Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/7/2012 12:00:00 AM
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Title:
Comments: The Conservation Congress appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft EA for the Porcupine Project. Please incorporate them into the administrative record and consider them prior to decision-making.

First, we commend the Forest for deferring the units in the Porcupine LSR. That said we have numerous concerns regarding this project.

Range of Alternatives

There are three action alternatives that have virtually the same effects to all resource values regardless of which alternative is chosen. This is a violation of NEPA. We would also expect that despite the project not being in critical owl habitat or LSR, there is still owl habitat on the Matrix lands. At least one of the action alternatives should have analyzed an alternative that would not degrade owl habitat.

Cumulative Effects

The original decision was reversed by the RO because of deficiencies in the cumulative effects analysis. Unfortunately those deficiencies still exist. For example, the EA states that actions in the Porcupine LSR may be considered in a future proposal specific to the Porcupine LSR yet this foreseeable action, as well as the cumulative impact to owls, is not analyzed in the Porcupine project. We are also including several maps we had made of the SMMU documenting the FS timber sales, private THPs, and owl activity centers as of 2008. It is clear that owl habitat has been adversely modified, yet the cumulative effects analysis continues to discount impacts to owls.

Furthermore, a few past actions are listed with a total of 3,528 acres. In a different section of the EA, it states over the past 20 years there have been 15 projects in the Porcupine assessment area which have thinned or salvage logged 5,594 acres, clearcut 1,541 acres, and pile or broadcast burned 2,219 acres . None of these figures are broken down into N/R and foraging habitat. How much of that acreage was owl habitat? We know the Powder project involved owl habitat, as well as the Davis sale. The same is true of the foreseeable actions that total another 5,049 acres within the Porcupine assessment area. How much of that habitat is owl N/R and foraging habitat?

Cumulatively the EA states there have or will be 12,292 acres of timber treatments within the assessment area (in another place in the EA it states 9,914 acres). That is 25% of the assessment area. In order to fully analyze impacts to owls a breakdown of how much N/R and foraging habitat was or will be logged must be included in the analysis.

The myriad of contradictions in figures, as well as the lack of information regarding owl habitat makes the analysis incomplete.

The EA states that past actions such as timber harvest and fire suppression have had negative cumulative consequences, yet the Porcupine project proposes to do more logging and fire suppression. The Forest needs to provide a legitimate rationale for why doing more of the same will solve the current problem.

Purpose and Need

Like all of the timber sales on the SMMU, the Porcupine project is allegedly needed to prevent catastrophic fire and insect epidemics. However, the best available science was not utilized to demonstrate either was a risk. In fact, the Porcupine project does not even include an entomologist report in the administrative record. Second, the most recent fire information clearly shows that small trees present the greatest risk of wildfire. Research points to the value of larger trees to lesson fire severity. In their 2012 scientific publication Trends and causes of severity, size, and number of fires in northwestern California, USA, J.D. Miller et al find “the percentage of high-severity fire in conifer-dominated forests was generally higher in areas dominated by smaller-diameter trees than in areas with larger-diameter trees”.

Northern spotted owl

The EA claims that the shift in species composition from pine to cedar and fir increase the risk of loss of desirable late-successional stand components due to wildfire and density related mortality. First, the Forest has previously

argued that owls don't use pine habitat as previously thought. Second, cedar and fir provide good owl habitat when allowed to grow large and create closed canopies. The Forest can't have it both ways, claiming in one project that owls don't use pine so it can log pine, and in this project claiming cedar and fir don't provide desirable late-successional habitat so it can log those types.

The EA also states that only 1.8% of old growth late-successional habitat occurs in the 5th field Porcupine watershed. The NWFP states that "landscape areas where little late-successional forest persists should be managed to retain late-successional patches. This standard and guideline will be applied in 5th field watersheds (20 to 200 square miles) in which federal forest lands are currently comprised of 15% or less late-successional forest. This assessment should include all allocations in the watershed. Within such an area, all remaining late-successional stands should be protected. Protection of these stands could be modified in the future, when other portions of the watershed have recovered to the point where they could replace the ecological roles of these stands." While the Forest claims that 34% of capable land is providing some level of late-successional habitat in the watershed, the cutting of old large diameter trees prevents the forest from attaining adequate old growth habitat. The regeneration harvest of over-mature trees is particularly egregious in that it removes owl habitat and violates management recommendations cited below under "Marking of Trees."

