

Scoping Report

Angora Hazard Tree Removal Project

September 11, 2007

Through the scoping analysis, the interdisciplinary team identified that some comments warranted clarification in the proposed action. Though there are no “issues,” a response is given following the comment. Some responses reflect how comments were incorporated and addressed in the decision document.

1. John Adamski

- a) I would like to bring to your attention a grove of old growth trees along the trail from the end of Nez Perce to Seneca Pond. Do not cut any of these trees in order to bring equipment in to remove hazard trees. I request to escort a USFS official on a field trip to examine this grove of trees.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, just concern for a specific stand of trees.

Response: *A field trip occurred on August 24, 2007 with Mr. Adamski and he showed us the grove of trees in question. The area we were shown is not a part of the Angora Hazard Tree Removal Project. Further, all equipment would be accessing the units from the north and would not need to pass through this area. This is indicated in project maps for skidding/hauling routes attached to the decision document*

2. Angora Lakes Resort

- a) If removal necessitates closing FS road 1214 to public access, we request that it take place after September 30, 2007 and prior to May 20, 2008 to allow public access during the peak season.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, concern over public access to a business.

Response: *The decision memo for this project will include a limited operating period (LOP) of May 20 to September 30 to prohibit hazard tree removal during this time. This will show as a project design feature specific to Unit 4 along Angora Ridge Road. Public access will be allowed during the LOP. Outside the LOP and during hazard tree removal, public access will be restricted.*

- b) What mitigation measures are there for cleaning up staging/landing areas on Angora Ridge Road after tree removal? We expect that any surface damage to this road will be fully repaired.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, only a question asked which can be answered now.

Response: *The decision memo will include rubber tired or equivalent low impact equipment to operate on FS road 1214 so as to minimize the risk for road*

damage. Any road damage would be repaired by the contractor responsible for removing trees. There are no landings planned for Unit 4 along Angora Ridge Road. Staging will likely occur in the parking lot at the end of this road but will be cleaned and repaired after operations.

- c) We are concerned about noise impacts. Specifically, chainsaw, helicopter and heavy equipment noise will be noticeable both at the residential lower lake cabins and the upper lake cabin rental units.

Non-Significant Issue: Noise has the potential to be an impact, however this is already decided by law, or if there is no support for concerns of exceeding this level.

Response: *There will likely be noise throughout the project area with this project, other restoration/rehabilitation efforts to the fire area, and home reconstruction. The LOP for timber harvest on Angora Ridge Road (1214) will eliminate noise impacts from unit 4 during your peak summer operating season. Operations will occur only during the day. See page c of the Decision Memo for noise related design features.*

3. Pat McKinnon

- a) The Angora Hazard Tree Removal Project should be implemented as promptly as possible before the trees lose value.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed.

Response: *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is being used for this project to analyze for the commercial removal of trees. Smaller merchantable trees will generally start losing their value within 2 years following a wildfire. The project analysis and decision is expected for completion by early 2008. Implementation is planned for completion within 2 years following the decision.*

- b) I suggest a 2x tree height removal specification to provide an adequate safety zone.

Non-Issue: A disagreement is expressed, but not based on fact.

Response: *A 1 ½ times tree height is a general standard operating procedure when working around felling operations or hazard trees. A 1 ½ tree height within the 150 foot zone for removal is sufficient for hazard tree mitigation and would provide an adequate safety zone for road and trail use.*

- c) Will imminently dead trees be removed?

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed.

