



United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest Region  
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# Los Padres National Forest

*Land Management Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Report for 2018*



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Los Padres National Forest Stakeholders,

I am pleased to present the Los Padres National Forest's (LPNF) fiscal year 2018 Monitoring and Evaluation Report. Included within the report is a summary of specific program accomplishments for the year, and evaluation of whether plans, projects and activities are implemented as designed and in compliance with the 2005 Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan (LMP), as amended.

The LMP emphasizes and identifies monitoring as a key element in all programs to assure the achievement of desired conditions over time. Recently implemented projects are monitored as well as ongoing activities, programs, and resource status. Through monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management, we aim to further increase management effectiveness and resource protection.

It is important to me to keep you informed of the results of our monitoring. If you are interested in becoming involved in a project or other planning activity, please see our national website <http://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/>. Additional information and opportunities on the Los Padres National Forest may be found on our Forest website <http://www.fs.usda.gov/lpnf/>.

Sincerely,



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KEVIN B. ELLIOTT  
Forest Supervisor  
Los Padres National Forest

July 29, 2021

Date

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## **Introduction**

Monitoring is a means for confirming the sufficiency and adequacy of guidance in the Land Management Plan (LMP), and for tracking the status of and trends in changing resource conditions. It facilitates the process for adapting to change and documents the need to update, amend and eventually revise land management plans to achieve desired conditions while ensuring healthy National Forests exist for future generations. Monitoring requirements are found in all three parts of the LMP, and a summary of these requirements are in Appendix C in Part 3 of the LMP.

Part 1 monitoring assesses resource conditions and movement towards desired conditions over the long-term. This is completed by measuring the change over time to environmental indicators and outcome evaluation questions identified in the LMP. The status of the trend relative to the desired resource condition serves as the basis for determining when a need for change in land management planning is indicated.

Part 2 monitoring focuses on program implementation through accomplishments tracked in Forest Service corporate databases. The annual accomplishment indicators determine if the program areas are implementing the objectives and strategies established in Part 2 of the LMP.

Part 3 monitoring is conducted at the project level to evaluate the effectiveness and application of design criteria established in the LMP. Projects that were completed or were in ongoing implementation in FY 2018 were selected for monitoring from representative functional areas and districts. Selected projects were then visited by an interdisciplinary monitoring team to review the application and effectiveness of the design criteria.

The FY 2018 LMP Monitoring and Evaluation Report documents the evaluation of selected projects and programs where activities occurred during October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018.

## **Part 2 Monitoring**

Monitoring identified in Part 2 of the Southern California Land Management Plans is focused on program implementation including inventory activities. The National Forests currently use attainment reporting for tracking program accomplishments as discussed in Part 2 of the LMP. The attainment measures are linked to the National Strategic Plan and report accomplishments through a national reporting system. Although the system will evolve over time as management needs change, Table 1 represents the type of measures that are currently reported on an annual basis. These attainments reflect current budget and staffing.

**Table 1:** FY2018 Accomplishments generated from geo-enabled Performance Accountability System (gPAS)

Indicator	Units	2018 Accomplishment
Terrestrial Habitat Enhanced	Acres	284.6
Aquatic Habitat Enhanced	Miles	13.3
Noxious Weeds Treated	Acres	277.3
Forestland Vegetation Improved	Acres	67
Watershed Improved	Acres	2,005.20
Land Ownership Adjusted	Acres	0
Heritage Programs Managed to Standard	Number	38.5
Recreation Special Use Authorizations Administered to Standard	Number	63
People At One Time (PAOT) Days Managed to Standard	Days	0
Recreation Sites Managed to Standard	Number	83
Land Use Authorizations Administered to Standard	Number	161
Mineral Operations Administered to Standard	Number	70
Grazing Allotments Administered to Standard	Acres	112,564
Hazardous Fuel Reduction	Acres	4,200
Passenger Car Roads Maintained to Objective Maintenance Level	Miles	0
High Clearance & Back Country Roads Maintained to Objective Maintenance Level	Miles	0
Road Decommissioned	Miles	0
Trail Operated and Maintained to Standard	Miles	31.9

### Part 3 Monitoring

Implementation and effectiveness monitoring for Part 3 of the LMP is conducted at the project level and is completed for new projects and ongoing activities and sites. A sample of projects and ongoing activities are selected, evaluated for compliance with the LMP, and visited by an interdisciplinary team (IDT) to review the application and effectiveness of design criteria. If the LMP design criteria are determined to be ineffective, then the IDT recommends possible corrective actions, and any required adjustments to the design criteria are documented in this report and updated in the LMP in accordance with Forest Service procedures.