The Porcupine project intends to cut several hundred acres of trees 150 years and older (up to 40" dbh). In fact, the EA refers to these trees as "old growth trees." The EA fails to include diameter limits or age classes in the EA, but it is clear these are large old trees with old growth characteristics likely providing adequate owl habitat. We request the Forest include age classes and diameter limits for all proposed treatment units in the final EA. Furthermore the stands with 150 year old trees are two of the four units that will have an owl LOP. We believe the Forest is violating the NWFP by logging these old growth trees in Matrix areas. Owls are using these areas and the NWFP designates particular management strategies for Matrix lands with owl habitat. The NWFP ROD chapter on management of Matrix lands has been entirely ignored in the development of the Porcupine project.

The Forest identified 905 acres (only 2%) of suitable habitat (14 acres of nesting/roosting and 891 acres of foraging) within the 50,289 acre assessment area. All three action alternatives will degrade 244 acres of owl foraging habitat from thinning and fuels work; about 8 acres of foraging habitat will be degraded by temporary road construction; and about 6 acres of foraging habitat will be removed during landing construction. We simply can't comprehend why the Forest insists on nickel and diming the last remaining owl habitat. The two stands that have trees 150 + years old should not be logged as they are approaching N/R conditions, as the EA concedes. Leaving these stands would add to the paltry amount of current N/R habitat and provide additional acreage for owl use. The EA states in unit 39-057 there is a need to maintain or enhance potential to develop NSO N/R habitat adjacent to identified N/R habitat, yet the prescription is to log the 150 year old trees and leave the younger trees. This is simply nonsense and does not follow the best available science. Furthermore, logging 27% of the suitable foraging habitat is significant considering the amount of foraging habitat that has been taken in the SMMU by other sales in the area. See attached maps which we incorporate into these comments.

The EA cites the 2011 recovery plan and cherry picks particular sections in an attempt to justify the project. The bottom line is nowhere does the recovery plan even alludes to logging 150+ year old trees being used by owls. The plan speaks to treating early seral habitat not old growth. Benefiting habitat in the long term will simply not occur by logging several hundred acres of 150+ year old trees. The Porcupine project is inconsistent with the 2011 Recovery Plan Recovery Action 32 that recommends "conserving and restoring older, multi-layered forests across the range of the spotted owl." Logging 150+ year old trees violate this recommendation. Just because the Forest deferred the units in the LSR does not mean it is acceptable to log old growth in the matrix areas that are "across the range of the owl." The 2011 Recovery Plan stresses restoration activities near spotted owl sites should focus on areas of younger forest that are less likely to be used by spotted owls and less likely to develop late-successional forest characteristics without vegetation management. This project does the opposite and will log old growth trees used by owls.

And we find it disingenuous for the forest to brag about not logging any N/R habitat – that's an easy claim to make when there are only 14 acres left in the project area.

The EA also states it is relying on the 2008 critical habitat designation yet the BA states it is using the 1992 designation.

For all action alternatives, direct and indirect effects to NSO are evaluated at the treatment unit and assessment

area scale, with more emphasis on suitable and capable NSO habitat. No rational is provided for emphasizing suitable and capable habitat that owls won't preferentially use rather than the actual habitat they are using. This is arbitrary and capricious and smells of an effort to disguise the true impacts to foraging, N/R habitat that is actually being used. To compound the problem further the action area for the owl is 88,657 acres and in that area there are only 42 acres of N/R habitat which is ½ of 1%. There are 3,153 acres of foraging habitat which is 4% of the action area for owl. The Porcupine project proposes to log 27% of the remaining 4% of available owl foraging habitat. We disagree with the determination of MANLAA especially in light of the claim that foraging habitat would continue to function until it develops into N/R habitat or until such time as other management actions occur.

The numbers above were taken directly from the EA that also states 84% of foraging habitat would remain unaffected by treatments. This is impossible in the project area, assessment area, or owl action area based on the figures above.

