



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

**Forest Service**

Pacific  
Southwest  
Region

Stanislaus  
National Forest



August 1998

# June 1998

## Fire Salvage

### Standards and Guidelines Review



Forest Supervisor Ben del Villar (left) and Deputy Forest Supervisor Glenn Gottschall at Cherry Lake Station; June 15, 1998. (USDA Forest Service Photo)

United States  
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Dear Friends:

I am pleased to announce completion of the June 1998 Fire Salvage Standards and Guidelines Review report. The report documents the results of Forest Leadership Team (FLT) evaluation of fire suppression and salvage activities in the 1996 Ackerson Fire Complex area, of the Groveland Ranger District. It also presents the FLT's conclusions and recommendations based on those results.

I support the FLT's findings. Full implementation of their recommendations depends on adequate funding. Accordingly, in the future the Forest will:

1. Complete a Forest Plan Review.
2. Coordinate Forest Plan effectiveness and NEPA implementation monitoring.
3. Provide clear written direction to interdisciplinary teams during NEPA processes.

The June 1998 Fire Salvage Standards and Guidelines Review report is available by request. Call, write, or stop by the Forest Supervisor's Office for copies. The report is also available on the Forest's website (<http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/stanislaus/mgmt/mereport>).

Comments received on this report will be considered in preparing future reports. Please submit comments, or any written requests for the documents to:

Stanislaus National Forest  
Attn: Monitoring  
19777 Greenley Road  
Sonora, CA 95370

Sincerely,



BEN L. DEL VILLAR  
Forest Supervisor

# June 1998 Fire Salvage

## Standards and Guidelines Review

### 1. Introduction

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The Regional Forester approved the Stanislaus National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on October 28, 1991 (USDA 1991). Chapter V of the Forest Plan identifies a need for program and activity reviews to insure consistent use of Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs) to improve the reliability of subsequent evaluations. Evaluation is the analysis and interpretation of monitoring data to determine whether changes in the Forest Plan, or in project implementation are necessary. Monitoring and evaluation are critical elements ensuring that the Forest Plan remains a dynamic and responsible tool for managing the Forest's land and resources in a changing social and economic climate.

The Stanislaus National Forest 1997 Monitoring and Evaluation Report (USDA 1998) documents the results of monitoring and evaluation activities accomplished during federal fiscal year 1997 (October 1, 1996 to September 30, 1997). It also presents a recommendation to schedule and conduct Forest Leadership Team (FLT) reviews of Forest Plan S&Gs implementation.

This report documents the results of a June 1998 Stanislaus National Forest FLT review of fire suppression and salvage activities.

## 2. Programs and Activities Reviewed

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The FLT conducted this review in the 1996 Ackerson Fire Complex area, of the Groveland Ranger District, on June 15 and 16, 1998. Prior to the field trips, the FLT discussed Forestwide S&Gs for Fire, Fish and Wildlife, Riparian, and Water. They later reviewed the following specific programs and activities related to Ackerson fire suppression and salvage sales.

### 2.1 Snag Retention and OSHA Requirements



**Location**

Wilson Loop Salvage Sale  
Unit 89

**Discussion**

Conflicts between snag retention and OSHA requirements.

Requiring Contractors to fell material they deem is too dangerous to fell.

Sale Administrator personal liability.

Snag hazards and future management actions.

Site prep and reforestation.

### 2.2 Snag Retention: Protected Lands and Economics



**Location**

Wilson Loop Fire Salvage Sale  
Unit 66

**Discussion**

Snag retention requirements in areas directly adjacent Yosemite National Park.

Snag retention requirements in snag deficit areas.

Ability to harvest in an economical and safe manner.



## 2.3 Planned Road Construction and BAER Projects



**Location**

Cherry Plum Salvage Sale  
Road 1N86

**Discussion**

Decision not to build the alternate  
route to 1N86.

Effectiveness of deep tilling.

Effectiveness of Burned Area  
Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER)  
projects.

## 2.4 Effects of Thinning on Fire Control



**Location**

Ackerson Fire Salvage Sale  
Road 1S19  
Units 102 and 104

**Discussion**

Effects of the pre-fire thinning on fire  
suppression efforts.

## 3. Evaluation

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The FLT reviewed the results of activities in an integrated fashion. In order to draw conclusions and make recommendations, the FLT identified the following objectives and themes.

### Objectives

- Review and determine effectiveness of land management actions.
- Review and determine if the Forest Plan provides support for management actions in response to catastrophic fire.
- Review and determine if management actions protected, improved, or enhanced water resources.

