USDA United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Eldorado National Forest | 100 Forni Road
Placerville, CA 95667
(530) 622-5061 (Voice)
(530) 642-5122 (TTY)

File Code: 1950
Date: March 7, 2013

Dear Interested Citizen:

You are receiving this scoping notice either because you may have expressed a specific interest in this project; because you have expressed an interest in similar projects in the past, or because the Forest Service believes you may be directly or indirectly affected by this project.

Scoping is the procedure used by the Forest Service to identify important issues and to determine the extent of analysis necessary for an informed decision on a proposed action. Scoping is a part of our environmental analysis process.

This scoping notice is intended to inform you about the proposed Trestle Forest Health Project in order for you to give us your comments, issues, concerns or recommendations about our proposal. If you have information you feel the Forest Service may not be aware of, or you feel you have issues (points of dispute, debate, or disagreement) regarding potential effects of the Proposed Action,

The descriptions of the Proposed Action, and Purpose and Need for Action developed by my interdisciplinary team are enclosed. If you have any questions about this proposal or would like more information, please contact Tim Howard at (530) 647-5382 or thoward@fs.fed.us.

At this time, a decision has not been made regarding this project. The opportunity to comment ends 30 days following the date of publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register. Comments may be submitted to Placerville Ranger District, 4260 Eight Mile Road, Camino, CA 95709. Attention: Trestle Forest Health Project. Comments may also be received via e-mail to comments-pacificsouthwest-eldorado-placerville@fs.fed.us, or via facsimile to (530) 647-5311. Comments must be received by April 8, 2013.

Sincerely,

KATHRYN D. HARDY
Forest Supervisor

Enclosures: Proposed Action, and Purpose and Need. Project Vicinity Map

INTRODUCTION

The Placerville Ranger District on the Eldorado National Forest proposes to implement activities to reduce fuel loads and fire hazards, improve forest health, improve wildlife habitat, watershed condition, and restore more sustainable forest conditions in the Trestle Forest Health project area, while considering effects on other resources and activities. Management actions would commence in 2014 and be completed by 2020. Proposed activities would include: commercial and pre-commercial thinning of mixed conifer natural stands and plantations; road reconstruction; hardwood enhancement; hazard tree removal adjacent to system roads and dispersed camping areas; removing impediments to terrestrial wildlife, mastication of woody fuels; watershed restoration activities; decommissioning and closing roads and trails; and, prescribed understory burning.

The Trestle project area is located east of the community of Grizzly Flat, including the area surrounding Leoni Meadows, west of Caldor, and north of Big Mountain. The gross area of the project is 20,452 acres. This total includes 1,325 acres of other ownership. The project is located entirely in El Dorado County, California in T.8N., R.13 E., in all or portions of Sections 1and 2; T.8N., R.14 E., in all or portions of Sections 4-6; T.9N., R.13E., in portions of Section 1-3, 11-16, 19-30, 33-36; T.9N., R.14E., in all or portions of Sections 5-10, 14-22, 28-33; and T.10 N, R.13E., in all or portions of Sections 35 and 36; M.D.B & M. The area is accessed from Grizzly Flat using the Capps Crossing Road (9N30) or the North South Road (10N83). Elevations range from 3,200 feet on the west side of the project area to 5,800 feet on east side of the project area. Refer to the attached project area location map.

The reader is referred to the Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP, 1989) and the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA, 2004) for an overview description of the Eldorado National Forest.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The purpose of the proposed management actions in the Trestle project area is to modify the forest vegetation in order to put it on a trajectory toward the desired conditions for: 1) reduced tree density; 2) sustained old forest conditions; 3) enhanced wildlife habitat; 4) reduced wildfire risk; 5) improved long-term scenic sustainability; increased recreational opportunities; 6) enhanced riparian conservation areas; and, 7) maximized revenue derived from commercial products to perform essential and costly biomass removal, and to support the retention of local industrial infrastructure.