Response: *Trees that exhibit other traits such as insect evidence or structural defects to the extent that pose a safety hazard would be removed. In addition, roads and trails would be monitored for additional mortality 3 years following the project decision. Refer to appendix cc of the decision memo for marking guidelines specific to this project.*

- d) Removal of hazard trees from SEZ is a good part of this proposal.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed,
Response: *Comments that state a position for or against a specific alternative are appreciated as this gives the Forest Service a sense of the public's feeling and beliefs about a proposed action. Such information can only be used by the decision maker in arriving at a decision and not for improving the environmental analysis or documentation.*

4. Jeff Glass

- a) Trees that the USFS marked with blue paint should be re-evaluated before removal.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed,
Response: *Trees recently marked with blue paint are included in a separate project for hazard tree removal on FS urban lots/parcels. These marking guidelines are slightly different as these trees are closer to life and property. Refer to appendix A of the decision memo for marking guidelines specific to this project.*

5. Dennis Bebensee

- a) Let the Professional forester's do their job and select the trees that should be harvested.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed,
Response: *Comments that state a position for or against a specific alternative are appreciated as this gives the Forest Service a sense of the public's feeling and beliefs about a proposed action. Such information can only be used by the decision maker in arriving at a decision and not for improving the environmental analysis or documentation. The project would only reduce hazards to system roads and trails. This proposal was developed by an Interdisciplinary Team of specialists including professional foresters.*

- b) The entire fire area needs to be salvaged.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement.
Response: *Comments that state a position for or against a specific alternative are appreciated as this gives the Forest Service a sense of the public's feeling and beliefs about a proposed action. Such information can only be used by the decision maker in arriving at a decision and not for improving the environmental analysis or documentation. The project would only reduce hazards to system roads and trails*

6. Amanda Adams

- a) All dead or dying trees should be removed from the burn area ASAP. This would allow new trees and plants to grow faster and it would be safer for the public.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed,
Response: *Comments that state a position for or against a specific alternative are appreciated as this gives the Forest Service a sense of the public's feeling and*

beliefs about a proposed action. Such information can only be used by the decision maker in arriving at a decision and not for improving the environmental analysis or documentation. The project would only reduce hazards to system roads and trails.

7. Laurel Ames

- a) The USFS should be clear on how and where hazard trees will be removed from SEZ.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *The FS will utilize hand falling of trees and endlining of those trees using equipment outside of the SEZ. This is described in the decision document and soil and hydrology design features. Prior to implementation SEZs would be marked on the ground as a project design feature. The project would use existing roads and trails that cross SEZ. Trees would be removed from SEZ where fuel loads would be at an unacceptable level if trees were left.*

- b) The USFS should be clear on disturbance from landings, i.e. revegetation, BMP's, number of landings and where they are located.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *The decision document for the project includes information on landing location, BMPs, and rehabilitation of the landings.*

- c) State how the trails will be rehabbed.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *General trail rehabilitation design features and those specific to each road and trail in the project area will be included in the project decision document. See the project design features.*

- d) Where will hazard trees be removed from Upper Truckee Road SEZ's?

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *Hazard trees will be removed as located on project area map that is attached to decision document. See response to 7a above for response to tree removals in SEZ.*

- e) Provide estimates of volume removed or amount of trees removed.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *Volume estimates per unit are shown in the project decision document.*

- f) Describe how trees will be removed from Angora Ridge Rd. and what BMP's would be used.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *The methods for hazard tree removal are specified for the unit on Angora Ridge Rd.. BMPs proposed are listed in Appendix B.*

8. Steve Wiard (Sierra Pacific Industries)

- a) Consider the longest possible operating season (beyond Oct. 15).

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed.

Response: *If there is a need to operate past this time, the possibility exists to apply for an extension to the operating season beyond Oct 15 by coordinating with Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Lahontan Water Quality Control Board for exemptions to the grading ordinance.*

- b) Unless a tree has a healthy green crown without other defects it should be considered for removal now rather than having to return later at a much higher removal cost.

Non-Issue: Maximizing economic efficiency is outside the scope of this proposal.

Response: *The project will remove trees according to the marking guidelines shown in Appendix A of the decision document. Monitoring will occur in some areas where trees could die over the next 2-3 years. Trees that die after the initial harvesting will be evaluated for sale but if not cost effective they will be felled and left on the ground.*

- c) Don't limit the removal to specific equipment or harvesting method. This could impact completing the project in a timely manner.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed.

