

Community Protection – Central and West Slope Project

| <b>Issue/Concern (Comment Numbers)</b> | <b>Comment(s) Summary</b>   | <b>Response</b>                          | <b>Remarks and/or Project Record References</b>   |
|--|---|--|---|
| Suggested Treatment Methods (I3-4)     | Diverse treatment prescription for resilient forest   | Comment considered but no changes needed | Design features in the project area are intended to provide protection to sensitive natural and cultural resources. Lower impact treatments may be one approach used to achieve fuels reduction if that resource requires a lower impact approach to maintain those sensitive resources. Prescriptions will vary based on stand type. Within the same stand type, existing stand conditions vary, therefore post-treatment stand conditions will vary even with a similar treatment. Additionally, the treatment may vary as desired conditions may be able to be reached by multiple pathways. A combination of prescribed burning, hand, and mechanical treatments are planned, and the implementation of these varied treatments will achieve a diverse and resilient outcome. |
| Suggested Treatment Methods (A2-5)     | Comment suggests consulting Moore et al. 2021 for fuel management activities to be implemented in previously burned high severity fire environments. Restoration that combined, mechanical, prescribed fire, and herbicide treatments were utilized and assessed in this paper. | Literature/science considered            | Thank you for providing the research citation to support activities in burned areas. Project activities under Alternatives 1 and 2, and to a lesser extent under Alternative 3 would include implementing mechanical, prescribed fire, and herbicide application in burned areas within the Project area.   |
| Suggested Treatment Methods (I7-4)     | Tree removal is not necessary prior to conducting prescribed fire.  | Comment considered but no changes needed | The EA does not make this claim. Thinning can increase the window of opportunity to use prescribed fire, however, it is known that tree removal is not required before prescribed fire can be used.   |
| Suggested Treatment Methods (I11-2)    | Recommends thinning one-third of trees.   | Comment considered but no changes needed | Comment is supportive of thinning forests to "about 1/3 of their current density". Alternative 1 should roughly approximate this approach in most areas.  |
| Suggested Treatment Methods (I14-2)    | Advocating for Removing dead and dying trees and forest debris.   | Comment considered but no changes needed | The proposed action includes the removal of biomass through mechanical/hand thinning and the use of prescribed fire.  |
| Suggested Treatment Methods (I32-7)    | Suggested Treatment Methods.  | Comment considered but no changes needed | Comments are opinion based and not backed up by any scientific reference. Hand thinning as the only course of treatment has proved to be empirically ineffective in many instances to achieve stand density goals that lead to desired fuels conditions after the application of prescribed fire. Hand thin only treatments also have a shorter period of effectiveness before retreatment is necessary increasing the need and cost of maintenance. Future climate scenarios suggest that without a significant reduction in trees per acre and stand density, we will not accomplish resilience and climate adaptation goals of the project with hand thinning alone.   |