



Forest Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Pacific Southwest Region, Plumas National Forest

June 2025

## Decision Notice

### Community Protection – Central and West Slope Project

U.S. Forest Service

Plumas National Forest

Butte, Plumas, Sierra, and Yuba Counties, California

### Introduction

This project proposes to implement fuels reduction and other vegetation treatments that mitigate the risk to communities and critical infrastructure from wildfire and climate change on approximately 217,721 acres throughout the Plumas National Forest. The Community Protection – Central and West Slope Project (Project) is concentrated within several community zones across the forest that have moderate-, high-, or very high-risk wildfire hazard potential. This project proposes to mitigate wildfire risk and promote forest resilience within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) surrounding those communities at highest risk from wildfire within and immediately adjacent to the Plumas National Forest and along critical transportation routes that



*Noah Berger, AP*

Downtown Greenville, Calif., during the Dixie Fire in 2021.

facilitate emergency access and evacuation. The project proposes additional reforestation and herbicide treatments within the WUI in areas burned by the 2018 Camp Fire and 2020 North Complex to restore resilient forest conditions. Lastly, the project proposes mechanical, manual, prescribed fire, and herbicide treatments to maintain desired conditions and treatment efficacy across the project landscape and facilitate repeated cross-boundary wildfire risk mitigation activities necessary to achieve an all-lands approach to wildfire and fuels management.

## Background



*Noah Berger, AP*

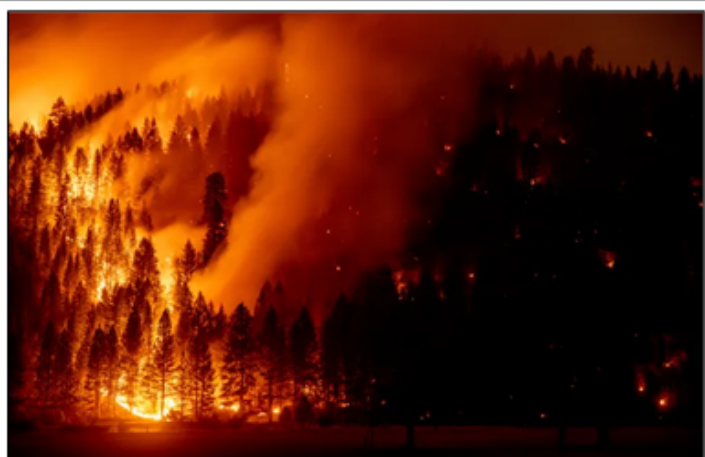
Deer walk through the burned community of Greenville, Calif., during the Dixie Fire in 2021.

Over the past 20 years, the Plumas National Forest has experienced wildfires of increasing size and intensity. Over the past 6 years, more than 65 percent of the national forest has been affected by catastrophic wildfire. The Plumas National Forest and surrounding region are experiencing the unprecedented convergence and consequence of climate change, drought, and over 100 years of extremely successful fire suppression in a fire-adapted ecosystem. As a result, vast areas of overly dense, fire-suppressed forests whose composition has shifted toward dominance by fire-intolerant species are experiencing extensive competitive stress, associated susceptibility to pests and disease, and

dramatic increase in catastrophic high-severity wildfires (USFS 2023). Resultant large-scale high-severity wildfires have consumed vast swaths of forest lands, severely degrading natural resources, damaging watersheds, and eliminating a broad-spectrum of wildlife habitats. Beyond landscape-level damage to the Forest's natural resources, these unprecedented high-severity wildfires have severely damaged or completely consumed several communities, displacing thousands of people.

In response to the current Wildfire Crisis, it is critical the Forest Service work urgently to mitigate the untenable composition of remaining fire-suppressed forests across the region through strategic and selective thinning, reducing the potential for catastrophic high-severity wildfire. This work is necessary to ensure conditions for the safe reintroduction of low-to-moderate severity fire into this fire-adapted landscape (USFS 2023).

As a result of the 2018 Camp fire, the 2019 Walker Fire, the 2020 North Complex, the 2021 Beckwourth Complex, and the 2021 Dixie Fire, the Plumas National Forest and surrounding communities suffered extensive damage including the destruction of homes, buildings, telecommunication facilities, bridges, and recreation facilities including campgrounds. Impacts to natural resources were also considerable. The combined total area burned by these wildfires was 1,635,200 acres, of which nearly 800,000 acres (roughly 49%) burned at high severity. On the Plumas National



*Ethan Swope, AP*

View of the Dixie Fire near Genesee on the Plumas National Forest as the fire continued to burn on Aug. 21, 2021.



Forest, high severity wildfire resulted in the loss of 241,776 acres of suitable mature forest wildlife habitat, which is roughly 43% of the total available forest-wide before 2018. These fires resulted in impacts to 151 of the 295 California spotted owl Protected Activity Centers (PACs) that existed within Plumas National Forest prior to 2018. Fifty-one of those PACs were rendered unsuitable due to a total loss of available habitat, and the remaining 100 revised to exclude patches that burned at high severity and may now consist of lower quality habitat in a less compact configuration. Suppression costs totaled over \$1 billion, and damages are thought to exceed \$27 billion. While the statistics are staggering, the impacts of these fires go beyond the documented fatalities, structure losses, and deforestation. A community may require decades to recover from wildfires of this magnitude, which can create or exacerbate mental health problems, substance abuse, and poverty, particularly for the elderly, economically disadvantaged groups, and the uninsured. Fire recovery can reduce business opportunities and property tax revenues, in turn affecting all public services, including education, law enforcement, and community health services. Protecting communities, evacuation routes, natural resources, and critical infrastructure from future wildfires is a critical priority. Considering these recent wildfires and their enormous impact, the need to take action to reduce fire risk to communities and critical infrastructure is urgent.

On September 10, 2023, Forest Supervisor Chris Carlton signed a Decision Notice for the LaPorte/Greater Mohawk area, herein referred to as “Decision 1”, including 69,925 acres of mechanical and manual thinning and prescribed fire within specific land allocations. Decision 1 utilized an emergency authorization approved by the Chief of the Forest Service. The LaPorte/Greater Mohawk Area decision is a standalone decision for those activities, being the first authorization in a phased decision-making process.

### Decision

This Decision Notice incorporates by reference the Community Protection – Central and West Slope Project Environmental Assessment (EA) dated June 2025, the associated Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and supporting information included in the project record. The decision notice and supporting documents, including the EA, are available on the project website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r05/plumas/projects/62873>.

I have reviewed the EA, including the analysis in the project file, applicable laws, and the Plumas National Forest Plan as amended. I understand the environmental effects disclosed therein. After careful consideration of the public comments, I have incorporated the following changes to the environmental assessment:

- added design features to reduce air pollution, protect monarch butterfly and western bumblebee, reduce the spread of noxious weeds, and protect visual resources associated with the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT),
- included analysis of each individual California spotted owl Home Range Core Area/Territory to better disclose impacts,
- explained why high severity fire areas were removed as California spotted owl (CSO) habitat and the extent to which CSO habitat may exist in burned areas. Clarified the extent to which CSO may use burned forest and updated effects analysis accordingly.
- included additional vegetation analysis,
- clarified planning unit acres,
- clarified language regarding:



- utilization of some Potential Operational Delineation (POD) boundaries and maintenance of permanent firelines,
  - the contribution of past intensive logging practices to current forest conditions
  - limitations on mastication,
  - opportunities to manage wildfires in the backcountry,
  - California spotted owl land allocations, suitable habitat and how burned areas factor into both,
  - protection of fisher habitat,
  - specific watershed conditions and how design criteria were developed,
  - finer scale identification of low-income and minority populations, and
  - refined the estimated total area of herbicide use in the project.
- Updated the comment consideration documentation to include Alternative 4 where applicable.
  - Reviewed and updated present and reasonably foreseeable actions considered in the cumulative effects analysis.