Response: *The project limits equipment used in unit 4 because of access conditions present in this unit. Harvesting methods in SEZ would also limit equipment.*

- d) The snag or tree retention policy should be reviewed closely. On the urban lots there should be no snag or wildlife tree retention.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed.

Response: *The project would not remove trees on FS urban lots.*

- e) For chipping and mastication, a reasonable specification should be considered as meeting a 2" and 6' piece. Where possible, chipped material should be spread back on lots to a depth not exceeding 6" to protect soil movement.

Non-Issue: No disagreement expressed, suggest a specification for chipped material.

Response: *Chipped material will be spread back on units where disturbance from equipment has occurred. Refer to soil and hydrology design features numbers 11 and 13.*

- f) We support your decision to use a CE.
Non-Issue: No disagreement expressed.
Response: *Comment acknowledged. Comments that state a position for or against a specific alternative are appreciated as this gives the Forest Service a sense of the public's feeling and beliefs about a proposed action. Such information can only be used by the decision maker in arriving at a decision and not for improving the environmental analysis or documentation.*

9. Michael Donahoe (Tahoe Area Sierra Club)

- a) Please evaluate all options in your decision document, from cutting the trees and leaving them to closing roads/trails in the area. There may be some middle ground alternatives as well.
Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed
Response: *The project would involve treatments ranging from cutting and leaving trees in specified units and mechanical methods in areas where more hazards exist. There is need for administrative use and a high demand for recreation use of system road and trails in the area. Closure of system roads and trails is outside the scope of this project. The project meets the stated purpose and need. No significant issues or extraordinary circumstances exist regarding the proposed action so consideration of alternatives are not required by NEPA. Alternatives are not analyzed using categorical exclusions.*
- b) Compare the impacts that commercial logging will have in the burn area along USFS System Roads and Trails as compared to dropping the trees and leaving them in place or leaving the trees to decay naturally.
Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed.
Response: *The project purpose and need states that hazards would be removed to offset costs. "There is a need to remove standing hazard trees that pose risk to life and property while using commercial methods that would offset costs for removal and utilization." Environmental analysis would disclose the impacts of this project through the Decision Document and specialist reports. Alternatives are not analyzed using categorical exclusions.*

Where fuel loading standards allow and for the purposes of wildlife habitat, trees would be felled and left in place to decay.

- c) Disclose the specific sites of all landings and the specific trails that will need to be widened.
Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.
Response: *The decision document for the project includes information on landing location, and trails that would be used for skidding/forwarding in map 1. The project includes BMPs (appendix B), and rehabilitation of the landings and skid trails (soil and hydrology design features).*

- d) We are confused by the language “Commercial removal of... recently felled fire killed trees in the Angora Fire area...” The document should explain clearly why removing downed trees with commercial equipment helps contribute to public safety and the restoration of the clarity of Lake Tahoe.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *Unit 4 of the project is the only area where recently felled fire killed trees would be removed. These trees would be removed within 50 feet of the powerline on Angora Ridge road to provide for safety. The project purpose and need includes felling and removing hazard trees to provide for public safety while including design features that protect water quality. The purpose and need is not intended to restore Lake Tahoe clarity.*

- e) Disclose the volume of board feet expected from the commercial removal of recently felled fire killed trees as well as the volume of board feet expected from the removal of standing hazard trees in the fire area specifically lying between the subdivided area of Upper Truckee Road on the east and the steep slopes of Angora Ridge on the west.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *Volume estimates per unit are shown in the project decision document.*

- f) The document should disclose the SEZ boundaries and describe SEZ crossings that would be constructed (by width and length) for use by commercial equipment.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *Prior to implementation SEZs would be marked on the ground as a project design feature, and equipment operations will be prohibited in those SEZs, except where the existing road or trail crosses the SEZ in its current alignment. Road and trail specific design features will provide details about each SEZ crossing. Soil and hydrology design features disclose the type of crossings needed for equipment. See map 4 for locations of SEZ boundary and SEZ crossings.*

- g) The document should disclose the volume of board feet that will be removed from the SEZ's by size (over 16" dbh, and 16" dbh and under).

