

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Amendments to 1988 Forest Plan

The date, location, and general nature of amendments for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit are listed below, for amendments written after 1988.

Date	Location	Amendment Topic
12/2/88	EIS, map packet	The Environmental Impact Statement and its accompanying map packet clarified regarding OHV use and to include Granite Chief Wilderness (preservation).
12/2/88	EIS, map packet	The Watson Management Area should be designated as Timber Stand Maintenance.
3/13/89	Practice 42	The IPES system will be used to refine the system of land allocation. IPES will be used to identify parcels of land less than 5 acres in size for acquisition, and the Bailey Land Capability System will be used for larger parcels.
6/1/90		Proofreading errors were corrected.
6/1/90	Map packet	Added that the Pope-Baldwin Recreation area is closed to winter motorized use.
6/1/90	Page I-4	The Land Area and Shoreline statistics were updated.
6/1/90	Sensitive Plants, Chapter 3, page III-17	Modified table "Sensitive Plants of the Lake Tahoe Basin" to change the number of population sites of <i>Silene invisa</i> from unknown to 1. Added to table a new sensitive plant species, <i>Arabis rigidissima</i> var. <i>demota</i> .
6/1/90	Sensitive Plants Chapter 3, III-16/17	Changed this statement: "Riorippa subumvellata, a plant which grows on Lake Tahoe's beaches, is the only <u>one of the sensitive</u> species subject to human disturbance."
6/1/90	Dispersed Recreation Facility Construction Practice 2, Chapter IV	Added language that Dispersed Recreation Facilities may be located on land capability classes 1-7, and when located on class 1-3 land, special findings must be made.
6/1/90	Practice 3, Chapter IV	Changed text slightly to comply with new national direction, deleted sentence restricting recreational residences that have certain sewage systems to 10-year permits, and added sentence allowing consideration for disability-related modifications to recreation residences.
6/1/90	Range Improvements Practice 21, Chapter IV	Deleted reference to fences as only method of restricting livestock access, and included "riparian" as another resource value that could be damaged.
6/1/90	Water Quality Maintenance and Improvement Practice 30, Chapter IV	Added land capability class 3 to list of classes where outdoor recreation facilities and public works projects are allowed under certain circumstances.
6/1/90	Land and Resource Management Practice 35, Chapter IV	Added detailed language regarding implementing the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
6/1/90	East Shore Beaches, Chapter 4	Change wording to correct the statement that parking should be reduced, not eliminated, and to clarify a roadside parking issue.
6/1/90	Echo Management Area, Chapter IV	Delete statement that term permits expire on 1/20/99, and change Proposed Resolution of Issues and Concerns to state the parking

Date	Location	Amendment Topic
		situation will be analyzed during this plan period.
6/1/90	Emerald Bay Management Area, Chapter 4	Modified Practice #3 to reflect current Washington Office policies.
6/1/90	Fallen Leaf Management Area, chapter 4	Modified Practice #3 to reflect current Washington Office policies, and add that recreation residences will not be allowed to be enlarged.
6/1/90	Meiss Management Area, Chapter 4	Change Dispersed Recreation Management practices 7 and 8 to show that areas are closed to all motorized vehicles in winter and summer.
6/1/90	Mount Rose Management Area, Chapter 4	Include statements that portions of the Mt. Rose Wilderness are in this management area.
6/1/90	Round Hill Management Area, Chapter 4	Clarify that the future use determination for Round Hill Pines will be scheduled before the end of the plan period.
6/1/90	Tahoe Valley Management Area, Chapter 4	Modified Practice #3 to reflect current Washington Office policies.
6/1/90	Appendix A	Change the listing of future use planning needs to include only Round Hill Pines Resort and Camp Chonokis.
6/1/90	Appendix G	Update the Recreation Facilities list to include areas within the Round Hill management area, and update the Angora Lakes management area.
April 1991	Chapter 1	Add "Fishery Management Plan for Lahontan Cutthroat Trout in California and Western Nevada Waters."
April 1991	Practice 7, Chapter IV	Change to include protection of water quality and critical fish and wildlife habitat.
April 1991	Practice 12, Chapter IV	Add wording regarding timber management.
April 1991	Practice 15, Chapter IV	Add wording regarding beaver management.
April 1991	Practice 22, Chapter IV	Add wording regarding timber management.
April 1991	Practice 28, Chapter IV	Reword policy for reforestation created openings.
April 1991	Practice 53, Chapter IV	Add requirement for downed logs for wildlife needs.
April 1991	Practice 54, Chapter IV	Add requirement to minimize charring of downed woody material retained for wildlife.
April 1991	Practice 58, Chapter IV	Create this practice restricting timber harvest near streams.
April 1992		Add Grass Lake Moss Bog to the national Research Natural Area system.
January 1993		Add interim guidelines for management of the California spotted owl habitat.
March 1995		Correct designation of Sawmill Pond Junior Fishing Reserve to recreation area.
August 1996		The Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan was significantly changed, resulting in changes to the Forest Plan in the areas of visual quality, boundaries, and practices for the Heavenly Valley Management Area.

E R R A T A S H E E T

These errata are the known errors in the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit's Final Environmental Impact Statement and its accompanying map packet.

M A P P A C K E T:

Summer OHV Map

For clarification purposes, the 4WD roads within areas labeled 1, north of Hell Hole in the Freer Roadless Area and to the east of Stanford Rock, are closed to motor vehicles.

Winter OHV Map

Though not shown on this map, the thirty acres of Granite Chief Wilderness in the vicinity of Twin Peaks* is closed to motorized travel.

Visual Quality Objective

Though not shown on this map, the 30 acres of Granite Chief Wilderness in the vicinity of Twin Peaks* are classified Preservation.

Alternative A

Missing Granite Chief Wilderness (30 acres) in the vicinity of Twin Peaks.*

Alternative B

Missing Granite Chief Wilderness (30 acres) in the vicinity of Twin Peaks.*

Alternative C

Missing Granite Chief Wilderness (30 acres) in the vicinity of Twin Peaks.*

Alternative D

Missing Granite Chief Wilderness (30 acres) in the vicinity of Twin Peaks.*

Alternative E

Missing Granite Chief Wilderness (30 acres) in the vicinity of Twin Peaks.*

Alternative F

Missing Granite Chief Wilderness (30 acres) in the vicinity of Twin Peaks.*

Alternative G

Missing Granite Chief Wilderness (30 acres) in the vicinity of Twin Peaks.*

Alternative H

Missing Granite Chief Wilderness (30 acres) in the vicinity of Twin Peaks.*

(* For the boundary of Granite Chief Wilderness in the LTBMU, please reference the Blackwood Management Area map in Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan, page 56.)

E R R A T A S H E E T

These errata are the known errors in the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit's Land and Resource Management Plan.

F O R E S T P L A N :

Watson Management Area The small piece of national forest land on the map
Chapter 4; Page 172 in the SW1/4 of section 31 should be designated
 Prescription 10, Timber Stand Maintenance. It is
 unlabeled in the map.



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
P.O. Box 731002
South Lake Tahoe, CA 95731-7302
(916) 573-2600

Reply to: 1920

Date: June 1, 1990

Dear Forest Planning Participant:

We have identified some areas in the Forest Plan which need correction or clarification. Simple corrections are addressed in the enclosed Errata Sheet 2. (The first errata sheet was sent out with the Forest Plan.) Amendment Set 1, also enclosed, changes the content of the Forest Plan in response to needed clarification, new information, and situations requiring modified management direction. These amendments are important to keep the Forest Plan an up-to-date working tool.

Please note that when the Santini-Burton Act was amended on March 13, 1989, the Forest Plan was also amended by reference. This amendment modified the system used to determine the eligibility of lands for consideration under the Santini-Burton Land Acquisition Program to include the Individual Parcel Evaluation System (IPES). This decision is enclosed.

The enclosed Update Sheet 1, updating landownership status at Lake Tahoe, is provided for your information. Its information has not been incorporated into the Forest Plan.

The proposed amendments are not significant since they are minor changes which will not alter the multiple use goals and objectives for long term land and resource management. The enclosed Decision Memo documents this decision, which is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. However, the enclosed Decision Notice regarding the Santini-Burton Land Acquisition Program is no longer appealable, as the appeal period for that decision has expired.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, we encourage you to discuss them with us. The Planning Department can assist you: (916) 573-2600. We will continue to work with you to improve the content and implementation of the Forest Plan.

Sincerely,

ROBERT E. HARRIS
Forest Supervisor

enclosures



DECISION MEMO
for
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT SET 1
AND ERRATA SHEET 2

El Dorado and Placer Counties, California
Washoe and Douglas Counties, Nevada
Carson City Rural Area, Nevada

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
USDA, Forest Service

PROPOSED ACTION:

It is my decision to implement Forest Plan Errata Sheet 2 and Amendment Set 1, which will:

- (1) correct wording, grammar, mapping, and editing errors made during Plan publication;
- (2) provide clarification in areas that were unclear;
- (3) modify management direction to be consistent with new policies, National direction, and law; and
- (4) incorporate new information.

After more than a year of implementation, editing errors were identified. These errors were corrected in the enclosed Errata Sheet 2. (Errata Sheet 1 was distributed with the Forest Plan and its related environmental documents.)

Amendment Set 1 involves changes in the Forest Plan. For instance, a new sensitive plant species was recently discovered in the Lake Tahoe Basin. This information has been added to the Forest Plan.

National direction for the Forest Service recreation residence policy is changing. Forest Plan direction will change to reflect the new policy, which is currently being developed in the Forest Service Washington Office.

Some Standards and Guidelines required additional clarification and/or added wording to be consistent with local policy. New direction was added to look at the potential eligibility and suitability of the Truckee River under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Public involvement, since the Plan was approved for implementation in December 1988, has focused primarily around contacts with Forest Plan appellants, including the California Attorney General's office, the League to Save Lake Tahoe, the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, the High Sierra Motorcycle Club, California Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs, California Off-Road Vehicle Association, California Department of Fish and Game, Sierra Pacific Industries, and Bill Derrick. Friends of the River pointed out a void in the Plan regarding Wild and Scenic Rivers.

REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION:

An environmental analysis was conducted for this proposed action. As a result of the analysis, a determination has been made that the action is in a category of actions that are excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement. That category of exclusion is Administrative Actions, pursuant to FSH 1909.15, Chapter 26.1b.

It was also determined through the environmental analysis that there were no extraordinary circumstances existing with this proposal that might cause the action to have environmentally significant effects.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND POLICY:

Most corrections and changes made in this Forest Plan Amendment and Errata only provide clarification of existing Plan direction. An exception is the new provision for a Wild and Scenic River evaluation for the Truckee River. However, the interim management direction required for the study river is consistent with current Forest Plan direction. The multiple use goals, objectives, and priorities identified in the Forest Plan will not change. Forest Service policy, as stated in 36 CFR 219.10(f) and FSM 1922.5, allows Forest Plan amendments to be adopted resulting from analysis conducted during Plan implementation. Amendments are also permitted when the Forest Interdisciplinary Team recommends changes resulting from monitoring and evaluating Forest Plan implementation, as per FSM 1922.5, 36 CFR 219.12(k), and FSM 1922.7.

IMPLEMENTING DATE:

This decision will be implemented ninety calendar days after the last legal notice is published.

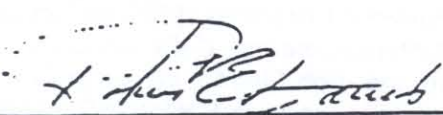
ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITY:

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations. To initiate an appeal, a written notice of appeal must be filed with the Reviewing Officer, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, 630 Sansome Street, San Francisco, California, 94111 on or before September 7, 1990, which is at least 90 days from the date this decision is posted in the legal section of the Tahoe Daily Tribune, the Tahoe World, and the Tahoe Bonanza. The copy of the notice of appeal must be filed simultaneously with my office. As a minimum your notice of appeal *must*: include your name, address, and telephone number; identify this decision being appealed (include the title of this document, its date, and the name and title of the Forest Officer who signed it); specify that portion of the decision that you object to and why you object; identify the specific change(s) in the decision that you seek. Your appeal can be dismissed if the preceding information is not included in the notice of appeal.

CONTACT PERSON:

Jon Hoefler, Planning Staff Officer
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
P.O. Box 731002
South Lake Tahoe, California 95731
(916) 573-2600

Approved by:



Forest Supervisor



date

1720
(5400)

DECISION NOTICE and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
for
AMENDMENT of the LAND ACQUISITION PLAN
PUBLIC LAW 96-586

This Decision Notice amends the Record of Decision for implementing the Santini-Burton Act Land Acquisition program approved on January 21, 1982, by Zane G. Smith Jr., Regional Forester, Pacific Southwest Region.