## **Selected Alternative**

I have decided to select Alternative 4. I believe Alternative 4 best meets the purpose and need of this project while also responding to public interest and concerns. This decision approves Alternative 4 with two modifications; I am excluding treatment within Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA) from this decision and changing the treatments in Wild and Scenic River Scenic Zones outside of WUI Defense to manual thinning only, followed by prescribed fire. A full description of the selected alternative can be found in the Environmental Assessment pages 2-16 to 2-24; see also Figures 1 and 2 at the end of this document.

My decision to implement Alternative 4, including certain activities which overlap geographically and are complementary to the LaPorte/Greater Mohawk/Decision 1 (as referenced below), authorizes the following activities:

- In all general/other forest planning units, mechanically thin forest stands to achieve a rSDI of up to 23-28 percent, followed by, where appropriate, prescribed fire treatments.
- In Wild and Scenic River, Wild Zones, manually thin up to 6 inches dbh and hand pile. Use prescribed fire to burn piles, and where appropriate, prescribed fire treatments.
- In Wild and Scenic River, Scenic Zones, outside of WUI Defense, manually thin forest stands to reduce hazardous fuels. In WUI Defense, mechanically thin forest stands to retain 40% canopy cover followed by prescribed fire treatments.
- In Wild and Scenic River, Recreation Zones and Wildlife Corridors, mechanically thin forest stands of CWHR size class 4 or greater to retain 40% canopy cover followed by, where appropriate, prescribed fire treatments.
- In California spotted owl territories, mechanically thin forest stands to retain no less than 40% canopy cover within Suitable Habitat Retention Areas. Utilize, where appropriate, prescribed fire treatments.



- Outside of WUI Defense: Retain at least 60% of the territory as suitable habitat where moist vegetation types and site conditions exist and at least 50% where dry vegetation types and site conditions exist.
  - In WUI Defense: Retain at least 40% of the territory as suitable habitat regardless of site conditions.
- In California spotted owl and northern goshawk Protected Activity Centers (PACs),
  - Within low and moderate productivity PACs:
    - Manually thin up to 6 inches dbh within up to six separate 10-acre nest and roost sites within each PAC, maintaining existing canopy cover.
    - Mechanically thin the remainder of the PAC, maintaining at least 60% canopy cover in CWHR 5D, and at least 50% canopy cover in all other areas.
  - Within high productivity PACs:
    - Manually thin up to 6 inches dbh and allow removal of ladder fuels up to 10 inches dbh.
    - Maintain existing canopy cover and a structurally diverse multi-tiered canopy.
- Complete hazardous fuel treatments along road systems identified for emergency access and evacuation to improve public and firefighter safety.
- Conduct prescribed fire treatments to modify fire behavior.
- Apply herbicides on approximately 51,000 acres in the project area to *(these activities are complementary to and geographically overlap with Decision 1)*:
  - Treat invasive plant species (approximately 2,000 acres).
  - Control competing vegetation for reforestation in burned areas (approximately 32,000 acres).
  - Maintain permanent fire lines (approximately 5,000 acres).
  - Control shrubs in lower elevation west slope fuel breaks dominated by tanoak (approximately 12,000 acres).
- Reforestation in high-severity burned areas within the project area. Treatments may include *(these activities are complementary to and geographically overlap with Decision 1)*:
  - Site preparation before planting – manual treatments, mastication, mechanical pull and pile of brush and down woody debris, dead tree removal, pile burning, herbicide application to control competing vegetation, or a combination of all the above.
  - Tree planting.
  - Maintain plantations to control/release competing vegetation, using the same methods described for site preparation above.

**Table 1. Treatments within the project area (approximate acreages).**

<b>Treatment Type</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Mechanically thin with follow-up prescribed fire	General/Other Forest	47,299
	PAC: moderate or low productivity	13,048
	Mature forest	18,966
	Fire control lines	2,903
	Territories	21,922
	Wildlife corridors	12,895
	Wild & Scenic – Recreation and Scenic	5,947
Manually thin with follow-up prescribed fire	PAC: high productivity	9,914
	Wild & Scenic – Wild and Scenic	4,956
Prescribed fire	Prescribed fire only	4,858
	Prescribed fire as follow-up treatment	138,289
Reforestation	Site preparation, planting and release (non-herbicide)	Approx. 25,801
Herbicide treatment	Invasive plant species	Approx. 2,000
	Control competing vegetation for reforestation in burned areas	Approx. 32,000
	Maintenance of permanent fire lines	Approx. 5,000
	Control of shrubs in early seral stands	Approx. 12,000





My decision includes all the necessary management requirements (EA, pages 1-4 to 1-5) and design features described in Appendix A of the EA which are incorporated in this decision and will be implemented for the whole project area.

## Decision Rationale

The Central and West Slope Project is surrounded by watersheds devastated by recent fires. The communities within this project area face not a possibility, but a probability that catastrophic wildfire similar to the Beckwourth Complex, North Complex, Dixie Fire, and others will occur. Our opportunity to take meaningful action is measured not in decades or centuries, but in years. It is incumbent on us to thoughtfully consider the resources at stake, including our landscapes, our natural and cultural resources, and our communities – many of which are disadvantaged. Through my interactions with the public during, and following these devastating fire seasons we have experienced, I have heard overwhelmingly from partners, stakeholders, and our public about the need to act. We need to implement actions that reduce the impacts of wildfire on our communities and critical infrastructure, improve forest resilience, preserve our valuable water supplies, support long-term wildlife habitat, and further our commitment to steward the critical natural resources for which we are responsible. I believe my decision to implement Alternative 4 is essential to meeting these concerns and moving the landscape toward the desired conditions outlined in the Forest Plan and our proposed amendments.

My decision will initiate treatments that will have the most beneficial effects in terms of reducing hazardous fuels and associated fire risk and enhancing forest resilience. My staff have utilized best available science, technology, and completed informed geospatial modeling to identify treatment prescriptions that address the existing fuel conditions and protect important wildlife habitat features. I believe application of Alternative 4 represents the best approach to balancing the needs of forest resilience and biodiversity conservation with protecting the communities of the Landscape through reducing wildfire risk and improving ease and safety of wildfire response.

## How Alternative 4 Addressed the Purpose and Need

The primary purpose of this Project is to implement fuels treatments that mitigate the risk to communities and critical infrastructure from wildfire. The fuels treatments are needed to reduce the accumulation of excessive surface fuels and create sustainable, resilient vegetation structure that allows for safer defense of human communities and critical infrastructure including evacuation routes, schools, hospitals, emergency service buildings, developed campgrounds, communication towers, water lines for service districts, and transmission lines. The purpose and need also includes the needs to reduce the potential for extreme fire behavior in the wildland interface; maintain road systems for emergency access and evacuations; and foster an all-lands approach to fire and fuels management. Alternative 4 includes actions and design features that address each of these needs.