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *Volume estimates per unit are shown in the project decision document on page 14.*

- h) The document should disclose the number of trees and volume of board feet that will be removed by cutting trees that exceed 30" in diameter.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *Volume estimates per unit are shown in the project decision document on page 14.*

- i) The document should disclose the requirements of Lahontan's Attachment A to R6T-2007-008, the timber waiver issued by the Regional Water Quality Control Board on Feb 14, 2007, for logging operations (commercial removal) in the SEZ and disclose which of those regulations will be met, and which, if any, may not be met.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *The only commercial removal in SEZ will occur on existing roads and trails. A Timber Waiver would be obtained from Lahontan prior to project implementation occurring.*

- j) How will large equipment be brought to the burn area? Will the trails be widened? Will large trees and old growth trees that are entirely unburned be cut to make room for the equipment to move along the trails?

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *Large equipment would be brought in using trucks and trailers. System trails could be temporarily widened as a result of hazard tree removal. Rehabilitation of trails and roads after operations are completed is part of the project design. It is not necessary for operations that large trees and trees exhibiting old growth characteristics that are unburned and still alive to be cut to make room for equipment mobility along trails. This explanation would be included in the project proposed action*

- k) Discuss the final width of the alterations to the existing trails and roads.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *The equipment used on trails may be as wide as 15 feet. The project includes decompacting soil along the trails, except for a 24" wide tread and also includes leaving felled trees along the trail to discourage user created trails and OHV use. See recreation project design features the decision memo.*

- l) Discuss the number of old growth unburned trees that will be cut down.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *Field reconnaissance indicates that zero trees exhibiting old growth characteristics that are unburned will be cut down through the project.*

- m) Discuss access off of Nez Perce because of the high neighborhood use and interest.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *Access off of Nez Perce is not required in the project. See project map attached to decision document.*

- n) The plan to cable trees up to Angora Ridge Road must be reviewed in great detail regarding soil disturbance, furrows made by the dragging operation, and difficulty of mitigation measures.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed.

Response: *The project will include design features for rehabilitation of disturbance to the slope from endlining operations.*

- o) Disclose the number of trees to be cabled up to Angora Ridge Road by size (over 16" dbh, and 16" dbh and under) as well as the number of trees 30" dbh and greater.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, requested more detail on the proposed action.

Response: *The volume of merchantable trees removed by endlining up to Angora Ridge Road was estimated using cruise data collected in August/September.*

- p) The decision document should discuss the benefits to the clarity of Lake Tahoe of removing the trees from the slope along Angora Ridge Road by dragging them up slope in comparison to cutting the trees and laying them across the slope.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed,

Response: *The Forest Service would analyze watershed effects through a cumulative watershed effects analysis as seen in the hydrology report. Project design features include BMPs to effectively protect soil and water resources. The project purpose and need includes felling and removing hazard trees to provide for public safety while including design features that protect water quality. The purpose and need is not intended to restore Lake Tahoe clarity but with implementing project design features and BMPs, the project is not expected to impact the clarity of Lake Tahoe.*

- q) Do the trees along the road that runs parallel to Lake Tahoe Blvd need to be removed? Inclusion of the east side of this road is especially problematic.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, a question is asked and clarification is needed.

Response: *Trees parallel to Lake Tahoe Blvd. along 12N31 will be felled and left in place. The east side of road 12N31 is not included as part of the project*

- r) Any land disturbance that occurs as a result of this project should be the object of complete restoration.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, makes a statement.