The EA states the environmental baseline is assumed to include past actions. The STNF needs to disclose quantitatively how it has determined the baseline. In some environmental documents it states the baseline has been calculated since 2003; in others it states the past 15 years; in others it states the past 20 years.

We request a copy of the environmental baseline for the NSO on the SMMU be included in the final EA for this project. It should document every timber sale as well as other activities that have impacted owl habitat since the issuance of the NWFP; how much foraging, N/R habitat existed at that time and how much exists now. Each activity that impacts owl habitat must be deducted from the habitat. We do not believe the STNF has a valid environmental baseline. We also note the 'modified' baseline drops a significant portion of the northwest portion of the project area as foraging habitat, and conveniently proposes logging in all of the dropped areas.

The EA also states there is only one known NSO activity center and home range in the action area. The map we are including shows two (CalFire 2008). Regardless owls are clearly using the area as evidenced by the acknowledged AC as well as survey results documenting owls in the area.

All action alternatives treat the same suitable and capable habitat with the same thinning prescriptions. This is yet another example of an invalid range of alternatives. The project proposes to thin 244 acres of suitable habitat and 310 acres of capable habitat. The 244 acres represent 27% of available foraging habitat in the assessment area (50,289 acres). This means there is less than 1,000 acres of available foraging habitat in the entire assessment area. It is clear that owl habitat has been adversely modified in the past and no further logging of owl habitat should occur in this assessment area. The EA states the basal area will not be reduced below levels consistent with maintaining foraging habitat but fails to quantitatively define it. In previous documents the Forest has brought the basal area down to densities ranging from 100 ft2/ac basal area in Ponderosa Pine stands, to 175 ft2/ac in mixed-conifer stands. The 1992 Technical Assessment for the California Spotted Owl (USFS GTR-PSW-133) recommends retaining 180-220 square feet per acre of live trees and 15-30 square feet per acre of snags to benefit foraging California spotted owls (retention standards are higher for nesting and roosting habitat). The actual basal area must be disclosed in the final EA.

The EA states canopy cover won't be reduced below 40% and is expected to return to current levels in 20 to 30 years, but fails to state what the current canopy closure percentage is now. This EA is not disclosing enough information to substantively ascertain how much habitat is actually being removed. These omissions must be included in the final EA.

The EA states prey species will be disrupted during thinning operations but it will be temporary and effects are expected to be of short-duration? Why? The EA must articulate the rationale for the predictions it makes. Impacts to prey species should be considered a direct impact to owls. In addition, fuel treatments, slashing, burning, and machine piling area also expected to disrupt prey species. Admissions are made that prey species will decrease for the first 3 to 5 years post-treatment, and the project is estimated to last 5 years so in effect prey species will be disrupted or decreased for 8 to 10 years. This is a significant impact to owls that was not substantively addressed. The Forest's position is that prey species can go to other areas. This predicted action is not substantiated nor does it take into account whether the owls could follow.

The EA states the primary purpose of previously completed projects and future actions on NFS is to decrease stocking in plantations; increase stand resilience to disease, insects, drought and fire; reduce wildfire risk; and improve safety along roadways. Despite failing at the majority of these goals, we note there is no mention to