The following questions are investigated for each reviewed project or ongoing activity:

- Is the project consistent with the LMP, and were LMP goals, desired conditions, and standards incorporated into the decision document?
- Were mitigations or design criteria identified from the LMP, consultations, and public input included in the decision, and implementation documents?
- Was the project implemented effectively?
- Were mitigations or design criteria effective?
- Were monitoring requirements identified and followed?

The following projects were chosen from a stratified sample of projects representing program areas and districts on the Los Padres National Forest. The LMP monitoring appendix calls for a 10% random sample of new and ongoing projects. Technically, an ongoing project is one that is either implemented over a

long span of time, a routine ongoing activity, or is part of a long-term permitted activity such as livestock grazing on a range allotment, but which still requires National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliant environmental review for reauthorization. A new project is one which is planned, implemented, or completed within a recent period. The Los Padres National Forest strives to select projects covering a range of program areas geographically distributed over the Forest. When possible, at least one project per District is selected while striving to have several major program areas represented.

**Table 2:** Projects Selected for Review

Ranger District	Project Name	Functional Area	Documentation Reviewed
Santa Barbara	Calvin Smith Road access aka Knapp's Castle Road	Commodity & Commercial Uses	Decision Memo
Mt. Pinos	Frazier Mountain Vegetation Management	Resource Management/ Fire & Aviation Management	Decision Notice
Mt. Pinos	Cuddy Valley Forest Health/Fuels Reduction Project #52500	Resource Management/ Fire & Aviation Management	Decision Memo
Ojai	Blue Point Campground and Day Use Removal and Restoration Project	Facility Operations & Maintenance / Resource Management	Decision Notice
Forest-wide	Los Padres Tamarisk Removal	Resource Management	Record of Decision
Mt. Pinos	AT&T fiber optic line permit reissuance	Commodity & Commercial Uses	Decision Memo
Forest-wide	OHV Route Level 1 and 2 Trail Maintenance Project	Public Use & Enjoyment/ Facility Operations and Maintenance	Decision Memo
Monterey	Strategic Community Fuelbreak Improvement Project	Fire and Aviation Management	Record of Decision



## ***Calvin Smith Road access aka Knapp's Castle Road***

### **Project Description**

The applicant, Calvin Smith, filed a Special Use Application requesting continued use and maintenance of an existing .47-mile-long road on National Forest System land. The purpose of the road permit is to provide access to their private property located within the Santa Barbara Ranger District.

### **Monitoring**

This action was analyzed under a categorical exclusion and documented in a Decision Memo in April 2017. The applicable category of action was identified in agency procedures as “Issuance of a new special use authorization for a new term to replace an existing or expired special use authorization when the only changes are administrative, there are not changes to the authorized facilities or increases in the scope or intensity of authorized activities, and the applicant or holder is in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the special use authorization” (36 CFR 220.6(e)(15)). No extraordinary circumstances were identified.

Because the road has been in existence since before 1974, continued use and maintenance of the access road would not result in adverse environmental effects.

A special use permit was issued to Calvin Smith in May 2017 and provides for the continued use and maintenance of the existing road for a 20-year term. The permit includes a maintenance plan which stipulates resource protection and fire prevention measures. Field visits found the road to be orderly and clear of vegetation and trash. Continued monitoring of this special use permit will ensure continued compliance.

The existing access road is located along E. Camino Cielo Road (FS Road 5N12). Although closed to public motorized vehicles, the road is accessible to the public via foot, bicycle, and horseback. This road primarily allows the private landowner access and Forest Service administrative use; however, the road does not restrict recreation access to the Snyder trail. It is determined that there are no impacts to recreation resources and public access.



Figure 1: Photos of the access road taken during a field visit

## Conclusion

This action authorizes road access to a private landowner and places maintenance conditions on the road to provide for consistent resource management. This action also provides continued use of the Snyder trail for recreation.

