

REGIONAL ECOSYSTEM OFFICE

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 10, 2012

TO: Sherry A. Tune, Forest Supervisor, Mendocino National Forest

FROM: Michael Hampton, REO Representative to the REIC

SUBJECT: Regional Ecosystem Office Review of the Proposed Amendment to the
Mendocino National Forest LSR Assessment, Mendocino National Forest

The Regional Ecosystem Office (REO) interagency Late-Successional Reserve (LSR) Work Group was asked to review a proposed amendment to the LSR Assessment (LSRA) for the Mendocino National Forest. We have concluded review of the documents provided by the Forest.

As required by the NWFP S&Gs (C-11), the Mendocino National Forest prepared a Late-Successional Reserve Assessment (LSRA) in 2000, which was reviewed and found to be consistent under the NWFP S&Gs (C-11). This letter amends the Forest-Wide Late-Successional Reserve Assessment (LRSA) for the Mendocino NF. The REO, based upon review by the LSR Work Group, concurs with the Forest that the amendment is consistent with the Standards and Guidelines (S&G) under the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) and consistent with the intent of the previous review of the LSRA by the REO LSR Work Group.

Proposed Amendment and Rationale: The Mendocino's LSRA included a statement on page 45 that high elevation stands would not be treated to reduce fuels and fire risk. Since the LSRA was approved, several fires have burned through high elevation red fir stands on the forest. Analysis of the effects of these fires in the red fir type has led the forest to conclude that the ecology of these stands is not consistent with that suggested by the language in this paragraph of the Mendocino LSRA.

The Forest has a small number of acres in the red fir vegetation type. This type is located mostly in the Wilderness areas; outside of the wilderness the red fir is located in non-contiguous patches with the biggest patches located in the Buttermilk LSR.

The language in the LSRA suggests the typical stand disturbance type in red fir stands is stand-replacing disturbance on an interval greater than a century. However, recent science has documented a different disturbance regime of much more frequent disturbance, mainly of low-to-moderate severity. Since the LSRA was completed, literature has been published that estimates the typical fire return interval for these stand types is 20-40 years and primarily a

mixed severity regime. The Forest cited 17 documents that examine the disturbance regimes in red fir and associated stand types.

In 2001, 2003, and 2006, fires burned through dense mature red fir stands, resulting in near-complete mortality in the stands. In 2008 a fire burned through red fir stands that were less dense with more widely spaced trees which resulted in much less high severity disturbance patches.

Red fir stands within the Buttermilk LSR have stand conditions are conducive to high-severity fire which would produce unwanted changes in late-successional habitat condition. These red fir stands also occur in areas of greater ignition occurrence than the general forest.

Based on current stand conditions, recent experience, and recently published literature, the Mendocino NF would like to conduct risk reduction treatments in red fir stands inside and outside of LSRs to reduce the risk of unwanted changes in habitat condition. Risk reduction treatments would be designed to bring the stands closer to both historic conditions and to the desired habitat conditions for late-successional dependent species.

Through this letter the Mendocino LSRA is amended on page 45 as follows:

The following paragraph is deleted:

High elevation stands would not be treated to reduce fuels and fire risk. These high elevation stands would naturally attain the higher densities and lower diversities characteristic of true fir plan communities.

The following paragraph is inserted:

*In addition to the mid- and late- successional stage mixed conifer stands described on page 45, red fir (*Abies magnifica*) vegetation type stands can be considered for risk reduction treatments. Crown closure in the red fir stands would be maintained at between 40 – 60 percent to promote the rapid attainment of large diameter trees and to provide resistance to fire damage. Other high elevation vegetation type stands would not be considered for risk reduction treatment.*

Review of the Project: The LSR Work Group reviewed materials submitted regarding the proposed amendment to the Mendocino LSRA. Members of the LSR Work Group also met with Forest staff via conference call on June 25, 2012. The Work Group's review was based on information obtained from these resources.

Conclusion: Based on the interagency REO LSR Work Group's review and conclusions, the REO concurs with the Mendocino National Forest's conclusion that the amendment to the Mendocino LSRA is consistent with the Northwest Forest Plan.

If you have questions regarding this review, please contact Kim Mellen-McLean at 503-808-2677.



Michael Hampton

REO Representative to the REIC

cc: Nancy Mulligan, Mendocino NF
Debbie Pietrzak, BLM
Kim Mellen-McLean, LSR Work Group, FS

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