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Department of  
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Forest Service

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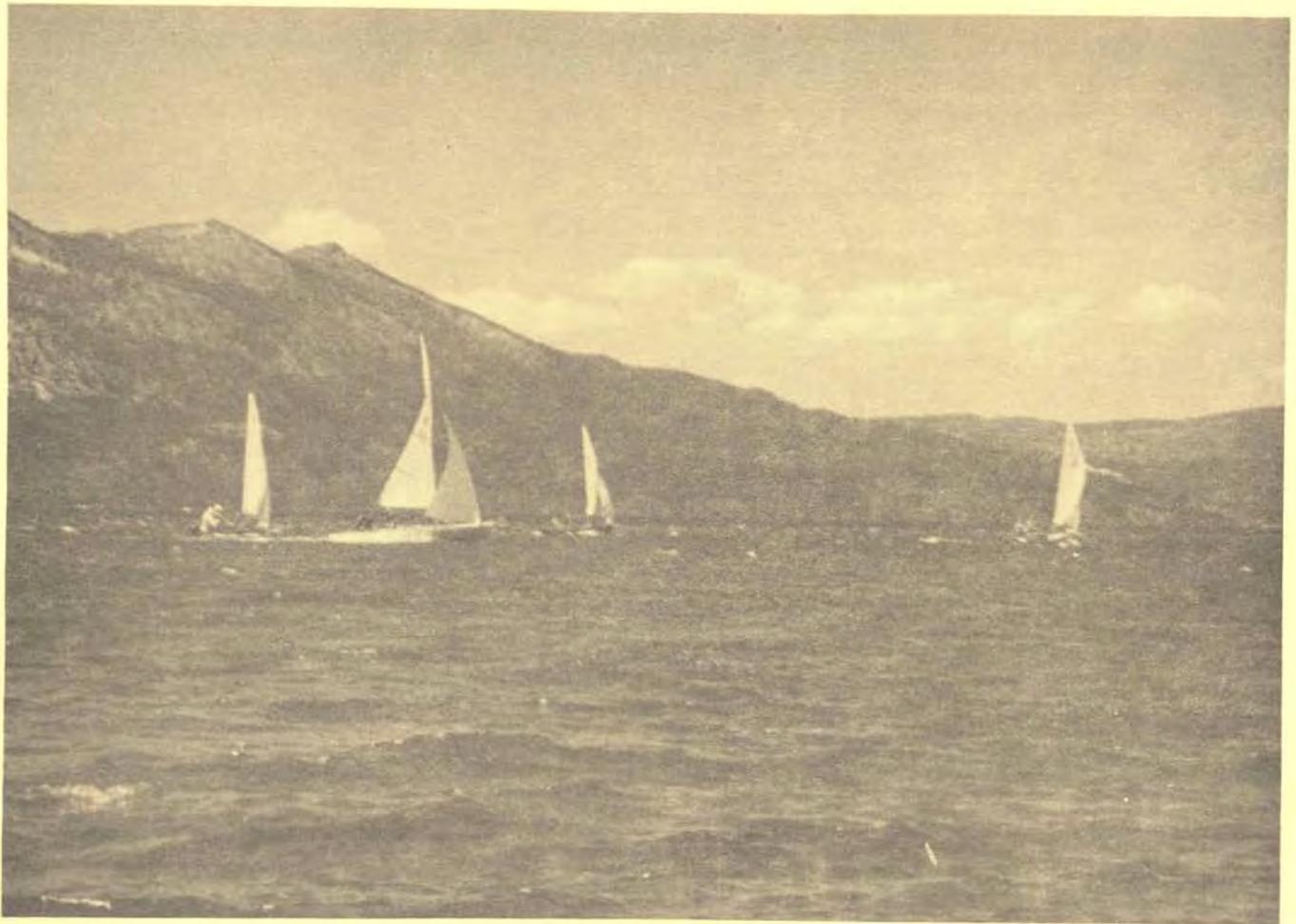


# Record of Decision

## Final Environmental Impact Statement

## Land and Resource Management Plan

## Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit



1988

COVER SHEET

RECORD OF DECISION

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit  
USDA Forest Service

El Dorado, Placer, and Alpine Counties, California  
Washoe and Douglas Counties and Carson City Rural Area, Nevada

THIS DOCUMENT PRESENTS THE DECISION REGARDING THE SELECTION OF A LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE NATIONAL FOREST LAND WITHIN THE LAKE TAHOE BASIN. IT SUMMARIZES THE REASONS FOR CHOOSING ALTERNATIVE A AS THE BASIS FOR THE FOREST PLAN WHICH WILL BE FOLLOWED FOR THE NEXT 10 TO 15 YEARS. ESTIMATES OF THE LONG-TERM ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES CONTAINED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT WERE CONSIDERED IN THE DECISION.