This project is consistent with the following goals as identified in the LMP:

- Goal 3.1 - Provide for Public Use and Natural Resource Protection
- Goal 7.1 - Retain natural areas as a core for a regional network while focusing the built environment into the minimum land area needed to support growing public needs

## ***Frazier Mountain Project***

### **Project Description**

The Frazier Mountain Project is designed to reduce fire hazard risk, maintain the health of mature conifer stands and existing conifer plantations, and protect existing facilities from wildfire, including high value recreation areas such as campgrounds, trailheads, special-use dwellings and the Mount Pinos Ranger District Office and warehouse. Thinning and fuels treatments will occur on approximately 2,386 acres of the 2,850-acre project area. Initial treatments will focus on noncommercial mechanical thinning and fuels reduction. Further fuels treatments, such as pile and understory burning, will occur in subsequent years to maintain desired stand conditions.

### **Monitoring**

Thinning and fuels treatments were approved under a Decision Notice signed in May of 2012. In 2018, the Forest implemented 236 acres of understory thinning or pile creation and burning. Fuels treatments were accomplished utilizing tracked masticators and a combination of mechanical and hand falling were used to accomplish thinning treatments. Both fuels and thinning treatments were accomplished by Forest Service employees. Not all vegetation was treated within the unit and vegetated islands were identified and retained throughout to achieve desired conditions. Additional thinning, pile burning, and understory burning treatments are anticipated to continue as funding becomes available.



Figure 2: Pile burning and smoke dispersal from the Frazier Mountain Project

## Conclusion

The fuels and thinning treatments implemented in 2018 are partially consistent with the purpose and need of the Frazier Mountain Project to reduce trees per acre and stocking levels, create more structural diversity within forest stands, and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Two-thirds of the treated stands are still



considered at risk following treatments because the final decision limits thinning to 10-inches diameter at breast height. Portions of the project are consistent with the following goals as identified in the LMP:

- Goal 1.1 - Community Protection. Improve the ability of southern California communities to limit loss of life and property and recover from the high intensity wildland fires that are a natural part of this state's ecosystem.
- Goal 1.2 - Restoration of Forest Health. Restore forest health where alteration of natural fire regimes has put human and natural resource values at risk.
  - Goal 1.2.1 - Fire Regime I (0-35 years - low severity). Reduce the potential for widespread losses of montane conifer forests caused by severe, extensive, stand replacing fires

### ***Cuddy Valley Forest Health/Fuels Reduction Project***

#### **Project Description**

The Cuddy Valley Forest Health/Fuels Reduction Project identifies fuels reduction treatments for 1,200 acres of overstocked forest stands at risk of loss to insect, disease, and wildfire complexes. This project also includes strategic treatment areas around local communities, the wildland urban interface, and connects with the broader landscape to strengthen treatment effectiveness on adjacent public and private lands. A variety of fuels reduction methods will be used in this project based on the existing conditions of the stands. Such methods may include mechanical and hand thinning, mastication, machine or hand piling, and pile burning.

#### **Monitoring**

This project was analyzed under a categorical exclusion and documented in a Decision Memo in November 2018. The applicable category of action is identified in agency procedures as "Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road construction 36 CFR 220.6(e)(6)". Project design features for implementation monitoring are developed from site specific evaluations and based on LMP direction to mitigate or avoid negative impacts. This project is under litigation and a decision from the Ninth Circuit Court is expected in 2021 or 2022.

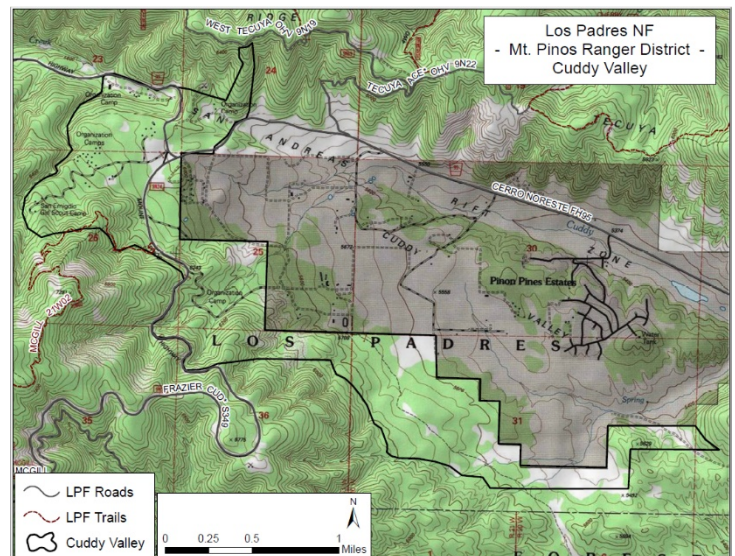


Figure 3: Map of the Cuddy Valley Forest Health/Fuels Reduction project

#### **Conclusion**

The fuels reduction treatments planned for the Cuddy Valley Forest Health/Fuels Reduction project will strategically place treatments to improve resilient forest conditions and assist in reducing forest loss due to insect, disease, and wildfire complexes. This project is consistent with the following goals as identified in the LMP:

- Goal 1.1 - Community Protection. Improve the ability of southern California communities to limit loss of life and property and recover from the high intensity wildland fires that are a natural part of this state's ecosystem.
- Goal 1.2 - Restoration of Forest Health. Restore forest health where alteration of natural fire regimes

has put human and natural resource values at risk.

### ***Blue Point Campground and Day Use Removal and Restoration Project***

#### **Project Description**

The Blue Point Campground and Day Use Area, adjacent to Piru Creek, was closed in 2000 for the protection of endangered species and critical habitat for the arroyo toad, California red-legged frog, and southwest willow flycatcher. Portions of the Piru Creek watershed burned during the 2003 Piru Fire and the 2008 Ranch Fire burned through the campground and damaged or destroyed the existing recreational facilities.

Decommissioning the campground and restoring the area to a natural condition was proposed considering the high cost of infrastructure replacement and recreation conflicts with federally listed species and their habitat.

The purpose of the project is to remove all improvements associated with the Blue Point Campground and Day Use Area, mitigate the hazards from burned and deteriorating improvements, and restore the campground and day use area to a natural condition. In addition, this project will improve riparian conditions and provide ecological conditions necessary to sustain populations of native species by improving the hydrologic function of Piru Creek and habitat for federally listed species.



Figure 4: Photo of a Blue Point Campground sign after the Ranch Fire.

#### **Monitoring**

The Blue Point Campground and Day Use Removal and Restoration Project was approved under a Decision Notice signed in July 2018 and the project was officially completed by October 2018. In total, 42 developed camp/picnic sites, 5 outhouses, a footbridge, pumphouse, and concrete ford were removed from the project area. The project required 30 full truck loads to haul 480 tons of concrete and 250 tons of miscellaneous debris. Upon removal, the Forest Service recycled or repurposed:

- 50 redwood table planks
- 25 pedestal stoves
- 450 tons of chip seal
- 40 tons of steel
- 3 Forest Service gates

All resource protection measures were followed, and biologists were present to monitor implementation and ensure the protection of the endangered species and their habitat. Continued monitoring of the area will determine long-term project effectiveness.

## Conclusion

The Blue Point Campground and Day Use Removal and Restoration Project was successfully completed, and the area was restored to a natural condition. This project is consistent with the following goals as identified in the LMP:

- Goal 3.1 - Provide for Public Use and Natural Resource Protection
- Goal 5.2 - Improve riparian conditions
- Goal 6.2 - Provide ecological conditions to sustain viable populations of native and desired nonnative species

## Los Padres Tamarisk Removal

### Project Description

The invasive weed, tamarisk (*Tamarix* spp.), is spreading within the Piru Creek, Lockwood Creek, Cuyama River, Santa Ynez River, Sisquoc River, Sespe Creek, and Arroyo Seco River watershed of the Los Padres National Forest. The Tamarisk Removal Project was designed to eradicate current tamarisk infestations and prevent further spread. The project area is located along riparian zones of the above-mentioned waterways and covers approximately 368 linear miles along perennial and intermittent streams for an area of approximately 4,247 acres. Currently, the infestations are composed of scattered tamarisk within riparian habitat conservation areas, congressionally designated wilderness areas, and wild and scenic rivers. The project is located on all five ranger districts of the Los Padres National Forest.

Tamarisk is an invasive non-native tree-shrub that can grow in dense patches, outcompete native riparian vegetation, such as willows (*Salix* spp.) and cottonwoods (*Populus* spp.), change soil chemistry by depositing salts from deep ground water onto the soil surface, and remove large amounts of water from streams and riparian areas via foliage evapotranspiration. By removing tamarisk before it becomes the dominant vegetation component within riparian landscapes, native plant communities will be maintained and can continue providing habitat to species dependent on healthy, properly functioning riparian ecosystems.



