Forest Health Protection
Pacific Southwest Region

Date: September 29, 2009
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To: Patricia Grantham, Forest Supervisor, Klamath National Forest

Subject: Biological Evaluation of Scott Bar Mountain Thinning Project – Salmon/Scott River Ranger District (FHP Report No. N09-05)

On May 18-21, 2009, Cynthia Snyder (Entomologist) and Pete Angwin (Plant Pathologist) from Forest Health Protection visited the Klamath National Forest to review past, current and future thinning projects requesting FHP funding with Roger Siemers (Klamath National Forest SO).

On May 20, we were joined by Dave Burgess (Salmon/Scott River Ranger Districts) to look at the Scott Bar Mountain thinning project, 76 acres of which was submitted for 2008 FHP Prevention/Suppression funding (FHP Report No. N07-12). FHP funding was pulled due to fire suppression activities; however, returns from fuels funding (WFHF and RTRT) made it possible for the District to accomplish 214 acres of thinning in the project area at $643.74 per acre. Observations and recommendations are as follows:

Background
The Klamath NF accomplished 214 acres of precommercial thinning and hand piling in the Scott Bar Mountain WUI in winter 2008/09. Burning is scheduled for fall 2009 or spring 2010. We visited the area located approximately 12-15 miles west of Fort Jones on May 20, and saw plantation units 533-14 (N41° 38.453', W123° 05.925'), -7 (N41° 38.928', W123° 05.315') and -180. The trees are primarily precommercial-sized ponderosa pine (about 30 years old) with lesser amounts of Douglas-fir, incense cedar, white fir and black oak. By thinning trees less than 10 inches DBH within the dripline (15 feet) of conifers greater than 10 inches DBH and leaving all hardwoods, the treatment has reduced stocking to about 130 trees per acre (for conifers) and increased spacing to approximately 20 feet (Figures 1 and 2).

Observations
Although the thinning has made obvious improvements in stocking levels, there may remain some risk of attack by western and mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus brevicomis* and *Dendroctonus ponderosae*, respectively). Western pine beetle and red

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turpentine beetle (*D. valens*) are both present within the stands. Western dwarf mistletoe (*Arceuthobium campylopodum*) was also found in ponderosa pine throughout the plantations. Pine engraver beetle (*Ips pini*) was found infesting the "doodle piles" that were left to be burned in the upcoming fall and/or spring (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 1. Plantation in Scott Bar Mountain after thinning with left-over "doodle piles".

Figure 2. Plantation in Scott Bar Mountain after thinning with left-over "doodle piles".

Figure 1. "Doodle pile" with pine engraver beetle infestation.

Figure 2. Frass from pine engraver beetle on ponderosa pine log.

Summary

Thinning at Scott Bar Mountain will have some effect in addressing concerns regarding bark beetles, fire and drought, while producing more diverse and resilient stand structure and enhancing wildlife and timber values. The level of risk is reduced but with higher than favorable density and the current presence of bark beetles, some elevated risk remains in the stands. The thinning may not have been heavy enough to meet the Regional Forester's density management policy that high risk density levels will not be reached again for at least 20 years.

The Scott/Salmon River Ranger Districts and Klamath National Forest have an excellent record of accomplishment in the planning and timely implementation of similar thinning treatments.

If you have any questions regarding this report and/or need additional information please contact Cynthia Snyder at 530-226-2437 or Pete Angwin at 530-226-2436.

/s/ Cynthia Snyder

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