



File Code: 1570-1 (218)

#07-01-00-0159

Date: September 4, 2007

Jonathan Oppenheimer and John Robison
Idaho Conservation League
P.O. Box 844
Boise, ID 83701

Dear Messrs. Oppenheimer and Robison:

This letter is in response to your objection dated August 6, 2007, to the Prichard Murray Fuels Reduction Project located on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. I have read your objection on behalf of the Idaho Conservation League. I have also reviewed the Environmental Assessment (EA), the analysis in the project file, and I understand the disclosed environmental effects. I have also considered the comments submitted during the public scoping for this project. My review was conducted in accordance with 36 CFR 218.

On December 3, 2003, President Bush signed into law the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA) to reduce the threat of destructive wildfires, while upholding environmental standards and encouraging early public input during planning processes. The legislation helps further the President's Healthy Forests Initiative pledge to care for America's forests and rangelands, reduce the risk of catastrophic fire to communities, help save the lives of firefighters and citizens, and protect threatened and endangered species.

This project clearly demonstrates compliance with the HFRA. The primary purpose of the Prichard Murray Fuels Reduction is to:

- Reduce dense fuel conditions in the wildland urban interface so potential fire behavior would be less intense and severe.
- Increase the proportion of resilient species composition (western larch, ponderosa pine and white pine) so stands are healthier with less fire risk.
- Create a mosaic of healthy stands that vary in age, tree diameter, and canopy (structural stages) and patch size.

The HFRA provides for a pre-decisional administrative review process in which the objector provides sufficient narrative description of the project, specific issues related to the project, and suggested remedies that would resolve the objection (36 CFR 218.7). HFRA also allows for the parties to meet in order to resolve the issues. On August 16, 2007, the District Ranger and



representatives of the interdisciplinary planning team met with you via conference call and discussed your concerns about the project and analysis, and your suggested remedies. This was a very productive meeting for all the parties, and after some follow-up information sharing, I understand your concerns were resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

The Responsible Official and I have reviewed the project in light of the issues and suggested remedies presented in your objection letter. I have reviewed the notes from the objection resolution meeting and have considered the primary issues raised therein, and the recommended resolutions.

In your objection letter and in the meeting, you stated your primary issues were with Alternative 2, specifically your concern that there would be a loss of allocated old growth and that proposed activities in old growth would not be consistent with the Old Growth and Large Tree Retention requirement of HFRA. Your suggested remedy was to adopt Alternative 3 to meet the hazardous fuels reduction objections, while protecting remaining old growth habitat.

As such, subsequent discussion focused on proposed treatments in old growth. The District Ranger identified the importance of proposed underburning treatments to reduce fuels within two old growth stands immediately adjacent to private land and structures, and one along Forest Highway 9, a primary ingress/egress route. No commercial harvest would be necessary in these stands prior to the underburning treatment, and these stands would maintain their status as allocated old growth following treatment. It was noted that the Idaho Conservation League was concerned about losing large trees during the underburning process and asked the District to consider ways they could be protected that were not cost prohibitive.

After further discussion and some requested follow up information sharing, it is my understanding that you were agreeable to the proposed underburning activities to reduce fuels in these three old growth units, as well as the rest of the treatments proposed in Alternative 3. The Responsible Official is aware of this information and will address it accordingly in the Decision Notice, and will further clarify compliance of the selected alternative with the requirements of HFRA.

It is also my understanding, that with resolution of the old growth issue, you did not see a need to discuss or further resolve other issues raised in your objection letter. I will, therefore, consider these issues to have been satisfied.

In closing this letter, I want to commend you, the Ranger, and the ID team for working together to resolve your concerns. Your objection was thoughtful, and your letter was clear on the issues and possible remedies. The combined work of everyone will make this a good project.

This response is not subject to further administrative review by the Forest Service or the Department of Agriculture [36 CFR 218.10(b)(2)].

Sincerely,

/s/ Kathleen A. McAllister
KATHLEEN A. MCALLISTER
Reviewing Officer

cc:
Responsible Official
Forest Coordinator