

GIANT SEQUOIA NATIONAL MONUMENT
DRAFT ALTERNATIVES

No Action (Current Direction)— Draft Alternative A

The No Action alternative does not meet the need to create a management plan for the Giant Sequoia National Monument (Monument). It does address some of the significant issues for managing the Monument, primarily the Recreation, Wildlife, and Fuels Management issues. It also partially addresses the Heritage, Ecological Restoration of Objects, Tree Removal and Regeneration, Sequoia, and Transportation issues; but it doesn't really address the Caves/Geology issue.

Current management direction for the Monument comes from several sources. The three main sources are:

- The 1988 Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as amended by the 1991 Kings River Wild and Scenic River and Special Management Area Implementation Plan (KRSMA), and the 2001 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (2001 SNFPA);
- The 1990 Sequoia National Forest Land Management Plan Mediated Settlement Agreement (MSA); and
- The 2000 Presidential Proclamation establishing the Monument (Proclamation).

There are a number of standards and guidelines associated with the existing management goals and objectives from the Forest Plan, the MSA, the 2001 SNFPA, and the Proclamation. The list of standards and guidelines, and how they relate to one another, will be in Appendix A of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Forest Plan as Amended by the 2001 SNFPA

The Forest Plan and the 2001 SNFPA provide desired conditions, goals, and objectives for a number of resources in the Monument. Much of this direction is currently in use to manage the Monument. There are also a number of laws, regulations, and policies that are continually being updated that could affect management of the Monument. In addition, there is management guidance that comes from the MSA and the Proclamation that also directs management of the Monument.

The Forest Plan was designed to manage the majority of the forest for timber production and recreation use. In the Forest Plan there were no diameter limits for tree removal. However, the 2001 SNFPA did establish diameter limits for fuel reduction activities and retention guidelines for wildlife habitat characteristics, especially in old growth forest. Current direction for fuels reduction is identified by land allocation as established in the 2001 SNFPA:

Land Allocation in 2001 SNFPA	Resource Management	Diameter Limit for Cutting (inches)
Forest-wide-large tree retention	Vegetation/fuels treatments	30-conifer, 12-hardwoods
General Forest	Fuels reduction	20
Old Forest Emphasis	Fuels reduction	12

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Old Forest Emphasis	Incidental felling for operability (during fuels reduction)	12-20
Northern Goshawk Protected Activity Center	Fuels reduction in and out of defense zones	6-within 1-2 acres of nest, 20-elsewhere in defense zone
Carnivore Den Site buffers	Fuels reduction	Avoid when possible-see SNFPA ROD, Appendix A, A-39
California Spotted Owl PAC	Fuels reduction in and out of defense zones	6-within 1-2 acres of nest, 20-elsewhere in defense zone
Urban Wildland Intermix-Defense Zone	Fuels reduction/fire protection	Follow allocation of Old Forest or General Forest?
Urban Wildland Intermix-Threat Zone	Fuels reduction/fire protection	20

The Forest Plan provided a mix of developed and dispersed recreation opportunities, in part managed differently by management emphasis area (see standards and guidelines table). Existing direction from the 1988 Forest Plan and 2001 SNFPA encourage diverse public access and use of the area in a safe manner. Management direction is in place to protect communities (including those within the Monument) from wildfires, and to encourage economic opportunities for the gateway communities and communities in the Monument.

The Forest Plan and 2001 SNFPA provide management direction to be well-balanced with a wide variety of recreational activities in a well-managed environment, promoting appreciation of the opportunities and harmony among users. Current direction recommends that visitors will find a rich and varied range of recreational, educational, and social opportunities enhanced by giant sequoias and the surrounding ecosystems. Current direction recommends that visitors have the opportunity to recreate in a variety of settings, from primitive to highly developed areas. The Forest Plan provides direction to handle conflicts that do arise with timeliness and equilibrium, and to provide consistent and easy-to-read signs and informational materials. Current management direction promotes recreation use throughout the year.

The Forest Plan used some evaluation tools that have changed over time. The Visual Management System has changed to the Scenery Management System (SMS).

There are two proposals from the Forest Plan that have not and are unlikely to be implemented within the Monument: creation of downhill ski areas at Peppermint on the Western Divide Ranger District and Mitchell-Maddox on the Hume Lake Ranger District.