Figure 5. Pictures of volunteers manually removing tamarisk

Herbicide application along with mechanical removal treatments are known as effective and efficient control methods for tamarisk. Herbicide applications for the project are restricted to ground-based, hand applications. Invasive tamarisk removal treatments will occur through 2021 as part of the project. Monitoring and



maintenance treatments will continue thereafter to re-treat existing infestations and to treat new infestations discovered within the project area. It is anticipated that most of the project will be implemented within ten years (from 2016 to 2026) with the most intensive treatments occurring during the first five years.

### **Monitoring**

The Tamarisk Removal Project was approved under a Record of Decision signed in November of 2016 and began implementation in the spring of 2017. In 2018, approximately 248 acres of tamarisk were chemically or manually treated. Between 2017 and 2018, a total of 360 acres have been treated to remove tamarisk.

### **Conclusion**

The tamarisk removal treatments conducted in 2018 were a success for the Tamarisk Removal Project implementation. Every acre treated removes numerous plants and prevents those plants from reproducing and spreading into surrounding environments.

Herbicide use for the project is consistent with the Forest Service Pesticide Use Policy; is in compliance with state and federal regulations; and follows Region 5 Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Vegetation Manipulation, the Region 5 Supplement for Pesticide-Use Management and Coordination, and the Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan guidance including the Supplement to Soil and Water Conservation Practices FSH 2509.22-2005-1.

This project is consistent with the following goals as identified in the LMP:

- Goal 2.1 - Reverse the trend of increasing loss of natural resource values due to invasive species
- Goal 6.2 - Provide ecological conditions to sustain viable populations of native and desired nonnative species

### ***AT&T Fiber Optic Line Permit Reissuance***

#### **Project Description**

AT&T requested the reissuance of special use permits to maintain an existing fiber optic line located on existing utility poles and underground trenches along Cuddy Valley Road on the Mt. Pinos Ranger District. The 19,400-foot line is an integral part of the telecommunications network between Frazier Park and Pine Mountain Club, California. AT&T also requested approvals to upgrade the network's bandwidth capacity to deliver high speed internet access and video on the existing telecommunication line. Three sections totaling 3.55 miles of the proposed cable route are located within the Los Padres National Forest.

### **Monitoring**

The AT&T Fiber Optic Line Permit Reissuance was analyzed under a categorical exclusion and documented in a Decision Memo in December 2017. The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as "Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of National Forest System lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land" 36 CFR 220.6(e)(3). No extraordinary circumstances were identified to warrant further analysis and documentation.



A special use permit was issued to AT&T for a 20-year term. The permit includes an approved operations and maintenance plan which allows AT&T to maintain all existing infrastructure and stipulates resource protection measures and fire prevention measures. Field visits conducted at the identified line locations found the line location areas to be orderly and clear of vegetation and trash. Continued monitoring with field inspections and discussions at annual meetings ensure continued compliance, and any non-compliance situation is resolved within a reasonable timeframe. As any shortcomings in the operation and maintenance plan are recognized, the plan is updated and implemented region wide.

### **Conclusion**

The resource protection and fire prevention measures stipulated in the issued permit are in accordance with the Guidelines for Protection and Conservation of Bird Species at Mountain Top Communications Sites found in Part 3, Appendix G of the LMP. This project is also consistent with Goal 7.1 as identified in the LMP:

- Goal 7.1 - Retain natural areas as a core for a regional network while focusing the built environment into the minimum land area needed to support growing public needs

### ***OHV Route Level 1 and 2 Trail Maintenance Project***

#### **Project Description**

The OHV Route Level 1 and Level 2 Trail Maintenance Project aims to continue the use and routine maintenance of approximately 335 miles of designated OHV (off-highway vehicle) trails on the Santa Lucia, Mt. Pinos, Santa Barbara, and Ojai Ranger Districts on the Los Padres National Forest. Without regular maintenance, the trails will deteriorate and erode leading to higher maintenance costs, threatening the sustainability of the trail system, and increase impacts to watersheds. This project will include light trail maintenance with no disturbance to the existing trail surface (Level 1 Trail Maintenance) and re-establishment of the existing trailway (Level 2 Trail Maintenance). This project will be completed with hand tools and mechanized equipment by a combination of contract crews, volunteers, and Forest Service staff.

