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Comments: On behalf of Golden State Natural Resources, Inc. (GSNR), I write to offer GSNR's support for the proposed Region 5 Post Disturbance Hazardous Tree Management Project in the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5). GSNR is a nonprofit 501(c)(3), tax-exempt, forest resiliency company created in 2018 for the purposes of working to achieve forest resiliency and restoration on a large scale. GSNR includes dedicated partnerships of committed public and private entities with related expertise and resources as part of the solution in achieving forest resiliency. The GSNR project is committed to the vision of environmental and economic success for our forests, watersheds, wildlife, communities, and residents.

GSNR is an affiliate entity of Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) and Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA). RCRC is an association of thirty-seven rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of an elected supervisor from each member county. Golden State Finance Authority is a statewide California Joint Powers Authority. RCRC member counties contain most of California's forested lands, including more than 70 percent of the state's national forest lands. RCRC's member counties have been devastated not only by the direct impacts of catastrophic wildfires on national forest service lands, but by the lingering, long-term effects of that damage. RCRC's members have long been engaged with USFS Region 5 to help facilitate pre- and post-wildfire collaboration to advance the mitigation of impacts from high severity wildfires.

Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA) and Golden State Natural Resources (GSNR) have identified an opportunity that can help achieve desired environmental and economic outcomes. The intent is to facilitate the restoration of California's forests over time to a level that will assist public safety institutions, the US Forest Service, California Natural Resources Agency, and CalFire for more effective management of the health of California's forests with available resources.

In addition to forest restoration, watershed enhancement, and numerous environmental benefits, this opportunity is intended to help revitalize the wood products industry in California resulting in investment and employment in rural California and overall economic gain for the state.

GSNR recognizes the urgent need to mitigate the potential public safety impacts from hazard trees in previously burned areas on national forest lands and offers support for the proposed project. The project areas in the proposal are comprised almost exclusively of RCRC member counties and abut numerous communities that would benefit significantly from the mitigation activities enumerated in the scoping document. Not only would hazard tree felling, removal, and fuels reduction in the project areas mitigate the potential for future wildfires and public safety hazards from damaged trees, but the proposal is vital for the economic benefit of rural communities and could potentially enhance economic opportunities for biomass-related industries.

GSNR supports the Emergency Situation Determination waiving the pre-decisional objection process and all mechanisms available to the USFS to expedite the actions proposed in this project, any other proposals that accomplish similar objectives in achieving landscape scale treatment in California's national forests. Specifically, GSNR supports enabling expedient capture of salvaged timber, unmerchantable timber and biomass, and facilitating the accelerated reduction of fuel accumulation for commercial purposes.

GSNR also strongly encourages Region 5 to continue work collaboratively with the impacted counties and communities while implementing the project in each zone. It is imperative that Region 5 maintain open communication with residents, local fire experts and industry representatives who reside in the communities and

have intimate knowledge of the landscape and local needs.

GSNR appreciates your consideration of our comments on the Region 5 Post Disturbance Hazardous Tree Management Project. Please do not hesitate to contact me at gnorton@gsnrnet.org if you have any questions or would like to discuss further.