Sierra Nevada
Forest Plan Amendment

Environmental Impact Statement
Problem Areas

- Old Forest Ecosystems
- Aquatic, Riparian & Meadow Ecosystems
- Fire and Fuels Management
- Noxious Weeds
- Hardwood Ecosystems
The Decision

- **Modified Alternative 8: Manage sensitive wildlife habitat cautiously.**
  - Provide for species conservation while addressing needs to reduce the threat of wildfire.
  - Management direction is designed to address uncertainty and increase confidence that management actions will not adversely affect wildlife habitat.
Modified Alternative 8

• Provides more spatially explicit California spotted owl and fisher conservation strategies.
• Provides better integration of these strategies with aquatic management and fire and fuels management strategies.
• Provides species conservation while addressing fire and fuels management.
• Allows more intensive fuel treatments in urban wildland intermix zones. Outside of these zones, direction for treating forest fuels is cautious, ensuring that treatments do not degrade habitat.
Strategies & Solutions

• Protect large old trees, restore old forest ecosystems
• Protect & improve aquatic riparian and meadow habitat
• Reduce wildfire severity
• Reduce spread of noxious weeds
• Protect and restore hardwood ecosystems
Old Forest Strategy

• Protects large, old trees and other old forest characteristics on all national forest lands.
• Establishes “old forest emphasis areas” to protect & create high quality old forest habitat.
• Giant Sequoia groves are almost all “old forest”
• Strategy emphasizes restoration of historic fire return intervals
• Establishes Protected Activity Centers (PACs) for species at risk
• In Strategically Placed Area Fuel Treatments, promote heterogeneity with small openings (<1 ac.) in dense uniform stands
California Spotted Owl Strategy

- Maintains all existing spotted owl protected activity centers (PACs) (300 acres) and protects future sites as they are discovered.
- Identifies spotted owl home range core areas (600 acres including PAC) and regulates activities within them.
- SOHAs no longer maintained
Northern Goshawk

- Protect 200 acre PACs
- Limited operating periods
Forest Carnivores
Forest Carnivore Strategy

- Protects all known den sites
  - 700 acres for fisher
  - 100 acres for marten
  - Evaluate 5 mile radius for wolverine and red fox*
- Habitat Linkages
- Surveys and Research
Southern Sierra Fisher Conservation Area.

- Landscape level habitat management
- Shifts fuels management emphasis from prescribed fire to mechanical treatments
- Prescribed fire may be applied for restoration and regeneration objectives for giant sequoia
- Does not apply to urban interface
- Provisions made for protection of human health and safety
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USDA Forest Service, Intermountain Region, Pacific Southwest Region and Pacific Southwest Research Station
Fire and Fuels Management
The Decision

• A strategic approach for locating fuel treatments across broad landscapes will be adopted.

• The treatments are linked to support one another on the landscapes so that wildland fire behavior spread and intensity are reduced.
Landscape Fuels Management Strategies

- Defensible Fuels Profile Zones (DFPZ’s)
- Urban Wildland Intermix Zones
- Strategically Placed Area Treatments (SPLAT’s)
- Wildland Fire Use
Defensible Fuels Profile Zones (DFPZ’s)

• Fire exclusion technique (keep fire out)

• Protection Strategy for Urban Wildland Intermix (adjacent to communities and areas of high value)
Urban Wildland Intermix

Desired Condition

• Fires are safely and efficiently controlled through initial attack under all but the most severe weather conditions.

• Under high weather conditions, treated areas are characterized by more specific outcomes such as rate-of-spread and flame length. All described in the Record of Decision
Urban Wildland Intermix

- Highest priority for fuel treatment
- Defense Zone ~ .25 mile from structures
- Threat Zone ~ 1.25 miles beyond defense zone
- Total of 1.5 miles zone around communities
- Locally determined
- In dense uniform stands, promote heterogeneity with small openings (<1 ac.)
Strategically Placed Area Treatments (SPLATs)

- 50 to 1,000 acres blocks of land where vegetation has been treated to reduce fuel loading.
- Purpose is to minimize risk of loss to wildfire to human life & property, sensitive resources, or the old forest emphasis area.
- Considers historic fire regime and severe wildfire potential in where to place area treatments.
- This strategy facilitates fire reintroduction.
Wildland Fire Use

• Use lightning-caused fires to:
  – reduce fuel loads and
  – maintain populations of fire-dependent species and their ecosystems.

• Reintroduces fire into ecosystems.

• Requires an approved Fire Management Plan that outlines how prescribed fires and naturally caused fires will achieve objectives for resource benefit.
Fuels Treatments

• Mix mechanical and prescribed fire
  • Starting with the highest priority and most intensive treatments…
    a. Defense Zone
    b. Threat Zone
    c. General Wildlands
    d. Wildland Fire Use
As the fire flanks around the treatments, Lower ROS & Intensity
Fuels Treatments

• Fuel Treatments will be more cautiously applied:
  – PACs
  – Sierra Fisher Conservation Area
  – Old forest emphasis areas
  – Cal. spotted owl home range core areas
  – Stands comprised of large trees
Recreation

- Avoids impacting recreation unless necessary to conserve ecosystem health and protect wildlife habitats
- Minimal direct effect on existing developed recreation and on use of recreation residences
- Largest recreation impact is on Off Highway Vehicle use (OHV) (little impact on Sequoia)
- Determination of OHV routes will be made at the forest level through a public involvement process
- Some differences in Giant Sequoia NM
S&Gs and Monitoring

• Forest Supervisors will determine which pre-existing Forest Plan S&Gs are superceded.
• Forest Supervisors will determine which existing Forest Plan monitoring requirements are met by the Adaptive Management Strategy.
• The Adaptive Management Strategy provides the coordinated foundation upon which all Sierra-wide monitoring will be executed.