. The project design took great effort to stay under the TOC in all of the watersheds. Therefore, none of the subwatersheds are expected to exceed the TOC as a result of project implementation. In fact, by removing some roads, the Grizz Project will improve the current condition of the watersheds.
   - **Soils**—Cumulative effects to soil resources are predicted to be minimal. Through the use of SOPs and other factors such as tree needle cast or mastication treatment, effects to ground cover and organic matter will likely be low and short lived (Grizz EA, pgs. 61, 136, 139). Impacts to soil porosity are also expected to be minimal or even improve

through reuse of existing skid trails and appropriate use of subsoiling (Grizz EA, pgs. 61, 137-138, and 283-284). Similarly, the amount of new skid trails and landings in the project area (skid trail and landing density) is anticipated to be nominal due to reuse of current skid trails and landings and their subsequent subsoiling, if deemed appropriate by the District Hydrologist (Grizz EA, pgs. 61, 137-138, 283-284).

8. The actions in the Grizz Project will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historic places. The Grizz Project area has been surveyed, identified, recorded and protected per standards for cultural and historic resources that are in compliance with the Programmatic Agreement 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Grizz EA, pg. 240).
9. The Grizz Project will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
   - There are no endangered or threatened wildlife species within the Grizz Project area or the Grizz Wildlife Analysis Area (Grizz EA, pgs. 144-146).
   - There are no endangered or threatened plant species within the Grizz Project area (Grizz EA, pg. 205).
10. The actions in the Grizz Project do not violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (Grizz EA, pgs. 38, 239-241).

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

In addition to the FONSI, I find that this project is consistent with the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Plumas National Forest (1988) as amended by the HFQLG Act and FEIS/FSEIS ROD and the 2004 SNFPA ROD. Therefore, this project is consistent with the requirements of the National Forest Management Act of 1976. In addition, the Grizz Project complies with the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Clean Water Act (see Grizz EA, pgs. 239-241), and other federal, state, and local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. Alternative 4 complies with Forest Plan direction found on page 38 of the Grizz EA and Table 2 of the 2004 SNFPA ROD (Grizz EA, Appendix C (pg. 275-277)).

Implementation Date

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day appeal period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last favorable appeal disposition.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to the regulation at 36 CFR 215. Appeals, including attachments, must be filed within 45-days of the publication date of the legal notice of decision in the Feather River Bulletin, the newspaper of record. Attachments received after the 45-day period will not be considered. The publication date in the Feather River Bulletin is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. Individuals or organizations who submitted comments or expressed interest during the comment period specified at 36 CFR 215.6 may appeal this decision. The notice of appeal must meet the appeal content requirements at 36 CFR 215.14.

The appeal must be submitted (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery) to the Appeal Deciding Officer: Randy Moore, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, Regional Office R5, 1323 Club Drive, Vallejo, CA 94592. Appeals may be submitted by FAX (707) 562-9229 or by hand delivery to the Regional Office at the address shown above. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered appeals are: 8:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to appeals-pacificsouthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us [Subject: Grizz Project EA]. In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an electronic message, a verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature is one way to provide verification.

Contact Person

The Grizz Project EA and supporting documents are available for public review at the Plumas National Forest, Beckwourth Ranger District, 23 Mohawk Dr., PO Box 7, Blairsden, CA 96103, 530-836-2575. For further information on this decision, contact Maurice Huynh (mhuynh@fs.fed.us), Grizz Project Interdisciplinary Team Leader at 530-836-2575.

/s/ *Alice B. Carlton* 5/12/08

ALICE B. CARLTON Date
Forest Supervisor
Plumas National Forest