When reviewing the action alternatives, I considered in detail the anticipated effects of not approving treatments or approving reduced treatments. The analysis firmly supports that a continuation of current conditions means that forest stands would continue to be at extreme risk of tree mortality, unnaturally high levels of understory vegetation and ladder fuels would remain, tree densities would continue to be high, and the extensive ingrowth of smaller trees would continue. Stands would continue to grow, and overly high tree stand densities, and overly crowded trees would become increasingly vulnerable to epidemic levels of insect infestations and high levels of mortality during periods of prolonged drought.

Without treatment, much of the area will remain at high risk for high severity wildfires with flame lengths beyond the threshold for direct suppression and high potential for crown fire. More than

60 percent of the WUI Defense and Threat Zones have modeled flame lengths exceeding 12 feet, and most of this area has modeled flame lengths exceeding 25 feet under 98th percentile weather conditions (Tables 3.1-5 through 3.1-8; Appendix D). These trends are reflected in the modeled fire type, with 67 percent of the Project area, including most of the WUI Defense and Threat Zones, being susceptible to torching and crown fire. These fire types and flame lengths pose a danger to firefighters working to control fires in the WUI, increase the potential of fire spread through spotting, and can result in areas of high fire severity (tree mortality) after a fire.

Under Alternative 4, flame lengths would generally be less than 4 feet under 90th and 98th percentile weather conditions in more than 67-71 percent of the WUI Defense and Threat Zones (Table 3.1-2 and 3.1-22; Section 3.2). Reduced predicted fire behavior would potentially facilitate safer future evacuations of local communities at risk and reduce the risk to structures, infrastructure, and resources. Fire management's ability to safely suppress and contain fires, both in initial attack and during extended fire suppression operations, would be substantially improved from current conditions.

Overall, reduced surface, ladder, and canopy fuel loads and the corresponding reduction in fire intensity (expressed as flame length) (see Table 3.1-21 and 3.1-22), in combination with other existing completed and planned projects in or adjacent to the Project Area, would 1) reduce wildfire risk to communities and infrastructure, 2) reduce the potential for extreme fire behavior in the WUI (see table 3.1-23 and 3.1-24), and 3) improve the safety of firefighters and the public.

It has been my intent that, while designing this Project for the best outcome of avoiding a large, severe wildfire, we also prepare for that very fire. For this reason, reducing the amount of flammable forest fuels within critical access road corridors, infrastructure buffers, and WUI defense zones is an important part of my decision. Communities in the project area rely on forest



USFS

View of the Dixie Fire burning in Red Clover Valley on the Plumas National Forest.

roads for emergency access and primary or secondary emergency egress if the community is faced with a rapidly moving wildfire. Some of the forest roads are overgrown and rutted, making safe evacuation difficult. Alternative 4 reduces roadside fuels and hazards along approximately 35 miles of roads and restores existing NFS roads to operational maintenance levels. Fuel reduction, combined with reduced stand densities to create more resilient forest conditions, in these areas, both increases the ability for emergency responders to access the area, as well as use roads and other treated areas as strategic fire containment lines. Even more importantly, treated critical access road corridors will increase the ability of people to evacuate quickly and safely, improving public safety overall.

Socioeconomics was not listed as a need for this project, but it is very important to me. Implementing Alternative 4 would result in social and economic benefits. Economic benefits include reduced wildfire suppression costs, reduced property damage, reduced impacts on recreation and tourism from wildfire, and reduced costs associated with the human health impacts of wildfire. Landscape-level forest health would also be a benefit to the community by strengthening shared stewardship efforts and building long-term wildfire resilience.

Alternative 4 would result in direct economic benefits by employing workers from many different sectors including tree trimmers, equipment operators, loggers, certified burn bosses, mill





operators, herbicide applicators, and truck drivers. In addition, secondary economic benefits would be realized by workers who provide services to support these operations, such as grocery store and gas station employees. This increase in local employment would also support local hospitals, schools, and other essential community services. The personnel needed to implement Alternative 4 would largely be hired locally and have continuous work over several years.

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## How Alternative 4 Addressed Public Comments

I appreciate the public feedback I received during the comment period. I have carefully considered the comments on the Draft EA and made changes where necessary to the EA, Finding of No Significant Impact, and other supporting documents to adequately address and respond to concerns brought up in the comments, and in other circumstances found documents to be sufficient without changes (see Consideration of Comments in project record). I updated maps, added and adjusted design features, added an alternative, and updated supporting analysis in the EA. I discuss some comment topics and how they are addressed below. Alternative 4 is responsive to the concerns raised through the public involvement process, while still meeting the purpose and need and desired conditions in the project area.

Some commenters expressed concern over the reduction of habitat suitability and connectivity for mature forest species. As professional land managers, one of our goals for this project is to reduce tree stem density and fuel loads in alignment with the best available guiding research to create greater forest resiliency to catastrophic wildfire. Much of the current best-available-science indicates that the forest conditions promoted by the 2004 SNFPA are unsustainable under the current climate, and conserving dense forest conditions wherever they occur presents unacceptable levels of risk (Steel et al. 2023). The proposed actions in Alternative 4 provide focused spotted owl habitat conservation in PACs, Territories and Wildlife Corridors in line with what is recommended in the CSO Conservation Strategy (USDA 2019). This focused protection is combined with the more general conservation strategy of variable density thinning, which protects the largest trees in clumps and promotes the long-term development of a heterogeneous forest structure. These combined conservation measures help sustain forest habitats on the landscape over the short-term as well as the long-term.

No mechanical treatment would occur within high productivity California spotted owl or northern goshawk (American goshawk) PACs. Habitat within these PACs would receive hand-thinning treatment and therefore would not change in suitability. Important habitat elements will be retained, and habitat will see improvement in wildfire resiliency. In low- and moderate-productivity PACs there would be no reduction to the amount of suitable habitat within the larger tree size classes (5D and 5M); habitat may be reduced in quality in some size class 4 stands but would remain suitable. Within California spotted owl Territories, outside of the PAC a portion of the suitable habitat would be mechanically thinned but maintained as suitable (40-50% canopy cover) and the remainder would be treated to a lower stand density to promote landscape heterogeneity. Including the PAC, 40-60% of each Territory will be comprised of the best available suitable habitat, with the exact portion determined by WUI designation and/or site moisture conditions. Additional suitable habitat will be retained within Wild and Scenic zones, with 40% or greater canopy cover retained.

The Central and West Slope Landscape historically experienced more frequent, low to moderate intensity wildfire; however, over the past hundred years, a variety of factors have altered how fire interacts with vegetation and the plant and animal species that live here. The pace of this change has accelerated in the nearly two decades since the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision was signed in 2004, with droughts intensifying and wildfire seasons increasing in length. In addition, research suggests that with climate change, the risk of stand replacing



wildfire and periods of drought will continue to increase. National Forests throughout the Sierra Nevada have experienced extensive losses of forested landscapes and wildlife habitat due to large, uncharacteristic high severity wildfires and prolonged drought and associated insect infestations. Landscapes impacted by large, high severity wildfires or massive tree die-offs do not support the same species as previously. Of particular concern is loss of mature forest habitat with high canopy cover that supports the California spotted owl and other wildlife species that rely on these habitats. Across the Sierra Nevada bioregion, a greater acreage of PACs burned in high severity wildfire in the two-year period of 2020 and 2021 than the total high severity PAC acreage burned during the previous 25 years (1993 through 2019). On the Plumas National Forest 143 spotted owl PACs were impacted by high severity wildfire between 2020 and 2021, compared to just 40 in the preceding 20 years combined, with twice as many completely lost to high severity fires between 2020 and 2021 as in the preceding 20 years combined (50 and 25, respectively).