This action is needed to: 1) improve the forest health across the Trestle project area; 2) reduce the fuel loading to reduce the threat of large high intensity wildfire and threats to Grizzly Flat, Leoni Meadows, and other landowners; 3) maintain and enhance the existing hardwood and late seral conifer component; 4) maintain and enhance scenic integrity and recreation opportunities; 5) treat hazardous fuels in a cost-effective manner to optimize treatment acres under a limited budget while fulfilling the role the Forest Service has in providing a wood supply for local manufacturers; 6) provide a maintainable level of forest access while closing unneeded roads and motorized trails to enhance wildlife habitat and reduce wildlife harassment; 7) enhance and maintain strategically placed area fuels treatments (SPLATS[3]) designed to slow the spread of wildfire; Enhance watershed conditions; Remove impediments

to deer/wildlife movement; and, 8) improve winter range for the Grizzly Flat deer herd through: reducing disturbance; improving forage to enhance winter survival, particularly that of pregnant does and fawns; providing thermal and security cover; and, utilizing updated deer management plan guidance.

These actions respond to the desired conditions, management intent, and management objective by land allocation outlined in the SNFPA ROD as displayed in Tables 1 and 2 on pages 6 and 7.

The specific desired conditions for the project area include: 1) the project area contains the level of vegetative, composition, and structural diversity associated with vigorous and healthy stands commensurate with the site's potential; 2) timber and other forest products are provided at a sustainable level that contributes to the stability of local and regional economies; 3) the project area has minimal amounts of noxious weeds; 4) protect, increase, and perpetuate desired conditions of old forest ecosystems and conserve species associated with these ecosystems while meeting people's needs for commodities and outdoor recreation activities; 5) increase the frequency of large trees, increase structural diversity of vegetation, and improve the continuity and distribution of old forests across the landscape; 6) snags and down logs, and recruitment trees are well distributed across the project area in sufficient quantity and quality to support species dependent upon these habitats; 7) the project area has a low level of disease and damaging insect populations; 8) aggregations of oaks and other hardwoods are present and in good health; 9) cultural resources are preserved and protected to retain a high degree of integrity and management objectives are compatible with tribal interests; 10) improve habitats through expanding knowledge of species requirements, development of habitat quality and diversity, and the identification and protection of key habitats; 11) the project area has a transportation system providing administrative and public access while maintaining open road densities at a level commensurate with the Eldorado National Forest Public Wheeled Motorized Travel Management Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (TMP – ROD); 12) the project area is managed to meet visual quality objectives; 13) the watersheds would have vegetation cover types that provide for proper hydrologic function, nutrient cycling, energy flow, and soil stability; and 13) accelerated soil erosion by human-related activities would be minimal while maintaining and enhancing soil productivity.

The difference between the existing and desired conditions (Table 1-1) defines the need for change - i.e., the need to treat the existing condition to create, or place it on a trajectory toward, the desired condition. Proposed actions in the Trestle project area address the aforementioned need for change.

In meeting the purpose and need for this project, certain standards and guidelines for treatment activities and resource protection would be adhered to during project implementation. These standards and guidelines are described in the LRMP as amended by the SNFPA. Proposed management actions listed below would incorporate concepts described in "*An Ecosystem Management Strategy for Sierran Mixed-Conifer Forests*", PSW-GTR-220, North et al, 2009 and "*Managing Sierra Nevada Forests*", PSW-GTR-237, North et al, 2012.