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RECORD OF DECISION  
USDA-FOREST SERVICE

Final Environmental Impact Statement  
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit  
Land and Resource Management Plan

El Dorado, Placer, and Alpine Counties, California  
Washoe and Douglas Counties, and Carson City Rural Area, Nevada

I. THE DECISION

A. FEIS Alternative A as a Basis for the Forest Plan

Based on a thorough study of the resources on the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU), detailed analysis of nine management alternatives, and review of public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Plan, I have selected Alternative A to provide direction for management activities on the LTBMU for the next ten to fifteen years. Alternative A is described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Final Plan. This Record of Decision summarizes the principal management objectives of the Forest Plan and the rationale for my decision.

B. Summary of the Major Provisions of the Forest Plan

The Plan protects and enhances the environmental and recreational benefits provided by the LTBMU while providing for modest levels of other uses.

**Recreation**

The Plan allows construction of additional developed recreation sites. Improvements to existing sites can also occur. A temporary restraint on construction of improvements that would attract more people and traffic to the Basin, which has been in place since 1980, is removed. The following table summarizes the projects scheduled for the next ten years. The Plan recommends additional work to be done later as needed.

<u>Sites Proposed For Construction or Expansion</u>	<u>Current Capacity (Persons at one time - PAOT)</u>	<u>Planned Increase in Capacity (PAOT)</u>	
		<u>Overnight</u>	<u>Day use</u>
Inspiration Point Vista (Emerald Bay)	50	0	25
Skunk Harbor boat-in (day use)	25	0	25
Celio Mill Pond (day use)	15	0	40
Fallen Leaf boat launch	7	0	50
Washoe Cultural Center (day use)	0	0	115
Organization Camps at Fallen Leaf	0	180	0
Tahoe City "Y" (day use)	25	0	245

The expansion of alpine skiing facilities is provided for in the Plan. Site-specific decisions will be made through the master development and project level planning processes. Areas suitable for expansion at this time are Northstar, Alpine Meadows/Deer Park, Homewood/Tahoe Ski Bowl, Ski Incline, and Heavenly Valley.

The Plan would also allow facilities to be constructed to support recreation outside of campgrounds and picnic areas. For example, the trail system will be enlarged and trailhead parking facilities will be constructed. Existing trails and trailhead facilities will be reconstructed to comply with health and environmental standards.

The 1976 Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Plan is incorporated through management direction in the Forest Plan. As in the past, summer OHV activity will be authorized only on system roads and designated OHV routes. Many areas used in the past will be closed as routes are reinventoried and enforcement is strengthened. Pending action by Congress on the Mt. Rose wilderness recommendations, winter OHV use will be allowed to continue as in the past.

#### **Timber**

Timber harvest and reforestation will create small (maximum 5 acre) forest openings. These openings will provide early successional stage habitat for wildlife. Approximately 40 acres of these openings will be made each year. Sanitation salvage and thinning will continue to be scheduled.

Timber harvest is increased by 10% in the first decade (from 4 to 4.4 million board feet a year). Much of the wood will be used locally for firewood. This harvest level does not qualify the LTBMU as a significant timber producing forest. Commercial timber production is not a primary management objective for any lands in the LTBMU.

#### **Riparian Areas**

The Plan will limit management activities in riparian areas. Activities that are allowed are: 1) vegetation treatments that benefit riparian dependent resources, control insects and disease, and remove hazardous trees, 2) livestock grazing systems that protect riparian dependent resources, and 3) occasional trail and road crossings. This will prevent any adverse disturbance to riparian areas. A restoration program for damaged riparian areas is also included in the Plan.

#### **Fire and Fuels Management**

A larger proportion of forest slash will be left to naturally decompose rather than be disposed of through burning. This action will assist in soil protection, provide wildlife cover, and reduce the amount of smoke produced from burning.

Fire suppression strategies will continue to call for suppression of all fires. However, as a cost saving measure, fires in high elevation areas with sparse vegetation may be contained or confined; low risk fires may not always be extinguished as quickly as in the past. Evaluation of risk will include such factors as the potential effects of the fire on air, water, and visual quality, as well as upon public health and safety.

#### **Water Quality and Quantity**

We will continue to emphasize protection of water quality through use of best management practices. Remedial actions will be taken to restore disturbed or damaged watersheds. The watershed restoration program is scheduled for completion in 20 years. Restoration of stream environment zones will continue as the highest priority. A land capability system that was established for the area in 1971 will continue to be used to determine tolerance for disturbance. Rating of land on a scale from 1 through 7, as provided in the system, is an integral part of the Plan. Management prescriptions and standards and guidelines are directly related to the land capability system.

