



Ecological Restoration
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region

Aspen Enhancement on the Plumas National Forest

Aspen is an ecologically important (as well as beautiful) habitat type that is diminishing in California. All three Ranger Districts on the Plumas NF have implemented projects to restore aspen and the valuable habitat it provides for wildlife. One factor that has contributed to the decline of aspen is fire suppression, which has allowed coniferous trees such as pine and fir to encroach into aspen stands, inhibiting growth and eventually replacing the aspen. Aspen restoration is one component of a larger ecological restoration vision to ensure a diversity of vegetation types and wildlife habitats into the future. Some of the same treatments that serve to reduce fuels and fire risk can also benefit aspen if properly applied.

The Beckwourth Ranger District has completed over 500 acres in several aspen restoration projects on the east side of the Plumas National Forest, including the Frenchman Lake and Lake Davis watersheds. An additional 55 acres is planned for this year, and over 150 additional acres are planned for restoration. Non-federal funding and assistance has come from multiple partners including Mule Deer Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, California Deer Association, and the Susanville Rancheria. One 2010 project, titled Thompson Aspen, involved removal of small-diameter trees as biomass for energy; this project was supported by funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Other projects remove larger conifer trees through commercial timber sales, or conduct hand-thinning by service contract.