PROPOSED ACTION

1) Conduct prescribed understory burning on approximately 15,287 acres. Activities would include construction of firelines by hand or tractor, and hand cutting ladder fuels (trees less than 8.9 inches dbh) around large old growth conifers, and oak trees. Fire line construction would follow established guidelines for waterbar construction as outlined in the Best Management Practices. Upon completion of prescribed burning activities, the visible character of the firelines would be hidden by spreading woody debris where they intersect existing roads and trails to limit unauthorized vehicle use.
2) Hand cut understory vegetation (trees less than 8.9 inches dbh), pile and burn the piles approximately 1,196 acres within 300 feet of private property boundaries in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) defense zones and within the threat and defense zones of the Steely Fork Cosumnes River drainage south of the community of Grizzly Flat. Hand treatments would still occur if mechanical treatment units are dropped from implementation. In areas of low fire hazard hand treatments would incorporate patch retention concepts described in PSW-GTR-220 and PSW-GTR-237.
3) Within the project area, conduct danger tree removal adjacent to system roads and motorized trails open to the public, including landings, dispersed camping areas, and within treatment units, for public, woods workers, and Forest Service employee safety. Dead and unstable live trees that do not present a hazard would be retained.
4) Maintain and recruit snags (trees greater than16 inches dbh) and down logs (16 inches in diameter and 10 feet long) by leaving pre-existing individual snags and logs. Tree killed by prescribed understory burning activities, unless they pose a danger to the public, woods workers, and Forest Service employees would also be left standing or felled to create down logs.
5) Evaluate qualifying cultural resources located within the project area using the California Archaeological Resource Identification and Data Acquisition Program, as adapted for north-central Sierra Nevada Forests, to determine eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.
6) Enhance and maintain montane hardwood ecosystems dominated by California black oak, canyon live oak by removing competing conifers (less than 29.9 inches dbh) from the understory and within 30 feet of the perimeter of existing oak trees and/or groups of oaks.
7) Enhance and restore watershed conditions by physically closing approximately 53 miles of system roads and 4 miles of motorized trails previously determined to not be open to the public in accordance with the TMP-ROD. Closure would be accomplished by employing barricades or gates. These roads would continue to be used for FS administrative traffic for follow-up prescribed burning and other activities.
8) Enhance and restore watershed conditions by physically decommissioning approximately 5 miles of non-system roads and trails previously determined to not be open in accordance with the TMP-ROD. Decommissioning would be accomplished through obliteration, ripping, or hiding with woody debris.
9) Use a combination of ground based and skyline logging systems to conduct commercial thinning (10-29.9 inches dbh) on approximately 4,653 acres (274 acres of skyline in natural stand. 4,237 acres of ground based in natural stands. 255 acres in plantations). Ground-based mechanized equipment (low-impact feller-buncher, hand felling, and conventional skidding equipment) would be restricted to slopes generally less than 40%. Where necessary during initial harvest, small trees and brush (4-9.9 inches dbh) would be mechanically thinned to facilitate sawtimber and biomass removal. Skyline would be

restricted to slopes generally over 40%. Of the 4,653 acres, 728 acres is located within WUI defense zones and 3,706 acres in WUI threat zones.