provide wildlife habitat or work towards recovery of the owl. This is a clear violation of the NWFP and the ESA.
The FWS informal consultation occurred in 2007 and is outdated. In addition, the revised preferred action alternative is not even analyzed in the BA therefore none of the figures pertaining to habitat are accurate. Furthermore, the standard and guidelines applicable across all management allocations as they relate to northern spotted owl are being violated with this project. The Matrix S&Gs applicable to resident wildlife are also being violated.
The EA states no barred owls are known in the project area but fails to state if and when they were surveyed for.
Sensitive Wildlife
Habitat in the assessment area was assessed using definitions from the Forest Plan Habitat Capability Models and existing vegetation data (2000). We are confused by this statement since the Forest claimed to have actually conducted site visits to assess owl habitat, which is basically the same habitat used by sensitive species.
Goshawk: one known territory; of the 11,898 acres of available habitat - 3,377 acres degraded; 91 acres downgraded; 33 acres removed; 30% of suitable habitat affected. Distribution of prey is expected. 125 acres of nesting/foraging habitat would be degraded under all alternatives by reducing canopy cover to 40 percent or below (200 acres of 150+ old trees). There are no measurable differences between action alternatives in terms of affecting suitable NGO habitat. Determination: may affect individual northern goshawks but would not cause a trend towards federal listing. No empirical data is provided for this determination which is based solely on opinion.
Pacific fisher: no current surveys but previous survey efforts occurred in the management unit that has detected fisher; best habitat is the 200 acres of 150+ old trees slated to be logged. Determination: implementing any of the action alternatives may affect individual fishers but would not cause a trend toward federal listing, by increasing priority listing. The FWS has already determined the fisher is warranted for listing under the ESA but precluded by higher priorities at this time. The STNF should not take this determination for carte blanche to continue degrading fisher habitat and use it as an excuse to not work towards recovery. The fisher is also a listed species in the state of CA and the FS is obligated to protect it.
American marten: 13,500 acres of suitable habitat in assessment area. 3,830 acres degraded; 72 acres downgraded; 33 acres removed; 29% of suitable habitat affected. Best habitat is the 200 acres of 150+ old trees slated to be logged. Risk exists for a resting or denning marten to be killed during logging operations; project activities may occur during breeding or kit rearing periods which may cause failed reproduction; reducing number of snags and CWD may affect prey species and foraging opportunities; prey will likely decrease for 8 to 10 years. Determination: implementing any action alternative may affect individual marten but would not cause a trend towards federal listing or a loss of viability.
Bats: moderate probability of snags that may be used as roosting sites being felled during operations; potential roost sites exist; available habitat increases the probability of disturbance at roost sites and potential mortality; project will remove roosting sites; may be affected by smoke. Determination: all action alternatives may have a short-term, negative cumulative effect on both bat species. These effects are not considered significant.
The NWFP provides management direction for sensitive species in Matrix lands. Again, this management direction appears to have been completely ignored in the development of the Porcupine project. There are additional protection measures for caves, mines, and bridges that are used as roost site for bats.
The LRMP and Forest Service Handbook also provide management direction for sensitive species to protect them so up-listing to threatened status will not occur. Project by project on the SMMU the FS ignores this direction; degrades habitat; and may actually be killing species.
Wildlife - General
The EA relied on aerial photos, photo series handbooks, ocular estimation, etc. for a range of resource values. The Forest must actually ground-truth proposed timber sale areas and conduct actual population monitoring for species.
In Northern Plains Resource Council, Inc. v. Surface Transp. Bd, 668 F.3d 1067 (9th Cir. 2011) (issued in late December 2011), this Court stated: Here, the Board purported to use aerial photographs and surveys to identify habitats and populations of fish, plants, and other wildlife. The Board fails to cite to any explanation in the record of what reliable methodology allowed it to determine the population of fish in rivers or identify sensitive plant species from these aerial surveys. We do not conclude that an agency cannot rely on aerial surveys in certain

situations for studying habitats and populations. However, in this case, we find it inherently illogical to credit the evidence the Board has submitted to support its conclusion that the aerial surveys conducted were sufficient to establish the habitat and population for the numerous plants and wildlife potentially at risk. 668 F.3d at 1086.

Roads and Landings

We request more information on the age and diameter of any “hazard trees” that may be removed for this project. What is the cost for maintaining 101 miles of road for this project?

The EA states 6 miles of temporary road within harvest units would be needed. Is this each unit? The EA concedes that landings and a network of skid trails would be created if necessary in every harvest unit. Soil disturbance can't exceed 15% and due to the 2006 and 2009 discrepancy we are not assured regional soil standards will be met.

About 132 landings will be required for the project causing 65 acres of forest to be removed. Has the forest ever documented the amount of lost forest due to landings and road construction in the SMMU? Please disclose this information. The EA states locations for landings and temporary roads have not been identified, yet approximately 6 acres of NSO foraging habitat may be removed for landings and up to eight acres of NSO foraging habitat could be affected by new construction of temporary roads under all action alternatives. The Forest considers the removal of 14 acres of owl habitat to be insignificant. Considering how little NSO foraging habitat exists, it IS significant. Project by project the forest claims landings and roads don’t constitute a significant removal of habitat. Within the SMMU it is likely that thousands of acres of owl habitat have been removed due to these activities and the Forest is likely not including these impacts in the environmental baseline.