Direction is provided to determine minimum instream flows for fish and for the maintenance of riparian vegetation. Water rights for National Forest system uses will be sought through appropriate Federal and State laws.

#### **Research Natural Areas**

Grass Lake Moss Bog (peatland) is recommended for inclusion in the Research Natural Area system. Cross country skiing will be allowed to continue on this 360 acre area when approved as a Research Natural Area.

#### **Wilderness and Roadless Areas**

The portion of Desolation Wilderness within the LTBMU (21,300 acres) will continue to be managed as described in the Wilderness Management Plan for the area.

Congress resolved the Wilderness issue for Dardanelles (Meiss), Pyramid, and Granite Chief roadless areas through the passage of the California Wilderness Act in 1984. A portion of Granite Chief (30 acres) within the LTBMU was designated Wilderness and will be managed in accordance with a Wilderness management plan scheduled for completion during Forest Plan implementation. Dardanelles, Pyramid, and the remaining portion of Granite Chief were released from Wilderness consideration. These areas will be managed for unroaded recreation, except for the portion of Granite Chief in Ward Valley. That area will be considered for future ski area development as part of Forest Plan implementation.

In the Mt. Rose area, 2,625 acres are being recommended for the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Mt. Rose area will be managed to protect its wilderness characteristics until action is completed on the recommendation for its addition to the Wilderness Preservation System.

The Freel area, designated a further planning area in the California Wilderness Act, will be managed for unroaded recreation, as will Lincoln Creek, another further planning area in Nevada.

#### **Air Quality and Noise**

Air quality and noise standards are adopted for national forest land. These standards are those established through the TRPA planning process as the environmental thresholds for the Lake Tahoe Basin.

#### **Wildlife and Fish**

Protection and improvement of wildlife and fish habitat will continue. Much of the improvement will be the result of vegetation management and watershed restoration programs. Approximately 2 miles of stream and 70 acres of meadow,

brush, and wetland habitat will be improved each year. Standards are established to maintain or enhance the amount of standing and down dead wood in the forest for wildlife habitat. Provision is made to reintroduce a pair of Peregrine falcon and to manage habitat suitable for 4 bald eagle nesting territories.

#### Land Acquisition

Purchase of environmentally sensitive land will continue with about 3,000 acres scheduled for acquisition over the next 10 years. This program has been reduced because the States of California and Nevada have initiated programs similar to the Federal Santini/Burton Act. Other acquisitions or ownership adjustments will be made through land exchange or other methods.

#### Landline Surveys and Trespass

Surveying and marking of property lines between national forest land and other ownerships will continue. As land is acquired, the amount of this work continues to grow. The Plan places high priority on the resolution of unauthorized occupancy and use.

#### Utility Corridors

Rights of way for utility corridors may be granted on the merits of each case. No utility corridors are established by the Plan.

#### Management of Urban Lots

Urban lots acquired by the Forest Service will be managed to protect watershed conditions. Most are closed to use by off-road vehicles including over-the-snow vehicles. The Plan directs that criteria be developed for determining when urban lots may be transferred to State or local governments as authorized in the Santini/Burton Act. Until those criteria are established, transfers may be evaluated on an individual case basis.

#### Grazing

Livestock grazing will continue at about the current level. Approximately 1,400 animal-unit-months of grazing will be permitted each year. No new allotments are recommended.

#### Soil

Protection of the soil is recognized, along with water quality, as a high priority.

#### Special Interest Areas (SIA)

The Tallac Historic Site is established as a Special Interest Area. The Plan also identifies four sites to be studied in this planning period to determine if they warrant SIA status: Emerald Bay, Osgood Bog, Taylor Creek Wetlands, and Freel Peak Cushion Plant Community.

#### Visual Resources

Visual quality is protected and where the natural landscape is excessively modified, restoration will occur. More than 90% of the land will appear natural. Location and design of ski areas, timber harvest, and other activities will be carefully considered to maintain the visual quality.

### Budget

The annual budget projected to fully implement the Plan is 6.5 million dollars. This figure does not include the cost of purchasing land through the Santini/Burton Act program, nor the funds granted to local governments for erosion control work under the same Act. Actual budgets affect the rate of plan implementation and the outputs produced. If the budget differs significantly from that which is needed, the objectives may not be achievable in the projected time frame. In that event, revision of or amendment to the Plan may be necessary to achieve the overall goals.

## II. DESCRIPTION OF THE LAKE TAHOE BASIN MANAGEMENT UNIT

The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) was designated a separate management unit in 1973 from portions of the Eldorado, Tahoe, and Toiyabe National Forests. This action was taken because of characteristics of the area which distinguish it from other forests.