### Themes

- Review effectiveness of BAER actions as they provide for protection, improvement, and enhancement of water resources.
- Review effectiveness of NEPA analysis and connection to execution of the timber salvage contracts.
- Review effectiveness of wildlife snag retention requirements as related to hazardous "snags" under OSHA regulations on worker safety.
- Review effectiveness of NEPA analysis decisions connected to land access issues on the 1N86 road area.
- Review effectiveness of thinning and prescribed fire as connected to fire suppression effort.

### 3.1 Results

The FLT reviewed the programs and activities, comparing conditions to the Forestwide S&Gs established in Forest Plan Chapter IV and guidelines from the NEPA decisions.

- Burned areas do not meet Forest Plan Forestwide S&Gs
  1. Snags per acre vary from S&Gs in some areas
  2. Long term snag retention may be lost as burned trees fall
  3. Unsafe roadside hazard trees still exist
  4. Several roads and landings do not meet Visual Resource S&Gs

### 3.2 Conclusions

Table 1 shows a summary of the FLT conclusions based on results obtained during this review.

### 3.3 Recommendations

The FLT reviewed their conclusions to develop the recommendations shown in Table 1. Table 2 (see Action Plan) lists the specific actions needed to implement these recommendations.

Table 1: **Conclusions and Recommendations**; Forest Leadership Team (FLT); Stanislaus National Forest.

Conclusions	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest Plan S&amp;Gs do not cover catastrophic events</li> <li>• Catastrophic events often can't meet Forest Plan S&amp;Gs</li> <li>• Some Forest Plan S&amp;Gs are incompatible with other S&amp;Gs</li> <li>• Prescribed burning often does not meet Forest Plan Fire S&amp;Gs</li> <li>• Funding constraints don't always allow meeting S&amp;Gs</li> <li>• Forest Plan does not accurately reflect current conditions</li> <li>• Forest Plan does not fully integrate Fire Ecology</li> <li>• Fuel treatments could be better prioritized</li> </ul>	<p><b>Complete Forest Plan Review, <i>considering needs to:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Forest Plan Amendment with S&amp;Gs for catastrophic events</li> <li>• Identify incompatible Forest Plan S&amp;Gs</li> <li>• Validate Forest Plan fire matrix S&amp;G</li> <li>• Update snag retention guidelines</li> <li>• Develop S&amp;Gs for fire suppression and BAER treatment of roadside hazard trees</li> <li>• Update Forest Plan to reflect current conditions</li> <li>• Fully integrate fire ecology into the Forest Plan</li> <li>• Set general direction for overall priorities (i.e. urban interface, old growth, plantations) for fuels management projects</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest Plan effectiveness and NEPA implementation monitoring are often not coordinated</li> <li>• Regional Office not aware of conflicts</li> </ul>	<p><b>Coordinate Forest Plan effectiveness and NEPA implementation monitoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate monitoring into Program of Work</li> <li>• Conduct Forest Plan S&amp;Gs reviews</li> <li>• Involve Regional Office in future S&amp;Gs reviews</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety, resource and economic (non-integration) conflicts exist</li> <li>• Limited monitoring of fire suppression and BAER treatments</li> <li>• Roadside hazard trees are unsafe</li> <li>• Not clear if snag requirements are rated acre by acre, or on a landscape basis</li> <li>• Leave snags appear to emphasize short-term rather than long-term retention</li> </ul>	<p><b>Provide clear written direction (decisions) during the NEPA process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize the 1900-2 training</li> <li>• Rate snags per acre on a landscape basis</li> <li>• Emphasize long-term snag retention</li> <li>• Establish requirements for post fire monitoring of suppression and BAER treatments</li> </ul>

## 4. Action Plan

The FLT developed a schedule to identify the actions needed for implementing their recommendations (see Table 1). Full implementation depends on adequate funding. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and regulations apply to any subsequent Forest Plan Amendments.

Table 2: **Action Plan**; Forest Leadership Team (FLT) and Forest Planning Interdisciplinary Team (IDT); Stanislaus National Forest.

