

Decision Notice  
& Finding of No Significant Impact  
**Consolidation of Rincon, East Fork, and Crystal Lake Fire Stations**  
**USDA Forest Service**  
**Angeles National Forest**  
**Los Angeles County, California**  
**T2N; R9W; Section 19**

**Decision and Reasons for the Decision**

*Background*

The Rincon Fire Station has provided fire protection services for the San Gabriel Canyon in the Angeles National Forest for many decades. The station is currently staffed with one fire engine, one water tender, and one fire prevention technician. In addition the site provides office space, work space, and storage for 10 recreation employees and other Ranger District programs.

On January 21, 2009, the Forest Leadership Team amended its Facilities Master Plan. This Plan introduced the concept of consolidating fire facilities which have overlapping response areas into fewer centralized Fire Centers. This was partly based on a 2007 Fire Facilities Analysis (included in Appendix). In order to improve efficiency and comply with Regional and National direction, the plan calls for consolidation of fire resources into six centralized fire centers, including one at Rincon.

The Rincon Fire Center will act as a station and staging area allowing for the increase and decrease of fire resources based on funding and need; and it will serve as home base for fire resources that can be strategically moved in the San Gabriel Canyon to provide coverage for high risk areas. The new Rincon Fire Station is designated to house three fire engines (Rincon, Crystal Lake, and East Fork). The current Rincon engine will remain at the Rincon Fire Station. The Crystal Lake and East Fork engines will be moved to the Rincon site. The water tender, fire prevention technician, and recreation personnel will continue to be co-located at the site. New facilities will be constructed at the Rincon site to house the three engines with personnel, the water tender with personnel, and the fire prevention technician. The Rincon, Crystal Lake, and East Fork engines each currently include a staff of seven. The water tender has a staff of two. There is one fire prevention technician.

*Decision*

Based upon my review of all alternatives, I have decided to implement Alternative 2 which consolidates the Rincon, Crystal Lake, and East Fork fire stations in the San Gabriel Canyon into one central fire station located at Rincon.

When compared to the other alternatives this alternative will (i) consolidate facilities in the San Gabriel Canyon, without reducing first response capabilities; (ii) improve energy efficiency and reduction of the carbon footprint of the Forest facilities in San Gabriel Canyon through better insulation, natural lighting and ventilation, with replaced electrical, mechanical, plumbing, and HVAC components; and (iii) eliminate deferred maintenance costs associated with the buildings to be eliminated.

The new consolidated fire station will reduce the number of facilities and their deferred maintenance, as well as the Angeles NF facilities carbon footprint in the San Gabriel Canyon.

This decision is consistent with the results of the Angeles NF fire facilities analysis, dated March 19, 2007, and with the Angeles NF facilities master plan amendment dated January 21, 2009.

My decision is based on a review of the record that shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgment of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk.

#### *Other Alternatives Considered*

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered one other alternative. A comparison of these alternatives can be found in the EA on page 8.

#### Alternative 1

##### No Action

Under the No Action alternative, current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area, and the Rincon, East Fork and Crystal Lake fire stations will indefinitely remain at their respective locations in the San Gabriel Canyon.

#### **Public Involvement**

As described in the background, the need for this action arose in after the 2007 Angeles NF fire facilities analysis and the January 2009 Angeles NF facilities master plan amendment, when it was decided to consolidate several fire stations into larger centralized stations, included the consolidation of the Rincon, East Fork, and Crystal Lake fire stations into a consolidated fire station and barracks at Rincon. A proposal to replace the SO buildings was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions on July 24, 2009. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping July 24 to August 28, 2009. In addition, as part of the public involvement process, the agency mailed out a scoping letter seeking input on this project, to 952 recipients on the Forest scoping mailing list; Local offices of congressional members were contacted by telephone on July 27 and 28, 2009. The scoping letter was posted on the Angeles National Forest webpage on July 27, 2009. A newspaper advertisement was placed in the Los Angeles Times on July 27, 2009, announcing the project and showing how to get additional information about it. On July 29, 2009 a short note and link to the scoping letter was provided on the Angeles National Forest Twitter account, which had 479 subscribers at the time. The scoping letter was sent electronically (by email) to all Angeles National Forest employees on July 28, 2009. On August 4, 2009, the San Gabriel Tribune and Pasadena Star newspapers printed an article on the front page of their printed and web-based newspaper, describing the proposed consolidation. Five comments were received.

Using the comments (see *Issues* section), the interdisciplinary team identified several issues regarding the effects of the proposed action. Main issues of concern included:

1. Impact to public service
2. Impact to Forest Service employees
3. Impact on accessibility
4. Impact on “Greening” of the Forest Service
5. Impact to cultural/heritage resources

## 6. Impact to first response services

(see EA page 6). These concerns were addressed by the Forest Service in the alternatives described above.

### **Finding of No Significant Impact**

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

1. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action.
2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety, because the new building will provide an efficient, safe, and user-friendly space for its staff, and will meet the accessibility requirements of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act (with 1978 amendment) (see EA pages 11 and 12).
3. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area, because (i) according to the biological evaluation/ biological assessment, “the proposed project will not affect any threatened or endangered species or its critical habitat ... [and] the proposed project “will not result in a trend toward Federal listing or loss of viability for any Forest Service sensitive species;” and (ii) no historic properties are located on site (see EA pages 5 and 13).
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. Because there is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of the project (see EA page 4).
5. We have considerable experience with the types of activities to be implemented. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk (see EA page 4).
6. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, because, according to the project description, the use and character of the site is not changing (see EA page 3).
7. The cumulative impacts are not significant (see EA pages 11 to 14).
8. The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, because, in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (USFS840305B-I, 1984; USFS900917E, 1990), it has been determined, by consensus, that no historic properties are located in the APE for the current undertaking (see EA pages 13). The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources, because (see EA page 14).

9. The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species act of 1973 because, according to the Biological Evaluation/ Biological Assessment, “will not result in a trend toward Federal listing or loss of viability for any Forest Service sensitive species.” (see EA page 5).
10. The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA (see EA pages 5). The action is consistent with the Angeles National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (See EA page 4).

### **Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations**

This decision to implement Alternative 2 which consolidates the Rincon, Crystal Lake, and East Fork fire stations in the San Gabriel Canyon into one central fire station located at Rincon, is consistent with the intent of the forest plan's long term goals and objectives listed in Part 2, page 117. The project was designed in conformance with land and resource management plan standards and incorporates appropriate land and resource management plan guidelines for Facility Maintenance Backlog (Land and Resource Management Plan, Part 2, page 117).

### **Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities**

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215. Individuals or organizations who submitted substantive comments during the comment period specified at 215.6 may appeal this decision. No substantive comments expressing concerns, or only supportive comments were received during the comment period for a proposed action analyzed and documented in an EA (36 CFR 215.6). Therefore, the decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12(e), projects or activities for which notice of the proposed action and opportunity to comment is published (36 CFR 215.5).

### **Implementation Date**

Implementation of the decision may occur immediately after signing this Decision Notice.

### **Contact**

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact George Farra, Assistant Forest Engineer, Angeles National Forest, 701 N. Santa Anita Ave, Arcadia, CA 91006, (626)574-5301, gfarra@fs.fed.us.

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**JODY NOIRON**

Forest Supervisor  
Angeles National Forest

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Date

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