This is my decision to refine the system for selecting lands for acquisition as authorized by the Santini-Burton Act, PL 96-586. My decision will modify the system used to determine the eligibility of lands for consideration under the Santini-Burton Land Acquisition Program.

The system recently developed by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) called the INDIVIDUAL PARCEL EVALUATION SYSTEM (IPES), forms the primary basis for the refinement. IPES will be added to the system for identifying parcels 5 acres and under eligible for acquisition. All parcels of land with an IPES score at or below the TRPA's "top rank" (currently established as 10) or those with stream environment zone (SEZ) as determined by IPES will be considered environmentally sensitive and thus eligible for acquisition. The sensitivity and eligibility for acquisition of larger unimproved acreage parcels (generally above 5 acres), including low risk lands depicted on the acquisition plan maps, would be based on the Bailey Land Capabilities. Also, IPES scores will be used as a ranking in helping determine acquisition priorities. Highest priority for acquisition will be those parcels with the lowest IPES scores. Lowest priority will be those parcels having a high IPES score with only a small amount of SEZ and low risk lands.

This decision is based upon an environmental analysis that is documented in the Environmental Assessment (EA), titled Amendment of the Land Acquisition Plan Public Law 96-586. My decision is to implement Alternative Number Three, which is the preferred alternative in the EA.

The reason for selecting this action is that IPES eliminates the many problems associated with mapping inaccuracies in the current plan maps. Use of IPES also makes the Forest Service Land Acquisition program more consistent with similar acquisition programs of the states of California and Nevada. Both states have adopted IPES for use in determining environmental sensitivity and eligibility for purchase.

Other alternatives considered were the No Action and the IPES Only alternative. The proposed action will not have a significant effect upon the human environment. As a refinement of the current acquisition plan it does not cause a substantial change in environmental consequences described in the EIS. Therefore, I am making a finding of No Significant Impact, and will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement or amend the original EIS.

The Land and Resource Management Plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is also amended by this decision. Amendment of the plan is necessary to maintain consistency with the management direction identified in this decision. The standard and guideline for identifying and eligible for acquisition under authority of PL 96-586, Practice 42, is amended on page 108 of the Land and Resource Management Plan. It is a non-significant amendment of the plan.

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR 217, as revised effective February 22, 1989.

Approved by: Robert E. Harris
Robert E. Harris
Forest Supervisor

3-13-89
date

E R R A T A S H E E T 2

These errata are the known errors in the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit's Land and Resource Management Plan. /// indicates deleted language; ___ indicates new language.

F O R E S T P L A N :

Dispersed Recreation
Chapter 3; Page III-14

Last line.
Change "~~1978~~" to "1978".

Wilderness
Chapter 3; Page III-21

Bottom third of page.
Change "~~1979~~" to "1978".

Practice 54
Chapter IV; Page IV-44

Prescribed Fire practice: Change "~~employ~~" to "employ" in the fourth Standard and Guideline. ..

Desolation Mgt. Area
Chapter 4; Page IV-64

Under Practice 11- Wilderness Management, correct ~~bryoria~~ lichen species to bryoria lichen species.

Fallen Leaf Mgt. Area
Chapter 4; Page IV-89

Under "8- Dispersed Recreation - Winter": change "from Fallen Leaf Lake Road ~~east~~ east to South Lake Tahoe".

Freel Management Area
Chapter 4; Page IV-94

Delete "6. Wilderness" from the map key.

Genoa MA
Chapter IV; Page IV-103

Proposed Resolution of Issues and Concerns. Change in =3: "~~Nevada Department of Wildlife~~" to "Nevada Department of Wildlife."

Heavenly Valley MA
Chapter IV; Page IV-108

Proposed resolution of Issues and Concerns. Change in =4: "Air quality and traffic impacts of an enlarged ski area will be ~~mitigated~~ through the transport of visitors to the base facilities by other means than the automobile."

Mt. Rose MA
Chapter 4; Page IV-143

Under =1 under Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities, change "~~Incline Village General Improvement District~~" to "Incline Village General Improvement District."

Watson Management Area
Chapter 4; Page IV-172

Management prescription for the parcel of National Forest System land in Section 32, T16N R17E was inadvertently left off. It should be Prescription 10, as it was designated in the DEIS.

M A P P A C K E T :

Winter OHV Map

The Pope-Baldwin Recreation area is closed to winter motorized use. This area is north of Highway 89, between the Emerald Bay State Park boundary and Tahoe Keys.

UPDATE SHEET 1

The following is an update of the "Land Area and Shoreline by Jurisdiction" table found on page I-4 of the Forest Plan. This update is provided for information only. Acreage figures for the management areas and for other portions of the plan will not be adjusted at this time.

LAKE TAHOE BASIN LAND AREA AND SHORELINE
(revised September 30, 1989)

LTBMU Acreage Inside Tahoe Basin	<u>Lake Tahoe Land Area</u> (acres)	<u>Shoreline</u> (miles)
California.....	155,170	41.4
Nevada.....	50,080	29.6
Total land area	<u>205,250</u>	<u>71.0</u>
Placer.....	31,380	
El Dorado.....	82,308	
Alpine.....	4,216	
Total National Forest in California.....	<u>117,904</u>	total: 3.5
Washoe.....	9,836	
Carson.....	3,660	
Douglas.....	17,401	
Total National Forest in Nevada.....	<u>30,897</u>	total: 7.7
Total National Forest land.....	148,801	11.2
Other public lands		
California State Parks.....	7,179	10.2
Nevada State Parks.....	6,950	4.1
Nevada Tahoe Basin Act.....	53	
California Tahoe Conservancy...	4,500	0.4
Incline Village GID.....	1,682	0.6
Washoe County.....	67	---
Douglas County.....	533	---
Placer County.....	184	(w/ El Dorado)
El Dorado County.....	12	2.4
Total.....	21,160	17.7
Total public ownership.....	169,961	
Private/other ownership in California	25,391	24.5
Private/other ownership in Nevada.....	9,898	17.8
Total private/other ownership.....	<u>35,289</u>	<u>42.3</u>
LTBMU Acreage Outside the Tahoe Basin		
National Forest	2,937	
Other ownership	758	
Total	<u>3,695</u>	
TOTAL:		TOTAL:
NATIONAL FOREST OWNERSHIP IN THE LTEMU.....	<u>151,738</u>	<u>11.2</u>

These amendments are changes to the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit's Land and Resource Management Plan. /// indicates deleted language; ___ indicates new language.

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT SET 1:

Sensitive Plants
Chapter 3; Page III-17

Modify Table III.6 "Sensitive Plants of the Lake Tahoe Basin" to change the number of population sites of Silene invisa on NF lands from "unknown" to 1. Add to the table a new sensitive plant species, Arabis rigidissima var. demota. Its management sensitivity is 3, and there is one population site on National Forest land. The number of sites on other lands is unknown.

III-16/17

Change "Rorippa subumbellata, a plant which grows on Lake Tahoe's beaches, is ~~the~~/only one of the sensitive species subject to human disturbance".

Practice 2
Chapter IV; Page IV-19

Dispersed Recreation Facility Construction: Add to the first Standard and Guideline "Such facilities may be located on land capability classes 1-7. When located on class 1-3 land, the following findings must be made:

- a) The project by its very nature must be sited on environmentally sensitive land;
- b) There is no feasible alternative which avoids encroachment on these lands; and
- c) The impacts are fully mitigated through the application of EMP and restoration of comparably disturbed land at the rate of 1.5 to 1 for disturbance beyond that which is allowed for the Land Capability System."

Practice 3
Chapter IV

Change the following text to comply with the new national direction:

Page IV-20

S&G Paragraph #9: "Permits for recreation residences within 100-year flood plain, avalanche path, unstable areas, or other hazardous situation, require a clause stating that substantial damage caused by the hazard will cause the permit to be ~~revoked~~ reevaluated."

Page IV-20

S&G Paragraph #10: "Continue existing recreation residences until a ~~future use determination~~ an analysis indicates one or more of the following conditions exist."

Page IV-20

S&G Paragraph #11: "Term/permits/for/recreation residences/will/not/exceed/10/years/where/the/Federal government/has/borne/a/substantial/portion/of/the cost/to/install/a/sewage/collection/system//or/where waivers/have/been/granted/by/state/authorities/for full/export/of/sewage/waste/"

Page IV-20

S&G Paragraph #11: "Recreation residences will not be allowed to expand in size to handle larger numbers of people or allowed additional impervious surface coverage. The exception is where the Forest Service or other regulatory agencies require additions to the residence for such improvements as toilet facilities. Modifications to assist persons with disabilities may be considered. If the required addition cannot be accommodated within the existing land coverage, additional coverage may be authorized."

Practice 21
Chapter IV; Page IV-29

Range Improvements practice: change S&G Paragraph 2: "Construct/fences/to Prevent livestock from entering recreation and urbanized areas, highway corridors, areas of steep or otherwise sensitive soils, and where riparian and other resource values could be damaged."

Practice 30
Chapter IV; Page IV-33

Water Quality Maintenance and Improvement practice: change S&G Paragraph #7: "Permit outdoor recreation facilities in SEZ and on land capability classes 1 and 2 1, 2 and 3 where they are a part of long range development plans, where the nature of the activity must be so sited, where there is no feasible alternative, where it is fully mitigated, and where disturbed SEZ beyond allowed coverage is restored at 150% of the amount disturbed."

Page IV-34

Change S&G Paragraph #8: "Permit public works projects (roads, trails, utilities, etc.) in SEZ and on land capability classes 1 and 2 1, 2 and 3 where necessary for health, safety, or environmental protection, where there is no reasonable alternative, where the impacts are fully mitigated, and where disturbed SEZ beyond allowed coverage is restored at 150% of the amount disturbed."

Practice 35
Chapter IV; Page IV-36

Land and Resource Management Planning practice: "Create S&G Paragraph #5: Implement the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act by:

a) Conducting an eligibility assessment for the Truckee River. If the river, or segment thereof, is eligible, schedule a suitability assessment. Until a decision is made regarding the river's status, the following interim management will be in effect:

1. To the extent that the Forest Service is authorized under law to control stream impoundments and diversions, the free flowing characteristics of the Truckee River will not be modified.

2. Outstandingly remarkable values for the Truckee River will be identified, protected and, to the extent practicable, enhanced.

3. Management and development of the Truckee River and its corridor will not be modified to the degree that potential eligibility or classification will be affected (i.e., cannot be changed from wild to scenic or scenic to recreational)."

East Shore Beaches
Chapter 4; Page IV-69

Change S&G Paragraph #2-Dispersed Recreation Site Construction: "Provide parking and associated improvements for 850 PAOT at suitable locations off Highway 28 to ~~eliminate~~ reduce the roadside parking."

Pages IV-69/70

Change S&G Paragraph #46- Road Maintenance: "Install barriers or other devices to prevent roadside parking where it has been determined to be a visual, safety ~~and~~ or water quality management problem."

Echo MA
Chapter IV; Page IV-75

Change S&G Paragraph #3- Private Sector Recreation. "A single future use determination will be made for all the private sector improvements in this management area since ~~all term permits expire on January 30, 1999~~ and their continuance substantially determines the character of the area for the future."

Page IV-76

Make the following changes to the Proposed Resolution of Issues and Concerns:

(1) "The parking situation will be analyzed ~~as part of the future use determination of permits in the area and should be completed before 1990~~ during this plan period."

Emerald Bay MA
Chapter 4; Page IV-81

Change S&G, Practice #3- Private Sector Recreation: "~~Plan the future use of the Emerald Bay recreation residence tract prior to the expiration of the permits in 1991~~" REPLACE WITH:

Evaluation and decisions regarding Recreation Residence Authorization renewals will be developed in accordance with the Recreation Residence Final Policy (which is now [1990] being developed in the Washington Office. Federal Register notice of the policy is expected later this year).

Fallen Leaf MA
Chapter IV; Page IV-88

Change S&G, Practice #3- Private Sector Recreation: "~~Plan the future use of the recreation residences prior to the expiration of their permits. The permits at Spring Creek, Alpine Falls, Stanford, and Fallen Leaf Lodge tracts expire in 2001. Those at Lily Lake, Fish Hatchery, Angora Lakes, and part of the Fallen Leaf tract expire in 1991~~" REPLACE WITH:

Evaluation and decisions regarding Recreation Residence Authorization renewals will be developed in accordance with the Recreation Residence Final Policy (which is now [1990] being developed in the Washington Office. Federal Register notice of the policy is expected later this year).

Page IV-88

Add under the previous paragraph:

"Recreation residences will not be allowed to enlarge in capacity or land coverage."