After road closures the open road density will be 2.15 miles per square mile. Open road densities that exceed 1 mile per square mile are known to have detrimental impacts to virtually all wildlife species, yet the EA is silent on this issue.

The Forest is also adding 2 miles of unauthorized routes to the system thereby decreasing the value of decommissioning 3 miles of road. The EA is also silent on the issue of how these 2 miles of road will be maintained. The Forest has a back log of road maintenance due to lack of funding so it is arbitrary and capricious to be adding roads to the system.

The assessment area has approximately 195 miles of road (155 classified and 40 classified. The Powder Hill Road forms the western project boundary. We commented on, appealed and litigated the Powder the sale. Part of the mitigation for wildlife in that sale was to close 33 miles of road. To date those roads have never been closed. Will any of those 33 miles of road be used in the Porcupine project? We request this information be disclosed in the final EA.

Marking of Trees

The EA states that spacing is not as important as leaving the largest/best trees available, yet also states co-dominant and dominant trees will be removed. There is also a reference to meeting ASQ targets yet the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has held the Forest Service is not required to meet its timber target or any other numerical estimation of outputs. See City of Tenakee Springs v. Block 778 F.2d 1402, 1406, 1410 (9th Cir. 1986). We see no reason to log co-dominant and dominant trees, particularly considering climate change, other than for commercial value.

In their recommendations for managing biologically diverse and regenerating landscapes, a group of ecological and natural resources scientists recommend that the following minimum ecological standards, adopted from post-disturbance (beetle outbreaks and/or wildfire) scientific research, should be employed to reduce damages from logging when forests are most vulnerable: intervene only in ways that promote natural recovery;

•retain all large (mature and old) legacy trees, whether live, dead, dying, damaged (i.e., crown scorch), standing or downed;

•of the remaining standing dead trees, retain at least 50% in all tree size classes;

•retain all live trees regardless of age or size within disturbance perimeters;

•prohibit logging on unstable slopes, severely burned soils, and other sensitive areas;

•because soils are irreplaceable in human life times, post-fire management practices that compact soils, reduce

soil productivity, or accelerate erosion should not be allowed;
•prohibit logging within riparian buffers, critical watersheds for salmonids and other sensitive aquatic species, late successional reserves, and remaining roadless areas; and
•avoid creating new roads and landings in the burned landscape.
http://www.bioone.org/doi/full/10.3375/043.032.0108

Wildfire Risk

As previously cited, Miller et al found the percentage of high-severity fire in conifer dominated forests (in northwestern CA) was generally higher in areas dominated by smaller-diameter trees than in areas with large diameter trees. Their results suggest that wildfires could be more extensively used to achieve ecological and management objectives in northwestern CA. The EA states a large wildfire has not occurred in the area for 30 years suggesting that fire risk may actually be low, or if a fire does start as cited above could provide ecological benefits. In addition, 93% of the watershed has previously burned yet the forest claims the area is outside its historical fire regime primarily due to fire exclusion and that 81% of the watershed has a moderate to high potential for catastrophic fire. These contradictions require further elaboration in the final EA. NSO have shown a preference for foraging in burned areas (Bond 2009). The EA is incomplete in that it has failed to consider the best available science.

The project also will remove shade tolerant species such as white fir and incense cedar and focus on leaving pine as the preferred species. If the Forest is concerned about wildfire it should be fostering the development of shade tolerant species that are better equipped to deal with fire, rather than fostering the species most at risk of burning.

The fire fuel model used is from 1982 – 30 years ago. The EA states “given the uncertainty of any modeling exercise, the results are best used to compare the relative effects of the alternatives, rather than as an indicator of effects. Interpretation, professional judgment, and local knowledge of fire behavior were used to evaluate the outputs from the models and adjustments made as necessary to refine the predictions.” Considering the major premise of this project is to prevent a wildfire, this is not the best available science on the subject. In fact, it is opinion and supposition.

Resource Protection Measures

For numerous resources the mitigation states an agency person would be notified if TES species are discovered prior to or during project implementation. Is the FS relying on the timber operator having the capability to identify TES species? This would seem to be arbitrary and capricious as loggers likely can’t identify TES plants or animals. Will a timber administrator or ‘ologist’ be on site at all times to determine if TES species are present? Please clarify in the final EA.