With these trends and dynamics in mind, I am adopting a project-specific forest plan amendment for the Central and West Slope Landscape (EA, Appendix C) to help make forest stands, particularly mature forest stands that provide habitat for the California spotted owl and other sensitive wildlife species, more resilient to severe impacts from uncharacteristic disturbances. Best available science informed the need for, and development of, the project-specific plan amendment as described in the EA, Section 2.2. Adopting the project-specific forest plan amendment (EA, Appendix C) at this critical juncture in time gives us a unique opportunity in this Landscape, to retain and promote long-term sustainability of California spotted owl habitat and enhance forest resilience by providing tools to help us more effectively reduce stand densities and fuel loading; retain and promote the long-term sustainability of large trees, particularly shade intolerant, fire resilient species; and enhance stand structural heterogeneity.

Alternative 4 includes thinning trees to a relative stand density index (rSDI) of 23-28%. I have considered the many comments regarding the application and incorporation of relative stand density index (rSDI) in the design of our mechanical thinning treatments of forested stands. Latest science indicates that one of the reasons that lent historic forested stands their resiliency to insects, wildfire and prolonged drought was their overall low stand density. By emulating these lower densities, thinned stands in the project area will have increased resilience in the face of climate change and the continued threat of large-scale catastrophic wildfire (Bernal et al. 2022). This increased resilience may result in reduced tree mortality in and around communities and therefore reduce available fuels and wildfire risk in these areas.

Some commenters were concerned that mechanically treated stands will degrade or homogenize habitat quality. The application of variable density thinning as proposed in the EA will result in increased heterogeneity across the landscape. Variable density thinning considers topography, aspect, stand type and other landscape features such as stream buffers and slope as it applies tree removal guidelines at varying levels of treatment intensity to emulate how fire would affect the landscape. Stands treated with a variable density thinning approach could expect to have more trees in drainages and north facing slopes where cooler temperatures and increased moisture would have tempered wildfires as opposed to ridgetops or south facing aspects where historic wildfires would have burned hotter, leaving stands naturally less dense. Additionally, these thinned stands should experience accelerated growth as inter-tree competition is reduced. In the long term, this will result in an increase in larger trees across the project area, which is a desired habitat attribute of many wildlife species. These larger trees will also have the added benefit of resiliency in the face of wildfire and climate change because of the benefits of reduced fuels and competition. Lastly, mechanical thinning is not the only type of treatment this project is proposing. Prescribed fire, manual hand thinning and mechanical fuels treatments such as mastication and grapple piling are also proposed. Combined with mechanical thinning, the whole suite of



treatments should provide increased landscape-wide heterogeneity and a broad range of different seral stages.

My team spent time documenting forest plan consistency and reviewing land allocations to verify our actions are compliant with applicable standards and guidelines. I know there is concern about impacts to Wilderness, Inventoried Roadless Areas, Wild and Scenic rivers, national recreation areas and trails, and other designated areas within the Plumas National Forest. While proposed treatments in Wilderness were supported by the project analysis, at this time, **I am removing them from consideration.** For other land designations additional design features were added (Pacific Crest Trail) or were already included in the project design features (see Consideration of Comments, page 55).

As I summarized above, there is potential for treatments to have some adverse (albeit not rising to a significant level) impacts to wildlife habitat, soils, water quality, and scenery; however, the importance of implementing these treatments to reduce the risk of wildfire to communities and critical infrastructure, and public safety cannot be overemphasized. There is a great need to reduce the risk of wildfire to communities and critical infrastructure; reduce the potential for extreme fire behavior in the wildland-urban interface and maintain roads for emergency access and evacuations. Providing a safe environment for both the public and administrative use of these areas is central to the Forest Service's mission. For this reason, I am choosing to implement Alternative 4 and associated design features, while also recognizing the potential for some adverse impacts to resources.

## Finding of No Significance

The Finding of No Significant Impact documents the reasons why an action, not otherwise categorically excluded, will not have a significant effect on the human environment and for which an environmental impact statement therefore will not be prepared. The Finding of No Significant Impact discussion considers all information included in the EA as relevant to actions included in this decision, including the Potentially Affected Environment, as well as documentation in the project record. Pertinent specialists have reviewed Alternative 4 and based on their input, the responsible official made the following determinations with regards to the potentially affected environment and degree of effects considered for a Finding of No Significant Impact.

### Degree of Effect

The following effects (or impacts) discussions focus on changes to the human environment from Alternative 4 that are reasonably foreseeable and have a reasonably close causal relationship to the proposed action or alternatives, including those effects that occur at the same time and place as the proposed action (or alternatives) and may include effects that are later in time or farther removed in distance from the proposed action or alternatives.

#### 1. *Both short- and long-term effects.*

The interdisciplinary team considered and evaluated both short- and long-term effects for their resources and identified no significant effects (see Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences, pp. 3.1-1 – 3.10, appendices, and supporting analyses in the project record). Applicable forest plan standards and guidelines, plan amendments and components, national core and state best management practices, and project design features will be implemented with the activities included in this decision to avoid or minimize adverse effects (see Consistency with the Forest Plan, pp. 1-4 – 1.5 and Appendices A, C, and F).

In the short-term, treatments in the project area will reduce hazardous fuels in the WUI around communities and critical infrastructure and provide safe NFS roads to access the forest for a



variety of reasons including implementation of this project, fire suppression and as evacuation routes. The activities included in this decision decrease the risk of wildfires, potentially reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and increasing levels of sequestered carbon. Wildlife habitat will be impacted, however, treatments in PAC and Territory for this project balance retaining the most important habitat in the short-term while improving resiliency for overall habitat retention in the long-term. These treatments will help sustain forest habitats on the landscape over the short-term as well as the long-term.

Over the long-term, the treatments included in my decision will provide beneficial effects. Resource values such as forest health, species habitat, water quality, recreation, and scenic values will be improved over current conditions, and much sooner than if I do not act. Additionally, the treatments will reduce threats to public health and safety.

## *2. Both beneficial and adverse effects.*

The environmental analysis and project record support the determination that there will be no significant effects from the activities included in this decision. The anticipated beneficial and adverse impacts of Alternative 4 are described in the environmental analysis, based on identified issues and concerns (see Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences, pp. 3.1-1 – 3.10-, appendices, and supporting analyses in the project record). Treatments in California spotted owl and goshawk PACs and California spotted owl Territories will reduce the likelihood of high severity fire within these areas while retaining beneficial habitat components. Applicable forest plan standards and guidelines, forest plan amendments and associated components, national core and state best management practices, and project-specific design features will be implemented with the activities included in this decision to avoid or minimize adverse effects (see Consistency with the Forest Plan, pp. 1-4 – 1.5 and Appendices A, C, and F).