Lake Tahoe is a nationally known scenic and recreation attraction. One of the clearest lakes in the world, it is a resource that could be irretrievably lost if water quality continues to decline. Concern for the effects of urban development in the sensitive mountain setting at Lake Tahoe, voiced for the past thirty years, has met with strong counteracting concern for protection of individual property rights and the local economic health of the area.

Implementing actions to regulate or influence the amount, rate, and standard of development has been extremely difficult, partly due to the large number of organizations and agencies involved. Included are the governments and agencies of two States, four counties, and two municipalities. To facilitate consistent handling of governmental affairs at Lake Tahoe, legislative action by California, Nevada, and the Congress of the United States established a planning and regulatory agency for the area - the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA). A single Forest Service administrative organization makes coordination of planning and regulation of activities involving the TRPA and the many other governmental entities having jurisdiction at Lake Tahoe more cohesive and manageable.

Public acquisition of land has been a major program. National Forest acreage in the LTBMU has more than doubled in the last 30 years from about 60,000 acres to over 140,000 acres. Initially the effort was to provide more public recreation, especially on the lakeshore. More recently the goal of acquisition, as authorized by the Santini/Burton Act (PL 96-586), has been to prevent development that would adversely impact the environment.

There is a large ongoing effort to restore environmental conditions that have been found unacceptable. The Forest Service has had a major role in the program, both directly and through federal grants to local governments. Work on national forest land is estimated to cost about \$25 million, while the total cost for the entire basin is in excess of \$160 million.

### III. ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

#### A. Issues Considered

The scoping process to determine the issues, concerns, and opportunities (ICO's) addressed in the Forest Plan was conducted almost continuously beginning with the development of the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact (PL 91-148) establishing the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency in 1969. Major public involvement during this period included development of the "Federal Policy for the Lake Tahoe Basin" (1978), and development of the current Land Management Plan and the land acquisition plan under the Santini/Burton Act (1980). FEIS Appendix A and the planning records include additional details regarding the scoping that was done.

On the LTBMU similar public issues and management concerns were grouped. The grouped issues are:

1. How does national forest management affect the water quality in the Lake Tahoe Basin and what opportunities exist for improving water quality?
2. What kinds and amounts of outdoor recreation opportunities should be provided on the LTBMU?
3. What portion of the public fair share of the Lake Tahoe Basin environmental threshold carrying capacity <sup>1/</sup> should be used for forest management other than recreation, and what is the appropriate blend of outputs to be contributed toward meeting national demands?
4. How should the roadless areas be managed?
5. How should the lots acquired through the Santini/Burton Act be managed?

In Section IV of this Record of Decision, the public issues and concerns on the DEIS and Draft Plan are discussed. The Draft Plan was revised as a result of public comments.

<sup>1/</sup> The Tahoe Regional Planning Compact (PL 91-148), which established the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, directed the identification of Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities. They were adopted for the Lake Tahoe Basin in 1982. They form the standards for planning development, for regulating activities, and for measuring success of protective programs.

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## B. Alternatives

In response to planning issues, concerns, legislation, and regulations, a range of alternatives was developed and analyzed in the DEIS. The following nine alternatives are presented in detail in the FEIS.

### Selected Alternative

The Preferred Alternative in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was modified as a result of public comments and additional analysis to become Alternative A in the FEIS. Wilderness designation would be recommended for the Mt. Rose area. The watershed restoration program would be completed in 20 years. A mix of recreation opportunities would be provided to meet demand. Modest levels of commodity outputs (timber and grazing) would be produced, partly as by-products of activities designed to achieve the environmental thresholds.

### Current Management Alternative

This alternative would continue the current directions, policies, and practices. Timber, grazing, and other goods and services would be provided at the 1982 level. A mix of recreation opportunities would be provided. However, expected demand would not be met unless provided through private investments such as at ski areas. No additional wilderness would be recommended.

### Conservation Alternative

This alternative was not included in the DEIS. It was developed by a task force representing several citizen's groups and received wide support from individuals commenting on the Draft Plan and EIS. It emphasizes protection of the natural environment and recommends four areas for wilderness. Recreation opportunities which do not require developed facilities, such as hiking and nature study, are recommended. Expansion of ski areas and campgrounds would be deferred through the first decade or until substantial progress had been made toward achievement of the environmental thresholds. Grazing would be phased out in the first decade.

### Economic Efficiency Alternative

This alternative would seek the most economically efficient use of the resources. It would produce the highest present net value that can be achieved from marketable goods and services. Recreation would be emphasized. Three areas would be recommended for wilderness. Timber harvest and other programs would be maintained at low levels because they do not produce revenue above costs. Grazing would be eliminated.

### Market Emphasis Alternative

This alternative would emphasize timber harvesting, livestock grazing, and recreation. These marketable goods and services would help satisfy national demand. No additional wilderness would be recommended. Watershed restoration would not be completed in 20 years.

