

Statement of  
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**United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service**

Before the  
**Subcommittee On Forests and Public Lands Management**  
**Committee on Energy and Natural Resources**  
**United States Senate**

**June 29, 2000**

Concerning

**The Sierra Nevada Framework**

Mr. Chairman And Members Of The Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Administration on the Sierra Nevada Framework for Conservation and Collaboration (Framework), and report on the progress of the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Draft Environmental Impact Statement that is currently out for public comment. I am Bradley E. Powell, Regional Forester for the Pacific Southwest Region. Accompanying me today is Kent Connaughton, Framework Project Manager.

The Framework is an effort to integrate the best available science on wildlife and sensitive species needs into forest plans covering the Sierra Nevada to help prevent future Federal listings of California spotted owls and other old-growth dependent species as either threatened or endangered. The Framework is also an aggressive effort to deal with

takes time. On the plus side, the last year-and-a-half has given us a tremendous opportunity to engage people with a variety of interests, which is reflected in the DEIS alternatives. Additionally, there have been efficiencies gained by taking a regional approach, as opposed to having 11 separate planning processes to amend each Forest Plan for each national forest in the Sierra Nevada.

In the last two years, the Forest Service has expended approximately \$6 million on the Framework project. Our estimate is that it will take about \$2 million more to complete the final EIS this year. We think this investment is warranted given the vast number of benefits that this management effort will bring to the region.

### **Public Involvement and Collaboration**

We have held nearly 70 public meetings and workshops in California and Nevada. We have received and considered the ideas offered in some 8,000 pieces of correspondence from approximately 6,000 people and organizations. We have participated in meetings with tribes, and have met with County Boards of Supervisors throughout the Sierra Nevada. Groups as diverse as the California Forestry Association, California Cattlemen's Association, the Sierra Forest Protection Campaign, the Quincy Library Group and the Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics have provided input.

Collaboration with the science community is a key, ongoing process. Scientists and managers from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Game, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the Environmental Protection Agency, universities and research stations continue to work closely with us.

#### **Relation to the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act**

The Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act (QLG) was enacted into law on October 21, 1998, as Title IV of the Department of Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 1999 as contained in the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 1999. A final EIS was completed, and a Record of Decision (ROD) was signed on August 20, 1999, to implement the Act. One of the decisions within the ROD required that all treatment of suitable owl habitat within the area covered by the Act be deferred until such time as new direction was issued as part of the Sierra Nevada framework EIS project. The Framework DEIS, in turn, has included the QLG project into the analysis for all of the alternatives being considered.

#### **Relation to the Rulemaking Process Proposing the Protection of the Remaining**

#### **Roadless Areas within the National Forest System**

There are approximately 2.4 million acres of inventoried roadless area within the 11 national forests in the Sierra Nevada. Information gathered from the Framework process is being utilized in the roadless rulemaking. Also, the QLG Act contains specific provisions (§401(c)(4)) regarding roadless area entries during the five year pilot project timeframe.

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### **Relation to the Giant Sequoia National Monument**

On April 15, 2000 the President exercised his authority under the Antiquities Act to extend permanent protection to objects of historic or scientific interest on federal lands through the creation of the approximately 328,000 acre Giant Sequoia National Monument. When the President had asked the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a review of the status of giant sequoias on the Sequoia National Forest on February 14, 2000, and to make a recommendation within 60 days, the Framework DEIS was in the final stages of being reviewed and printed. Establishment of the new National Monument is not reflected in the DEIS. Given the timing of this recent development, the Forest Service will incorporate this new information into the ongoing analysis, and will ensure that this designation, and any changes in effects that may result from it, are reflected in the Final EIS.

### **Relation to the Draft Report “A Cohesive Strategy for Protecting People and Sustaining Resources in Fire-Adapted Ecosystems”**

The draft report, A Cohesive Strategy for Protecting People and Sustaining Resources in Fire-Adapted Ecosystems (Cohesive Strategy), is a framework for setting overall priorities and programmatic emphasis. It is based on risk mapping that provides a broad scale estimate of acres by fire regime and condition class. That data will continue to be refined as it is stepped down to the forest and district scale. One critical source in the step down process will be regional assessments, forest and watershed level analysis, as well as project level planning. The Sierra Nevada Framework is a key element of this

process. While the actual number of acres requiring treatment may change over time with refinements in analysis, the draft Cohesive Strategy is clearly in step with the needs and purposes in this ongoing assessment.

### **Summary**

The Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment EIS is an important effort, as it is addressing significant issues in the Sierra Nevada. We will continue to integrate the best science into natural resource management and work collaboratively with others, to ensure sustainable environmental, economic and social conditions in the Sierra Nevada to meet the needs of people both now and in the future.

This concludes my written statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you or members of your subcommittee may have at this time.