Sporax

One pound of Sporax per acre would be applied in thinning prescriptions and up to 2 pounds in regeneration stands. This equals between 3,761 pounds for thinning and up to 166 pounds for regeneration for a total of up to 3927 pounds of Sporax. The EA states the probability of environmental problems is low with literally no analysis. Applying almost 4,00 pounds of pesticide in an area with owls, their prey, goshawk, marten and bats, as well as other wildlife requires a due diligence analysis to ensure impacts will not occur.

In addition, new research out of British Columbia states snags continue to transfer legacy nutrients through their communications network (fungi) after the tree has died. Applying Sporax to stumps will kill the fungi in the soil and destroy the tree communication system.

Hydrology

The EA states the ERA disturbance factors for the assessment area were developed using the coefficients described by Haskins (1986) and coefficients developed on surrounding forests. The Haskins technique is 26 years old; and we question why “surrounding forests’ were used rather than the Shasta-Trinity NF itself?

The EA states cumulative effects are discussed qualitatively at the project and watershed scale in the context of ACS. The field of hydrology requires and environmental baseline and quantitative data in order to determine impacts. Discussing effects qualitatively does not ensure any level of meaningful certainty impacts won’t occur, and fails to utilize the best available science. The EA also states the analysis relies heavily on existing (core) data layers stored in GIS and maintained through several databases. Some discrepancies may exist between spatial information in the databases and actual ground conditions. Several problems exist: first, what year are the

GIS layers, and second “some discrepancies” is not defined. For all we know the forest could be suing 30 year old data with many discrepancies.
Road 40N12X is scheduled for decommissioning after the project due to intermittent stream flow within the road prism. The same problem exists to a lesser degree with road 41N25 yet it is not recommended for decommissioning although it is causing resource problems. This is arbitrary and capricious and this road should be decommissioned. The FS provides no rationale for keeping it open.
Soils
Field surveys were conducted in 2006 with a follow-up in 2009. Additional qualitative visits were conducted in 2011. Please define what is involved in a 'qualitative' site visit. The EA states the people who conducted the 2009 surveys disagreed with the findings of the 2006 surveys regarding CWD, equipment operation on slopes exceeding 35% and operational limits on wet soils. In addition, the 2006 surveys documented 20 to 52% disturbance and the 2009 surveys found 0 to 9%. No rational is provided for this huge discrepancy. The 2009 surveys are below the 15% threshold for disturbance while the 2006 are in complete violation of regional soil standards. This discrepancy must be vetted and documented in the final EA. In addition the Porcupine project will cause slight to extensive levels of compaction. We request the 2006 information and 2009 information be placed in table format for comparison in the final EA so the public has the opportunity to review the disagreements and the rational provided for the 2009 changes.
CWD may be unrepresented in 25 units. This is an LRMP violation. The EA states that unmerchantable material, green trees and/or snags would be left where feasible. This issue requires far more analysis than the lip service provided in the EA. An LRMP violation is also a violation of the NFMA and the current status of the area is in violation of the LRMP. We object to cutting green trees and snag – both of which provide habitat – to meet CWD requirements.
The EA concedes that reduction in cover would be most severe in GTR units; 50% of cover of litter and duff would be retained with a minimum of 15% overstory. There is a standard to maintain 85% undisturbed organic matter content. How does retaining 50% cover of litter and duff meet the 85% undisturbed organic matter content?
Similarly, the EA states there are no activity units which currently exceed soil quality standard threshold of 15%, yet soil disturbance in a unit may exceed 50%. The EA states this is not a violation. Please clarify in the final EA as it appears to be a blatant violation of standards to us. This problem is compounded by the concession that units that have multiple entries by equipment have the potential for higher compaction. Footnote 11 is missing from the draft EA and must be included in the final EA. This important citation states standards are currently being met.
Cumulatively, the EA states there are no foreseeable actions within the treatment units but the EA also states some units overlap other proposed projects. This discrepancy must be clarified.
Geology
The Porcupine project includes a non-significant forest plan amendment to refine the SIA boundary where it is adjacent to project activities. The forest claims the current boundary is incorrect and as mapped a treatment unit would encroach on the SIA. For such an amendment to occur the Forest should ground-truth the area and consult with historical maps. Instead the STNF relied on USGS 2010 mapping, a master’s thesis from 1973, and TNF cave resource files. This is not using the best available science to warrant a LRMP amendment.
Cultural Resources
The EA states the FS will monitor prehistoric sites where underburning is planned, after the underburn is completed and therefore there would be no adverse effects to cultural resources. This statement is illogical. The forest can't predict that underburning won't harm prehistoric sites by monitoring after the burning has been implemented.
Visual Quality
The VQO for the Powder Hill Road calls for Partial Retention in the foreground. The forest 'interpreted' the VQO of partial retention for the proposed treatments for the existing condition. The short term versus long term for direct, indirect and cumulative effects are based upon professional experience. The EA states there are no known references for what constitutes time frames for scenery. The scenery analysis identifies short term as zero to five years pot treatment and claims VQO won't be violated. This determination is arbitrary and capricious