Action	Who	When
<p><b>Complete Forest Plan Review, considering needs to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete Forest Plan Amendment with S&amp;Gs for catastrophic events</li> <li>▪ Identify incompatible Forest Plan S&amp;Gs</li> <li>▪ Validate Forest Plan fire matrix S&amp;G</li> <li>▪ Update snag retention guidelines</li> <li>▪ Develop S&amp;Gs for fire suppression and BAER treatment of roadside hazard trees</li> <li>▪ Update Forest Plan to reflect current conditions</li> <li>▪ Fully integrate fire ecology into the Forest Plan</li> <li>▪ Set general direction for overall priorities (i.e. urban interface, old growth, plantations) for fuels management projects</li> </ul>	IDT and FLT	9/30/99
<p><b>Coordinate Forest Plan effectiveness and NEPA implementation monitoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incorporate monitoring into Program of Work</li> <li>▪ Conduct Forest Plan S&amp;Gs reviews</li> <li>▪ Involve Regional Office in future S&amp;Gs reviews</li> </ul>	FLT FLT Forest Supervisor	10/1 annual at least 2 per year 9/98 and on-going
<p><b>Provide clear written direction (decisions) during the NEPA process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Utilize the 1900-2 training</li> <li>▪ Rate snags per acre on a landscape basis</li> <li>▪ Emphasize long-term snag retention</li> <li>▪ Establish requirements for post fire monitoring of suppression and BAER treatments</li> </ul>	FLT	On-going



## 5. Participants

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### Forest Leadership Team

Ben del Villar, Forest Supervisor  
Glenn Gottschall, Deputy Forest Supervisor  
Karen Caldwell, Summit District Ranger  
Dave Freeland, Calaveras District Ranger  
Jack Myrick, Acting Groveland District Ranger  
Joe Sherlock, Acting Mi-Wok District Ranger  
Larry Caplinger, Resource Protection Program Area Leader  
Rob Finch, Resource Management Program Area Leader  
Brain Kermeen, Acting Public Service Program Area Leader

### Support Staff

Todd Ellsworth, Groveland Soil Scientist  
Linda Johnstone, Groveland Fuels Specialist  
John Maschi, Land Management Planner  
John Schmechel, Groveland Silviculturist

## 6. Public Notification

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This report is available by request. The Forest will inform the public of its availability by news release; notice in the Forest's Environmental Analysis Quarterly; and, posting on the Forest's Internet site (<http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/stanislaus/mgmt/mereport>). Comments received on this report will be considered in preparing future reports. Please submit comments to:

Stanislaus National Forest  
Attn.: Monitoring  
19777 Greenley Road  
Sonora, CA 95370

## 7. References

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USDA Forest Service. 1991. Stanislaus National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, EIS, Forest Plan and Record of Decision. Pacific Southwest Region; San Francisco, CA.

USDA Forest Service. 1998. 1997 Stanislaus National Forest Monitoring and Evaluation Report. Stanislaus National Forest, Sonora, CA.

## 8. Appendix

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The FLT generated the following notes; comments and possible future actions at their June 16 exit conference, immediately after completion of the field review.

### Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

- Develop S&Gs for catastrophic events
- Snags per acre rated by the acre or on a landscape
- District Rangers must provide written line officer emphasis to reduce safety, resource and economic conflicts
- Post fire monitoring of suppression and BAER treatments
- Conflicting wildlife direction (non-integration)
- Short vs. Long term snag retention
- Lack of effective site productivity retention
- Suppression and BAER treatments must consider roadside hazard trees
- What to do as next step? (step 1)
- Line officers must provide clear direction (decisions) to resolve conflicts
- Funding constraints don't always allow meeting S&Gs
- Visual Objectives not met on several roads and landings
- Involve Regional Office in field reviews
- Close the loop on 1N86 road access decision
- Document rationale for changing timber sale contract (1N86)
- Validate fire matrix S&G
- What to do with green stands?
- How to prevent catastrophic events?
- Integrate fire ecology into the Forest Plan
- Monitor Forest Plan and NEPA required in one effort
- Update Forest Plan to reflect current conditions

- Set priorities for fuel treatment
- Line officers and key staff must be in place, on unit, during catastrophic events
- BAER efforts went well
- Prescribed burns often can't meet soil cover and other S&Gs
- Need to identify incompatible S&Gs
- Recognize and utilize Acting assignments for line and staff
- Procedure guidelines for catastrophic events
- Road condition, access and management
- OSHA and personal liability

#### General Comments

- See lower drainages next time
- Resource representatives on-site were helpful
- Effective, useful, focussed review
- Need more interdisciplinary dialogue
- Good job, do more on other Districts
- Excellent job on salvage, given conflicts, time constraints, etc.
- Safety emphasis good
- Invite other agency participation: Yosemite person could have provided more BAER input

#### Next S&Gs Review

- September 15-16, 1998  
Public Service emphasis  
Karen Caldwell and Dave Freeland share lead