



File Code: 1950

Date: September 23, 2011

Dear Interested Parties:

The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) has prepared the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the South Shore Fuel Reduction and Healthy Forest Restoration Project (South Shore Project). The release of the South Shore FEIS and legal notice in the newspaper of record begin the 30 Day Objection Period per Healthy Forest Restoration Act process (36 CFR 218, subpart A).

The South Shore Project proposes to reduce the risk of high intensity wildfire on National Forest System lands in the wildland urban interface (WUI) in order to provide a defense zone between the National Forest System land and urban and/or suburban development. Removing surface and ladder fuels in the WUI provides space for an oncoming crown fire to drop to a surface fire where deployment of firefighting crews could be expected to safely succeed in controlling the spread of the fire, thus protecting life and property in the South Shore community. Equally important is thinning trees to improve forest health. This achieves a forest density more resistant and resilient to drought, insects, and disease which is included in the action alternatives, along with removal of conifer encroachment in riparian areas, aspen stands, and meadows. The action alternatives were developed using the best available science and are in compliance with and would implement the direction in the LTBMU Forest Plan, including amendments.

The proposed action was developed through coordination and collaboration with the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, the City of South Lake Tahoe Fire Department, Lake Valley Fire Protection District, Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, Fallen Leaf Fire Department, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), and the public starting in 2007.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was released for a 45 Day public comment period on April 10, 2009. Copies of the Draft EIS were mailed to interested and affected public, as well as to required federal and state agencies. Twenty letters of comment were received. The response to comments is contained in Appendix E of the EIS.

Project Area

The South Shore project analysis area extends from Cascade Lake on the northwest to the Heavenly Mountain Resort special use permit boundary and the Nevada State line on the northeast, and from Lake Tahoe on the north to the LTBMU boundary on the south. Maps showing the location of proposed treatment areas can be found following Chapter 5 in the FEIS.

Summary of Alternatives

The three alternatives analyzed in detail, (1, 2, 3) consider a full range of reasonable management options, including the No Action and Proposed Action alternatives.



In **Alternative 1**, the No-Action alternative, no vegetative treatments would take place and ladder and surface fuel loads would continue to increase. The Forest and private property would continue to be at risk for high-intensity crown fire.

In **Alternative 2**, the Proposed Action alternative, the Forest Service proposes 10,670 acres of vegetative treatments to reduce hazardous fuels and improve forest health. Most of the South Shore project acres will require activities extending over a period of three to seven years after initial treatment to attain fuel reduction conditions that would remain within desired condition for a period of 15 to 20 years post treatment. Hazardous fuel reduction would occur in all three zones of the WUI: on National Forest-owned urban lots within the urban core of the WUI, on National Forest lands within the ¼ mile WUI defense zone extending from the urban core, and on National Forest lands within the 1¼ mile WUI threat zone extending from the defense zone. Most areas would require two connected treatments, the first to remove trees and the second to reduce surface fuels.

The South Shore project includes objectives for tree spacing and basal area to improve forest health while retaining larger trees and emphasizing retention of Jeffrey/ponderosa and sugar pine species. Restoration and maintenance of meadows and aspen stands would be accomplished by removal of encroaching conifers, mainly lodgepole pine and white fir.

In **Alternative 3**, the Preferred Alternative is a modification of the Proposed Action. Vegetative treatments on 10,112 acres would reduce hazardous fuels and improve forest health. This alternative was developed to address the issues raised in public scoping concerning watershed and wildlife effects. Alternative 3 provides an action alternative that reduces environmental effects to the extent practical while meeting the purpose for the project and concerns for public health and safety. Alternative 3 reduces impacts to watersheds and wildlife while meeting the purpose and need to effectively reduce fire risk in the WUI. In summary, environmental effects are reduced through a reduction in mechanical treatment units, a reduction in whole-tree mechanical units, an increase in cut-to-length units, an increase in hand thinning units, and an overall reduction in total project acres compared to Alternative 2.

How to Object and Timeframe

This proposed hazardous fuel reduction project is subject to the objection process pursuant to 36 CFR 218, subpart A. It is not subject to the notice, comment, and appeal procedures found at 36 CFR 215 (36 CFR 218.3). Only those individuals and organizations who previously submitted written comments specific to this project, during scoping or other opportunity for public comment, have standing to file an objection (36 CFR 218.6(a)).

Objections, including attachments, must be filed (regular mail, fax, e-mail, hand delivery, express delivery, or messenger service) with the appropriate Reviewing Officer (36 CFR 218.7) within 30 days from the publication date of the legal notice in the Tahoe Daily Tribune. Notices of objection must meet the specific content requirements of 36 CFR 218.7. Incorporation of documents by reference shall not be allowed (36 CFR 218.7 (c)). The publication date of the legal notice in the Tahoe Daily is the exclusive means for calculating the time period to file an objection (36 CFR 218.9 (a)). Those wishing to object should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Objection to this Final Environmental Impact Statement must be in writing and must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 218.7. The objector must provide sufficient narrative description of those aspects of this proposed project addressed by the objection, specific issues and suggested remedies to resolve the objection. At a minimum, the objection must include: the objector's name and address, with telephone number if available; a signature or other verification of authorship; identification of a lead objector if multiple names are listed on the objection; the name of the project being objected to; the name and title of the Responsible Official (Nancy J. Gibson, LTBMU Forest Supervisor); and the Forest on which the project will be implemented.

Objections must be submitted to Reviewing Officer (Regional Forester), ATTN: HFRA OBJECTIONS, 1323 Club Drive, Vallejo, California 94592, faxed to (707) 562-9091 or hand delivered to the above address between 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic objections, in acceptable [plain text (.txt), rich text (.rtf), portable document format (.pdf) or Word (.doc)] formats, may be submitted electronically to appeals-pacificsouthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us with Subject: South Shore Project - LTBMU. The Responsible Official may not issue a decision for this hazardous fuel reduction project until the Reviewing Officer has responded to all pending objections. When no objections are filed within the 30-day time period, the decision may occur on, but not before, the fifth business day following the end of the objection-filing period.

The FEIS is available on the internet at the following web address:
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/lbmu/SouthShoreFuelReduction>

For further information or to request a CD or hardcopy of the FEIS, contact Duncan Leao at the LTBMU Supervisors Office, 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe, California 96150; (530) 543-2660 or 543-2600.

Sincerely,



NANCY J. GIBSON
Forest Supervisor