Meiss Mgt. Area

Chapter IV; Page IV-140

Change S&G, Practice #7- Dispersed Recreation Management - Summer:

"Closed to all motorized vehicles."

Page IV-140

Change S&G, Practice #8- Dispersed Recreation Management - Winter.

"Closed to all motorized vehicles."

Mt. Rose MA

Chapter IV; Page IV-143

Add to the management area description:

"The Nevada Wilderness Protection Act of 1989 designated the Mt. Rose Wilderness, a portion of which lies in this management area."

Page IV-144

In the Resource Management Emphasis, change:

"A recommendation to designate a portion of the area to the Wilderness Preservation System will be made to Congress. Congress has designated a portion of the management area as part of the Mt. Rose Wilderness."

Roundhill MA

Chapter IV; Page IV-150

Proposed Resolution of Issues and Concerns. Make the following change to #2:

"The future use determination for Round Hill Pines resort has been scheduled for 1990/ will be scheduled before the end of the plan period."

Tahoe Valley MA

Chapter IV; Page IV-153

Change S&G, Practice #3- Development and Administration of Private Sector Recreation.

"Permits will authorize continued recreation use through 1999. The new permits will be subject to modification or digitizing measures that may be required to protect the environment or to conform to the current Forest Service policy." REPLACE WITH:

Evaluation and decisions regarding Recreation Residence Authorization renewals will be developed in accordance with the Recreation Residence Final Policy (which is now [1990] being developed in the Washington Office. Federal Register notice of the policy is expected later this year).

Page IV-153

"Conduct a future use determination (FUD) for Bridge Recreation Recreation Tract before the permits terminate in 1991 and for Upper Truckee Tract before the permits terminate in 1989." REPLACE WITH:

Evaluation and decisions regarding Recreation Residence Authorization renewals will be developed in accordance with the Recreation Residence Final Policy (which is now [1990] being developed in the Washington Office. Federal Register notice of the policy is expected later this year).

Appendix A
Page A-1

Make the following changes to the Planning Needs and Research appendix:

(#10) "Future Use Determinations for:
- Round Hill Pines Resort +/complete/by/1990.
+/Recreation/residences/in/the/Echo/Lakes/Echo Summit/and/Emerald/Bay/areas+/complete/by/1991/
- Camp Chinokis."

Appendix G
Page G-1

Make the following changes to the Recreation Facilities appendix:

G-2

Under Private Sector Resorts and Facilities ... change the Management Area for Zephyr Cove and Round Hill Pines from Génóa/Peák TO Roundhill.

Under Swimming Beaches ... change the Management Area for Nevada Beach from Génóa/Peák TO Roundhill.

Under Interpretive Sites ... change the Management Area for Logan Shoals from Génóa/Peák TO Roundhill.

G-3

Under Recreation Facilities Supporting Dispersed Recreation ... ADD Angora Lakes; Management Area: Fallen Leaf; Type of Use: Parking; 1987 PAOT total: ~200, below Bayview Trailhead.

DECISION MEMO
for
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT SET 2

El Dorado and Placer Counties, California
Washoe and Douglas Counties, Nevada
Carson City Rural Area, Nevada

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
USDA, Forest Service

PROPOSED ACTION:

It is my decision to implement Forest Plan Amendment Set 2, which will refine the direction provided in specific sections of the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) pursuant to the May 1990 Settlement Agreement between the LTBMU, the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), and the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks). This agreement was the result of negotiations between the three agencies to resolve the issues raised in the DFG appeal of the LTBMU Forest Plan.

After more than a year of negotiation, minor changes in the wording and direction in the Forest Plan were identified that resolved the concerns identified in the DFG appeal. Such changes were documented and agreed to by the Forest Service, DFG (appellant), and State Parks (intervenor) in the May 1990 Settlement Agreement. This decision officially incorporates the terms of this Settlement Agreement into a formal amendment of the LTBMU Forest Plan.

Some Standards and Guidelines required additional clarification to satisfy the participants in the negotiation. Management direction is essentially unchanged. An agreement was also made that the Forest Service will develop a Riparian Area Management Practice. Currently, management direction for riparian areas is dispersed throughout numerous practices in Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan. Until that practice is developed, existing Forest Plan direction will be supplemented by one additional interim Standard and Guideline pertaining to timber management within the stream zone.

Public involvement, since the Plan was approved in December 1988, has focused primarily around contacts with Forest Plan appellants, including the California Attorney General's office, the League to Save Lake Tahoe, the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, the High Sierra Motorcycle Club, California Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs, California Off-Road Vehicle Association, California Department of Fish and Game, Sierra Pacific Industries, and Bill Derrick. State Parks, as an intervenor in all of these appeals, has also been involved in discussions.

REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION:

Environmental analysis was conducted for this proposed action. As a result of the analysis, a determination has been made that the action is in a category of actions that are excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement. That category of exclusion is Administrative Actions, pursuant to FSH 1909.15, Chapter 26.1b.

It was also determined through the environmental analysis that there were no extraordinary circumstances existing with this proposal that might cause the action to have environmentally significant effects.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND POLICY:

Changes made in this Forest Plan Amendment provide clarification of existing Plan direction. The multiple use goals, objectives, and priorities identified in the Forest Plan will not change. Forest Service policy, as stated in 36 CFR 219.10(f) and FSM 1922.5, allows Forest Plan amendments to be adopted resulting from analysis conducted during Plan implementation. Amendments are also permitted when the Forest Interdisciplinary Team recommends changes resulting from monitoring and evaluating Forest Plan implementation, as per FSM 1922.5, 36 CFR 219.12(k), and FSM 1922.7.

IMPLEMENTING DATE:

This decision will be implemented forty-five calendar days after the legal notice is first published in the Tahoe Daily Tribune.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITY:

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations. To initiate an appeal, two copies of your written Notice of Appeal must be filed with the Reviewing Officer, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, 630 Sansome Street, San Francisco, California, 94111 on or before May 27, 1991, which is forty-five days from the date this decision is first posted in the legal section of the Tahoe Daily Tribune (April 12, 1991). It will also be published in the Tahoe World and the Tahoe Bonanza. As a minimum your notice of appeal *must*: include your name, address, and telephone number; identify this decision being appealed (include the title of this document, its date, and the name and title of the Forest Officer who signed it); specify that portion of the decision that you object to and why you object; identify the specific change(s) in the decision that you seek. Your appeal may be dismissed if the preceding information is not included in the Notice of Appeal.

CONTACT PEOPLE:

Lisa O'Daly or Joe Oden
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
870 Emerald Bay Road, Suite 1
South Lake Tahoe, California 96150
(916) 573-2600

Approved by: _____


Forest Supervisor


date

April 1991

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
Forest Plan Amendment 2

The enclosed Forest Plan amendments reflect the results of the May 1990 Settlement Agreement between the USDA Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU), appellant the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), and intervenor the California Department of Parks and Recreation.

These amendments are changes to the LTBMU Land and Resource Management Plan. /// indicates deleted text, ___ indicates new wording.

- Chapter I
page 2 Add to the list of plans incorporated into the Forest Plan by reference: "Fishery Management Plan for Lahontan Cutthroat Trout in California and Western Nevada Waters" - 1986.
- Practice 7
Chapter IV
page 22 Change Practice 7, Dispersed Recreation Management - Summer as follows:

"f) Identify potential summer and winter OHV routes that can be developed consistent with environmental and management guidelines, including protection of water quality and critical fish and wildlife habitat, with special emphasis placed on minimizing conflicts between users and urban areas."
- Practice 12
Chapter IV
page 26 Change Practice 12, Nonstructural Wildlife Habitat Management, as follows:

ADD: "When timber management is selected to modify forest habitat, the location and extent of openings and the potential for type conversion, reforestation, and timber stand improvement will be evaluated and selected as necessary to ensure that wildlife objectives are achieved."

ADD the following after the seral stage description:
"Evaluate opportunities to manage and improve diversity through timber management and wildlife habitat improvement activities on a watershed or management area level, as well as basinwide.

"In created openings larger than two acres, 4-6% of the green stand, preferably in dispersed clumps, will be retained for snag recruitment, except in areas where it would conflict with objectives for type conversion. In openings smaller than two acres, retention of trees for snag recruitment will be considered in project planning."

Change the third Standard and Guideline (S&G) as follows:

"Provide and maintain at least three down logs per acre in ~~harvested~~ forested areas to meet the need of dependent species such as shrews, chipmunks, golden mantled ground squirrel, and raccoons. The logs/shield/be/in/varying/stages/of/decay//at/least 12/inches/diameter/in/diameter/and/20/feet/long/ These should be hard logs if available and at least 12 inches in diameter and 20 feet long. Retain all large or soft decomposing logs as consistent with other management objectives. In harvested areas, retain at least two slash piles per acre for wildlife cover and retain a minimum of 10% of the area in untreated slash where consistent with fire protection and recreation/visual quality objectives."

Practice 15
Chapter IV

Change Practice 15, Nonstructural Fish Habitat Management, to add the following S&Gs:

page 27-28

"Where beaver populations are negatively impacting the fishery resource, appropriate measures will be taken in cooperation with the State to control the localized population."

"Large woody debris will be left or repositioned in stream channels unless channel stability needs dictate otherwise."

Practice 22
Chapter IV

Change Practice 22, Timber Management - General, to add the following S&Gs:

page 30

"When timber management is selected to modify forest habitat, the location and extent of openings and the potential for type conversion, reforestation, and timber stand improvement will be evaluated and selected as necessary to ensure that wildlife objectives are achieved and to achieve optimum benefits for visual quality, recreation, and watershed protection."

"In created openings larger than two acres, 4-6% of the green stand, preferably in dispersed clumps, will be retained for snag recruitment, except in areas where it would conflict with objectives for type conversion. In openings smaller than two acres, retention of trees for snag recruitment will be considered in project planning."

Change S&G #2 as follows:

"Planning for where, when and how timber will be cut will be conducted on a watershed by watershed

basis in such a manner as to insure optimum
benefits for vegetative diversity/wildlife/
visual quality/forest openings/and
wilderness/preservation. Introduction of forest
openings shall be based on an inventory of early
successional stage needs (see practice 13)."

Practice 28
Chapter IV

Replace the first S&G under Practice 28,
Reforestation, as follows:

page 32

DELETE: "Forest openings/except
type/forest/has been determined appropriate
in project level planning."

ADD: "Created openings will not be reforested
when type conversion for vegetative diversity is
determined appropriate in project level planning."

Practice 53
Chapter IV

Add the following S&G to Practice 53, Fuel Treatment:

page 43-44

"Provide and maintain at least three down logs per
acre in forested areas to meet the need of dependent
species such as shrews, chipmunks, golden mantled
ground squirrel, and raccoon. These should be hard
logs if available and at least 12 inches in diameter
and 20 feet long. Retain all large or soft
decomposing logs as consistent with other management
objectives. In harvested areas, retain at least two
slash piles per acre for wildlife cover and retain a
minimum of 10% of the area in untreated slash where
consistent with fire protection and recreation/visual
quality objectives."

Practice 54
Chapter IV

Add to the last S&G under Practice 54, Prescribed
Fire, as follows:

page 44

"Design prescribed fire activities to avoid adverse
effects on soil and water resources and minimize
charring of downed woody material retained for
wildlife. Flame height will not exceed two feet
within 50 feet of stream courses or on wetlands
unless higher intensities are required to achieve
specific objectives."

Practice 58
Chapter IV

Create Practice 58, Riparian and Stream Environment
Zone (SEZ) Management. Pending completion of the
final practice description and its associated S&Gs,
the following interim S&G will be in effect:

"Timber harvest will not be permitted within 100 feet
of perennial streams and 50 feet from intermittent
streams. Removal of hazard trees, for water quality
protection, or for planned type conversions will be
excepted."



Forest
Service

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
870 Emerald Bay Road, Suite 1
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150
(916) 573-2600 TDD 541-4036

Reply to: 1950

Date: April 13, 1992

I am pleased to announce that the Chief of the Forest Service has added Grass Lake Moss Bog to our national Research Natural Area (RNA) system. The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit's Forest Plan (1988), which you received either in full or in summary, recommended the area for designation. Establishment of the RNA preserves Grass Lake's 360 acres as representative of the sphagnum bog-type ecosystem in the northern Sierra Nevada.

The RNA system provides a national network of undisturbed ecological areas preserved in perpetuity for research and education, and to maintain biological diversity. RNA's provide unique opportunities for nonmanipulative research, observation, and study, also serving as baselines for measuring long-term ecological changes.