## *3. Effects on public health and safety.*

### *Hazardous Fuels Reduction – Communities and Critical Infrastructure*

Implementing hazardous fuel reduction activities in the WUI around communities and critical infrastructure within the project area would reduce the risk of wildfires and loss of lives and homes. Road activities would provide safe emergency access and evacuation routes. Fire management's ability to safely suppress and contain fires, both in initial attack and during extended fire suppression operations, would be substantially improved from current conditions. The reduced predicted fire behavior and the dominant fire type (surface fire) would lead to reduced tree mortality in forested areas, including in treated areas of general forest, riparian zones, PACs, Territories, and Wildlife Corridors. Reduced predicted fire behavior would potentially facilitate safer future evacuations of local communities at risk and reduce the risk to structures, infrastructure, and resources. These reduced flame lengths and less severe fire types would improve firefighters' ability to manage future wildfires and prescribed fires within the WUI and would allow greater flexibility in managing future wildfires in the backcountry.

### *Air Quality*

The predicted pollutant emissions included in this decision were estimated for smoke emissions from all acres eligible for prescribed burning, smoke emissions from pile burning for all acres manually treated, exhaust and dust emissions from all initial mechanical and manual treatment activities, and exhaust and dust emissions for expected worker commute and material hauling activities. It was assumed that all initial mechanical and manual treatments would occur over a period of 3 years with follow up prescribed burning and pile burning, occurring over 10 years, although treatments under this decision may occur into the future.



Proper mitigation measures to meet air quality requirements would be implemented. All burning would be conducted under an approved prescribed fire plan. As a required component of Prescribed Fire Plans, a Smoke Management Plan would be developed in coordination with the appropriate Air Quality Management District (AQMD) to mitigate emissions from fuel reduction burning following the California Code of Regulations Smoke Management Guidelines (Title 17). The project area falls within three Air Quality Management Districts including the Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (Plumas and Sierra Counties), the Butte County Air Quality Management District, and the Feather River Air Quality Management District (Yuba County). After approval of a Smoke Management Plan, an Air Pollution Permit would be acquired from the AQMD, requiring daily authorization to burn. The burn authorization specifies the amount, timing, and location of allowable smoke emissions appropriate for the daily meteorological and air quality conditions. Permissive burn days are determined by the AQMD, based on recommendations from the California Air Resources Board (CARB). Prescribed fire implementation would coordinate daily and seasonally with regulatory officials and other burning permittees both inside and outside the forest boundary, through the Northeast Air Alliance (NEAA) to help meet air quality standards. The Forest Service Agency Administrator, and the Prescribed Fire Burn Boss are required to complete daily go/no-go decision checklists to ensure that prescribed fire project specific mitigations and regulatory requirements can be met. The combination of mitigation measures, coordination efforts with regulatory agencies and other prescribed burners, and daily authorization processes are designed to minimize smoke impacts to smoke sensitive areas, populations, and firefighters, avoid cumulative smoke impacts, and prevent public nuisance. Because of this, any impacts are expected to be minimal.

### *Herbicide*

Use of herbicide for vegetation management and invasives can pose a hazard for applicators (see Human Health Risk Assessment in project record). By implementing best management practices and mitigations these risks will be minimized. No long-term health effects of herbicide use are anticipated as result of herbicide application.

#### *4. Whether the action threatens to violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The project area treatments will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment and is designed in a manner that is consistent with Forest Plan direction and forest plan amendments and associated components.

Implementation of the treatments would not violate Federal, State, or local law for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in this decision. The treatments comply with the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Central Valley Regional Water Quality Board, Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District regulations, and other applicable codes and ordinances.

After considering the effects of the actions included in this decision, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

### **Summary of Tribal Consultation and Public Involvement**

The project area resides on the traditional homeland of the Mountain Maidu. Consultation efforts for the Project included a meeting with the Susanville Indian Rancheria on May 6, 2022. On May



5, 2022 formal tribal consultation letters were mailed to the Maidu Indians of the Berry Creek Rancheria, Maidu Indians of the Enterprise Rancheria, Greenville Rancheria, Mechoopda Indian Tribe of the Chico Rancheria, Maidu Indians of the Mooretown Rancheria, Susanville Indian Rancheria, Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, Konkow Valley Band of Maidu Indians, Maidu Cultural Development Group, Maidu Summit Consortium, Tasmam Koyom Foundation, and Ya-Mani Maidu Cultural Association. The letters provided information about the purpose and need for action, proposed action, legal compliance, project schedule, possible alternatives, responsible official, nature of the decision to be made, and how to submit comments. On June 16, 2023, formal tribal consultation letters were electronically mailed to the entities listed above and provided information about the 30-day comment period, project, project specific website, and Forest contacts. On September 12, 2023, emails were sent to the entities listed above notifying them that Decision 1 was signed for the LaPorte/Greater Mohawk area.

The project was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) on September 8, 2022. During a public scoping period from May 5 through June 8, 2022, comments on the project were received from 19 interested agencies, organizations, and individuals. This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Plumas National Forest SOPA and updated periodically during the analysis. Initial public involvement efforts were used to help in developing the proposed action for the Project. The legal notice for the scoping period was published in the *Feather River Bulletin* on May 5, 2022. The 30-day opportunity to comment legal notice was published in the same newspaper of record at the same website on June 19, 2023. There were 10 groups and 25 individuals that submitted comments. On September 12, 2023, emails were sent to the public included on our project specific mailing list or who participated in the project notifying them that Decision 1 was signed for the LaPorte/Greater Mohawk area.

A list of agencies, organizations and persons consulted regarding this proposal is also provided in the Consultation and Coordination section of the EA, pages 4-1 – 4-2.

## Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

My decision complies with all applicable law, regulation, and policy for the activities in the project area.

Alternative 4 was developed in accordance with and does not threaten to violate any Federal, State or local laws or requirements for protecting the environment (i.e., Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, National Forest Management Act, National Historic Preservation Act, etc.). The activities under Alternative 4 are consistent with the Plumas National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended by the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment and the project-specific forest plan amendment described in Appendix C (see also National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule (36 CFR 219) section, below)

The Non-Native Invasive Plants Risk Assessment conducted for the Project, hereby incorporated by reference and available upon request, incorporates the SNFPA (2004) list of fourteen Standards and Guidelines for management of Non-Native Invasive Plants (NNIP). In summary, the standards and guidelines applicable to this project direct the Forest to conduct a NNIP risk assessment that includes NNIP risk, prevention, and treatment (Appendix E5). Project risks associated with NNIP factors generally resulted in “high” risk.

### National Forest Management Act – Land Management Consistency

Effects from proposed activities on management indicator species and their habitat elements were considered in the environmental analysis. The analysis of effects to management indicator





species and their habitat concludes that the project would not change the current forest-wide distribution or habitat trend. See analysis in the EA, design features in Appendix A, and project record for additional information about plan consistency.

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) directs that a diversity of plant species be provided as consistent with overall multiple-use goals. NFMA regulations also direct the Forest Service (FS) to preserve and enhance the diversity of plant communities, including native and desirable naturalized plant species such that diversity mimics what might be expected under natural conditions, where appropriate and to the extent practicable. In addition to evaluation of threatened, endangered and sensitive plants, the Plumas National Forest maintains a “watchlist” for plants and considers effects to these species should they be present.

A total of 56 plant species listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA and Forest Service Sensitive plant species were evaluated and considered and analyzed in the EA as potentially occurring within the Project area (Table 3.2.7). The four threatened or endangered plant species, Layne’s butterweed, Webber’s ivesia, whitebark pine, and slender Orcutt grass, were evaluated separately in the Project Biological Assessment. Distribution and documented CNDDDB and NRIS occurrences, habitat, and current threats to these species are summarized in species accounts included in Appendix E7. Forest Service Watch List plant species are presented in Appendix E9.

