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Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Pacific
Southwest
Region

Stanislaus
National Forest



March 1999

September 1998

Recreation

Standards and Guidelines Review



Forest Leadership Team (from front, then left to right): Ann Denton, Dave Freeland, Rob Finch, Ben del Villar, Larry Caplinger, Glenn Gottschall, John Swanson and Bill Ferrell at Sourgrass Recreation Area; September 16, 1998. (USDA Forest Service Photo)

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Dear Friends:

I am pleased to announce completion of the June 1998 Fire Salvage Standards and Guidelines Review report. The report documents the results of Forest Leadership Team (FLT) evaluation of fire suppression and salvage activities in the 1996 Ackerson Fire Complex area, of the Groveland Ranger District. It also presents the FLT's conclusions and recommendations based on those results.

I support the FLT's findings. Full implementation of their recommendations depends on adequate funding. Accordingly, in the future the Forest will:

1. Complete a Forest Plan Review.
2. Coordinate Forest Plan effectiveness and NEPA implementation monitoring.
3. Provide clear written direction to interdisciplinary teams during NEPA processes.

The June 1998 Fire Salvage Standards and Guidelines Review report is available by request. Call, write, or stop by the Forest Supervisor's Office for copies. The report is also available on the Forest's website (<http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/stanislaus/mgmt/mereport>).

Comments received on this report will be considered in preparing future reports. Please submit comments, or any written requests for the documents to:

Stanislaus National Forest
Attn: Monitoring
19777 Greenley Road
Sonora, CA 95370

Sincerely,



BEN L. DEL VILLAR
Forest Supervisor

September 1998 Recreation

Standards and Guidelines Review

1. Introduction

The Regional Forester approved the Stanislaus National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on October 28, 1991 (USDA 1991). Chapter V of the Forest Plan identifies a need for program and activity reviews to insure consistent use of Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs) to improve the reliability of subsequent evaluations. Evaluation is the analysis and interpretation of monitoring data to determine whether changes in the Forest Plan, or in project implementation are necessary. Monitoring and evaluation are critical elements ensuring that the Forest Plan remains a dynamic and responsible tool for managing the Forest's land and resources in a changing social and economic climate.

The Stanislaus National Forest 1997 Monitoring and Evaluation Report (USDA 1998) documents the results of monitoring and evaluation activities accomplished during federal fiscal year 1997 (October 1, 1996 to September 30, 1997). It also presents a recommendation to schedule and conduct Forest Leadership Team (FLT) reviews of Forest Plan S&Gs implementation.

This report documents the results of a September 1998 Stanislaus National Forest FLT review of recreation activities.

2. Programs and Activities Reviewed

The FLT conducted this review in the Lake Alpine, Highland Lakes and Sourgrass areas, of the Calaveras Ranger District, on September 15 and 16, 1998. Prior to the field trips, the FLT discussed selected Forestwide S&Gs (see Appendix) for Cultural Resources, Fire and Fuels, Fish and Wildlife, Range, Recreation, Transportation and Facilities, Visual Resource, and Water. They later reviewed specific programs and activities related to recreation use and improvements, comparing conditions to the Forestwide S&Gs established in Forest Plan Chapter IV and guidelines from the NEPA decisions. They reviewed these results in an integrated fashion to develop the recommendations shown. Table 1 (see Action Plan) lists the specific actions needed to implement these recommendations.

In order to draw conclusions and make recommendations, the FLT identified the following objective.

Objective

- Determine adherence to Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs) to insure consistent use of S&Gs and improve the reliability of subsequent monitoring and evaluation.

2.1 Bear Valley/Lake Alpine Trail



Objectives

Does the trail construction project meet the selected Forest Plan S&Gs? Are those S&Gs still valid?