Designation of Grass Lake RNA fills an important gap in the Forest Service's California RNA system as the largest and best example of a sphagnum bog. Bogs and peatlands are very rare natural communities in California. Over 270 species of vascular plants are known in the RNA vicinity, which provides excellent opportunities for studying montane bog and meadow ecology and vegetation succession. Further, Grass Lake RNA represents the only remaining undisturbed site for the study of pollens and spores in the Sierra Nevada. The pollen record at Grass Lake contains information on climatic and vegetation changes over the last 10,000 to 15,000 years.

The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, in conjunction with the Pacific Southwest Forest and Range Experiment Station, will prepare a plan for the management of this RNA. If you have an interest in the preparation and contents of this plan, please contact my Planning Department at the above address.

The Chief's decision is appealable to the Secretary of Agriculture. A Notice of Appeal prepared pursuant to 36 CFR 217.9(b) must be filed by June 1, 1992, and sent as described in the attached Decision Notice/Designation Order.

Sincerely,


ROBERT E. HARRIS
Forest Supervisor

enclosure

DECISION NOTICE/DESIGNATION ORDER

Decision Notice
Finding of No Significant Impact
Designation Order

By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Secretary of Agriculture under regulations 7 CFR 2.42, 36 CFR 251.23, and 36 CFR Part 219, I hereby establish the Grass Lake Research Natural Area. It shall be comprised of lands described in the section of the Establishment Record entitled "Location."

The Regional Forester has recommended the establishment of this Research Natural Area in the Record of Decision for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Land and Resource Management Plan. That recommendation was the result of an analysis of the factors listed in 36 CFR 219.25 and Forest Service Manual 4063.41. Results of the Regional Forester's Analysis are documented in the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Land and Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement which are available to the public.

The Grass Lake Research Natural Area will be managed in compliance with all relevant laws, regulations, and Forest Service Manual direction regarding Research Natural Areas. It will be administered in accordance with the management direction/prescription identified in the Establishment Record.

I have reviewed the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) direction for this RNA and find that the management direction cited in the previous paragraph is consistent with the LRMP and that a Plan amendment is not required.

The Forest Supervisor of the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit shall notify the public of this decision and will mail a copy of the Decision Notice/Designation Order and amended direction to all persons on the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Land and Resource Management Plan mailing list.

Based upon the Environmental Analysis, I find that designation of the Grass Lake Research Natural Area is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment (40 CFR 1508.27).

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR Part 217. A Notice of Appeal must be in writing and submitted to:

The Secretary of Agriculture
14th & Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

and simultaneously to the Deciding Officer:

Chief (1570)
USDA, Forest Service
P.O. Box 96090
Washington, D.C. 20090-6090

The Notice of Appeal prepared pursuant to 36 CFR 217.9(b) must be submitted within 45 days from the date of legal notice of this decision. Review by the Secretary is wholly discretionary. If the Secretary has not decided within 15 days of receiving the Notice of Appeal to review the Chief's decision, appellants will be notified that the Chief's decision is the final administrative decision of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (36 CFR 217.17(d)).



Chief

3/12/92

Date



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
870 Emerald Bay Road, Suite 1
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150
(916) 573-2600; TTY 541-4036

Reply to: 1950

Date: January 22, 1993

Dear Friends:

On January 13, 1993, Regional Forester Ron Stewart amended the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). At the same time, nine other Forest Plans, and the Pacific Southwest Region's Regional Guide, were also amended. As a holder of a copy of the LTBMU Forest Plan, please keep this amendment with the others you have received over the past four years of Forest Plan implementation.

The Regional Forester's amendment provides interim guidelines, anticipated to be in place for two years, for management of California spotted owl habitat on National Forests in the Sierran province. The interim guidelines address timber, fuels and owl management Standards and Guidelines, and reflect the findings of the State of California/Forest Service technical team that investigated the biological aspects of the owl. This team determined that the strategy previously in place would not protect the viability of the spotted owl; consequently, these interim guidelines provide a short term strategy for protection and management of spotted owl habitat until a longer term strategy is developed.

The LTBMU will be analyzing options for this longer term strategy. The results of this analysis may or may not result in an amendment to the LTBMU Forest Plan. If you would like to be involved in the environmental analysis for this project, please write to Robert McDowell, Planning Staff Officer, at the letterhead address and you will be placed on a mailing list specifically for this planning effort.

I appreciate your continued interest in the LTBMU.

Sincerely,

ROBERT E. HARRIS
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure





UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE

FOREST
SERVICE

PACIFIC
SOUTHWEST
REGION

REGIONAL OFFICE
630 SANSOME STREET
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111

REPLY TO: 2670

DATE: JAN 13 1993

Dear Interested Public:

Enclosed you will find a copy of the Decision Notice which documents my decision for the California Spotted Owl Interim Guidelines Environmental Assessment. The environmental assessment analyzed alternative management strategies for the Sierran population of the California spotted owl and disclosed the potential environmental effects of their implementation.

The Decision Notice amends the Regional Guide and ten Forest Plans which include: Eldorado, Inyo, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Sequoia, Sierra, Stanislaus, and Tahoe National Forests, as well as the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

The Forest Service needed to do this assessment because of our responsibility to manage habitat for the owl on National Forests in accordance with the requirements of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and its implementing regulations. The regulations (36 CFR 219.19) require that wildlife habitat be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species well-distributed throughout the area.

The Interim Guidelines are intended to be a short-term strategy which will be in place for approximately two years or until a longer-term strategy to maintain viability of the owl is adopted.

The Environmental Assessment is available for review at Forest Service Regional Offices nationwide, Forest Service National Headquarters in Washington D.C., and all California National Forest and Management Unit Supervisor's Offices.

If you have any questions about this assessment, please contact Chris Jauhola, Fisheries and Wildlife Management Staff Director at (415) 705-2884. Thank you for your continued interest in National Forest Management.

Sincerely,

RONALD E. STEWART
Regional Forester

Enclosures



**DECISION NOTICE
and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
for
CALIFORNIA SPOTTED OWL SIERRAN PROVINCE
INTERIM GUIDELINES**

**Pacific Southwest Region
USDA-Forest Service**

**DECISION NOTICE
and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
for
CALIFORNIA SPOTTED OWL SIERRAN PROVINCE
INTERIM GUIDELINES**

**Pacific Southwest Region
USDA-Forest Service**

I. Introduction

An environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared to describe alternative management strategies for the Sierran population of the California spotted owl (owl) and disclose the potential environmental effects of their implementation. The assessment area encompassed the following National Forests: Eldorado, Inyo, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Sequoia, Sierra, Stanislaus and the Tahoe, as well as the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. The California Spotted Owl Interim Guidelines EA is available for review at the Pacific Southwest Regional Office, at all of the Forest Supervisor's Offices within the Region and in the Washington Office.

II. Proposed Action

The proposed action is to amend the Regional Guide and ten Forest Plans to provide for management of the owl for an interim period. The interim amended Standards and Guidelines will be in effect until a longer-term strategy to maintain viability of the owl is analyzed and adopted. Specifically, this longer-term strategy will consider recommendations of the Policy Implementation and Planning Team (refer to Section III, Coordination with the State of California). The Interim Guidelines are intended to bridge the time gap between the current obsolete strategy and the longer-term strategy. It is expected that the process to develop the longer-term strategy will take approximately two years.

III. Purpose and Need for Action and Project Objectives

The Forest Service has a need to manage habitat for the owl on National Forests in accordance with the requirements of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and its implementing regulations. The regulations (36 CFR 219.19) require that wildlife habitat be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species well-distributed throughout the planning area.

Recent studies have demonstrated that current direction, i.e. maintenance of a Spotted Owl Habitat Area (SOHA) network, does not assure that viability of the owl will be maintained. Both the Conservation Strategy for the Northern Spotted Owl (May 1990) (commonly known as the ISC Report) and the California Spotted Owl Report (July 1992) (CASPO Report), prepared by the California Spotted Owl Technical Assessment Team (Technical Team), concluded that the SOHA strategy for managing spotted owls would likely lead to extinction of the species.

The CASPO Report made two additional observations: (1) timber harvest practices have led to a serious decline in the number of large, old trees which are preferred by the owl; and (2) the threat of stand-destroying fires must be considered in any strategy. The purpose of the proposed action is to respond to these studies in developing a management strategy for the owl that will maintain population viability.

In order to be effective, any short-term strategy must provide for maintenance of management options for the owl. Therefore, it must include the essential elements for maintenance of viability, as identified in the CASPO Report. While

owl viability is the primary objective, the CASPO Report states a desired objective is to maintain spotted owls throughout Sierran conifer forests in a manner compatible with some level of timber production.

The specific project objectives were:

Protect known owl nest stands (or main roost stands if nest stands are not known) from any significant modification.

Protect very large, old trees in those Sierran timber strata which provide suitable owl habitat.

Reduce the threat of stand-destroying fires.

The CASPO Report directed its recommendations toward timber management activities on public lands because they can have the most extensive effects on owl habitat. Therefore, this proposed action only addresses timber, fuels and owl management Standards and Guidelines. There are currently adequate procedures to analyze, mitigate and address effects of non-timber projects on the owl.

Coordination with the State of California

In 1991, the State of California and the Forest Service formed two investigatory, advisory teams. The first team formed was the Technical Team. Its charter was to produce a report on the California spotted owl (the CASPO Report) which would: analyze and interpret relevant information on owl biology; characterize habitat attributes; evaluate current land management practices; evaluate a range of options to achieve an amount and configuration of suitable habitat to provide for the long-term maintenance of the owl throughout its range; and identify research, inventory and monitoring needs.

The second investigatory, advisory team formed was the Policy Implementation Planning (PIP) Team. Concurrently with this analysis, the PIP Team has been examining and evaluating alternative institutional approaches for implementation of the recommendations of the Technical Team. The charter for their analysis is to minimize economic, environmental and social costs. The Forest Service analysis of the longer-term strategy will use recommendations of the PIP Team. Issuance of these recommendations is currently scheduled for spring, 1993. Refer to Section X - Related Future Actions.

IV. Decision and Rationale for Selection

It is my decision to select Alternative 2 (CASPO recommendations) for implementation of the interim guidelines for management of the Sierran province of the California spotted owl. This Decision Notice amends the Regional Guide and the ten affected Forest Plans, documents my selection of this alternative and discloses the reasons for my decision.

Both Alternatives 2 and 3 respond to the purpose and need for action to maintain species viability, while Alternative 1 (No Action) does not provide reasonable assurance that viability of the owl will be maintained. Alternatives 2 and 3 respond to the project objectives of protecting known owl nest stands and very large, old trees, while Alternative 1 does not protect these stand elements nearly as well.

Alternative 1 continues the century-long trend of replacement of the original forest of large, widely-spaced trees with a young, dense even-aged forest. In addition, historical fire exclusion and selective harvest of fire-tolerant species have increased the percentage of fire-intolerant species in mixed conifer stands. The physical characteristics of white fir, in particular low crowns and high crown density, make stands containing white fir more susceptible to torching or crowning.

The conifer species found in the mid-elevations of the Sierra Nevada decrease in fire tolerance as they decrease in size, and smaller trees are usually younger trees. Therefore, the continued reduction in average stand age, which

is a typical result of Alternative 1, and the relatively high existing percentage of fir, will reduce the overall tolerance of the forest to fire and will make the overall forest highly susceptible to crown fire. The continuation of this trend through the direction from current Forest Plans will almost certainly lead to more and more large, stand-destroying fires. Large, high intensity fires render habitat unsuitable for owls for periods of up to a century.

Alternative 2 recommends practices which will increase the average age of forest stands and will also increase the overall tolerance of the stands to fire. It recommends silvicultural guidelines which will reduce fuel ladders on treated acres. Stands treated under these guidelines will be more tolerant of surface fire intensities and will have fewer of the physical characteristics that promote the propagation of torching and crown fires. The recommendations for widespread underburning address the problem of reducing surface fire intensity.

However, the requirements for Alternative 2 and 3 for log and snag retention make large scale underburning programs difficult, expensive and impractical. In addition, these requirements will increase the difficulty and cost of fire suppression. The conflict between the intent of the recommendation to reduce the incidence of fires which render owl habitat unsuitable and the requirements for retention of logs and snags will have to be resolved in the development of a longer-term strategy for the owl. Resolution of this conflict is beyond the scope of this analysis because data to support an alternate strategy is not available. Implementation of Alternative 2 will require monitoring and additional studies which identify the range of logs and snags which a self-sustaining owl population requires. Further quantification of the actual risk to owl habitat from stand-destroying fire is also needed as part of a longer-term proposal.

