

SUMMARY

The Sierra National Forest proposes to return about 13,700 acres of the forest landscape in the Kings River Project area to a more resilient condition. The area affected by the proposal is located in two watersheds, Dinkey Creek and Big Creek, of the Kings River drainage in the Southern Sierra Nevada. This action is necessary to protect life and property and to protect sensitive wildlife and habitat from loss to uncharacteristically severe wildfire.

This proposed action is part of the larger Kings River Project (KRP) which was established in 2002 with an inter-agency memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed by both the Station Director (PSW) and Regional Forester (Forest Service) in 2002.

A notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement was filed with the Federal Register on December 20, 2004. Public scoping was conducted and a total of 18 letters were received regarding the proposal. The local line officer approved the following significant issues:

- Large tree removal will have adverse effects to old forest dependant wildlife species
- The use of herbicides/surfactant will create an adverse risk of harmful effects to people and wildlife
- The proposed action will threaten the viability and cause degradation of habitat of the spotted owl, marten, fisher, and goshawk and will lead to higher short-term risks on aquatic management

These issues led the agency to develop alternatives to the proposed action which were analyzed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement released October 6, 2006. The Record of Decision was signed on December 21, 2006. The Forest Supervisor decided to withdraw his decision after a review of new information regarding Pacific fisher.

A notice of intent to prepare a supplement to the environmental impact statement was filed with the Federal Register on February 28, 2008. The format and contents of the original environmental impact statement have been heavily revised to improve readability.

Alternatives to the proposed action were developed and are analyzed in the document in response to the original issues and the new information regarding Pacific fisher.

Alternatives included analyzing:

- Reducing the upper cutting diameter limit to 30" dbh
- Minimizing short-term impacts to Pacific fisher by using a slightly different silvicultural prescription and implementing a Limited Operation Period in the entire fisher conservation area
- Reducing the upper cutting diameter limit to 20" dbh to be compatible with the 2001 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (Based on new information that

suggest that fuels reduction is necessary in close proximity to habitat, diameter limits and equipment limits were not part of the design of this alternative)

Pacific fisher and Yosemite toad are Forest Service “sensitive species” that have also been designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as “candidate species” for listing under the ESA. A candidate species is determined by the USFWS through a 12 month finding as warranted for listing, but the listing process is precluded by other priorities. The Forest will conference with the USFWS on those two species to address uncertainty related to candidate species with distributions beyond Forest boundaries.

This project should create regeneration in groups to encourage conditions of the historical forest; promote uneven-aged stands with fewer shade tolerant species and with more species resistant to fire such as pines; concentrate growth on large trees; utilize fire to maintain stand structure.

Based upon the response to the purpose and need and the effects of the alternatives, the responsible official will decide whether to implement the proposed action; implement an alternative to the proposed action; or take no action at this time.