Management Area

Scenic Corridor
Developed Recreation Sites

Selected S&Gs

Range

Allotment Management (9-A)

Recreation

ROS Roaded Natural (10-B-4)

Trails Management (10-I)

Trails Construction(10-K)

Visual Resource

VQO Retention (17-B-2)

Results

- Due to safety concerns, VQO and ROS S&Gs not met on short segments of Lake Alpine trail outside of areas allocated to developed recreation sites in the Forest Plan
- The trail construction project meets all other selected S&Gs

Conclusions

- The Lake Alpine designated "Recreation Area" encompasses Forest Plan developed sites plus all the areas between
- The trail project would meet all VQO and ROS S&Gs if the entire designated "Recreation Area" was allocated to developed recreation by the Forest Plan

Recommendations

- Consider adjusting Forest Plan developed recreation sites to include the entire designated "Recreation Area"

2.2 Highland Lakes Road

Objectives

Do recreation uses and improvements meet the selected Forest Plan S&Gs? Do those S&Gs provide adequate protection for watershed resources?

Management Area

Proposed Wild and Scenic River

Selected S&Gs

Fish and Wildlife

Stream and Lake Fisheries (5-C)

Water

Streamside Management Zone (18-C,
item c. Transportation and Facilities)



Results

- The recreation uses and improvements meet the selected Forest Plan S&Gs

Conclusions

- Without water quality measurements, it is unknown whether those S&Gs provide adequate protection for watershed resources
- The Forest Plan does not contain S&Gs for amphibians

Recommendations

- Continue monitoring to ensure implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs)

2.3 Sourgrass Recreation Area



Objectives

Do recreation and road/bridge improvements meet the selected Forest Plan S&Gs? Do those S&Gs provide adequate protection for Wild and Scenic River values?

Management Area

Developed Recreation within Proposed Wild and Scenic River

Selected S&Gs

Cultural Resources

Cultural Resource Protection (2-B)
Cultural Resource Enhancement and Interpretation (2-C)

Fire and Fuels

Activity Fuels (4-B)

Transportation and Facilities

Road Construction (16-A)

Results

- The recreation and road/bridge improvements meet the selected Forest Plan S&Gs
- Catastrophic landslide altered conditions since approval of the site plan

Conclusions

- The selected S&Gs, along with other Forest Plan direction, provide adequate protection for Wild and Scenic River values
- Forest Plan S&Gs do not cover catastrophic events
- Site plan does not accurately reflect current conditions
- River pool level above bridge provides scenic and recreation attractions
- Potential fuel hazards exist adjacent to recreation sites

Recommendations

- Address variations from Forest Plan S&Gs in site-specific project NEPA resulting from catastrophic events
- Update Sourgrass site plan
- Designate Sourgrass area as a "Recreation Area"
- Retain pool level above bridge if environmentally and economically feasible
- Construct shaded fuelbreaks in and around Sourgrass recreation area

3. Action Plan

The FLT developed a schedule to identify the actions needed for implementing their recommendations (see Programs and Activities Reviewed). This is a cumulative action plan that incorporates the findings of the previous S&Gs review and supercedes its action plan (USDA 1998a).

Full implementation depends on adequate funding. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and regulations apply to any subsequent site-specific projects or Forest Plan Amendments.

Table 1: **Action Plan**; Forest Leadership Team (FLT) and Forest Planning Interdisciplinary Team (IDT); Stanislaus National Forest.

Action	Who	When
<p>Complete Forest Plan Review, considering needs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify incompatible Forest Plan S&Gs ▪ Validate Forest Plan fire matrix S&G ▪ Update snag retention guidelines ▪ Develop S&Gs for fire suppression and BAER treatment of roadside hazard trees ▪ Update Forest Plan to reflect current conditions ▪ Fully integrate fire ecology into the Forest Plan ▪ Set general direction for overall priorities (i.e. urban interface, old growth, plantations) for fuels management projects ▪ Adjust Forest Plan developed recreation sites to include entire designated "Recreation Areas" 	IDT and FLT	9/30/2000
<p>Coordinate Forest Plan effectiveness and NEPA implementation monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incorporate monitoring into Program of Work ▪ Conduct Forest Plan S&Gs reviews ▪ Involve Regional Office in future S&Gs reviews 	<p>FLT FLT Forest Supervisor</p>	<p>10/1 annual at least 2 per year On-going</p>
<p>Provide clear written direction (decisions) during the NEPA process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilize the 1900-2 training ▪ Rate snags per acre on a landscape basis ▪ Emphasize long-term snag retention ▪ Establish requirements for post fire monitoring of suppression and BAER treatments 	FLT	On-going
<p>Complete implementation of the Sourgrass recreation area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update Sourgrass site plan ▪ Designate Sourgrass area as a "Recreation Area" ▪ Retain pool level above bridge if environmentally and economically feasible ▪ Construct shaded fuelbreaks in and around Sourgrass recreation area 	<p>Public Service Forest Supervisor Public Service Calaveras District Ranger</p>	<p>9/30/2000 9/30/2000 On-going 9/30/2000</p>