Amenity Alternative

This alternative would emphasize environmental protection and achievement of the environmental thresholds. Three areas would be recommended for wilderness. Recreation opportunities which do not require developed facilities would be increased to meet demand. New campgrounds and ski areas would not be developed. Programs to maintain or enhance water and air quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and the visual resource would be at a high level. Timber harvest would assist in improving wildlife habitat and vegetation diversity.

Low Budget Alternative

This alternative is similar to the Current Management Alternative except that by 1990 the budget would be reduced by 25%. Budget reductions would not be uniform for all resource programs, but all would be below the present level except for watershed restoration. Livestock grazing would be phased out in the first decade. No additional wilderness would be recommended.

1980 RPA Alternative

This alternative would achieve the 1980 RPA program targets assigned to the LTBMU. The RPA program provides moderately high levels of benefits. Timber harvest and livestock grazing would increase above current levels. Recreation would be expanded but probably not enough to meet demand. Two areas would be recommended for wilderness. The watershed restoration program would not be completed in 20 years.

Wilderness Alternative

This alternative would recommend three roadless areas for wilderness while intensifying resource management on nonwilderness lands. Total timber harvest, grazing, and recreation opportunities would be increased over current levels.

IV. RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

In selecting Alternative A, I considered both monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits, the capability of the land, the need for protection of resources, concerns expressed by people interested in the Forest, advice received from other agencies and resource professionals, and the legislative mandate of the Forest Service. Therefore, National, regional, State, and local objectives were considered in making the decision.

Alternative A provides management direction that will result in the greatest long-term benefits to people, including the benefits of a healthy, diverse, and productive forest environment. It provides a mix of amenity and commodity resources at reasonable levels and addresses the range of public concerns more effectively than the other alternatives.

The Amenity, Current and Conservation alternatives do not place enough emphasis on recreation opportunities which are in demand. The Market and RPA alternatives produce commodity outputs at high levels which are not justified in light of economic and environmental considerations. The Wilderness, Low Budget and Economic Efficiency alternatives do not meet some of the environmental thresholds established for the Tahoe Basin.

#### A. Response to Public Comments and Management Concerns

The FEIS, including Alternative A, responds to comments received from the public on the DEIS. Public input was very helpful. It showed areas of confusion, disagreements, and also what the public found acceptable. The comments proposed changes that would correct the documents, indicated where better explanations were needed for clear understanding, and stated issues to be addressed further.

Major issues that surfaced during the public comment period are discussed below.

##### 1. Wilderness

Issue: A large portion of the comments supported designating additional wilderness in the Lake Tahoe Basin. No new areas were recommended in the Preferred Alternative of the DEIS.

Plan response: Upon reconsideration, I am recommending the Mt. Rose area for wilderness. Until recently the Mt. Rose inventoried roadless area had been confined to the Toiyabe National Forest. Acquisition of land made it possible to add substantial acreage to the roadless area. The portion within the Lake Tahoe Basin is not large enough to be considered alone as a recommended wilderness, but it is a logical extension of the Mt. Rose Wilderness being recommended by the Toiyabe National Forest.

##### 2. Recreation Expansion

Issue: Comments addressing expansion of recreation opportunities, including ski areas, were mixed. Some people feel that ski areas, campgrounds, and other types of recreation improvements that attract people to the area cannot be built or expanded without endangering attainment of the environmental thresholds that were established in the TRPA planning process.

Plan response: I believe that a prohibition on expansion would inappropriately deny the general public recreation opportunities in the future. I also believe that, with mitigation measures, the environment can be protected. Alternative A allows for a balanced program including expansion of recreation sites.

##### 3. Off-Highway Vehicles

Issue: Many comments addressed off-highway vehicle activities complaining about user conflicts near the urban interface. Others were supportive of these activities as a legitimate recreational use of the national forest.

Plan response: Considerable effort will be spent trying to reconcile conflicts between user groups. Opportunities for motorized recreation will continue to be limited. User restraint and monitoring will play a major role in determining future mix of activities which will occur in the Tahoe Basin.

#### 4. Vegetation Management

Issue: Many comments supported the position taken in the Draft Plan that no lands in the LTBMU be managed for commercial timber production. The allowable sale quantity (ASQ) is zero. The proposed Plan called for 100 acres of small patchcuts up to 8 acres in size to create wildlife habitats that are lacking in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Concerns were expressed regarding the size and number of planned wildlife openings.

Plan response: In the final Forest Plan this program is being reduced. Group selection timber harvest will be the primary silvicultural system. Only 40 acres of 1 to 2 acre openings will be created each year. Occasional openings of 5 acres may occur. These forest openings are needed to maintain the plant diversity and habitat needed by Tahoe Basin wildlife. Though not prohibited, no herbicide use is anticipated.

