



Forest
Service

Sequoia National Forest and
Giant Sequoia National Monument

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To: All Sequoia Employees

Collaboration, communication, integration (linking models), and connection (partnering with other entities) are the four key parts to develop a compelling and successful Giant Sequoia National Monument Management Plan and subsequent environmental impact statement. Over the past 2+ years, the Forest has engaged the public, our partners, and our cooperators in a new collaborative planning process. This process has been extremely beneficial in involving the public in our planning and environmental documentation. During this endeavor, the Forest initiated a number of steps to integrate science modeling, the use of computer communication techniques, partnerships, and social networking tools into the collaborative planning process.

Since the Forest initiated the collaborative planning process in October 2007, we have completed a number of tasks to link science to management, in particular the development of the Giant Sequoia National Monument Management Plan. First we re-convened some members from the Scientific Advisory Board formed in 2001 (and functioned until 2003). This Board provided 29 science advisories to the Forest for review, incorporation, and consideration. Since 2003, when the science advisories were published, the Forest embarked to implement some of the advisories, thus there was a need to review these advisories to determine if they were still relevant. In May 2008, the Forest met with some of the members of the Scientific Advisory Board to review the science advisories and discuss how the science advisories developed back then are still relevant and being implemented now as we develop a new Giant Sequoia National Monument Management Plan and final environmental impact statement.

In July 2008, the Forest released the science advisories again to the public and provided a 60-day commenting period where the public was able to review the advisories and provide their comments on whether the advisories were still relevant and addressed current science. Through our contract with the US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, we used a new commenting portal where over 100 people commented on the science advisories and the proclamation.

Finally, to link science to management, the Forest held a Southern Sierra Science Symposium in September 2008. The Sequoia National Forest/Giant Sequoia National Monument worked for over a year with the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, the Forest Service – Pacific Southwest Research Station, and the U.S. Geological Survey to host a Southern Sierra Science Symposium to explain and design a research science agenda for the future. The premise of the



symposium was to develop a program of research, resource management, and public education, to help mitigate the impacts and adapt to climate change effects on ecosystems of the southern Sierra Nevada. The objectives of the symposium were to analyze and discuss broad scale environmental agents of change affecting the southern Sierra Nevada ecosystems, which include giant sequoia trees. The panel convened to organize and plan the science symposium identified five agents of change: climate change, fire, forest management, pollutants (air), and invasive species. The Southern Sierra Science Symposium identified the need to continue to link science to management. Some of the presenters mentioned the need to take risks when managing the land, to understand that humans have affected the land and created change on the landscape, and to realize adaptive management will help us to understand the impacts of human management on this global and unique ecosystem.

As the Forest continues to move forward in developing the environmental impact statement, it is time to implement another aspect of linking science to management, the convening of a Science Review Panel. I am convening a Science Review Panel to formalize a process for reviewing how we are integrating current science into the development of the environmental document and subsequent management plan.

In 2003, the research branch of the Forest Service developed procedures for conducting a science review. A science review determines whether an analysis or decision document is consistent with the best available science. The review is accomplished by judging whether scientific information of appropriate content, rigor, and applicability has been considered, evaluated, and synthesized in the documents that underlie and record land management decisions.

A Science Review process provides:

- Guidelines for incorporating existing agency experience with science evaluations.
- Guidelines that can be used for small or large decisions, for situations of little or great complexity, and with emphasis on practical application and real-world constraints.
- A mechanism for scientists, land managers, and administrators both within and outside the agency to peer-review the guidelines; thus, their comments are incorporated in the process.
- The guidelines are field tested, which also results in refinements of the process.

The guidelines reflect current thinking by both National Forest System (NFS) and Forest Service Research and Development (FSR&D) personnel on the best way to implement a science review.

In its basic form, the Science Review is used to evaluate whether the draft analysis or decision document under review has considered and correctly interpreted applicable and available scientific information. The Science Review is also used to determine whether the expected risks and consequences from the proposed action and alternative actions are consistent with what would be inferred from the scientific literature, and that they are correctly interpreted and disclosed in the draft document.

The product of the Science Review is an interim or final report from the review team to the responsible official that states whether and how the elements being evaluated met the basic evaluation criteria. The responsible official can use this process to cite the final Science Review report as evidence that the decision based on that document is consistent with science information.

The Science Review is not intended to validate, ratify, endorse, or make the decision. Neither, the Science Review report, or the reviewers who prepare it should make judgments about the balance manager's strike among competing objectives or what levels of risk to take. The Science Review report does not advise a decision-maker for or against a particular course of action. The Responsible Official remains solely responsible for the decision. The Science Review Panel can be composed of personnel representing Forest Service Research & Development (FSR&D) scientists, university faculty members, scientists with state agencies, tribes, or other federal agencies, or National Forest System staff or technical experts not attached to the particular project or unit under review.

I have convened a Science Review Panel consisting of a science administrator and five scientists. Carl Skinner, scientist with the Pacific Southwest Research Station, is the science administrator leading the panel. The five scientists assigned to the panel are: (1) Malcolm North (USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station), research ecologist; (2) Scott Stephens (University of California, Berkeley), fire scientist; (3) Bill Zielinski (USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station), research ecologist; (4) Kevin O'Hara (University of California, Berkeley), silviculturist; and (5) Emilyn Sheffield (California State University, Chico), social scientist. This panel will review the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) and management plan for the Giant Sequoia National Monument before they are released to the public.

The panel of scientists will review the final EIS, management plan, and record of decision before they are released to the public. In addition, the panel will prepare a report, which will be available to the public.

As we implement the science review process over the next couple of months, I am interested in including the public to get their input and feedback. To get this dialogue initiated and give the public a better understanding of a science review process, I am holding a Science Review public meeting on Tuesday, November 10, at the Visalia Convention Center from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. This meeting will introduce the public to the scientists and inform them of the process for a science review. Dr. Stephens and Dr. North will attend the meeting. To facilitate the meeting, the Forest is contracting again with the U. S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution. Dr. Frank Dukes, from the University of Virginia, will serve as the meeting facilitator.

The science review of the draft EIS and management plan will be bound by four questions:

1. Is the relevant scientific information considered?
2. Is the scientific information reasonably interpreted and accurately presented?
3. Are the uncertainties associated with the relevant scientific information acknowledged and documented?
4. Are the relevant management consequences identified and documented, including associated risks and uncertainties?

The public is being asked to facilitate an understanding of the above questions, but not to introduce new questions. The same science review process and questions will be applicable to the final EIS, management plan, and record of decision when those documents are prepared.

I hope after this meeting to continue to have discussions with the public regarding our linkage to science. I envision the draft environmental impact statement and subsequent draft management plan to be submitted for public comment by the end of the year.

/s/ Tina J. Terrell
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