4. Participants

Forest Leadership Team

Calvin Bird, Public Affairs Officer
Larry Caplinger, Resource Protection Program Area Leader
Ann Denton, Mi-Wok District Ranger
Ben del Villar, Forest Supervisor
Bill Ferrell, Acting Public Service Program Area Leader
Rob Finch, Resource Management Program Area Leader
Dave Freeland, Calaveras District Ranger
Glenn Gottschall, Deputy Forest Supervisor
John Swanson, Groveland District Ranger

Regional Office Staff

Brad Burmark, Regional Planner
Hao Tran, Acting Deputy Regional Forester

Support Staff

John Maschi, Land Management Planner

5. Public Notification

This report is available by request. The Forest will inform the public of its availability by news release; and, posting on the Forest's Internet site (<http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/stanislaus/mgmt/mereport>). Comments received on this report will be considered in preparing future reports. Please submit comments to:

Stanislaus National Forest
Attn.: Monitoring
19777 Greenley Road
Sonora, CA 95370

6. References

- USDA Forest Service. 1991. Stanislaus National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, EIS, Forest Plan and Record of Decision. Pacific Southwest Region; San Francisco, CA.
- USDA Forest Service. 1998. 1997 Stanislaus National Forest Monitoring and Evaluation Report. Stanislaus National Forest, Sonora, CA.
- USDA Forest Service. 1998a. June 1998 Fire Salvage Standards and Guidelines Review. Stanislaus National Forest, Sonora, CA.

7. Appendix

Bear Valley/Lake Alpine Trail

Objectives: Does the trail construction project meet the selected Forest Plan S&Gs? Are those S&Gs still valid?

Management Area: Scenic Corridor

Selected S&Gs:

Range

- Allotment Management (9-A)

General Direction

Transportation systems in established range allotments will include fences and cattleguards where new roads open up natural livestock barriers.

Recreation

- ROS Roded Natural (10-B-4)
- Trail Management (10-I)
- Trail Construction and Reconstruction - Special Purpose (10-K)

General Direction

Manage the area so there is only moderate evidence of the sights and sounds of man. Provide a range of roded natural recreation opportunities and experiences.

Maintain trails for their intended use. Regulate and restrict trail use as mandated by law or policy. Protect resource values and user safety while reducing conflicts. Emphasize and utilize volunteers, through the Adopt-a-Trail program and other agreements, for trail management activities, whenever possible.

Provide for special purpose trails such as physically impaired, educational, bicycle, and oversnow.

Standards and Guidelines

Meet the ROS objective of Roded Natural. Interaction between users is usually low to moderate with evidence of other users prevalent. Resource modification practices are evident. Conventional motorized use is provided for in construction standards and facilities designs. Follow Forest Service Manual direction for trail management. Implement trail use regulations.

Separate bicycle trails from other uses except when incorporated into selected roads. Oversnow trails may be installed, signed and maintained by special use Permittees.

Visual Resource

- VQO Retention (17-B-2)

General Direction

Provide a natural appearing landscape where changes are not readily evident.

Standards and Guidelines

Manage the vegetation of the area to provide optimum diversity of species with a range of age and size classes up to and including trees with old growth characteristics. Optimum diversity shall be achieved as it relates to a sequence or continuity of view in the foreground. Limit cutting methods to uneven-age single tree selection or group selection (up to 1-acre openings). Impacts of management activities in highly visible foreground areas will be reduced through special treatments.