#### 5. Watershed Restoration and Protection

Issue: There is a large ongoing effort to restore environmental conditions that have been found unacceptable. Restoring disturbed watersheds is a substantial part of this effort. The Forest Service has had a major involvement in the program, both directly and through federal grant programs to local governments. Work on national forest land is estimated to cost about \$25 million, while the total cost for the entire basin is in excess of \$160 million. The proposed Plan included a 40 year schedule for accomplishing the restoration of damaged watersheds on the LTBMU. Several comments pointed out that a 40 year schedule was longer than the time frame established in water quality management plans.

Plan response: The Final Plan reschedules watershed restoration and protection. Necessary work will be conducted over the next 20 years.

#### 6. Environmental Thresholds

Issues: The amount of commitment the LTBMU should demonstrate relative to the environmental thresholds for the Lake Tahoe Basin that were established through the TRPA planning process was questioned by some commenters. They felt that the Forest Service should adopt the thresholds and commit to their attainment regardless of future developments or strategies adopted by other agencies in the basin.

Plan response: The final Forest Plan adds emphasis to our commitment to continue participation in attainment of the thresholds and assisting others in doing the same. However, many of the influences critical to threshold attainment are not controllable by the Forest Service. It would be unrealistic for us to set attainment of the thresholds as an agency goal, apart from other participants in the basin.

## 7. Special Interest Areas (SIA)

Issue: The draft Forest Plan did not designate any SIAs nor did it recommend any candidates for study. Many comments questioned the lack of SIAs in the draft Plan.

Plan response: The Forest Plan establishes the Tallac Historic Site as a SIA. This designation is sanctioned by Title 36, CFR, Section 294.1(a) and by the authority vested in the Regional Forester. The site includes 225 acres and the management emphasizes preserving and interpreting the historic values of the area. The Plan also identifies four sites to be studied in this planning period to determine if they warrant SIA status. These are: Emerald Bay (scenic and geologic values), Osgood Bog (paleobotanical values), Taylor Creek Wetlands (botanical and zoological values) and Freel Peak Cushion Plant Community (botanical values). Until the evaluations of these sites are completed, their values will be protected against unacceptable disturbance.

## 8. Minerals

Issues: Mineral management proposals would be evaluated on a case by case basis under the draft Plan. Several comments stated that mining should not be allowed in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Plan response: The Forest Service does not have the authority to prohibit most mineral activity on public domain lands. The Department of Interior issues the leases for mineral activities. The Forest Service can recommend whether to lease or can consent to leasing. The Forest Service does have discretionary authority to dispose of common variety minerals. Experience and known mineral potential within the Lake Tahoe Basin indicate that little mineral activity is anticipated during the planning period and any such activity will be severely limited by local and regional environmental constraints. It is not within the authority of this Forest Plan to categorically prohibit mineral exploration or removal. Direction in the final Plan is the same as in the draft.

## 9. Grazing

Issue: A number of comments indicated that too much emphasis was being placed on livestock grazing. Some felt that grazing should be eliminated because of impacts upon watershed conditions, riparian vegetation, wildlife, fish, and recreation use.

Plan response: Livestock grazing management systems are incorporated in the Plan to protect these resources from adverse impacts. Modification of livestock grazing may be necessary as effects are monitored, but the Plan does not change the amount of grazing.

Additional specific concerns of the public are addressed in the public response appendix.

## B. Economic Efficiency of Alternatives

In determining the most economically efficient alternative, the Forest Service uses an estimate of Present Net Value (PNV) which is the difference between discounted benefits and costs. Alternative A ranked third highest in PNV among alternatives considered in detail. However, it provides the best mix of resource activities and is more compatible with the Forest Service goals and objectives than the other alternatives.

The highest PNV was produced by the Efficiency Alternative where maximizing PNV was the primary emphasis. The Wilderness Alternative had the second highest PNV. Both of these alternatives increased their PNV relative to other alternatives by recommending several areas for wilderness and developed recreation (high benefit producers) while minimizing cost for programs such as fire protection and watershed restoration. The benefits from these programs are not reflected in the PNV.

The PNV in Alternative A was 5% below that of the Efficiency Alternative. This relatively small reduction in PNV was judged less important in terms of net public benefit than the nonpriced benefits associated with Alternative A.

## C. Contribution to the Regional Production of Goods and Services

The Forest Plan will serve to implement and adjust assigned output targets of the RPA (Resources Planning Act) program. In considering the balance of multiple uses, I have chosen levels for each that are most fitting to the needs of the area. Although the Plan does not achieve some of the targets established in the 1980 RPA program, it does continue to provide resources important to the nation while preserving the basic soil and water resources so critical to the environment at Lake Tahoe. While several alternatives provide higher commodity outputs, the costs of doing so are also high, both in direct costs of implementation and costs to offset potential adverse impacts.