Response: *The project will include rehabilitation and restoration as described in project design features.*

- s) As hazard trees are cut down, any areas that are deficit in terms of the per-acre large woody material (large logs) requirements under the Regional Soil Quality Standards, we ask that you leave the larger logs on the ground in order to meet the standards.
 Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, asking to follow regional soil quality standards.
Response: *The project includes leaving large logs to meet soil quality standards.*
- t) The decision document should discuss the cost-effectiveness of opening decommissioned roads, using them for commercial logging and then re-decommissioning those same roads.
 Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed.
Response: *The section of non-system road to be opened for use of hauling is less than ½ mile and would not require extensive work for temporary upgrading. This road would be necessary to meet the project purpose and need and would be decommissioned. This is described in the decision memo*
- u) The decision document should discuss the cost-effectiveness of hydromulching, then undertaking a commercial logging project on top of the hydromulch.
 Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed.
Response: *The hydromulching was a temporary effort as part of the BAER and was intended to stabilize the site before the onset of the first storm event. The project along with future restoration would involve activities on top of the hydro mulched areas.*
- v) What are the expected increased rehabilitation costs due to the commercial logging operation's increased soil disturbance?
 Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed.
Response: *See project purpose and need. The pre-decisional memo describes costs associated with the project*
- w) What is the cost comparison between hauling trees out of the woods versus hauling chippers in to chip the wood in place?
 Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, asking for disclosure of costs.
Response: *See project purpose and need. The pre-decisional memo describes costs associated with the project. See FS response on page 12*
- x) What is the total expected costs of the logging operation versus leaving the whole trees in place?
 Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed.
Response: *See project purpose and need, and economic analysis in decision memo. Project design features in decision memo describe leaving downed logs. See FS response on page 12*
- y) What is the cost of complete mitigation of this project versus the cost of leaving the trees in the forest without disturbance by logging equipment?

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, asking for disclosure of costs.

Response: *See economic analysis*

10. Darrel Cruz (Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California)

- a) We are in support of a hazard tree removal project to reduce the threat of falling timber on lives and property. We would like to see protection of any archaeological sites and avoidance of those sites. If any sites are discovered during implementation please notify the Washoe Tribe.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed, makes a statement.

Response: *Comments that state a position for or against a specific alternative are appreciated as this gives the Forest Service a sense of the public's feeling and beliefs about a proposed action. Such information can only be used by the decision maker in arriving at a decision and not for improving the environmental analysis or documentation.*

- b) We would like to see protection of any archaeological sites and avoidance of those sites. If any sites are discovered during implementation please notify the Washoe Tribe.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed.

Response: *The project includes notification of FS heritage staff if any new sites are discovered.*

11. Chad Hanson (John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute)

- a) We appreciate that you have properly defined "hazard" trees as those that are actually dead, i.e., no green foliage.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed

Response: *Comments that state a position for or against a specific alternative are appreciated as this gives the Forest Service a sense of the public's feeling and beliefs about a proposed action. Such information can only be used by the decision maker in arriving at a decision and not for improving the environmental analysis or documentation. Refer to Appendix A of the decision memo for marking guidelines specific to this project.*

- b) If roadside hazard tree felling is currently proposed along any roads that are not maintained for public use, please drop these roads from the project and close the roads.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed

Response: *Current proposed action is only for removal of hazard trees along "system" roads and trails (i.e., roads and trail alignments approved in previous decisions), and does not include removal of hazards along "user-created" road/trails that are not maintained for public use.*

- z) Once hazard trees are felled, they are no longer hazards. For hazard trees larger than 30 inches in diameter, please leave such trees on the ground after felling them.

Non-Issue: No clear disagreement expressed.

Response: *Felled hazard trees larger than 30 inches in diameter will not be removed from the project area, unless: coarse woody debris fuel loads would exceed acceptable standards for the Wildland-Urban intermix zone (WUI) upon leaving such trees on the ground, and no options exist for removal of coarse woody debris smaller than 30 inches in diameter to alleviate fuels risk. It is not expected that this would occur anywhere in the current project area.*