10) Conduct pre-commercial thinning (trees less than 10 inches dbh) and mastication of competing brush on 201 acres of conifer plantations, of which, 19 acres located in California spotted owl Protected Activity Centers (PACs) and 182 acres located outside of PACs. Of the 201 acres, 20 acres is located within the WUI defense zones and 135 acres in WUI threat zones.
11) Restore watershed conditions, facilitate treatment activities, and repair erosion problems, reconstruct approximately 73 miles of system roads and maintenance of 30 miles of system roads. Reconstruction activities would involve the repair or replacement inadequate drainage culverts, elimination of ruts, ditch repair, installation of waterbars and dips with inadequate water runoff control, gate installation to control seasonal use or replacement of existing non-functional gates or barricades, and removal of brush and small trees encroaching on roads.
12) Perform follow-up machine piling, and cutting small trees and brush (trees 1-3.9 inches dbh) with follow-up pile burning on about 2,000 acres in natural stands to reduce ground fuels and ladder fuels. Machine piling would occur only on slopes less than 40%. Piling locations will be determined after harvest activities are complete.
13) Reuse about 3 miles of existing temporary roads. After the temporary roads have served their use, they would be barricaded, obliterated and ripped to alleviate soil compaction, restore infiltration, and discourage unauthorized motor vehicle use.
14) Approximately 70 existing landings and any new landings constructed in this project would be ripped to minimize erosion problems, restore infiltration, and discourage unauthorized motor vehicle use.
15) Remove approximately 26 miles of barbed wire fencing, primarily from the vacant Caldor and Steely Creek Range Allotments to: remove wildlife movement barriers, particularly for large game species; eliminate wildlife entanglement; and, remove barriers and improve safety for human access for recreational use, fire suppression, and management activities. Materials that can be salvaged will be incorporated into future projects on the Forest and the remainder will be recycled.
16) Reduce disturbance to the Grizzly Flat deer herd during the winter season. Disturbance will be reduced or removed through limited operating periods and road closures for roads needed for future or seasonal access.
17) Prescribed fire and hand thinning will be used to improve habitat quality for Pleasant Valley Mariposa lily populations that have been impacted by growth of competing vegetation.
18) Boulders will be placed to protect the Pleasant Valley Mariposa lily occurrence along Big Mountain Road from vehicle traffic.
19) Rehabilitate several dispersed camping areas and associated spur roads adjacent to Dogtown Creek and the Steely Fork Consumnes River. Rehabilitation activities would be specific to each area in order to best reduce the erosion of sediment from the camping areas into the adjacent to the creek and stream. Activities would include, but not limited to, one or more of the following: placement of boulders to define the foot print of the camping areas and close unnecessary spur roads; ripping of compacted areas and spur roads; construction of waterbars and/or other runoff control structures; placement of organic material on the ground surface of denuded areas, and planting of native vegetation.