### **National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule (36 CFR 219)**

The National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule (2012 Planning Rule) sets forth process and content requirements for development, amendment, and revision of land management plans to maintain and restore NFS terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and watersheds while providing for ecosystem services and multiple uses. A land management plan (forest plan) may be amended at any time. Plan amendments should be used to keep plans current and help units adapt to new information or changing conditions (36 CFR 219.13(a)). Amendments to forest plans require the following: (1) identification of the need to change the plan; (2) provision of opportunities for public participation; (3) amendment of the plan consistent with Forest Service NEPA procedures; (4) adherence to the applicable format for plan components set out at Section 219.7(e), and (5) determination of which specific substantive requirements within 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11 are directly related to the plan direction being added, modified, or removed.

The need to change the plan and the project-specific forest plan amendments adopted in this decision are detailed in Appendix C of the EA. The public comment period for the Draft EA provided opportunity for public participation. The substantive requirements directly related to the amendments are identified in Appendix C of the EA along with a description of how the directly related substantive requirements were applied within the scope and scale of the project-specific forest plan amendments.

### **Endangered Species Act**

#### *Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate Species and Critical Habitat*

Pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (16 USC 1531 et seq.), Federal agencies shall insure that any action they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat. Section 7 of the ESA, as amended, requires the responsible Federal agency to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) concerning endangered and threatened species.



The Wildlife and Plant BA analyzed potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of Alternative 1 on federally listed species with the potential to occur in the project area. The Forest Service requested consultation with USFWS for Webber's Ivesia, Layne's butterweed, California red-legged frog, foothill yellow-legged frog, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, and gray wolf, as well as USFWS-designated critical habitat for California red-legged frog and Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (see determinations tables in Appendix E) in compliance with Section 7 of the ESA. The Forest Service received the USFWS Biological Opinion (BO) and letter of concurrence on July 26, 2023. The potential effects of Alternative 4 would be the same as Alternative 1, with the same types of treatments proposed in the same locations. Therefore, Alternative 4 would not affect any listed species or its critical habitat in a manner or to a degree not considered during consultation based on Alternative 1.

The Sierra Nevada population of the California spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*), which occurs in the Project area, was proposed for listing as threatened under the ESA on February 23, 2023 (88 FR 11600). The Forest Service is currently conferencing with USFWS for the California spotted owl on actions proposed under Alternative 4 of this project that have the potential to affect the species. The EA finds that the proposed actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the California spotted owl. Completion of the conferencing process is not required prior to making this decision but is being conducted proactively to ensure compliance with Section 7 of the ESA should the species be listed.

Effects to candidate species (monarch butterfly) were analyzed as part of the biological evaluation process and documented in the EA (pp. 3.2-51). The project may affect individuals but is not likely to contribute to the current trend toward federal listing for this species. Consultation/conferencing with the USFWS is not required for candidate species.

No further action pursuant to ESA is required currently.

### **Sensitive Species (Forest Service Manual 2670)**

The pertinent specialists reviewed the proposed action and made the following determinations for sensitive species:

To comply with Forest Service Manual 2670, analyses were conducted and included in the EA to evaluate the Project in sufficient detail to determine potential effects on Forest Service Region 5 sensitive plant, aquatic, and terrestrial wildlife species and determine whether the proposed action would likely result in a trend toward these species becoming federally listed. Based on analysis completed to date, the proposed activities would not cause any species to trend toward Federal listing (see determinations tables in Appendix E).

### **Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act**

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668d) prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from "taking" bald or golden eagles, including their parts (including feathers), nests, or eggs. The Act defines "take" as "pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb." Regulations further define "disturb" as "to agitate or bother a bald or golden eagle to a degree that causes, or is likely to cause, based on the best scientific information available, 1) injury to an eagle, 2) a decrease in its productivity, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior, or 3) nest abandonment, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior" (50 CFR 22.6). Project design features, including Limited Operating Periods, have been incorporated to ensure project activities do not result in "take" of bald or golden eagles (see design features in Appendix A).



## National Historic Preservation Act – Section 106

The pertinent specialist has reviewed the proposed action and made the following determination regarding Section 106 compliance:

The Plumas National Forest (PNF) is conducting a phased approach to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Pursuant to 36 CFR 800, the *2021 National Programmatic Agreement among the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, for phasing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for large scale multi-year undertakings* has been developed to allow the Forest Service to carry out Section 106 of the NHPA with a phased approach. This National Programmatic Agreement requires a Heritage Implementation Plan (HIP) to document how Section 106 responsibilities will be met post-NEPA decision but pre-implementation.

PNF developed the *PNF Protect and Recover Project HIP* in consultation with the Greenville Indian Rancheria, Susanville Indian Rancheria, Enterprise Rancheria, Berry Creek Rancheria, Mooretown Rancheria, Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada, Mechoopda Indian Tribe of the Chico Rancheria, Maidu Summit Consortium, Konkow Valley Band of Maidu, Ya-Mani Maidu Cultural Association, Tasmam Koyom Foundation, Maidu Cultural Group, and the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).

The project area, including necessary design features, will comply with the *PNF Protect and Recover HIP*. By following the cultural resources or heritage design features (CUL-1 through CUL-10) outlined in Appendix A, proposed activities would result in a finding of no adverse effect to cultural resources located within the proposed area of potential effect (APE) and the project area. Cultural resource boundaries would be clearly identified prior to any project activities, and no activities would occur within existing site boundaries without heritage program manager approval. Any project activity that may occur within existing site boundaries would follow standard protection measures identified in the *PNF Protect and Recover HIP* (see project record).

## Clean Air Act

The pertinent specialist has reviewed the proposed action and made the following determinations regarding the Clean Air Act:

To maintain air quality, fire managers would cooperate with Federal, State, and local regulatory agencies to protect air quality as required by the Clean Air Act and state and local rules. Prescribed burning will comply with Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations, Subchapter 2, Smoke Management Guidelines for Agricultural and Prescribed Burning, and the local air district's rules. Burning would only be initiated on "burn days" designated by the Air Quality Management District or when satisfactory smoke dispersion conditions prevail.

Prescribed burning that is regulated by the States having approved smoke management programs complies with the Clean Air Act. In California the State's smoke management program is called Title 17 and the program is managed at the local level by the air districts. Under General Conformity, 42 USC 7571-7574, prescribed burning conducted by the Forest Service is required to comply with the State's smoke management program and therefore, prescribed fire projects (including proposed slash pile burning proposed in this project) in nonattainment or maintenance areas are presumed to comply with, or "conform" to the federal Clean Air Act's conformity rules.

