

NEWS RELEASE

Sequoia National Forest and the Giant Sequoia National Monument

1839 S. Newcomb Street, Porterville, CA 93257



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Contact: Mary Chislock, Public Affairs Officer
Phone: (559) 784-1500

Giant Sequoia National Monument Management Plan Promotes Protection and Ecological Restoration through Science and Collaboration

Forest Supervisor Announces Release of the Record of Decision, the Giant Sequoia National Monument Management Plan, and Final Environmental Impact Statement

PORTERVILLE, CA - Sept. 4, 2012 – Today, Forest Supervisor, Kevin B. Elliott, released a new Giant Sequoia National Monument Management Plan (Monument Plan) for one of this Nation's national treasures. The Monument Plan guides restoration efforts for giant sequoia ecosystems, watersheds, habitat for old-forest dependent wildlife, and the protection of mountain communities.

Regional Forester, Randy Moore, selected Alternative B and one element of Alternative E (Moses Wilderness recommendation) as the basis for the Monument Plan.

Two years of public collaboration provided the sidebars for a strategic vision for the Giant Sequoia National Monument (Monument). "The public's tireless efforts have resulted in a framework to restore and manage 33 giant sequoia groves, provide healthy watersheds, homes for unique wildlife, as well as provide spectacular recreation adventures to the American people", stated Elliott, Forest Supervisor. "Throughout this Monument Plan there is a theme of ecological restoration based on a foundation of science and a set of strong protocols."

Today's action culminates years of collaborative efforts with multiple agencies, the scientific community, and an engaged public to develop management direction based on public collaboration and current science.

Alternative B is identified as the environmentally preferred alternative based upon the comprehensive balance that this alternative provides for: 1) reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire to communities and valuable resources such as giant sequoia groves, wildlife habitat, and other objects of interest; and 2) restoring important ecological processes and forest structures such as a more natural fire regime, a mosaic of tree species, ages, and sizes for wildlife habitat, and giant sequoia regeneration.

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The southern Sierra Nevada is a special place with an international icon: the world-renowned giant sequoia, nature's masterpiece.

On April 15, 2000, President Clinton signed the presidential proclamation (Proclamation) that established the Giant Sequoia National Monument. The Monument Plan implements the Proclamation, and will protect the objects of interest while also encouraging continued public recreational access and use, consistent with the purposes of the Monument.

The Forest Service heard from more than 79,000 respondents on the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan, published for comment on August 6, 2010. Concerns raised by the public were used to improve and make corrections to the Management Plan and the analysis in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

The final documents include: the Record of Decision, Monument Plan, and FEIS (Volumes I and II). The key highlights include:

- **A comprehensive stand-alone Monument Plan** which describes a long-term vision and provides the strategic direction for managing the Monument and its resources over the next 10 to 15 years. The Monument Plan includes the direction required by the Proclamation and it replaces all previous management direction for the Monument. It defines the limits for management activities, but allows for the adjustment of future project-level decisions to accommodate changing social and resource conditions.
- **Use of science** - A four-pronged approach compiled the best available science to develop management direction for the Monument. In 2001, a Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture developed 27 science advisories; in 2008, the SAB reconvened to review the relevance of the 27 advisories; in 2009, a Science Review Panel was convened to conduct a science consistency review of the analysis in the draft documents; and in 2011, another Science Review Panel was convened to review the analysis in the FEIS.
- **Development of criteria to determine the appropriateness of tree felling and the *clear need for tree removal***. This criteria follows the Proclamation requirement that 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.*
- **Recommending a portion of the Moses Inventoried Roadless Area** (15,110 acres in the southern portion) **for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System**, as the ***Moses Wilderness***, and managing it as such until Congress acts.
- The **designation of Special Interest Areas**:
 - ✓ **Freeman Creek Grove Botanical Area** (4,190 acres in the southern portion), which includes the pristine Freeman Creek Giant Sequoia Grove. This grove is the easternmost grove of giant sequoias and is considered to be among the most recently established with approximately 800 large trees (10 feet in diameter or more), and

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- ✓ **Windy Gulch Geological Area** (3,500 acres in the northern portion), which protects amazing and unique caves, 15 which are known and possibly as many as 100, that contain Pleistocene-era fossils, rare minerals, and unique animals. A cave management plan will be developed for significant caves in this geological area.

The notice of availability for the FEIS will be published in the Federal Register on September 7, 2012. The final documents can be downloaded from the Sequoia National Forest's website at: www.fs.fed.us/r5/sequoia/gsnm_planning.html.

To request a copy of the ROD, Monument Plan, FEIS, or map packets, please contact Annette Fredette at the Sequoia National Forest Supervisor's Office: (559) 784-1500, extension 1138. The file sizes of some of the documents and maps are quite large so, if high-speed internet is not available, please contact our office to request a CD.

A written Notice of Appeal must be filed within 90 days of the date the legal notice is published in the newspapers of record, the *Porterville Recorder and Sacramento Bee*. Written appeals need to be addressed to the Chief of the Forest Service in Washington, DC. The appeal must contain sufficient narrative evidence and argument to show why this decision should be changed or reversed. For more information on appeals, please see the Appeal Rights section of the ROD.

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