## D. Social and Economic Stability

Factors such as jobs, revenues, recreational opportunities, impacts upon lifestyles in the area, costs to the local economy, protection of resources for future generations, and their implications on social and economic stability were considered in choosing Alternative A.

A major effect of the Plan is the contribution the LTBMU makes to maintaining the attractiveness of the area as a world class destination resort. Tourism is by far the most important industry in the area. National forest land as a scenic backdrop, protector of water quality, and source of outdoor recreation is critical to the social and economic well being of the area. With respect to current levels of economic activity attributable to the LTBMU, the greatest change would be in employment and revenues associated with ski area developments. LTBMU activity supports, directly and indirectly, about 2,400 jobs annually. This is not significant when compared to the effects of other businesses in the area. The Plan does not significantly impact minorities or women differently from other identified users. However, in keeping with Forest Service policy, the LTBMU will maintain its commitment to equal employment opportunities in the implementation of the Plan.

#### E. Environmental Effects of the Alternatives

This section summarizes some effects which are expected to occur under each alternative. The magnitude, timing, and location of key environmental effects will differ under each alternative. These factors were all considered in choosing Alternative A as the Forest Plan.

All alternatives rely on substantial mitigation to protect air quality. Air quality would vary between alternatives as a result of automobile traffic generated while engaging in recreation activities. Limited recreation expansion in the Conservation, Amenity, and Low Budget alternatives would result in less auto emissions than in the other alternatives. Air quality would also be affected by slash burned following timber management activities. Adverse effects of slash burning would be greatest in the Market Alternative.

Opportunities for expanding recreation facilities are foregone in the Current, the Low Budget, and the Amenity alternatives and deferred in the Conservation Alternative. Recreation sites, including campgrounds and ski areas, are developed in the other alternatives, including Alternative A. Demand for these activities is expected to increase, and so long as adverse environmental impacts can be mitigated they are considered appropriate uses for the LTBMU.

The LTBMU is well timbered with annual growth of about 32 million board feet. Timber harvesting falls substantially short of the growth except in the Market and RPA alternatives. These two alternatives provide the most benefits to wildlife dependent upon early seral stages of vegetation. The other alternatives, including Alternative A, include a very low level of harvest, but meet the minimum requirements for maintaining vegetative diversity and providing the benefits of early seral stages. Forest conditions as a whole will progress toward older, more mature timber stands. Forest insect and disease activity is expected to increase along with the potential for losses due to wildfire in untreated stands.

All alternatives except the Market Alternative far exceed the national goal for visual resources. Since a large percentage of the LTBMU appears undisturbed there is very little land that would not meet visual quality objectives. In Alternative A and most other alternatives, over 90% of the LTBMU would appear natural. The Market Alternative would result in almost half of the LTBMU appearing modified by timber harvest, ski trails, and roads.

#### F. Environmentally Preferable Alternative

I judge the Amenity Alternative to be the environmentally preferable alternative. It emphasizes protection of water, air, visual quality, enhancement of wildlife habitat, and maintains large areas in wilderness or roadless, undeveloped condition. It includes no expansion of recreation developments and therefore has no potential for adverse effects which might be associated with such development. Timber harvest is slightly increased to include 100 acres of regeneration harvest per year as a wildlife and diversity enhancement. Over a short term, the Conservation Alternative would equal the Amenity in environmental protection. It would become less so as deferred recreation development begins to occur. The main reason for not selecting

either of these alternatives is that I believe the recreation opportunities included in Alternative A should not be foregone or deferred.

#### G. Compatibility with Goals and Plans of Other Agencies

The goals and plans of other agencies were considered throughout the planning process. Federal agencies commenting on the draft were the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Interior, and the Environmental Protection Agency. State agencies from California and Nevada commenting on the draft included the Departments of Parks and Recreation, Water Resources, Fish and Game, and Transportation; Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board; and the State Boards of Forestry, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology.

Local governments and agencies provided comment on the DEIS through representation on the Governing Board and Advisory Planning Commission of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. One Congressman commented on the DEIS.

Public input to the DEIS provided much needed information and solidified coordination efforts. Dialogue with other Federal agencies, States, local governments, and interested publics, however, will not stop with the approval of the Plan. On-going involvement by interested parties is critical to successful Plan implementation. As more site specific planning is done, we will conduct additional environmental analyses, with public involvement.