MSA

The 1990 Mediated Settlement Agreement to the Sequoia National Forest Land Management Plan (MSA) states, "In the interim period between signing this Agreement

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and finalizing an amendment incorporating this Agreement into the Plan, the Parties agree that the provisions of this Agreement shall be implemented according to the schedules indicated throughout this document." There are a number of provisions yet to be fully incorporated in amendments, though the Monument is currently being managed in accordance with all applicable MSA requirements.

The MSA requirements still in effect are for grove management and special notifications regarding activities near or upslope of groves. Per the MSA, administrative and influence zone boundaries were established for the giant sequoia groves in the 1990s. Management within the groves has been in accordance with specifications from the MSA regarding restricted mechanical entry and logging. MSA specifications that the area around and including Freeman Creek Grove be managed as a botanical area have been met.

The MSA had several requirements for off-highway vehicle use and other trail use which may be affected by the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR Parts 212, 251 and 261: Travel Management, Land Uses, and Prohibitions), and is clearly altered by the Proclamation (65 FR 24098).

The 1990 MSA recommended a number of changes to the Visual Quality Objectives, which will be considered during the evaluation under the Scenic Management System.

In the MSA, spotted owl home areas (SOHAs) were recommended for designation, and limited guidance was given regarding furbearers, including the Pacific fisher and American marten. In subsequent direction, including the 2001 SNFPA, this guidance has been superseded by protected activity centers (PACs) for owls and den sites for furbearers, as applicable. The MSA recommended interim protection measures for known and potential nest sites for California condors. This direction was superseded by the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service Condor Recovery Plan in 1996.

Proclamation

The Proclamation stated, "Laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to administration by the Department of Agriculture of grazing permits and timber sales under contract as of the date of this proclamation on National Forest System lands within the boundaries of the Monument shall continue to apply to lands within the Monument. Nothing in this proclamation shall be deemed to affect existing special use authorizations; existing uses shall be governed by applicable laws, regulations, and management plans. Nothing in this proclamation shall be deemed to revoke any existing withdrawal, reservation, or appropriation; however, the national monument shall be the dominant reservation." (Proclamation 7295, 65 FR 24095, 24098 (Apr. 25, 2000)).

In addition, the Proclamation stated, "Removal of trees, except for personal use fuel wood, from within the Monument area may take place only if clearly needed for ecological restoration and maintenance or public safety (65 FR 24097)."

Public use in the Monument is defined as scientific research, interpretation and conservation education regarding natural and cultural resources, activities authorized

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under special use permits, recreation activities and current commodity uses (i.e., grazing, fuelwood cutting, etc.) under applicable laws, regulations, and policies regarding their administration.

The Proclamation also stated, “The final decision to issue any management plans and any management rules and regulations rests with the Secretary of Agriculture. Management plans or rules and regulations developed by the Secretary of the Interior governing uses within national parks or other national monuments administered by the Secretary of the Interior shall not apply within the Giant Sequoia National Monument (65 FR 24098).”

Management direction provided by or inferred from the Proclamation is to focus more on the resources for which the Monument was established. This has refined the current management direction to:

- Shift vegetation management direction for Management Area “Conifer Forest (CF)” and the associated Management Emphasis “7 (emphasize production of sawtimber volume in conifer)” that covers much of the Monument. Prescription CF7 is one where commercial forestry based on allowable sale quantity is found. One of the things the Proclamation did was to prohibit this type of commercial forestry. The timber portion of Prescription CF7 is thereby no longer applicable in the Monument.
- Focus fuels management on sequoia groves.
- Provide resource management direction that is more responsive to new scientific data.
- Place greater emphasis on paleontological and cave resources.
- Place greater emphasis on cultural resources.
- Place greater emphasis on recreation.
- Place greater emphasis on the diverse array of wildlife species.
- Focus fuels management on ecological restoration, which is limited due to funding and process.

It is not within the purpose or authority of the Presidential Proclamation that established the Monument to change existing:

- state jurisdiction over fish and game management
- water rights
- laws, policies and regulations pertaining to permits and projects under current contract
- special use authorizations
- withdrawals, reservations, or appropriations except where the Proclamation specified

Scientific Advisory Board and Existing Advisories

The Proclamation required that the Secretary of Agriculture appoint a Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) to assist in developing the Monument management plan. The SAB was convened and submitted 28 advisories during the planning process from 2002-2004. Some of the advisories were specific to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) while others were more far reaching. Current management of the Monument is

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beginning to respond to the advice provided in the scientific advisories where applicable and practicable.