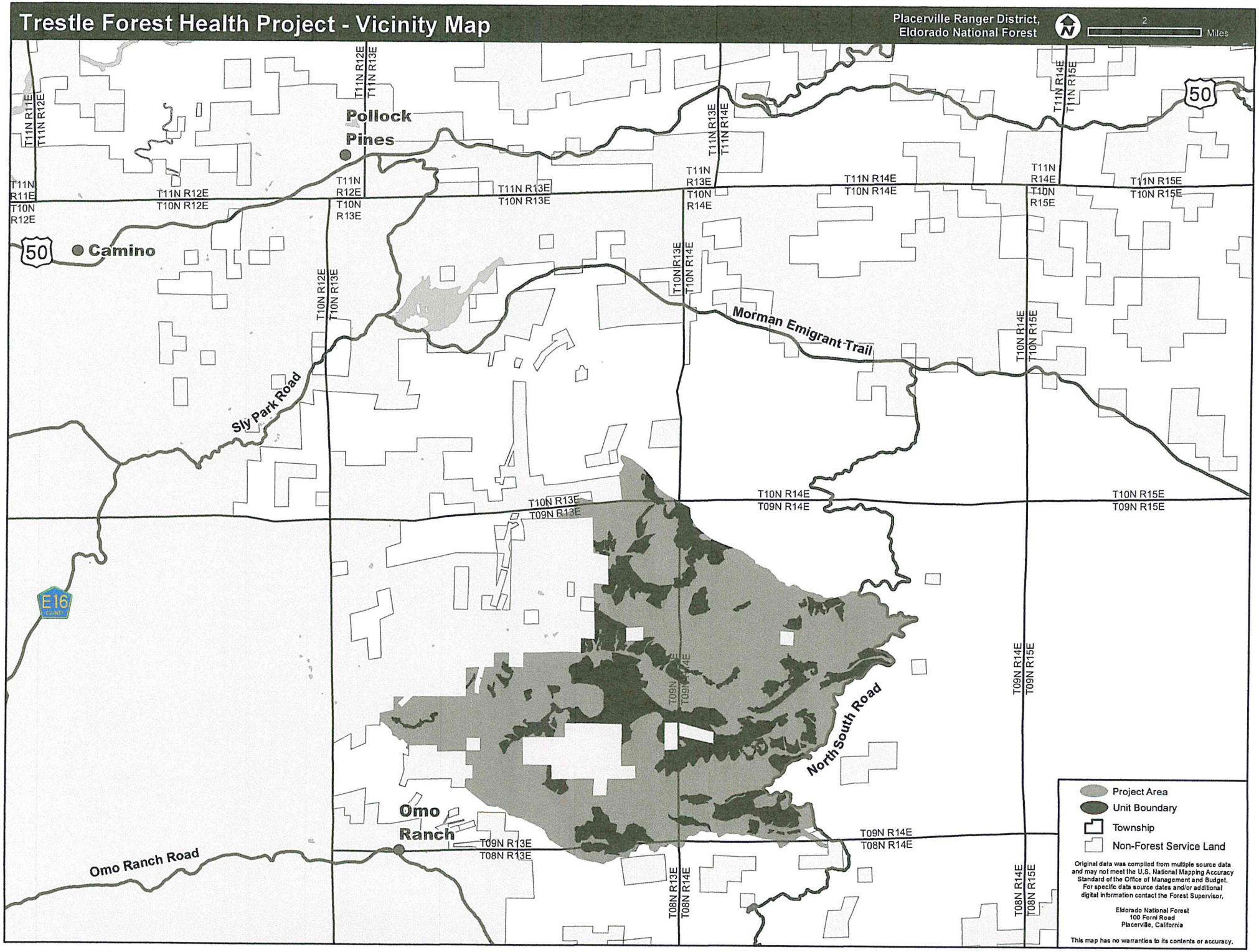
Table 1-1. Desired Future Conditions By Land Allocation For Lands Proposed For Treatment			
Land Allocation	**Desired Conditions**	**Management Intent**	**Management Objectives**
WUI *Defense Zones*	Stands are fairly open and dominated primarily by larger, fire tolerant trees. Surface and ladder fuel conditions are such that crown fire ignition is highly unlikely. The openness and discontinuity of crown fuels, both horizontally and vertically, result in very low probability of sustained crown fire.	Protect communities from wildfire and prevent the loss of life and property. WUI defense zones have highest priority for treatment (along with threat zones). The highest density and intensity of treatments are located within the WUI.	Create defensible space near communities, and provide a safe and effective area for suppressing fire. Design economically efficient treatments to reduce hazardous fuels.
HRCAs	Within home ranges, HRCAs consist of large habitat blocks having: ▪ at least two tree canopy layers. ▪ at least 24 inches dbh in dominant and co-dominant trees. ▪ a number of very large (>45 inches dbh) old trees. ▪ at least 50-70% canopy cover. ▪ higher than average levels of snags and down woody material.	Treat fuels using a landscape approach for strategically placing area treatments to modify fire behavior. Retain existing suitable habitat, recognizing that habitat within treated areas may be modified to meet fuels objectives. Accelerate development of currently unsuitable habitat (in non-habitat inclusions, such as plantations) into suitable condition. Arrange treatment patterns and design treatment prescriptions to avoid the highest quality habitat (CWHR types 5M, 5D, and 6) wherever possible	Establish and maintain a pattern of fuels treatments that is effective in modifying wildfire behavior. Design treatments in HRCAs to be economically efficient and to promote forest health where consistent with habitat objectives.
WUI *Threat Zones*	Under high fire weather conditions, wildland fire behavior in treated areas is characterized as follows: ▪ Flame lengths at the head of the fire are less than 4 feet. ▪ The rate of spread at the head of the fire is reduced to at least 50% of pre-treatment levels. ▪ Hazards to firefighters are reduced by managing snag levels in locations likely to be used for control in prescribed fire and fire suppression, consistent with safe practices guidelines. ▪ Production rates for fire line construction are doubled from pre-treatment levels.	Threat zones are priority area for fuels treatments. ▪ Fuels treatments in the threat zone provide a buffer between developed areas and wildlands. ▪ Fuels treatments protect human communities from wildland fires as well as minimize the spread of fires that might originate in urban areas. ▪ The highest density and intensity of treatments are located within the WUI.	Establish and maintain a pattern of area treatments that is effective in modifying wildfire behavior. Design economically efficient treatments to reduce hazardous fuels.

