



United States  
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Agriculture

Forest  
Service

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# Finding of No Significant Impact

## Last Chance Fuels Reduction Project

Placerville Ranger District, Eldorado National Forest  
El Dorado County, California



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<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/eldorado/projects/hfi.html>

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The direct effects of the proposed action are limited to impacts in the immediate project area. The Last Chance Fuels Reduction Project is located east of the community of Grizzly Flat. It is expected that the project would be implemented and completed within 5 years (by the end of 2009). Short-term adverse effects would be mitigated through implementation of Best Management Practices. Mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Proposed Action. These include, but are not limited to flagging of occurrences of the Pleasant Valley mariposa lily for avoidance prior to project implementation; imposing a limited operating period for ground disturbing activities from February 15 to September 15 for California spotted owl and Northern goshawks; and flagging cultural resources for protection during ground disturbing activities and prescribed burning. Long-term adverse effects are not expected. After considering the environmental effects described in the attached EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

/s/ **Kathryn D. Hardy**

**8/8/03**

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**Kathryn D. Hardy, Placerville District Ranger**

**Date**

**I base my finding on the following:**

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

Beneficial effects were not used to offset adverse effects. In the absence of beneficial effects, no adverse effects would be significant even when considered all by themselves. (EA pages 8-13)

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The fuel treatments are designed to increase the efficiency of fire suppression efforts and reduce risks to firefighters, the public (Grizzly Flat Community), facilities and structures, water quality, and natural resources on 1700 acres. There would be improved community safety because the fuel reduction zones would allow direct suppression tactics by firefighters. These direct suppression tactics would increase the chance of suppressing the fire before it reaches the community. (EA page 12-13, Fuels and Fire Report)

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The proposed action is located on ridgetops and mid-slope but not in the proximity to any parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas, therefore none would be impacted. Cultural resource surveys have been completed and 23 sites were identified within the project area. Design criteria would prevent impacts to existing sites and provide protection for new sites if discovered during project implementation. The proposed action would not pose adverse effects on historic or cultural resources. The proposed action is non-significant because no unique characteristics would be impacted. (EA pages 8-13, Cultural Resource Report)

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

Controversy revealed by scoping generally dealt with decisions made in the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment concerning designation of defense zones and harvesting in California spotted owl and northern goshawk PACs. There is no substantial scientific controversy related to effects disclosed in the EA, therefore, there is no significant effect. (EA pages 8-13)

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

The Placerville Ranger District has completed 8 environmental documents covering fuels reduction projects over the past 6 years. These projects have exhibited the desired change in wildfire behavior by reducing rate of spread and intensity of the fire. In our experience, this type of project is not uncertain and we are not taking a unique or unknown risk, therefore this project is non-significant. (EA pages 8-13)

6. 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.

The Last Chance Fuels Reduction Project represents a site-specific project that does not set precedence for future actions or present a decision in principle about future considerations. Any proposed future project must be evaluated on its own merits and effects. These activities are in accordance with the best available science we have to manage fuels and fire behavior.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is 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 component parts.

The Biological Assessments and Biological Evaluations considered potential cumulative impacts of this proposal on habitat for wildlife and plants. In addition, cumulative watershed effects analysis was completed for all watersheds within the project area, which considered past, present and reasonably foreseeable future activities. These documents and analysis disclosed in the EA support the finding that this proposal would not cause significant cumulative effects on biological or physical resources, even when considered in relation to other actions. (EA pages 8-13)

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

All of the project area has been surveyed and a comprehensive Archaeological Reconnaissance Report Addendum (ARRA r2003050300003) was completed. Protection of heritage resources in the area was incorporated into the proposed action through such measures as flagging and avoiding sites during project implementation. Based on the analysis documented in the ARRA, the proposed action would not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. (EA page 12-13)

9. 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.

Biological Evaluations (BEs) were prepared for plant and wildlife species. The plant BE concluded that no threatened, endangered, or proposed plant species are known on the Placerville Ranger District (EA page 12). The wildlife BE concluded that no threatened, endangered, or proposed wildlife species would be affected by the proposed action. (EA pages 9-12)

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

The proposed action was developed in accordance with and, therefore, does not threaten to violate any Federal, State or local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment (i.e. Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and the National Forest Management Act). Discussion in the EA of effects and the related references in the project file document that this project will not adversely affect soils, water quality, or threatened or endangered species. The proposed action is also consistent with the Eldorado National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan (1989) as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (2001). (EA pages 8-13)