#### H. Reasons for Selecting FEIS Alternative A

FEIS Alternative A provides the mix of resource management that I considered appropriate for existing and predicted conditions on the LTBMU. It allows increased utilization of some market resources while protecting the basic soil and water resources and maintaining or enhancing amenity values. It provides for increases in recreation opportunities, enhances the quality of life for the public, and enhances vegetative diversity, which also benefits wildlife. It protects riparian areas, restores disturbed watersheds, and maintains soil productivity.

This alternative fits the special nature of the Lake Tahoe Basin. It provides direction for the multiple uses that are consistent with the Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities developed for the basin and is carefully coordinated with the plan prepared by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency for all lands in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

For all of these reasons, I judge Alternative A to have the greatest long-term public benefit when compared to other alternatives and have selected it to be the Plan for management of the LTBMU.

#### V. IMPLEMENTATION, MITIGATION OF IMPACTS, AND MONITORING

The Plan will not be implemented sooner than 30 days after the Notice of Availability of the Plan, FEIS, and Record of Decision appears in the Federal Register. The time needed to bring all activities into compliance with the Plan will vary depending on the type of project.

As soon as practicable after approval of the Plan, the Forest Supervisor shall ensure that, subject to valid existing rights, all outstanding and future permits, contracts, cooperative agreements and other instruments for occupancy and use of affected lands are consistent with the Plan. The Forest Supervisor will also assure that (1) annual program proposals and projects are consistent with the Plan; (2) program budget proposals and objectives are consistent with management direction specified in the plan; and (3) implementation is in compliance with the Regional Guide and 36 CFR 219.10(e), .11(d), and .27.

Implementation will be guided by the management requirements contained in the goals, objectives, standards and guidelines, prescriptions, and management area directions which are found in Chapter 4 of the Plan. These management requirements were developed through an interdisciplinary effort and contain measures necessary to mitigate or eliminate any long-term adverse effects. To the best of my knowledge, all practical mitigation measures have been adopted.

Outputs associated with Plan implementation may be adjusted as a result of research efforts which produce new information and technologies. Air quality, prescribed fire, riparian trend studies, and other data will enhance and affect Plan implementation. Management direction contained in the Plan will be used to analyze any proposal involving use of the national forest. All permits, contracts, and other instruments for occupancy and use of national forest land must be consistent with the management direction. This is required by 16 USC 1604(i) and 36 CFR 219.10(e).

The purpose of the monitoring program is to evaluate whether LTBMU goals and objectives are being met, to determine how closely management requirements have been followed, and to assist in assessing achievement of the environmental thresholds. The results of monitoring and evaluation will be used to measure the progress of plan implementation. These results will also help to determine when Plan amendments or revisions are needed.

## VI. PLANNING RECORDS, AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

### A. Planning Records

Planning records contain detailed information and document decisions used in developing the Plan and EIS as required in 36 CFR 219.12. All of the documentation detailing the forest planning process is available for inspection during regular business hours at:

Forest Supervisor's Office  
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit  
Plaza 89, Emerald Bay Road  
South Lake Tahoe, California 95731

These records are incorporated by reference into the EIS and Plan.

## B. Amendments and Revisions

The National Forest Management Act requires revision of the Forest Plan at least every 15 years. The Plan may be revised sooner whenever the Forest Supervisor determines that conditions or demands in the area covered by the Plan have changed significantly, or when changes in national policies, goals or objectives would have a significant effect on programs of the LTBMU.

The Regional Forester will approve any significant amendments to this Plan. The determination of significance or nonsignificance will be documented in a decision notice. Determinations of significance or nonsignificance are appealable under 36 CFR 211.18.

## C. Right To Administrative Review

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with the provisions of 36 CFR 211.18. Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted to:

Paul Barker  
Regional Forester  
Pacific Southwest Region  
USDA Forest Service  
630 Sansome Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111

The notice of appeal, a statement of reasons to support the appeal, and any request for oral presentation must be filed within 45 days after the date of this decision.

My recommendations for Wilderness designation for the Mount Rose area and Research Natural Area designation of the Grass Lake Moss Bog are not appealable. Only Congress can designate wildernesses. It is the Chief of the Forest Service that makes final decisions on Research Natural Areas. Specific decisions regarding interim management of these areas pending action by Congress or the Chief are appealable.

An appeal of my decision does not halt Forest Plan implementation. A stay of the decision must be requested. A stay may be requested at any time during the appeal period until a decision on the appeal is made by the Chief, USDA Forest Service.

No decisions on site-specific projects are made in this document, although a number of projects are identified. Those projects identified in various parts of the Plan or FEIS are only included in order to show that Forest Plan goals and objectives can be achieved.

Final decisions on site-specific projects will be made during Plan implementation after appropriate analysis and documentation meeting NEPA requirements. Parties dissatisfied with a specific project should appeal the site-specific decision once it is made.



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PAUL BARKER  
Regional Forester



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Date