



November 10, 2004

Dear Planning Participant:

The Santa Lucia Ranger District is proposing fuels management treatments on Figueroa Mountain. The purpose of this letter is to acquaint you with The "Figueroa Mountain Project" and ask for your help in identifying issues to be address in the environmental analysis.

The "Figueroa Mountain Project" is a 667- acre area located along Figueroa Mountain Road (Rd 7N07) approximately 9 miles northeast of the community of Los Olivos, California. The legal description is T 8 N, R 30 W, Sections 25 and 36 and T 8 N, R 29 W, Sections 30 and 31 (*see enclosed maps*).

Figueroa Mountain is a high value recreation area and the emphasis is to maintain it as such. The purpose of the project is to maintain the health of the existing mature conifers and oaks, and reduce the risk of future mortality of the conifers due to insects, disease, and catastrophic fire on Forest Service lands as well as on adjacent private lands.

The forested stands in the project area are mainly comprised of mature stands of Coulter pine, ponderosa pine and big-cone Douglas fir, and Coast live oak. With the exclusion of fire as a natural process, these stands have increased in under story stand density with the addition of various hardwood brush species including manzanita, mountain mahogany, ceanothus, and various oak species. This has resulted in an increased risk of plant stress and mortality from insects and disease to the larger diameter trees. This condition has also reduced the ability to produce future large diameter trees due to competition. In addition, heavy tree mortalities could result during wildfire events due to crown fire conditions that would develop based on current stand densities. The following treatments are proposed:

- Thin dense stands to reduce tree competition and tree crown densities. Borax (*presently registered as SPORAX*) would be applied to freshly cut conifer stumps for control of annosus root rot disease (*Heterobasidium annosum*).
- Thin Coulter pine, ponderosa pine and Coast live oak adjacent to larger trees to reduce inter tree competition, and decrease ladder fuels (*young and smaller trees and shrubs that allow a fire to go from the ground to the top of the trees*) to reduce fire intensities during a wildfire. Borax (*presently registered as SPORAX*) would be applied to freshly cut conifer stumps for control of annosus root rot disease (*Heterobasidium annosum*).
- Thin under story vegetation (*small conifers and hardwoods brush species*), followed up with piling to reduce tree competition, decrease ladder and surface fuels (*all materials lying immediately above the ground including needles, leaves, grass, large limbs, low brush, stumps*). Borax (*presently registered as SPORAX*) would be applied to freshly cut conifer stumps for control of annosus root rot disease (*Heterobasidium annosum*).
- Thin dense stands of young Ponderosa and Coulter pine to reduce inter-tree competition to enhance/ maintain the existing trees that will be left.
- Cut material will be made available for forest products and campground firewood where feasible. Excess limbs, branches, etc. will be piled and/or burned/chipped.
- Retain large trees for visual, screening, and shade objectives.
- No new roads will be built.
- Small scale under burning (*low-moderate intensity prescribed fire in which 50-75% of the area results in burned or black conditions to reduce quantities of "fine fuels" such as tree needle cast and ground surface vegetation*) and ground fuels (*all combustible fuels lying beneath the ground*



*surface, such as duff and other woody debris*) may take place within the project area once cutting activities are completed or to maintain a desired condition.

- If natural regeneration were inadequate due to stands losing the potential to continue as a result of insect/disease losses, inter-planting of native conifer seedlings (Coulter pine, ponderosa pine and big-cone Douglas-fir) would occur.

**On Saturday December 4, 2004**, there will be a field trip to help acquaint you with this the project. If you would like to attend, please meet at the Figueroa Fire Station (located on Figueroa Rd) at 10:00 AM. I anticipate the field trip will end about 2:00 PM. Please dress for the weather, wear walking/hiking shoes, and bring a lunch and water.

The environmental analysis for this project will be ongoing for the next few months. Your comments, suggestions, or concerns relative to this project are requested and will help us with analysis and project development. Your comments should be submitted by **December 15, 2004**, to be used in the environmental analysis process. Comments should be addressed to:

Project Leader  
Figueroa Mountain Project  
Santa Lucia Ranger District  
1616 Carlotti Road  
Santa Maria, CA 93454  
PH (805) 925-9538, FAX (805) 961-5781  
EMAIL [comments-pacificsouthwest-los-padres-santa-lucia@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificsouthwest-los-padres-santa-lucia@fs.fed.us)

For further information about the Figueroa Mountain Project, or if you would like a copy of the final decision, project please contact Melody Fountain at (805) 925-9538.

Sincerely,

/s/

KATHLEEN PHELPS  
District Ranger

Enclosures

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Parts 215 or 217. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within 10 days.