## Clean Water Act

The pertinent specialist has reviewed the proposed action and made the following determinations:



- 1) The project would comply with California State Water Board requirements to implement best management practices, which are included through project design features and would be implemented through contract specifications, maps, and administration. Best management practices would be adhered to during project activities to protect water quality.
- 2) This project would meet best management practice monitoring requirements because USDA Forest Service Region 5 Forests conduct annual best management practice monitoring, which is implemented consistent with 2014 Forest Service Handbook 2509.19, Ch. 10, Ch. 30.
- 3) The project would comply with California State Water Quality Control Board Waste Discharge project enrollment requirements:
  - a) Before implementation of project activities, each national forest, or in some cases the regional office, would be responsible for enrolling this project under the applicable waiver(s). Each forest, or in some cases, the regional office, would carry out the provisions of the applicable waiver(s) through project completion including certifying the project as complete.
  - b) Local Forest Service districts and forests would work with Regional Water Quality Control Boards throughout the lifespan of each project to implement the conditions applicable to each waiver.
- 4) The project meets requirements for providing 303(d) impacts analysis:
  - a) A review of the most recent section 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies identified waterbodies that are located within or immediately downstream of the project area. The 303(d)-listed streams occur in the project area within a large portion of national forests in the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board's jurisdiction.
  - b) The sediment analysis discloses the effects of sediment delivery. See watershed supporting documents in the project record for more detailed analysis. This information will support prioritization and site-specific best management practice application consistent with tenets of Order No. R1-2015-0021 (California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Valley Region 2015).

## **Pertinent Executive Orders**

The responsible official or applicable specialist(s) have determined treatments are in compliance with the following executive orders, which were deemed pertinent based on the nature of the project:

*Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management* – determine action occurring in a floodplain, using Housing and Urban Development floodplain maps or more detailed maps, if available.

Assessment of the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Hazard Area Inventory shows inventoried floodplains mapped within the project area. See the project record for detailed assessment and acreages reported by forest and sub-watershed. The project area is consistent with Executive Order 11988 because all floodplains within the treatment area would be protected through equipment and burn pile exclusion zones, which prohibit activities near streams and floodplains (see Appendix A – Design Features). No short- or long-term adverse effects to floodplains would occur.



*Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands* – avoid actions within wetlands unless there are no practical alternatives, and the action includes all practicable means to minimize harm to wetlands.

Assessment of the National Wetlands Inventory shows numerous inventoried wetlands mapped within the project area. See the project record for detailed assessment and acreages reported by forest and sub-watershed. The project area is consistent with Executive Order 11990 because all wetlands would be protected through equipment and burn pile exclusion zones, which prohibit activities within and near wetlands (see Appendix A – Design Features).

*Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites* – avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of these sites.

Treatments are consistent with EO 13007 because Indian Sacred Sites will be avoided.

*Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments* – agencies consult with Indian tribes and respect tribal sovereignty as they develop policy on issues that impact Indian communities.

The Forest consulted with Tribal governments during scoping and the public comment period, ensuring consistency with all requirements under this Executive Order.

*Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species* – prevent the introduction of invasive species, and spread of invasive species, as well as to eradicate and control populations of invasive species that are established.

Treatments include fuels reduction that would decrease potential future fire behavior and elevated risks of nonnative invasive species spread and establishment if fire were to occur. Design features to minimize the introduction and spread of nonnative invasive species will be implemented as part of the treatments. However, even with design features, the proposed action carries an overall moderate to high risk of introducing or spreading nonnative invasive species in portions of the project area. These risks are due to the historical presence of nonnative invasive plants, disturbed habitats vulnerable to invasion, and movement vectors in the project area. Furthermore, implementation is expected to result in moderate habitat alteration and a moderate increase in vectors in the treatment areas included in this decision. However, the potentially affected areas comprise a small proportion of the project area. In some areas, nonnative invasive plant treatment and control would occur under existing decisions or other authorities. Based on this information, effects associated with nonnative invasive plants would be limited geographically and would not approach significant levels.

*Executive Order 13186, Migratory Birds* – identify actions that may have a measurable negative effect on migratory bird populations.

The proposed treatments comply with this act because the environmental analysis identifies whether unintentional take will occur, and if so, whether such take would have a measurable negative effect on migratory bird populations identified by Executive Order 13186. Implementation of this project would not substantially adversely affect migratory birds (EA, p. 3.2-3.46).

## Implementation

I intend to implement this decision beginning in 2025.

## Administrative Review and Objection Opportunities

This decision was subject to pre-decisional administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B, also called the “objection process”. A legal notice detailing the opportunity to



object was published on October 31, 2024, in the *Mountain Messenger*, the newspaper of record. The objection period lasted for 45 days ending on December 16, 2024.

Nine eligible objection letters were submitted, including: 1) joint letter from John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute (Lead Objector), Feather River Action!, and Plumas Forest Project, 2) Friends of Plumas Wilderness, 3) Feather River Action!, 4) Plumas Forest Project, 5) Maya Khosla, and 6) Plumas County. Three letters, submitted by Pacific Crest Trail Association, Sierra Pacific Industries, and American Forest Resource Council, generally expressed support for the draft decision.

The objection response letter from the Reviewing Officer concluded I am authorized to proceed with the final decision following execution of these instructions:

1. Update the Comment Consideration documentation to include Alternative 4 where applicable.
2. Explain why high severity fire areas were removed as CSO habitat and the extent to which CSO habitat may exist within the burned areas. Clarify the extent to which CSO may use burned forest and update the effects analysis accordingly.
3. Review the present and reasonably foreseeable actions considered in the cumulative effects analysis and update as needed.
4. Update the final decision to incorporate the changes to mechanical treatments within the eligible and designated Scenic River Zones as described above.

A summary of how these instructions were addressed in the EA and other documents is as follows:

- Instruction 1: comment consideration responses were updated to reflect the inclusion of Alternative 4 as the proposed action.
- Instruction 2: updates were made to the EA wildlife effects analysis to explain why areas burned at high severity in recent wildfires were removed as California spotted owl (CSO) habitat. Language was added to explain the extent to which CSO habitat may still exist within areas burned in recent wildfires and the extent to which CSO may use burned forest. Updates were made to EA Appendix A – Design Features to include Alternative 4 into mitigations specific to each alternative.
- Instruction 3: present and reasonably foreseeable actions were updated to include the North Fork Forest Recovery Project and the Tributaries Forest Recovery Project. Cumulative effects analyses were reviewed and updated as needed to ensure the effects of actions taken under the full list of projects were considered.
- Instruction 4: this decision was updated to incorporate the changes to treatments proposed within eligible and designated Wild and Scenic River Scenic Zones as described in the *Decision* section above. Project geospatial data and maps were updated to reflect the change. The updated version of the Environmental Assessment and comment consideration documents, are available on the project website <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r05/plumas/projects/62873>.





## Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Katherine Carpenter, Program Manager, 159 Lawrence Street, Quincy, CA 95971, (530) 283-7742, or [katherine.carpenter@usda.gov](mailto:katherine.carpenter@usda.gov).