Both Alternatives 2 and 3 tend to retain more large trees and increase the average age of stands by removing small trees. These alternatives increase the tolerance of stands to surface fire and remove many trees that could carry fire from the ground into larger trees. Due to more acres projected for treatment in Alternative 2, this alternative has this beneficial effect to a greater degree. However, none of the three alternatives, due to the relatively small acreages projected for treatment, would significantly alter the fire regime in the short term.

In conclusion, Alternative 2 best meets the combination of project objectives. While both Alternatives 2 and 3 meet the objectives of maintaining important elements of owl habitat, Alternative 2 better meets the objective of reducing the threat of stand-destroying fires than Alternative 3.

V. Brief Description of the Selected Alternative

This alternative proposes implementation of the recommendations of the Technical Team. The primary features of Alternative 2 are:

For the Eldorado, Lassen, Plumas, Sequoia, Sierra, Stanislaus and Tahoe National Forests:

Maintain the base habitat contained within the SOHAs in accordance with Forest Land Management Plans. If a SOHA, or portion thereof, is rendered unsuitable by a catastrophic event such as a wildfire, remaining suitable owl habitat within the SOHA shall be maintained. However, there is no requirement that these SOHAs either be replaced or that additional habitat be added to the SOHAs.

Establish a 300-acre Protected Activity Center (PAC) around all currently known spotted owl sites in the owl range. Within these PACs, no stand altering activities will generally be allowed to occur except for some light fuels management activities. The CASPO Report stated that spotted owls are still widely and fairly evenly distributed throughout conifer forests of the western Sierra Nevada. Therefore, establishment of PACs around known owl sites is sufficient to maintain options for a longer-term strategy.

Within strata preferentially selected for nesting by owls (Selected strata) which are outside of PACs, or commercial entry is allowed during the interim period, no removal of live trees 30 inches in diameter breast height (dbh) or larger is allowed and retention of 40 percent of the basal area and canopy closure is maintained in the largest trees available.

Within strata utilized, but not preferred for nesting by owls (Other strata), one commercial entry is allowed during the interim period, no removal of live trees 30 inches dbh or larger is allowed, and retention of 30 percent of the basal area (at least 50 square feet of basal area per acre) is retained in the largest trees available.

In both Selected and Other strata, the largest 4-8 snags (dead and/or trees expected to die within six months) per acre are maintained (may be averaged over the harvest unit). The number of snags to be left is dependent on the diameter of snags available for retention. In addition, fuel treatments to remove surface and ladder fuels and protect owl habitat are encouraged and an average of at least 10-15 dry tons per acre of large dead and down material is retained.

Adaptive management is allowed in two situations: (1) When a project-specific biological evaluation demonstrates that the objectives of the CASPO recommendations may be better achieved through an alternate prescription, and (2) when projects are designed as administrative studies and coordinated with the Pacific Southwest Forest and Range Experiment Station (PSW), or with an oversight team established for this purpose. On each National Forest, administrative studies are limited to no more than two percent of the lands identified as "suitable for timber production" in the Forest Land Management Plans.

On lands where these requirements are implemented, project-driven owl surveys will not be required.

For the Inyo and Modoc National Forests and for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU):

The Modoc and Inyo National Forests, and the LTBMU contribute less than one percent of the known owl sites on National Forest land in the Sierran province. Owls surveys are required only within suitable owl habitat. If owls are detected, their habitat will be managed in accordance with the Modified Cumulative Effects Analysis (CEA) process described in Alternative 3.

For the Lassen, Plumas, Tahoe, Inyo and Modoc National Forests and for the LTBMU:

Pure eastside pine habitat is not considered to be suitable and is not analyzed in detail in the EA. However, there is a small subset of suitable habitat within the eastside pine type (primarily fairly well-stocked pine stands with a white fir understory). When a project is proposed within this suitable area, the area will be surveyed for owls. Where owls are detected, the area will be managed using the Modified CEA process.

The Technical Team has concurred with habitat management on the Modoc, Inyo and LTBMU, and with eastside pine management.

VI. Alternatives and Scope of the Analysis

The alternatives were developed by the Interdisciplinary (ID) Team using the process directed by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This process provided a range of choices for managing resources within the project area. There were three alternatives considered in detail for this analysis. They are: Alternative 1-No Action (retain current Regional Guide and Forest Plan direction); Alternative 2-CASPO Report recommendations; and Alternative 3-Modified CEA process.

Alternative 1 would have continued management of the owl in accordance with current Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines. As is discussed in the following section (Alternatives Not Considered in Detail), the CEA process currently in use was designed to enable the Forest Service to preserve management options for the owl until the Technical Team completed its analysis and the appropriate legal procedures could be followed for implementation of a new strategy. Utilization of the CEA process did not change Regional Guide or Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for the owl. The No Action Alternative would continue implementation of the SOHA network system and the Forest Plans. The Modoc and Inyo National Forests, and the LTBMU do not have SOHAs because these Forests have little owl habitat. They have been managing the owl through protection of identified owl sites.

Alternative 3 proposed continuation of the CEA process currently in use, but with modifications from the CASPO Report to respond better to the project objectives. The Modified CEA process is driven by identification of owl use areas, which is based on presence of suitable habitat and location of owls. If the available habitat is less than the acreage thought to be necessary for owl use, no harvest of green timber is generally allowed within this habitat.

Modifications to the CEA process include the creation of PACs, with the same management guidelines as Alternative 2. Within Selected and Other strata, the same management guidelines are provided as for Other strata in Alternative 2. Management guidelines for snag and dead and down retention are also the same as Alternative 2. Management of the SOHAs will also be the same as for Alternative 2. Alternative 3, in essence, identifies owl use areas and generally allows no green timber harvest in suitable habitat within these areas, except where available habitat exceeds owl needs. Outside of the protected suitable habitat, CASPO guidelines are applied. Project-driven owl surveys are also not required for Alternative 3.

VII. Alternatives Not Considered In Detail

There were many alternatives considered which were not developed in detail. Two alternatives suggested by the public were also evaluated by the Technical Team which developed the CASPO Report. They are: (1) Habitat Conservation Areas and (2) establishment of 4,500 acre protected activity centers around owl locations. These strategies were dismissed from detailed consideration because they would not adequately provide for protection from stand-destroying fires, which was an objective of the analysis.

Continuation of the current CEA process (without modification) was considered. If the CEA process were continued, Fiscal Year 1993 volumes are projected to be about 25 percent higher than the Modified CEA Alternative, however, the land base for this alternative is limited, and it is expected these volumes would drop off in Fiscal Year 1994 and approach Alternative 3 volumes. This alternative was dismissed from detailed consideration because it did not assure protection of known owl nest stands or the retention of the very large, old trees. Changes made to the fully developed Modified CEA Alternative (Alternative 3) are discussed in Appendix B.

Several variations of the CASPO recommendations, primarily zoning and/or moratorium of timber harvest within parts or all of the owl habitat, were considered. All the alternatives which would have excluded timber harvest on a substantial portion of the owl range were eliminated due to these alternatives' inability to reduce the risk of stand-destroying fires. The variations which suggested applying CASPO in some areas and Forest Plan recommendations in others would not adequately protect known owl nest stands or retain very large, old trees.

One of the more frequently suggested variations were several types of old-growth preservation/riparian network/CASPO alternatives. These types of alternatives may be appropriate for consideration in the development of a longer-term management strategy for the owl and other mature-forest dependent wildlife species. However, these alternatives were dismissed from detailed analysis for these Interim Guidelines because they did not address the objective of reducing the threat of stand-destroying fires.

Adjustment of the diameter limit or basal area recommendations of CASPO to allow harvest of some larger trees and more flexibility in silvicultural treatments was considered. This alternative was dismissed from detailed consideration because there was no current research which would support these alterations. Alternative 2 provides for silvicultural flexibility in the Adaptive Management guidelines.

Alternatives were considered which eliminated clearcutting, or utilized uneven-aged management and group selection exclusively. These alternatives did not ensure protection of known owl nest stands, very large, old trees or reduce the threat of stand-destroying fires. However, the alternatives considered in detail do markedly reduce acres of clearcutting in much of the affected National Forests, and will result in some uneven-aged and group selection conditions. In particular, the group selection alternative may be modified to respond better to the project objectives and may be considered in detail in the longer-term strategy analysis.

Several variations of adaptive management were considered, including mimicking natural fire patterns, experimentation with group selection, allowance of harvest within SOHAs and a proposal by the California Forestry Association to manage habitat by watersheds to mimic habitat that owls were using. These alternatives appeared to have merit, but there was not enough information currently available to ensure that they would meet the purpose and need for action. The adaptive management portion of the selected alternative does allow experimentation and it may be used to test these and other management practices.

The CASPO Alternative approach to management of Selected strata (proposed in CASPO Report-Chapter 13) was considered. This alternative was dismissed from further consideration because it was more complex to administer than the CASPO Alternative, and the effects of this proposal relative to owl viability were essentially the same. Thus, this alternative did not contribute to the range of alternatives presented.

Several salvage options were also considered. Due to the continuing effects of the drought it was thought that snag recruitment (i.e. natural tree mortality during the next few years) could "count" for some of the snag requirements in the CASPO and Modified CEA Alternatives. This concept may have merit, but it cannot be analyzed at the Regional level. Forests may be able to develop site-specific longer-term tree mortality predictions for some situations.

The option of establishing snag retention levels based upon current fire danger was considered. There is a strong public perception that high levels of snag retention contribute to current danger of wildfire and that snag retention should be limited on that basis. In fact, standing snags are more of a concern for long-term fire danger. The number of snags required under Alternative 2 will, in some areas, result in fuel loadings which exceed the 10-15 tons per acre guideline. In addition, it is unlikely that these fuel and snag levels were maintained at these levels in a natural forest with a frequent fire regime. However, there is no data to link lower fuel levels with survival of self-sustaining owl levels. Until such studies can be conducted, it is uncertain whether this option could meet owl viability concerns. Monitoring requirements incorporated into Alternative 2 will help provide needed data.

The option of establishing guidelines for salvage associated with large, severe wildfires in addition to guidelines for smaller wildfires and insect mortality was also considered. The specific option considered was to buffer suitable remaining owl habitat in severe wildfire areas with CASPO recommended snag levels and to retain Forest Plan-directed levels of snags in the interior of the wildfire area. This option was dismissed from detailed consideration because it did not supply adequate large dead and down material for future owl habitat, however, some elements of this option were included in Alternative 2.

VIII. Issues and Their Resolution

The following major issues were identified:

1. To what extent will management options for the California spotted owl be maintained in the short term?

The amount of owl habitat which would be made unsuitable through timber harvest varies by alternative. Based upon harvest calculations, there would be no reduction in the amount of Selected strata for Alternatives 2 and 3. There would be a reduction of approximately 4,800 acres of Selected strata for Alternative 1.

Alternative 1 will maintain adequate habitat for nest stands for 260 known owl pairs within the SOHA network. Approximately three-fourths of the known owl nest or roost stands are outside of SOHAs and timber harvest may eliminate habitat within these nest stands. Alternatives 2 and 3 maintain adequate habitat for nest stands for all of the 1,028 owl sites identified in the CASPO Report. Alternatives 2 and 3 both provide a high likelihood of maintaining the current known distribution of owls. Alternative 1 does not.

The alternatives vary in their effects upon the quality of owl habitat, particularly the retention of large, old trees and associated snags and down logs. These elements have been identified as particularly important to the ecological function of the stand as owl habitat. Alternative 1 will not retain these important habitat elements within the majority of acres harvested, as even-aged regeneration prescriptions are primarily used. Even where some trees are retained,

they are generally retained in insufficient numbers to ensure the continued existence and replacement of large trees. Alternatives 2 and 3 will retain large trees, large snags and logs. Outside of 300-acre PACs however, Alternative 2 allows for a reduction in canopy cover within Selected strata, potentially reducing the suitability of this habitat for nesting and roosting purposes but maintaining its suitability for foraging. In Other strata, Alternative 2 allows for a reduction in canopy cover, potentially reducing the suitability of this habitat so that it is no longer suitable as foraging habitat. Alternative 3 maintains the canopy cover and suitability of most of the owl habitat currently in use.

Alternative 1 will continue to fragment existing owl habitat through clearcut harvest methods, increasing the risk associated with juvenile dispersal and mate-finding and decreasing the quality of remaining patches of habitat. Alternatives 2 and 3, because they retain at least 50 square feet of basal area in the largest trees on all harvested acres, will reduce fragmentation effects by reducing the contrast between older forest patches and the surrounding landscape.