considering for all other resource values the short term is identified as up to 20 years. The EA also absurdly states that visual quality would be improved and more balanced if both sides of the road are treated. This is simply an attempt to hide the degradation from the project on one side of the road. The forest also can't meet the VQO for the GTR unit so proposes to leave a 'beauty strip' to fool the public.

Economics

The Porcupine project is yet another below-cost timber sale subsidized by tax payer dollars. PNV is the standard criterion for deciding whether a project is economically justifiable. The EA states PNV provides a better measure of the overall level of benefits and costs as it reports the differences between benefits and costs at the aggregate level, rather than just a ratio of the two (Benefit-Cost ratio). The PNV for the Porcupine project is negative $2,080.62; therefore the costs outweigh any potential benefits. All three action alternatives have a negative PNV. It makes no sense to propose this project when the EA states that natural resource based industries are NOT a major contributor to employment. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting account for only 6.6% and 1.8% of total jobs in Siskiyou and Shasta counties respectively. This project can't be justified by any economical measure.

MIS

The EA fails to include any analysis for MIS stating a report is in the project record. NEPA requires full disclosure in an EA and that the information is made available for public input. The EA simply states three small birds were selected and there is enough habitat available on the forest to prevent any impacts. This disclosure is not compliant with NEPA and must be remedied in the final.

Survey & Manage Species

For all S&M species (wildlife, mollusks, botanical, fungi, and vascular plants) the EA simply states reports are in the project record. This is a violation of NEPA. Furthermore, for S&M fungi, the EA states surveys are not required because old growth habitat would not be disturbed. The EA consistently refers to the 150+ year old trees slated for harvest as “old growth.” These stands must be surveyed for fungi. Ironically, the portion of the EA regarding ethno botanical resources states edible fungi species may be the most important species in the assessment area, demonstrating fungi are known to be in the assessment area. Furthermore botanical surveys were conducted five and six years ago. These surveys must be updated prior to any disturbance.

Seral Stage Diversity

The EA states the Porcupine watershed is below minimum requirements for 4c – large tree, older, greater than 40% canopy cover, yet the Porcupine project proposes to log several hundred acres of 150+ year old trees. The watershed is also below minimum requirements for large trees with less than 40% canopy cover and large trees with greater than 40% canopy cover. The Porcupine project will decrease the large tree size classes. It claims by only 19 acres due to the GTR unit yet fails to account for the 200 acres of 150+ year old trees.

In addition, the EA claims the 15% standard for late-successional habitat is being met in the watershed yet Table 47 demonstrates otherwise. There is only 1.1% large tree and 3.3% older large tree. And the Porcupine project intends to take 200 hundred acres of this paltry amount further degrading the old forest habitat in the watershed.

ASQ

The draft EA mentions this project helps to meet the Forest’s ASQ. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has held the Forest Service is not required to meet its timber target or any other numerical estimation of outputs. See City of Tenakee Springs v. Block 778 F.2d 1402, 1406, 1410 (9th Cir. 1986).

Conclusion

Please keep us on the mailing list for this project and send any final decisions to us immediately upon release. We reserve the right to raise new issues and more information becomes available.