

For Immediate Release
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Sierra Nevada Plan Revised

Federal Government Rolls Back Protections for Sierra Forests, Water and Wildlife

Sacramento, CA -- Today, the U.S Forest Service announced sweeping revisions to the Sierra Nevada Framework, which directs the management of 11.5 million acres of California's national forest lands. The revisions will nearly triple the amount of logging and limit safeguards for forests, water and wildlife throughout the Sierra.

" The new plan is a major step backward from the scientifically sound approach that had been adopted" said Dr. Jerry Franklin, a Professor at the University of Washington's College of Forest Resources and contributor to a landmark research project on the Sierra supported by the Forest Service and University of California. "For example, it abandons necessary ecological protections for old growth forests."

UCLA Professor of Biology Dr. Philip Rundel agreed, saying, "This decision is a fundamental change in policy under the guise of fire protection. By encouraging unregulated logging in our national forests, we are passing on a future fire hazard to our children and grandchildren."

The Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment, adopted in January 2001 by the Forest Service, represented over a decade of research, planning and cooperative efforts by that agency, scientists, community activists, business owners, and conservationists. According to Craig Thomas, director of the Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign and a Sierra resident, this version of the plan bears little resemblance to the original.

" The Framework was a balanced approach to forest management that reduced the wildfire threat to communities, while protecting forests, wildlife, and water quality. This decision revokes a sound plan and ignores the advice of scientists commissioned to review it."

The following outlines discrepancies in the new plan when compared to scientific and regulatory analysis:

Forest Service Claim: The revised plan will reduce the risk of fire by cutting large trees.

Fact: Logging large trees is not necessary to reduce fire risk. The focus must be on reducing the most flammable fuels in the forest, known as surface and ladder fuels. Moreover, logging can increase fire severity by leaving behind highly combustible twigs and needles, while loss of tree canopy encourages the growth of flammable brush, increases wind speed and air temperature and decreases humidity in the forest, exacerbating fire conditions.

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Forest Service Claim: The revised plan will better protect homes and communities.

Fact: The logging of large, fire-resistant trees far from development does nothing to protect homes and communities and fails to adequately address surface and ladder fuels.

Forest Service Claim: The revised plan protects old growth and large trees.

Fact: The new plan fails to recognize old growth as a special resource and manages it under the same standards as the rest of the forest, standards that will degrade and reduce the amount of high quality old growth in the

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Sierra. The new plan nearly triples the amount of logging in the Sierra and allows large, 30" diameter trees to be cut across the entire landscape.

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Forest Service Claim: The new plan allows more flexibility to develop land use practices that protect meadows and streams.

Fact: The revisions significantly weaken grazing limitations and water quality protections, and increase the risk of stream bank and meadow erosion.

Forest Service Claim: The revised plan reduces threats to at-risk wildlife and habitat by allowing fuel treatments in Protected Activity Centers (PACs).

Fact: Increased logging of large diameter trees, combined with clear cutting allowed under the reactivated Quincy Logging plan, will likely cause some species to be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Forest Service Claim: Logging and selling large trees can offset the cost of removing brush and smaller trees.

Fact: Timber sales may generate short-term revenue, but carry a great cost in the long-term. Loss of scenic values negatively impacts tourism and recreation, the main economic engines in most Sierra counties.

Forest Service Claim: The 2004 Record of Decision was based on public input and sound scientific analysis.

Fact: No public meetings have been held on the Framework since fall of 2002, and according to scientists who reviewed the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement it contains no new information that would warrant such a radical overhaul of the original 2001 Framework Plan.

"These changes are bad news for those of us who live here" says John Brissenden, owner of Sorensen's Resort in Hope Valley and former Alpine County supervisor. "Cutting trees miles away from our homes won't protect us from wildfire. People want to bring their kids to hike, camp and fish in a peaceful place, not a logging project."

Experts available for comment:

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Jay Watson: Phone: 415-518-2604
Director, Wildland Fire Program for The Wilderness Society, experience in forest and wilderness policy, including 19 years with The Wilderness Society and five years as a wilderness ranger with the Forest Service.

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The Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign is a 80 member-group coalition formed in 1996 to secure an ecologically sound management plan for the 11 national forests and 11.5 million acres of public land in the Sierra Nevada.