Alternatives 2 and 3 use harvest guidelines that will reduce the length of time required for owl habitat to redevelop. These alternatives focus on retaining the habitat elements that take the longest to replace: large, decadent trees, snags and downed logs. Habitat harvested under Alternative 1 will take much longer to redevelop these important habitat attributes. In the case of even-aged prescriptions it may be in excess of 150 years. For this reason, Alternatives 2 and 3 are much more likely to retain future management options than is Alternative 1.

Five percent of the forested areas in the Region burn in wildfires each decade. Most of these acres burn in large, intense fires which result in mortality of a majority of the overstory trees. These fires render owl habitat unsuitable for at least 60 to 70 years. Because Alternatives 2 and 3 maintain the current distribution of owl sites, the loss of any particular block of habitat from wildfire would present much less risk to population viability than would Alternative 1.

None of the three alternatives will affect this overall fire regime in the short term because the percent of the total area affected by the alternatives is too small. The impacts, however, may be noticeable on individual fires. Alternative 1 may result in smaller fires where the number of snags is reduced on harvested acres. Suppression efficiency will be reduced by both Alternative 2 and 3 where large numbers of snags are retained. On the other hand, areas harvested under Alternative 2, and to a lesser extent, Alternative 3, may burn at a lower intensity, thus retaining the large trees and redeveloping more quickly as owl habitat following wildfire. Because Alternative 2 allows harvest within much of the suitable owl habitat, this habitat would be protected from wildfire loss to a greater extent than for Alternative 3.

2. What are the effects to timber supply and what are economic effects?

There are many uncertainties inherent in volume projections, and these uncertainties are discussed in detail in the EA. Effects to jobs, local income and county receipts vary with timber harvest volume. Projected commercial total green and salvage volumes for the next two years are as follows: Alternative 1—1,284.6 million board feet (MMBF); Alternative 2—932 MMBF (73 percent of Alternative 1) and Alternative 3—778.2 MMBF (61 percent of Alternative 1). For Alternatives 1 and 2, slightly more than half of the volume is projected for FY 93. For Alternative 3, about 60 percent is projected for FY 93. However, these figures must be viewed in context. As stated, Alternative 1 would not assure maintenance of the current known distribution of owls, and would violate NFMA viability requirements.

These figures do not include biomass and non-commercial multiproduct volumes which would also add to total volume generated. All figures, including biomass and multiproduct volumes, are discussed in detail in the EA.

The alternatives' effects on timber products are also analyzed. Under Alternative 1, a full range of manufactured wood products would continue to be provided from the Sierran forests, in particular the high-value moldings, veneer and select lumber. Timber harvest would be maintained across the full spectrum of diameters, continuing to provide large dimension structural and heavy framing lumber. Price fluctuations would continue historic trends influenced by economic cycles and new housing starts.

Under Alternative 2, log grade, log value and sawing efficiency would decline. Products would be manufactured primarily from 6 inch to 20 inch diameter logs, resulting in lower valued products such as utility and economy lumber.

2 X 4 studs from firs and pallet material. A higher percentage of the logs would end up as chips or energy plant fuel and the availability of high value products such as veneer, molding, select, structural and heavy framing lumber which is dependent upon larger diameter, high grade trees would be reduced. Alternative 3 would have similar kinds of effects as Alternative 2, but to a greater magnitude.

Timber sale cost efficiency was also analyzed. The following cost factors vary proportionally to numbers of acres in the sale or analysis area: marking and cruising and environmental analysis costs. It is more cost efficient to produce a given amount of volume from a smaller number of acres, than from a greater number of acres. It costs more for a biologist, archaeologist, silviculturist or timber cruiser to examine, or for a forester to design, a timber sale which involves more acres to achieve a given volume of timber. Road construction, reconstruction and logging costs are greater when more acres must be accessed.

The only important difference between alternatives that is not clearly accounted for by volume per acre differences is the differences in owl and stand survey requirements. Alternatives 2 and 3 would greatly reduce the need to survey for owls compared to Alternative 1. This could reduce costs by six to eight dollars (based on costs experienced over the last two years) per thousand board feet (MBF). However, this dollar savings is not nearly as important as benefits derived from reducing agency timing and scheduling problems and personnel staffing concerns associated with owl surveys.

Alternatives 2 and 3, however, will necessitate more intensive and expensive vegetative surveys. Due to lack of experience with CASPO implementation, it is difficult to provide data about cost increases. However, field tests on two Forests have estimated that timber sale preparation (stand exam, data entry and processing, field reconnaissance and marking) costs could almost double.

Alternative 1 produces 4.4 MBF/acre, and both Alternatives 2 and 3 produce 2.7 MBF/acre. These values are low because salvage volumes per acre are included. Green volumes per acre are as follows: Alternative 1 produces 15.0 MBF/acre, Alternative 2 produces 9.6 MBF/acre and Alternative 3 produces 9.1 MBF/acre.

To obtain the same volume, 60 percent more acres would need to be harvested and unit costs would increase accordingly for Alternatives 2 and 3 when compared to Alternative 1. In general Alternative 1, which allows a full range of harvest prescriptions, is more efficient than Alternatives 2 and 3 which primarily allows a form of thinning from below that requires more acres to be entered for the same volume. Alternatives 2 and 3 would also have higher per acre sale preparation costs, however as stated, the reduced owl survey requirements would reduce these effects.

Alternatives 2 and 3, which result in less volume harvested, will result in loss of some jobs and have associated decreases in timber-generated income and receipts to counties, and may also result in social problems, particularly within timber-dependent communities. Stress resulting from job losses can have negative consequences for the individual and community. The short time frame the Interim Guidelines should be in effect should serve to mitigate some of these effects, but uncertainty about the longer-term strategy makes the degree of mitigation also unknown.

There are also anticipated changes in imports. A reduction in timber harvests in the State reduces competition among suppliers, raises market prices, and leads to increased use of imported products and may result in an increase in the price of the typical new house.

3. How will the risk be reduced of fires which would make California spotted owl habitat unsuitable?

Over the last century, the fire regime in Sierran forests has changed from a frequent, low intensity surface fire to infrequent, high intensity fire. The present fire regime affects forested areas at a rate of approximately 5 percent per decade. These acres burn in high intensity fires which cause widespread overstory mortality and make owl habitat unsuitable for at least 60 to 70 years.

None of the three alternatives fully succeeds in reducing the risk of making California spotted owl habitat unsuitable through wildfire. All three alternatives establish minimum levels of dead and down fuel loadings. None of the alternatives establish upper limits to fuel loadings which would reduce surface fire intensity, and hence the risk to

California spotted owl habitat. Alternative 1 (No Action) establishes the lowest minimum levels of dead and down fuel loading. It also establishes the lowest minimum number of snags per acre, which reduces the potential to add fuel to long-term fuel loadings. However, these snag and dead and down levels should be considered in terms of projects. Generally, there are few funds available to treat fuels outside of timber sale projects. The levels of dead and down fuels and snags in Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines should be considered in terms of acres harvested. In other words, the lower snag and dead and down levels are typically only attained on harvest acres, not throughout the landscape.

In practice, fuel loadings after harvests can be much higher than the minimums because no standards or guidelines have been established to keep fuels below some maximum level linked to wildfire risk or fire behavior. Alternatives 2 and 3 both establish a minimum dead and down fuel loading higher than Alternative 1, but concentrate the loading in large logs. Alternative 2 encourages removal of smaller dead and down woody material. It is not clear at this time if it will be practical or economical to remove the small material while retaining the large material. There is a large potential for additional fuels to be added under both Alternatives 2 and 3 as snags fall and are added to the fuel load.

Snags are the number two cause of fatalities and serious injury to firefighters in Region 5. Alternative 1 requires a minimum of 1.5 snags per acre. Firefighters can work in areas with this many snags if they exercise caution and avoid risk areas around snags. Both Alternatives 2 and 3 recommend snag retention levels that may pose an unacceptable risk to firefighters.

It is impossible to predict exactly how many snags will be actually retained due to differences in existing snag levels. In fact, (Alternatives 2 and 3) a range of 0-8 snags may be actually retained (zero snags may be retained if there are none to begin with). However, where there are high snag levels to start with, where over three or four are retained (depending on height of snags), there may be virtually no "safe" areas for firefighters. Wildfires will burn more acres if there are high (greater than 3-4) levels of snags imposed over large areas because control lines will be moved to safe areas. In addition, night time firefighting efforts will be curtailed for safety reasons. Large numbers of snags and logs also reduce firefighting efficiency and hence, increase fire size. However, as stated, the relatively small acreages affected during this interim period reduces these effects. This will be a greater consideration for the longer-term strategy.

Other Issues

There were other issues identified involving the wildlife, vegetative, watershed, soils, fisheries, cultural and recreation resources. Refer to the EA for specific issues, and their resolution.

VIII. Public Involvement

In early June 1992, the Forest Service published a notice in the Federal Register soliciting comments on the Interim Guidelines analysis. Also during this period, a legal notice was published in the Sacramento Bee. A press release was also issued soliciting public comments. My staff and I have met with representatives from environmental groups, the timber industry, other agencies, and elected officials to discuss the analysis for this proposed action.

In the first week of June, the Regional office initiated a mailing of information to over 300 affected/interested key publics, including elected officials. The mailed packets contained a cover letter explaining the basic premises of the analysis (including a draft purpose and need statement, draft alternatives, and identified initial issues), a copy of the Federal Register Notice and a copy of Chapter 1 of the CASPO Report. Individual National Forests contacted several thousand of their local publics using the same mailing packet, and/or additional information.

From the initial public contact, over 400 letters, form letters and phone calls were received. Comments were accepted during the entire analysis period (June through December). The public comments were analyzed and to the extent possible, issues, concerns, and opportunities were addressed in the EA. Public comments were processed as follows: Comments that raised issues or suggested other alternatives were directly analyzed as such. Refer to the Issues and

Alternatives sections of the EA and to the Alternatives not Considered in Detail portion of this Notice. Public comment that expressed opinions, generally for jobs or for owls could not be incorporated into the analysis because there was no substantive information, however, these comments were noted. Also refer to the Public Involvement Appendix in the EA for more information.

IX. Implementation

The CASPO Report represents the best efforts of a highly qualified group of scientists to identify and address concerns associated with the status of the California spotted owl. The CASPO Report received third-party peer review, which exceeded standard procedures. Field, research and academic professionals also submitted significant technical questions regarding the biology and silviculture contained in the CASPO Report. These questions were submitted to the Technical Team, which responded in detail. As a result of this process, some changes were made in the recommendations, although the basic CASPO Report conclusions remained unchanged. The Forest Service will continue to analyze new information as it becomes available.

Some publics wanted the CASPO recommendations implemented immediately for all projects not currently under contract (and some wanted contracts modified). Others thought nothing should be changed until more scientific research and review was completed. A basic conflict exists between the desire of some for continuing research on the owl before any actions take place, and the desire of others to apply new standards to existing projects, even when these projects are not likely to cause a trend toward federal listing or loss of viability.

There is a need to make an orderly transition from one management scheme to another to assure the most efficient and appropriate use of government resources. It is not necessary to require that CASPO guidelines be applied to projects currently well along in the planning process, to projects with a signed decision or to projects under contract. In devising its recommended interim strategy, the Technical Team assumed that all timber sales that were under contract prior to issuance of its draft report were already harvested. Therefore, continuation of existing contracts will still allow maintenance of owl management options and will not compromise the intent of the CASPO Report recommendations.

The California spotted owl is not a federally-listed species and the CASPO Report could not conclude if the owl population is in decline within the Sierran province. The Report said the current CEA process would maintain options for owl management in many cases. The amount of lands analyzed and prepared for timber sales under the CEA process is insignificant compared to the total amount of land available for timber management. Completion of these few projects will not foreclose future options for owl management. Therefore, it is not necessary to rework projects which are currently being planned, or are under contract.

It is my decision that the selected alternative will apply to any timber sale project decision made on or after March 1, 1993. Implementation of this decision between now and March 1 is optional. This date was selected as it coincides with the start of the owl survey season, and allows projects where analysis is substantially completed to go forward. To ensure however, that Alternative 2 is implemented in a timely manner, any timber sales with decisions signed before March 1, 1993, must be sold within calendar year 1993. This will result in a mix of effects, particularly in Fiscal Year 1993.

X. Related Future Actions

There are two related future actions:

1. Amendment of the Regional Guide and ten Forest Plans for a longer period for management of the owl:

This analysis will commence after my decision on this interim amendment and will use PIP Team recommendations as a basis for alternative generation. It is estimated that this analysis will be completed in about two years. Public involvement in this effort will start with the issuance of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement. The amendment for the longer term will use information obtained from the report of the

California Spotted Owl Policy Implementation Planning Team. The amendment will also consider monitoring results from timber sale and fuel treatment projects that use the CASPO guidelines, and additional guidance from the California Spotted Owl Steering Committee. This longer-term amendment is expected to be in effect until additional California spotted owl research results become available.