Land Allocation	Desired Conditions	Management Intent	Management Objectives
Old Forest Emphasis Areas	Forest structure and function generally resemble pre-settlement conditions. High levels of horizontal and vertical diversity exist within 10,000 acre landscapes. Stands are composed of roughly even-aged vegetation groups, varying in size, species composition, and structure. Individual vegetation groups range from less than 0.5 to more than 5 acres in size. Tree sizes range from seedlings to very large diameter trees. Species composition varies by elevation, site productivity, and related environmental factors. Multi-tiered canopies, particularly in older forests, provide vertical heterogeneity. Dead trees, both standing and fallen, meet habitat needs of old-forest-associated species. Where possible, areas treated for fuels also provide for the successful establishment of early seral stage vegetation.	Maintain or develop old forest habitat in: ▪ areas containing the best remaining large blocks or landscape concentrations of old forest and/or ▪ areas that provide old forest functions (such as connectivity of habitat over a range of elevations to allow migration of wide-ranging old-forest-associated species). Establish and maintain a pattern of area treatments that is effective in: ▪ modifying fire behavior. ▪ culturing stand structure and composition to generally resemble pre-settlement conditions. ▪ reducing susceptibility to insect/pathogen drought-related tree mortality. Focus management activities on the short-term goal of reducing the adverse effects of wildfire. Acknowledge the need for a longer-term strategy to restore both the structure and processes of these ecosystems.	Establish and maintain a pattern of area treatments that is effective in modifying wildfire behavior. Maintain and/or establish appropriate species composition and size classes. Reduce the risk of insect/pathogen drought-related mortality by managing stand density levels. Design economically efficient treatments to reduce hazardous fuels.
General Forest	Same as above	Actively manage general forest areas to maintain, and enhance a variety of vegetative conditions. Strategically place fuels treatments to modify wildfire behavior. Reduce hazardous fuels in key areas to lessen the threat of high severity fire.	Establish and maintain a pattern of area treatments that is effective in modifying wildfire behavior. Reduce the risk of insect/pathogen drought-related mortality by managing stand density levels. Design economically efficient treatments to reduce hazardous fuels.

[1]**WUI Defense Zone** - The wildland urban intermix defense zone is the buffer in closest proximity to communities, areas with higher densities of residences. The zone generally extend roughly 1/4 miles out from theses areas.

[2]**WUI Threat Zone** - The wildland urban intermix threat zone buffers the defense zone and generally extend roughly 1 ¼ mile out from the defense zone boundary.

[3]**SPLATs** - Strategically placed area fuels treatments are non-overlapping treatment areas, spatially positioned to efficiently and effectively change fire behavior at the landscape scale. Conceptually, SPLATs are intended to slow fire growth and modify behavior while minimizing the amount of treated area required. The SPLAT arrangement changes fire behavior by forcing the fire to repeatedly flank around areas of treated fuels. Thus, the rate of growth of the fire is slowed, and its intensity and severity reduced. The locations of the treatment areas emphasize actions needed to make SPLATs effective in terms of interrupting wildfire rates of spread and burn intensity.


Trestle Forest Health Project - Vicinity Map
Placerville Ranger District,
Eldorado National Forest
2
Miles
Pollock Pines
Camino
50
Sly Park Road
Morman Emigrant Trail
North South Road
Omo Ranch
Omo Ranch Road
E16
T11N R11E
T11N R12E
T11N R13E
T11N R14E
T11N R15E
T10N R11E
T10N R12E
T10N R13E
T10N R14E
T10N R15E
T09N R13E
T09N R14E
T09N R15E
T08N R13E
T08N R14E
T08N R15E
Project Area
Unit Boundary
Township
Non-Forest Service Land
Original data was compiled from multiple source data and may not meet the U.S. National Mapping Accuracy Standard of the Office of Management and Budget. For specific data source dates and/or additional digital information contact the Forest Supervisor.
Eldorado National Forest
100 Forni Road
Placerville, California
This map has no warranties to its contents or accuracy.