Highland Lakes Road

Objectives: Do recreation uses and improvements meet the selected Forest Plan S&Gs? Do those S&Gs provide adequate protection for watershed resources?

Management Area: Proposed Wild and Scenic River

Selected S&Gs:

Fish and Wildlife

- Stream and Lake Fisheries - Non-Structural Improvements and Maintenance (5-C)

General Direction

Provide medium to high quality habitat for resident trout species (rainbow, brown, and brook trout) according to the habitat capability models for these species.

Standards and Guidelines

Manage for snags and down logs in the Streamside Management Zone at the same level as low elevation fisher areas (level b) to allow large woody debris to accumulate in fish-supporting streams. Refer to Management Area 4 Standards and Guidelines. The objective is to achieve amounts of large woody debris in the stream channel needed to optimize conditions for resident trout commensurate with good watershed practices.

Maintain high water quality values in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for watershed.

Retain streamside vegetation so that at least 60% of the stream surface is shaded from 11 AM to 4 PM from June 1 to September 30 to maintain water temperatures at less than 65 degrees for those perennial streams which do not normally exceed this temperature.

Maintain the integrity of the riparian zone using the Standards and Guidelines for Streamside Management Zones (SMZs).

Water

- Streamside Management Zones (18-C)

General Direction

Streamside Management Zones (SMZs) will be established along streams and lakeshores to protect their unique resource values. The SMZ is a zone in which SMZs are given preference in management activity planning because of the SMZs significance not only to fish, wildlife and water quality protection, but for human activities such as camping, hiking, fishing, swimming and scenic enjoyment.

Standards and Guidelines

c. Transportation and facilities - Roads (permanent, temporary and skid trails), trails, log landings, parking areas (trailheads, fishing access, dispersed campsites, etc.) and facilities such as building sites, developed campgrounds or mining activities shall not be constructed within the SMZ except where design features can adequately mitigate impacts on SMZ resource values. Existing developments, which do not provide adequate SMZ resource protection should be redesigned, relocated, rehabilitated or obliterated.

Sourgrass Recreation Area

Objectives: Do recreation and road/bridge improvements meet the selected Forest Plan S&Gs?
Do those S&Gs provide adequate protection for Wild and Scenic River values?

Management Area: Developed Recreation within Proposed Wild and Scenic River

Selected S&Gs:

Cultural Resources

- Cultural Resource Protection (2-B)

General Direction

All identified cultural resources are to be protected until they are evaluated. The integrity and significant values of eligible properties and National Historic Landmarks are to be protected. When necessary, mitigative excavation or data recovery may be accomplished.

Standards and Guidelines

Use the guidelines in FSM 2361 and FSM 1680 for developing and implementing protective measures. Comply with 36 CFR 800 regulations and follow the guidelines in 36 CFR 66, FSM 2361, and the 13 principles in the "Treatment of Archaeological Properties" Handbook (ACHP).

Conduct compliance inspections on all special use permits containing cultural resource stipulations or conditions.

Protect documents, photographs and other information relevant to the administrative, social and contextual history of the Forest for research and public use.

Utilize law enforcement patrols to help prevent site vandalism and conduct law enforcement investigations when cultural resources are impacted using ARPA, 36 CFR 261.9, and other applicable laws and regulations.

Work with Interpretive Services to develop high quality brochures, publications and/or audio-visual presentations. Work with cooperators to develop high quality interpretive, stabilization, and/or restoration projects.

Comply with 36 CFR 800 regulations and follow the guidelines in 36 CFR 66, FSM 2361 and the 13 principles in the "Treatment of Archaeological Properties" Handbook (ACHP).

Issue permits under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (PL 96-95) for non-Federal archaeological research projects on the Forest.

Encourage non-Federal research projects on the Forest.

Encourage the Sierra Mi-wok, Washo, and Mono Lake Paiute to contribute to the Forest's cultural resource management activities, to enhance public understanding of their traditional and contemporary cultures.

- Cultural Resource Enhancement and Interpretation (2-C)

Plan interpretation, research and restoration projects for the benefit of the public and of cultural resources.