Rachel A. Birkey  
Acting Forest Supervisor

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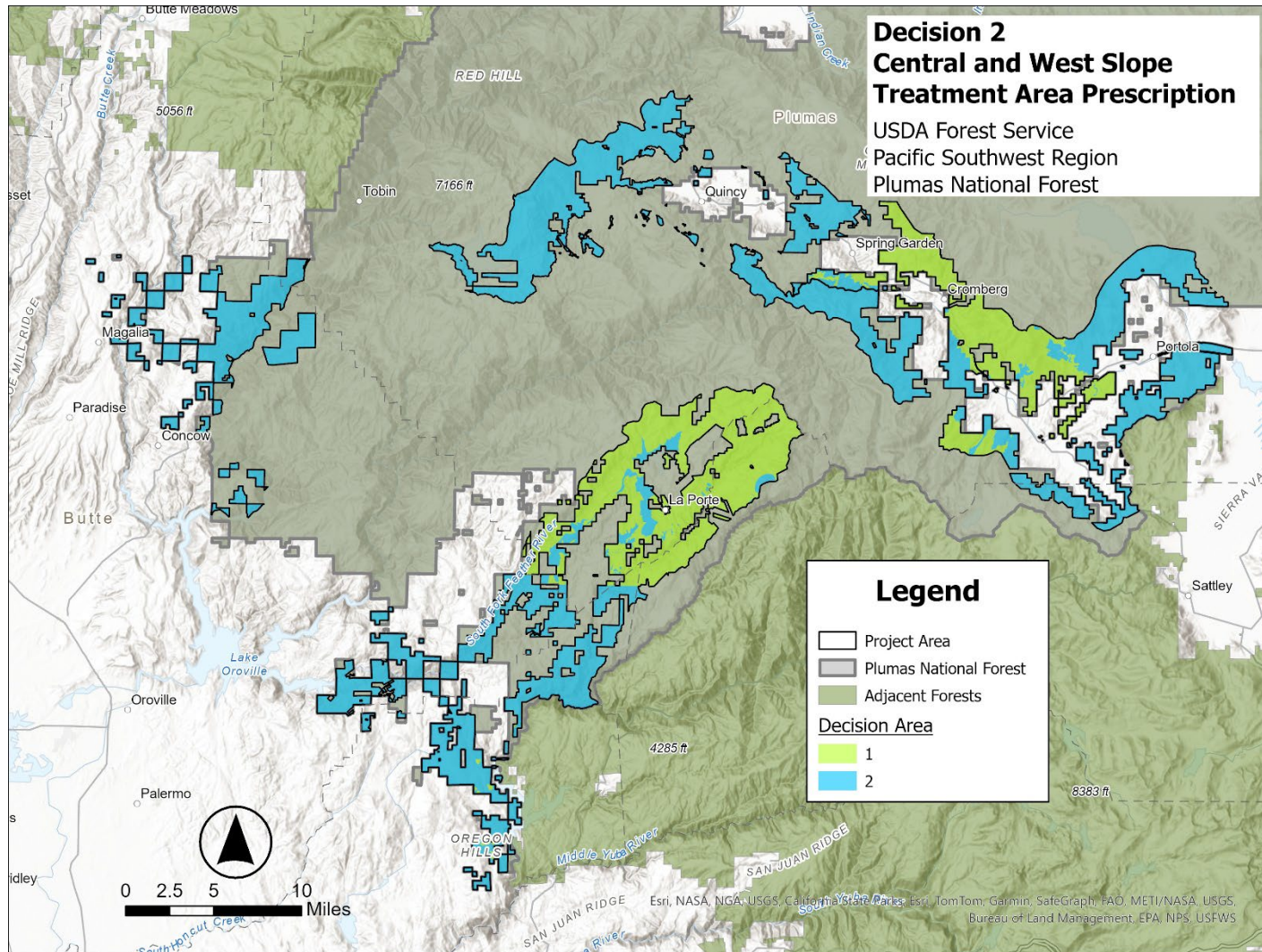
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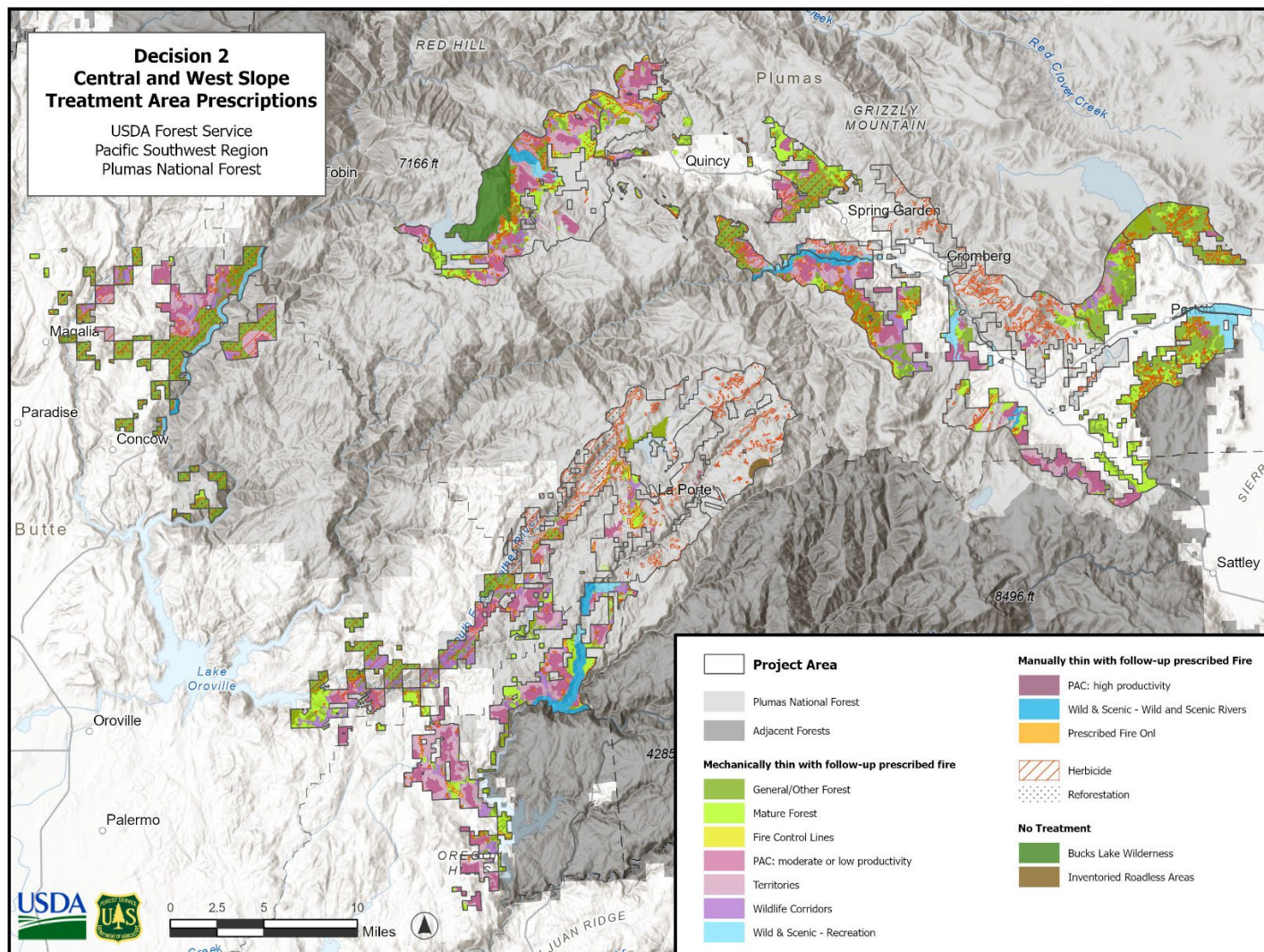
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## Figures



**Figure 1.** Community Protection – Central and West Slope Project (Decision 2) and LaPorte/Greater Mohawk (Decision 1) areas.





**Figure 2.** All treatments included in this decision (2) and areas outside of this decision (Decision 1 and “no treatment”; see Table 1 for acres).