



Forest Plan Revision

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit November 12, 2008 Public Workshop

Vegetation, Fuels and Forest Health

Past management practices (i.e. heavy logging, fire suppression and grazing) have combined to significantly alter the general ecological conditions within the Lake Tahoe Basin. In recent years, the understanding of ecosystem processes and the management of public land has benefited from the incorporation of new science data.

It is apparent that a more complete integration of restoration efforts are necessary to successfully restore public lands –specifically forested landscapes, natural watershed processes and forest structure. Restoration should be accomplished while also reducing the wildfire hazard to communities and maintaining and enhancing quality habitat for the Basin’s diversity of native plants, fish, and animals. Additionally, climate change is expected to bring rising air temperatures and changes in precipitation patterns in the West; expected to lead to an increased risk of high severity fire and shifts in species ranges (including potential invasion by non-resident native and exotic plants, insects and diseases).

Current –and predicted future– conditions present complex challenges for management in the Lake Tahoe Basin as a result. Perhaps chief among these challenges is sustainably balancing the restoration of fire-adapted ecosystems and the planning and implementation of fuels reduction projects to protect public and private assets, with the legal and biological necessity of preserving habitat for species that require dense canopy, late Seral forest conditions.

Integrated Vegetation, Fuels, Wildlife, Forest Health Desired Conditions

1. Diverse forest stand densities, structure, and species are representative of historic disturbance regimes. The overall species mix, size classes, and mixture of stand conditions across the landscape results in a forest that is resilient to catastrophic fire and insect and disease outbreaks, and is characterized by high quality wildlife habitat that supports a diverse range of native species.
2. Disturbance processes such as fire, insects, and disease occur in the ecosystem within the natural range of variability, and where this is not feasible, surrogates that effectively mimic natural disturbance are carefully used. This diversity of vegetation conditions is present throughout the entire forest, including riparian and special areas, supporting a diversity of native plant, fish, and wildlife species while enabling the forest to respond to a changing climate.
3. At both the stand and the landscape level, the Basin's forests more closely resemble vegetative conditions that were shaped by natural disturbance and other evolutionary processes. Because vegetative conditions are shaped by more frequent, low intensity fire, resulting conditions help protect the public from fire hazards.
4. Fuel treatments decrease wildfire intensity and severity while providing firefighters with better opportunities to successfully halt wildfires before they threaten communities. Habitat and ecosystem diversity are maintained or improved during fuel reduction and vegetation treatments to achieve some combination of the following goals:
 - Decrease risk to California spotted owl and northern goshawk PACs from wildfire
 - Create early seral stages
 - Reset the system for long-term old growth restoration
 - Increase tree growth rates to more rapidly generate old forest conditions
 - Release aspen stands and restore riparian areas and meadows
 - Maintain and/or improve habitat connectivity
 - Improve and/or maintain forest health
5. Appropriate ecological conditions are provided throughout the Plan area to recover federally listed species, to support species of concern and avoid their federal listing, and to manage for species of interest.