2. Amendment of ten Forest Plans to integrate new Standards and Guidelines for the owl with other provisions of the Forest Plans:

These amendments are expected to re-allocate land to prescriptions and management areas, modify standards and guidelines for other affected resources, and establish new allowable timber sale quantities in at least seven Forest Plans based on decisions made in action item 1. The Forest Plan amendment process will be initiated by affected Forests over the next two years.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

I have determined that my decision to select Alternative 2, analyzed in the California Spotted Owl-Sierran Province Interim Guidelines Environmental Assessment, is not a major federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment either beneficially or adversely; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not needed for this short-term analysis. This determination is based on the following factors:

The Interim Guideline's effects are limited in time and scope.

- The Interim Guidelines will be in effect until the analysis for and adoption of a longer-term strategy is completed. This process is estimated to take approximately two years. Refer to the discussion of Related Future Actions. An EIS will be prepared to analyze the longer-term strategy.
- Although implementation of the Interim Guidelines would likely cause a short-term reduction in harvest levels (reduction of an estimated twenty-seven percent from the No Action Alternative projected harvest levels) this is not significant because of the short time period the Interim Guidelines would be in place, and because of experienced normal fluctuations in timber outputs due to market influences.
- The Interim Guidelines affect only those acres proposed for vegetative management through timber sales during the interim period. This consists of harvest on only about 10 percent of the capable, available and suitable (CAS) land base on the affected National Forests. If only green timber harvest is considered, this figure drops to a projected acreage of between 1 and 2 percent of the CAS lands.
- On the acres affected, effects are reduced on other resources (such as watershed, soils and visual quality) or the short-term nature of the effects is within allowed fluctuations (reduction to timber supply) in the ten-year planning cycle. Opportunities to achieve the timber outputs in later years are still maintained.
- Where these effects are reduced on other resources, and may be termed beneficial effects, these beneficial effects are in themselves not significant due to the short time frame involved and because the degree of benefits obtained are limited in the amount of acres affected and in intensity of beneficial effects.

No known unusual circumstances exist:

- Implementation of Alternative 2 will not involve highly uncertain, unique or unknown environmental risks. A site-specific analysis will be conducted for all proposed timber management projects. Any proposed timber management activities which could adversely affect the owl will require a determination of "not likely to result in a trend toward federal listing" documented in a biological evaluation.
- No unique characteristics of the geographic area will be affected by any of the actions allowed under Alternative 2.

The Interim Guidelines will not produce any significant irretrievable, irreversible or cumulative effects:

- Further site-specific analysis with appropriate NEPA documentation is required at the project level for each proposed action within owl habitat.
- The potential cumulative effects were evaluated in the Environmental Assessment and it was determined that by limiting the time period of the Interim Guidelines' implementation, cumulative effects would not be significant. In addition, cumulative effects are also limited by the nature of the Guidelines themselves. As analyzed in the EA, they reduce effects to resources such as watershed and visual quality.

- Selection of Alternative 2 will not set precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The actions allowed under Alternative 2 were designed to be temporary. They will be implemented only until longer-term direction can be developed. Refer to the discussion of Related Future Actions. An EIS will be prepared to analyze the longer-term strategy and any potential significant effects.
- Alternative 2 is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. This determination is made both because the Interim Guidelines are temporary, and because of the nature of the action to allow a lower level of environmental effects than the existing Standards and Guidelines.
- A Biological Evaluation (BE) has been written for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species potentially affected by activities. The BE concluded that selection of Alternative 2 will have no effect on threatened or endangered species and will not result in a trend toward federal listing for sensitive species as long as site specific BEs are developed for all projects implemented under these guidelines that determine appropriate project design standards or mitigating measures for these species.
- Biological diversity will not be significantly affected at either the stand, landscape or regional levels; the character of the forest matrix will not be significantly altered.
- Public health and safety will not be significantly affected by any of the activities that could occur under Alternative 2.
- No adverse effects are expected on prime farmlands, rangeland, forest land, flood plains, wetlands or ecologically critical areas.
- Selected actions do not threaten to violate federal, State, local law, or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.
- No adverse effects to any historic places or loss of scientific, cultural or historic resources will occur because of implementation of Alternative 2.
- The selected alternative will not significantly affect consumers, civil rights, minority groups or women. Although consumers may be affected by an increase in timber product price caused by a change in average harvested tree size and a reduction of harvest levels, these increases should be within normal market fluctuations. Jobs and income losses will also affect minority groups and women, but not disproportionately to their participation in affected industries. Public comments received during this analysis supported this conclusion.

The Interim Guidelines are not likely to cause highly controversial effects:

- The effects from the actions allowed under Alternative 2 are not likely to be highly controversial. Controversy in this context refers to cases where a substantial dispute exists as to the size, nature or effect of the major federal action rather than to the existence of opposition to a use. The scientific validity of the CASPO Report recommendations is discussed in the associated Decision Notice for the Interim Guidelines and in the EA.

Adoption of the Interim Guidelines is a nonsignificant amendment of the Regional Guide and the ten affected Forest Plans because:

- These Interim Guidelines are temporary. They will be implemented only until the process for analysis and adoption of a longer-term strategy is completed, in approximately two years. They are expected not to be in place for the remainder of this planning period, either for the Regional Guide or the affected Forest Plan. The short length of the interim period supports a finding of non-significance.

- The Interim Guidelines do not involve a demand for a new service or goods not discussed in or contemplated by the Forest Plans.
- Although the Interim Guidelines will apply to future decisions in the planning area, they will only apply to decisions made within the next two years, and will not substantially alter the desired future condition of the land from that contemplated in the Regional Guide and Forest Plans. In fact, the Interim Guidelines work to accomplish the desired future condition intended by the Regional Guide by protection of a species identified as "Sensitive" and as a "Management Indicator Species" by this Region.
- The Interim Guidelines do not change Forest Plan land allocations, prescriptions, or management areas.
- Because of their short duration, the Interim Guidelines will not significantly alter the long-term relationships between the levels of goods and services projected by Forest Plans.
- Although the changes in Standards and Guidelines directed by the Interim Guidelines are not minor in type, they are minor in effects. As stated, they will cause lessened effects to such resources as owl habitat, visual quality, and watersheds. The effects on timber supply are short-term.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of a Notice of Appeal," including the reasons for appeal and must be filed with the Reviewing Officer: F. Dale Robertson, Chief, Forest Service - Appeals at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Auditor's Building, 201 14th Street, S.W. at Independence Avenue, Washington, DC 20250 within 45 days of the date legal notice of this decision appeared in the Sacramento Bee. Appellants must submit two copies of a Notice of Appeal.

For further information contact: Chris Jauhola, Pacific Southwest Region Fisheries and Wildlife Management Staff Director, USDA Forest Service, 630 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94111.


 RONALD E. STEWART
 Regional Forester

JAN 13 1993

 DATE

Reply to: 1900

Date: March 17, 1995

Dear Forest Planning Participant:

After over five years of implementation, an error was recently discovered in the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit's (LTBMU's) Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). In the Tahoe Valley Management area, the Sawmill Pond Junior Fishing Reserve was not designated as a recreation area. Instead, the small recreation site was mistakenly consolidated on the management area map into the nearby wetlands. Consequently, the map (Forest Plan, page IV-152) labels the site under the Wetlands Management Prescription (Rx 8), when it should properly be segregated from the wetlands prescription and designated Intensive Dispersed Recreation (Rx 5). The corrected map is enclosed. Please also correct section four of page IV-157 by adding a category for Rx 5 and allocating it 20 acres, while decreasing the acres under Rx 8 to 100.

Sawmill Pond was reshaped in 1985 as part of a unique watershed restoration project. The pond was deepened and lined, and the vicinity was revegetated. Walkways and a parking facility were created at that time. It quickly caught on as popular fishing location, especially with local children. In 1989, the area was officially designated by the California State Legislature for use solely as a Junior Fishing Reserve. In 1990, the LTBMU unofficially joined with several local organizations and agencies in a cooperative management arrangement of the site. These ties were made official in 1992 with the execution of a memorandum of understanding establishing an "Adopt-a-Site" partnership between the LTBMU, the South Lake Tahoe Optimist Club, the High Mountain Anglers, and the El Dorado County Fish and Game Commission. Over the years, the partners have contributed greatly to the maintenance and management of the reserve.

The Forest Plan's mapping error came to light when a Forest Plan compliance check was done for a proposal to replace the site's existing port-a-potties with a permanent restroom facility. As use at Sawmill Pond has increased, it has become apparent that permanent restroom facilities are needed. The South Lake Tahoe Optimists would like to construct such a facility.

Under the Wetlands prescription, such development is prohibited, as that prescription prohibits the construction of any permanent facilities. However, the Intensive Dispersed Recreation Prescription allows restroom construction under Practice 2, Dispersed Recreation Facility Construction (Forest Plan page IV-19). This prescription is described on page IV-47 and 48 of the Forest Plan, and applies to areas similar to Sawmill Pond, such as the East Shore Beaches, the undeveloped portion of the shoreline at Echo Lake, and much of the Lower Truckee River.

All current facilities at Sawmill Pond predate the Regional Forester's decision on the LTBMU Forest Plan, attesting to the fact that the mislabeling was truly an error. In addition, the land where the site was developed has been heavily disturbed from years of use as a gravel quarry and were never wetlands.

If you have any comments, concerns or interest in the details regarding the installation of permanent facilities at this site please contact Gayle Ellis of the LTBMU fisheries Department (916) 573-2600.

Sincerely,

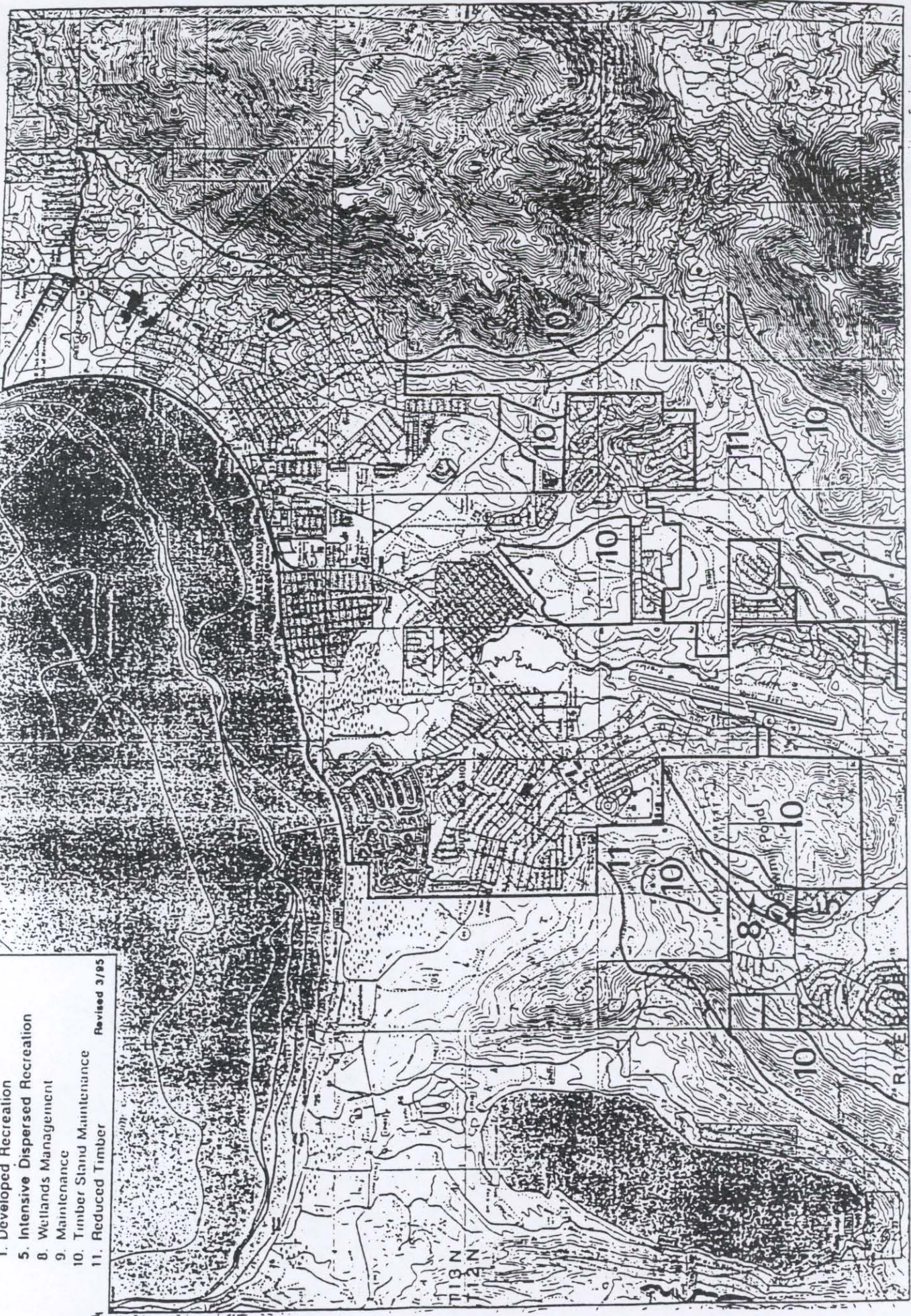
A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert E. Harris", written in a cursive style.