#### **Monitoring**

The OHV Route Level 1 and Level 2 Trail Maintenance Project was analyzed under a categorical exclusion and documented in a Decision Memo in April 2017. The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as "Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries" 36 CFR 220.6(d)(4). Implementation began in the fall of 2017 and monitoring indicates all resource protection measures are being implemented as planned.

### **Conclusion**

The OHV Route Level 1 and Level 2 Trail Maintenance Project will provide necessary routine maintenance to ensure a sustainable OHV trail system that is well-maintained, safe, consistent with visitor expectations, and consistent with Goal 3.1 as identified in the LMP:

- Goal 3.1 - Provide for Public Use and Natural Resource Protection

## ***Strategic Community Fuelbreak Improvement Project***

### **Project Description**

The Strategic Community Fuelbreak Improvement Project will reestablish and maintain 24 miles (approximately 542 acres) of historically used fuelbreaks. The fuelbreaks originated as firelines within the wildland urban interface threat zones for the Big Sur, Palo Colorado, Cachagua, and Jamesburg communities. The project will remove medium (light brush and small trees) to heavy (dense brush) fuels. Approximately 170 acres of fuelbreaks will be reestablished and maintained within the Ventana Wilderness. Maintenance in the Wilderness will occur every 3-5 years through a combination of manual treatments utilizing traditional tools and handheld motorized tools for cutting vegetation, piling, and pile burning. Approximately 371 acres of fuelbreaks will be re-established and maintained in non-wilderness areas. Maintenance will occur every 3-6 years through a combination of manual thinning with handheld motorized tools and chippers, mastication with excavators, herbicide, and any remaining material will be piled for burning. The desired end state of the project is to have a vegetative ground cover of grass, forbs, and small shrubs, with the existing overstory of trees intact. This project will improve wildland fire suppression efficacy and reduce fire risk to life and properties in the surrounding communities.



Figure 6: A visual simulation of what completed implementation may look like on Hennicksons Ridge. Top picture is before treatment and below is after treatment. Simulation completed using Adobe Photoshop.

### **Monitoring**

The Strategic Community Fuelbreak Improvement Project was analyzed under an Environmental Impact Statement and approved under a Record of Decision in November 2018. The decision includes project wide monitoring for implementation, effectiveness, and validation, as well as an adaptive management plan. Implementation monitoring includes checking compliance with a situation report to verify timelines, meet project design standards and mitigation measures, and the appropriate use of tools. Effectiveness monitoring will assist in determining if prepared fuelbreaks are sufficient for suppression activities and ensure all safety procedures and practices are implemented in hazardous situations. Validation monitoring will document how well the project is working to meet objectives and protect resources of concern, ensure compliance with the NEPA decision, and identify any changed conditions or unintended consequences. Finally, adaptive management will be ongoing and utilized as monitoring occurs. Implementation of this project is anticipated in FY2020.

**Conclusion**

The Strategic Community Fuelbreak Project will provide conditions to support firefighting operations and improve the ability of the communities to strategically mitigate potential impacts of fire. This project is consistent with Goal 1.1 as identified in the LMP:

- Goal 1.1: Improve the ability of southern California communities to limit loss of life and property and recover from the high intensity wildland fires that are a natural part of this state's ecosystem.

## Land Management Plan Amendments

The LMP is a dynamic document that can be amended in response to:

- Errors and or discrepancies found during implementation.
- New information.
- Changes in physical conditions.
- New laws, regulations, or policies that affect National Forest management.
- New guidance indicated by application of adaptive management principles.

Significant LMP amendments change guidance or management zoning which, because the LMP is a NEPA document, requires NEPA. This is completed through a project-level NEPA decision that requires an LMP amendment to make the project consistent with the LMP, or directly in a supplemental EIS. Non-significant changes not requiring NEPA include corrections; clarification of intent; changes to monitoring questions; and refinements of management area boundaries to correct GIS inaccuracies. These are simply updates that are posted to the LMP and made public through such means as publishing on the Forest website, as is the case for this document. From the evaluation of monitoring results, no amendments are needed.

## Public Participation

The 2018 Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Report is posted on the Forest website.

## List of Contributors

The following individuals participated in the completion of this report either as Part 2 contributors of program area assessments, or as team members in Part 3 project field reviews:

Laura Brown	Rebecca Dykes	Heidi Guenther	Greg Thompson
Vicki Collins	Steve Galbraith	Michael Heard	
Diane Cross	Veronica Garza	Esther Morgan	