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Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

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Route To:

Subject: Biological Evaluation of Karuk Tribe Proposal for FPM Suppression/Prevention Funds for Road Decommissioning (FHP Rept. No. N07-05)

To: Gerald Jones, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Pacific Regional Office

On July 17, 2007, I accompanied Earl Crosby (Karuk Tribe of California, Department of Natural Resources) to the Bluff Creek Watershed, near Orleans, California. The purpose of the trip was to evaluate a potential Forest Pest Management Suppression/Prevention project that the Karuk Tribe would like to propose for funding in FY2008.

Together with the Six Rivers National Forest, the Karuk Tribe plans to decommission approximately 9.4 miles of road on the Orleans Ranger District. The roads include parts of FS Road 11N21, 11N17, 11N02 and associated spur roads, all of which are in Late Successional Reserves within the Bluff Creek watershed. As part of a cooperative effort with funding from several federal and state agencies, the Karuk Tribe is requesting a contribution of \$20,000 of Forest Pest Management Suppression/Prevention funds to go toward this overall effort. The total cost of the treatment will be approximately \$420,000, and will utilize funds from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Environmental Protection Agency, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game.

The road decommissioning is part of a Challenge Cost Share Agreement between the Karuk Tribe and the Six Rivers National Forest that will provide watershed restoration in the Bluff, Slate and Camp Creek drainages. All NEPA requirements have been completed and the project is ready for implementation. The decommissioning is designed to reduce road-related sediment input, which will help conserve and protect anadromous fisheries spawning and rearing habitat, as well as native fisheries. Another major benefit of the project is that it will provide an additional degree of protection of a major population of Port-Orford-cedar in the Bluff Creek Watershed from the exotic root disease pathogen, *Phytophthora lateralis*. It will do this by preventing vehicles, which can carry and deposit mud that is infested with the pathogen, from passing by the Port-Orford-cedar along these roads.

The population of Port-Orford-cedar in the project area is approximately 8.5 miles from a large Port-Orford-cedar root disease infestation at Fish Lake, which is home to the most popular campground on the Orleans Ranger District. The whole area (Fish Lake, Bluff Creek and beyond) is currently protected from additional vehicle-related root disease introduction and spread by wet-season road closure gates. These gates are only open from approximately May 15 to October 31, when roads are dry and the risk of vehicles picking up, carrying and dropping off pathogen-laden mud is low. This control method is highly effective, but the complete elimination



of all vehicles at all times from will provide an even higher degree of protection for the Port-Orford-cedar in the immediate project area. Earl Crosby estimates that approximately 500 acres of Port-Orford-cedar will be protected to this higher degree by the road decommissioning. Best Management Practices, including the washing of all equipment used in the project will be practiced in order to avoid potential spread of the pathogen during project implementation.

The project has several other benefits as well. The Karuk Tribe, as well as the nearby Yurok and Hoopa Tribes, utilize Port-Orford-cedar for a variety of ceremonial uses, where the resource has great spiritual and cultural significance. The protection of Port-Orford-cedar thus has direct impact on the cultural well-being of these people. In addition, project funds will also provide employment to the Karuk tribal workforce and on-the-job internships for apprentice heavy equipment operators and laborers, who will develop skills in the principles of design, prescription and implementation of watershed restoration projects. The project also provides protection to the habitat of variety of Tribal Trust and T&E fish and wildlife species, including Coho and Chinook salmon, Steelhead Trout, northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and other game and non-game species, both through the effects of conserving riparian Port-Orford-cedar and from the reduction in road-related sediment input to the watersheds.

I wholeheartedly support the aims of this project and recommend it for Forest Pest Management Suppression/Prevention funding. Because the project provides only a degree of additional protection to Port-Orford-cedar in an area that already has reasonably effective protections in place, I feel it should be given medium priority for funding. The additional cultural and economic benefits for the Karuk and other tribes, as well as the positive effects on wildlife and wildlife habitat amply justify the project. In addition, because the project is the product of a cooperative effort between the Karuk Tribe and the USDA Forest Service, and has the technical and financial support of a variety of federal and state agencies, I feel that it is highly appropriate that Forest Health Protection takes part and contributes to this effort.

Please feel free to call if you have any questions or would like to discuss this FPM Suppression/Prevention project proposal.

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CC: EARL CROSBY, CORRINE BLACK, LISA HOOVER, ROY BERGSTROM, BILL RICE, RALPH THEIR, JULIE LYDICK, PHIL CANNON AND SHERI SMITH