Treatments of cultural properties, including maintenance of historic properties, should be appropriate to their assessed values (as documented in the Statement of Significance in the Request for Determination of Eligibility and National Register nomination form), the state of knowledge and methods of cultural resource disciplines, and the public interest.

The significant values of National Register and eligible historic structures shall be conserved by physical protection and maintenance or recording to professional standards if physical preservation is not possible.

Fire and Fuels

- Activity Fuels (4-B)

General Direction

All management activities, which generate woody residues, will have an approved fuel treatment project plan. This plan will describe the methods of treatment to be used, the estimated total cost of treatment, method of funding, responsible parties to complete treatment, and necessary measures to maintain the acceptable fuel profile. The scope of the plan should encompass the overall area affected by the activity and not be limited to each individual unit. The fuel treatments identified will meet the minimum level of treatment as described in the standards and guidelines

Treat Fuel According to Following Priorities:

1. All current and proposed management activities expected to generate woody residues.
2. Plantations less than 50 years old that do not meet current standards and guidelines. (Plantations in excess of 50 years are treated as outlined in the Natural Fuels Management, general direction and standards and guidelines).
3. All other areas that do not meet current standards and guidelines as a result of previous management activities.

Transportation and Facilities

- Road Construction and Reconstruction (16-A)

General Direction

Construct and reconstruct Forest roads including long-term and temporary roads.

Standards and Guidelines

Geometric standards and location will be planned to provide acceptable levels of service and traffic safety and meet resource management needs. Traffic Service Level C (see Appendix G of the Plan for descriptions of traffic service levels) or higher should be used where a significant mix of public and commercial traffic is planned. Alignment, width and passing facilities should provide appropriate speed, traffic safety and flow on roads with high traffic volumes or public traffic. Traffic Service Level D may be used on roads where use will be primarily commercial and traffic volumes will be low. On Traffic Service Level D roads limited turnouts and sight distance may be acceptable in combination with traffic management for safety.

Surfacing will be planned with consideration for the total cost of transportation, including construction, operation and maintenance costs, while meeting resource management objectives. Roads with weak sub-grades, which are susceptible to rutting, may require surface stabilization. Traffic Service Level will be considered when public use justifies smooth dust-free surfaces. Roads with higher traffic volumes, often arterial and collector roads may need more stable and higher-speed surface types. Economic analysis and road management objectives will be used to determine improvement needs.

Location, design and construction standards will protect soil, watersheds, fisheries and other resources.

Proposed Wild and Scenic River

River: North Fork Stanislaus

Segment: (4) Highland Creek - McKays Reservoir (16 miles)

Classification: 13 miles Wild and 3 miles Recreational

W&S River Values:

Scenic: outstanding Variety Class A landscape includes a deep, U-shaped, glacially carved canyon through granitics with some glacial moraines. The river provides a variety of water forms including rapids, cascades and pools. The mountain scenery of the Forest and of the State Park attracts thousands of visitors each year. The scenic quality of the river and its canyon is a major attraction. The giant sequoia groves are another scenic attraction in the State Park.

Recreation: variety of both developed and dispersed, motorized and non-motorized activities occur. Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use, fishing, hiking, swimming, camping and whitewater boating occur at various locations on the National Forest. Calaveras Big Trees State Park is a popular recreation attraction for thousands of visitors each year. The State Park offers hiking, fishing, camping and scenic viewing in the midst of giant sequoia groves.

Wildlife: Calaveras Big Trees State Park, is one of the largest tracts (5,000 acres) of old growth forest left at this elevation in the Sierra. The river connects this tract of habitat with large tracts of old growth forest at higher elevations in the National Forest. It is a vital corridor, providing for movement of many wildlife species. The North Fork, between Boards Crossing and Highland Creek, is the connecting feature of three spotted owl habitat areas (SOHAs) and it is the core zone of one fisher reproductive unit which incorporates the three SOHAs and Big Trees State Park.

Other: considered sensitive because they are fragile or nonrenewable. Information can be found in the Planning Records, on file at the Stanislaus National Forest Supervisor's Office in Sonora, CA.