



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Region 5
Eldorado National Forest
Placerville Ranger District

Placerville Ranger District
4260 Eight Mile Road
Camino, CA 95709
(530) 644 - 2324

File Code: 1950/5100

Date: May 15, 2003

RE: Last Chance Fuels Reduction Project

Dear Interested Party,

Enclosed are the Environmental Assessment (EA) and proposed finding of no significant impact (FONSI) for the Healthy Forests Initiative – Last Chance Fuels Reduction 2003 project. You are invited to comment on the proposed action (Alternative 1) to create a defensible space by reducing fuels on approximately 1700 acres by thinning the understory, masticating brush, hand pruning, and low intensity underburning, before I make my final decision.

This is one of the Forest Service demonstration projects for the President's Healthy Forests Initiative for Wildfire Prevention and Stronger Communities (<http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/hfi.html>). This initiative calls for administrative improvements to ensure more timely decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in projects that reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires and restore forest health.

This EA looks quite different from the traditional Forest Service approach and includes the FONSI. The effects analysis in the EA is focused on supporting my determination that there will be no significant impacts from this proposed action. I will also consider other components of the analysis in reaching my decision. Some of this information is available in the project record and on our website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/eldorado/projects/hfi.html>. In the past we have included all this information in the EA. This EA is more focused on supporting the FONSI, which meets the requirements of our laws and regulations¹.

Based on the analysis completed so far, I will consider your comments, the EA and the following in reaching my decision:

- Public health and safety related to wildland fire;
- The overall economic cost of the project;
- Reducing the acreage of hazardous fuels; and
- Beneficial and adverse impacts to management indicator species.

All the analysis and conclusions reached to date are available on our website or in the project files at the Placerville Ranger District Office. Please contact Laura Hierholzer at (530) 642-5187 if you have questions about this EA.

To be considered, comments must be presented verbally, or be postmarked, no later than June 16, 2003. Included with your comments should be your name, address, telephone number, and organization represented, if any. Comments should be addressed to Kathryn D. Hardy at 4260 Eight Mile Road, Camino, CA 95709 or (530) 644-2324. Comments on the proposed action are due within 30-days of the notice of this proposed action in the Mountain Democrat newspaper.

I appreciate your interest and participation in the process thus far and look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

/s/ Kathryn D. Hardy

KATHRYN D. HARDY
Placerville District Ranger

¹ For information on the core elements of the EA process, see the President's Council On Environmental Quality memo under the Healthy Forest Initiative:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/ceq/guidanceforenvironmental_assessmentsofforest_healthprojects_memo.pdf

