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Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

We have reviewed the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the proposed activities documented in the Environmental Assessment (EA) and associated project records for the Gold Crown Fuels Reduction Project. As a result of this review, we conclude that Alternative B (The Proposed Action) is not a major federal action and would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, either individually or cumulatively, with other activities in the general area. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. This finding is based on the following factors set forth in 40CFR 1508.27:

- A. **Context.** This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts, such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant (40 CFR 1508.27);

The disclosure of effects in the EA found the actions limited in context. The project area is limited in size and the activities limited in duration. Effects are local in nature and are not likely to significantly affect regional or national resources.

- B. **Intensity.** This refers to the severity of impact. Responsible Officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action. The following are considered in evaluating intensity (40 CFR 1508.7):
- a. *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effects will be beneficial.*

Impacts associated with the project are discussed in Chapter III of the EA. These impacts are within the range of those identified in the Forest Plan. The actions would not have significant impacts on resources identified and described in Chapter III.

The effect of the decision to be made is non-significant in the long and short term (EA, Chapter III)

- b. *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.*

Proposed activities would not significantly affect public health and safety. Timber harvesting activities would be conducted in a safe manner to protect the public. Similar actions have not significantly affected public health and safety. A minor impact for a short period may occur to local air quality from the prescribed burning/ broadcast burning treatments and the

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burning of logging slash. However, burning would be accomplished in accordance with State air quality standards. Prescribed, broadcast burning can also present a risk of escaped fire. Extensive agency experience with similar local projects and conditions show these risks are low (see Fire, Fuels, and Air Quality Report in the project file). The hydrology analysis indicates that no degradation of water quality, that would constitute a public health threat, would result from the implementation of the proposed action. (see Hydrology Report in project file).

- c. *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

There are no adverse effects to historic places or loss of scientific, cultural, historical, or other unique resources (EA, Chapter III). This project is in compliance with the Region 1 programmatic agreement (1995) between the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

- d. *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

An analysis of the proposed action and alternatives have been conducted using the best information available and the latest methods of analyzing data by professionals in their respected disciplines. Throughout the analysis process, public comments varied in their recommendations on ways to best manage resources within the project area. However, the effects of the proposed alternatives on the various resources (EA, Chapter III) are not considered to be highly controversial by professionals, specialists, and scientists from associated fields of forestry, wildlife biology and management, fisheries, and hydrology. While the selected alternative may be controversial, we do not believe that there is a significant controversy over the effects of this action.

- e. *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

Scoping and collaborative efforts did not identify highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks. The possible effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain, nor do they involve unique or uncertain risks. The technical analyses conducted for determinations of the impacts to the resources are supportable with use of accepted techniques, reliable data, and professional judgment. Impacts are within the limits that are considered thresholds of concern. Therefore, we conclude that there are no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks.

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- f. *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

This project is not setting a precedent for future actions with significant effects. The sites that would be affected by the proposed action are designated by the Forest Plan for timber production and timber production, within big game winter range. Therefore, this action does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

- g. *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small components.*

The EA includes all connected, cumulative, and similar actions in the scope of the analysis (see past, present, and future foreseeable activities list in the project file). The cumulative effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions have been considered and disclosed in the EA, Chapter III.

- h. *The degree to which the proposed action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.*

There are no features in the area affected that are listed or are being considered for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A cultural resource inventory has been completed in the area, and all known cultural resources are protected (EA, Chapter III). The potential for impacting undiscovered sites is mitigated by compliance with the Forest Plan standards and guidelines, and through the use of specific design features (EA, Chapter III and Appendix A).

- i. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

Upon review of the EA and the three Biological Assessments, we find that the selected alternative (Alternative B- The Proposed Action) would not adversely affect threatened or endangered species.

- j. *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

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The action does not violate any Federal, State, or local laws or permits imposed for the protection of the environment.

Based upon the review of the test for significance and the environmental analyses conducted, we have determined that the Gold Crown Fuels Reduction Project is not a major federal action and that implementation of the proposed action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, we have determined that an Environmental Impact Statement does not need to be prepared for this project.