ROBERT E. HARRIS
Forest Supervisor

TAHOE VALLEY MANAGEMENT AREA - NORTH HALF

PRESCRIPTIONS

- 1. Developed Recreation
 - 5. Intensive Dispersed Recreation
 - 8. Wetlands Management
 - 9. Maintenance
 - 10. Timber Stand Maintenance
 - 11. Reduced Timber
- Revised 3/85



0 1 mile

RECORD OF DECISION
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

HEAVENLY SKI RESORT MASTER PLAN

USDA Forest Service
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit

El Dorado County, California
Douglas County, Nevada
and
City of South Lake Tahoe, California

INTRODUCTION: In November 1989, Heavenly Ski Resort began the preparation of a new Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan proposal, to replace its 1966 Master Plan. A Master Plan Steering Committee, comprised of members of lead permitting agencies (the USDA Forest Service, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency [TRPA], El Dorado and Douglas counties, and the City of South Lake Tahoe), as well as a Heavenly Ski Resort representative, was formed to guide the environmental documentation preparation. Harland Bartholomew and Associates, Inc., an environmental consulting firm, was retained to prepare the documentation needed to address federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), state California Environmental Quality Act, and regional TRPA requirements. One document, the Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan Environmental Impact Report/Statement (EIR/EIS/EIS), was prepared to meet the requirements of all the agencies.

This Record of Decision is prepared pursuant to NEPA and represents the Forest Service's decision on the Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan and related environmental documents.

THE DECISION: I have selected the Proposed Action alternative as the master development program (Master Plan) for Heavenly Ski Resort for the next 20 years. This programmatic decision provides the vision for future development for the ski resort, within its existing boundary, which is operated largely on National Forest System lands under permit from the Forest Service. Subsequent environmental analysis is required for implementing various aspects of the Master Plan. It is expected that some projects will be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or impact statement, while others will require such further analysis, depending on the specific development proposal and its potential environmental effects. The environmental documentation upon which this decision is based represents the likely facilities and activities to implement the Master Plan and the cumulative effects of the total development.

The Master Plan vision for the ski resort includes an increase in the resort's capacity by 7,100 persons at one time and the development of an additional: 7 ski lifts, 126 acres of ski trails, 261 acres of snowmaking, 3,254 food service seats, and 1,500 shuttle bus passenger seats for winter use. Besides downhill skiing, additional winter uses will include snowplay, sledding, Nordic skiing, and sleigh rides. Summer uses, such as sightseeing, fishing, hay rides, interpretive hikes, special events (such as concerts), and horseback riding, are proposed to facilitate year-round use of the National Forest. The cornerstone of the Master Plan is the installation of a high-capacity gondola.

servicing 3,000 people per hour, which would originate from a new transit terminal near the California/Nevada stateline. It would transport resort visitors year-round to a new Gondola Top Station at Von Schmidts flat, at approximately 9,000 feet in elevation. Restaurants, shops, and ski lifts would be located at this new facility and skiers would be able to access either the California or Nevada side of the resort from this point. A Gondola Mid Station, which includes an offload/onload facility and restaurant, would overlook Lake Tahoe from just behind the ridgeline.

By this decision, I will require the routine reassessment of the Master Plan at least every five years to keep it updated. In addition, an annual report must be submitted to me by Heavenly Ski Resort regarding the status of implementation of the mitigation program. At increments of five years or less, the Master Plan and its associated environmental documents will be reviewed in light of the annual reports to assess the effectiveness of mitigation measures and to determine whether environmental effects are as predicted in the environmental analysis. If measures are not effective in mitigating impacts, they must be reapplied or new measures developed and applied.

In addition, by this decision I will also amend the LTBMU Forest Plan (see attachment). The Heavenly Valley Management Area of the Forest Plan, when it was written and approved by the Regional Forester in 1988, placed much emphasis on the need for development of a new master plan for the ski area. Since this decision is the result of that direction, it is appropriate to modify and keep current the management area planning direction by incorporating the information from the new master plan.

This Forest Plan amendment also site-specifically modifies the visual quality objective for the gondola corridor. The area through which the gondola will ultimately be constructed is assigned a "maintenance" prescription which has a visual quality objective (VQO) of Retention. Gondola development would be inconsistent with a VQO of Retention. Thus, through the gondola corridor only, I am modifying the visual quality objective to Partial Retention to facilitate its development.

Finally, the Forest Plan amendment corrects one last inconsistency with the Forest Plan. The boundary between the prescription 9 (Maintenance) and the prescription 2 (Downhill Skiing) will be modified to accommodate the planned gondola midstation development. The planned development would otherwise be in conflict with the activities allowed in the Maintenance prescription. Consequently, this amendment adjusts the prescription boundary so that the midstation will be in land allocated to the Downhill Skiing prescription where it is consistent to develop such facilities.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION: In making my decision to select the Master Plan as the project to be implemented, I considered the following environmental documents: the Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan EIR/EIS/EIS, public comment and responses to the public comment, and appendices; and the LTBMU Forest Plan and associated NEPA documents. The Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan EIS has, to my satisfaction, explored a reasonable range of alternatives and disclosed direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects. The Master Plan alternative implements the Forest Plan and best meets the overall project purpose and need while correcting existing environmental problems. It provides the best balance

between recreational use of the mountain on one hand, and meeting the Region's environmental thresholds on the other.

The Master Plan will effectively meet the social, economic, recreation, and environmental protection objectives of the proposed project as defined in the environmental impact statement. These objectives include:

- Improvement of the multi-seasonal, visitor/skier experience utilizing technological advances now widely employed by the ski industry;
 - Integration of the operation of Heavenly Ski Resort into the land use and economic goals of the South Lake Tahoe community;
 - Implementation of the recognized development needs of Heavenly as determined by local planning documents and decisions; and
- Improvement and enhancement of environmental conditions and correction of problems created by past ski resort developments.

The Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan includes facilities to accommodate a portion of the additional persons at one time capacity identified as available in the TRPA Regional Plan and Forest Plan. In addition, the expansion of summer recreational opportunities at Heavenly will help achieve the objective of integrating ski resort operations into the land use and economic goals of South Lake Tahoe, which includes the TRPA goal of greater year-round use of existing recreational facilities.

Implementing mitigation measures described in the Mitigation and Monitoring Plan will reduce impacts associated with the existing conditions as reflected in the No Action/No Project Alternative. Existing conditions such as accelerated soil erosion, noncompliance with surface water quality standards, exceedance of noise thresholds, and degradation of scenic quality will be mitigated to varying levels in conjunction with new development proposed in the Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan.

The Master Plan alternative includes the construction of a new gondola, which will create a new base area for the resort on private land at the South Lake Tahoe Commercial Core area. By incorporating the Gondola, the Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan improves the multi-seasonal, visitor/skier experience using technological advances now widely employed by the ski industry. The commercial core area includes a dense concentration of tourist accommodation units (about 7,000 beds) within walking distance of the gondola. The new gondola will therefore reduce the dependency on the automobile to access the resort. In addition, the gondola is a key component to implementing an expanded transit program in the South Tahoe area. Increases in vehicle trips and air emissions that will occur as part of the proposed Master Plan development will be offset through the creation of the new gondola.

After construction of the gondola, the existing Tram at the California base area will be removed and replaced with a new detachable quad chair. The timeframe for the removal will be determined through the TRPA permitting process for the Gondola. In addition, the Top of the Tram building will be reconfigured with the removal of the Tram terminus and stairway leading to the existing restaurant. The remodeled restaurant will only operate during winter skiing hours. These changes will mitigate a portion of the scenic and visual resource impacts associated with "the Face" at the California base area, which contributes to the degradation of scenic quality in Lake Tahoe's south shore. The gondola will create a new visual impact, but required design and

construction methods keep it visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape.

The Master Plan includes a watershed restoration program, the Cumulative Watershed Effects Soil Erosion Reduction Program (CWE Soil Erosion Reduction Program), for all 10 of the subwatersheds within the Heavenly Ski Resort boundary. Master Plan implementation will require the implementation of erosion control programs established by the CWE Soil Erosion Reduction Program. The restoration program will be implemented over a seven year period beginning in the summer of 1997. The restoration program will reduce soil erosion and associated water quality problems of past disturbances (ski runs and roads) by increasing ground cover, improving water infiltration and conductance, and stabilizing creeks. The goal of the restoration program is to avoid adverse cumulative watershed effects which may occur as disturbance within a subwatershed approaches a cautionary point or recommended threshold of concern (TOC). Many of the Heavenly subwatersheds are currently over their recommended TOC due to past disturbances. The beneficial results of the CWE Soil Erosion Reduction Program implementation include improving existing watershed conditions and enhancing surface water quality in both the Lake Tahoe region and the Carson Valley.

The Master Plan proposes relocation of the California upper maintenance facility out of a stream environment zone (SEZ) to land better suited for such a development. The Master Plan allows for restoration of this SEZ and others throughout the mountain. In addition, the restoration of 5.2 acres of offsite SEZ will occur.

Snowmaking noise generated at the California, Boulder, and Stagecoach base areas currently exceeds regional noise standards. Under this decision to adopt the Master Plan, Heavenly will be required to implement mitigation measures that will reduce noise levels towards the levels required by the environmental thresholds over the next ten years.

I consider the selected alternative the environmentally preferable alternative. Implementation of the Master Plan accomplishes the project's purpose and need, combining a mix of new development with mitigation programs designed to reduce existing environmental degradation. It achieves the project's purpose, including improvement of the multi-seasonal visitor/skier experience, while emphasizing environmental protection and watershed recovery. It enhances visual quality over the long-term, and increases the opportunities for interpretive programs for the existing heritage resources on the site. Although the No Action/No Project Alternative is environmentally superior in that it avoids new development that can impact the environment, it does not provide an implementation schedule for offsetting existing environmental impacts or fully achieve the project's objectives.

APPLICABLE LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND POLICY, AND FINDINGS REQUIRED BY THESE LAWS:
The National Forest Management Act requires that all proposed activities on the National Forest be consistent with that area's Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). Implementation of the Master Plan, programatically, is consistent with the Forest Plan. The "LTBMU" section of Chapter 3 of the Final EIS details the project's consistency. In summary, the Master Plan is consistent with the multiple-use goals established for the area, when considering mitigation measures provided for environmental impacts. The LTBMU

Forest Plan's management direction for the Heavenly Valley Management Area allows consideration of expanding skiing capacity at Heavenly by an estimated 5,400 new skiers at one time (SAOT) on the California side and by 3,600 new SAOT on the Nevada side (outside of the Lake Tahoe Basin). Master Plan implementation will ultimately increase the capacity of the ski resort by 7,100 persons at one time. Implementation of the project will not cause the environmental threshold carrying capacities to be exceeded, as described in TRPA's Article V(g) findings (dated June 26, 1996). The Forest Plan directs that the Forest Service shall support attainment of the thresholds.

The Heavenly Management Area section of the Forest Plan, in its management-area specific standards and guidelines, allows consideration of an "aerial tramway or other conveyance" from the casino core to Heavenly. The Master Plan analysis has determined the Von Schmidt's flats area to be the optimal point for termination of the gondola. While programmatic consideration of the gondola is directed by the Forest Plan, actual construction would not be consistent without a Forest Plan amendment. The gondola corridor passes through an area designated Prescription 9 -- Maintenance. This management prescription currently has a visual quality objective of Retention. Such a corridor is not consistent with a Retention objective. Consequently, this decision amends the Forest Plan by creating a corridor for the gondola through the Prescription 9 area with a modified visual quality objective of Partial Retention. Only the minimum amount of land necessary to construct and maintain the facility will be designated in the corridor.

In addition, this Forest Plan amendment adjusts the boundary of the management prescriptions near the gondola midstation. Land allocated to prescription 9, Maintenance, will be reduced by fifty acres. (See revised Management Area map.) This acreage will be added to the Downhill Skiing prescription, Prescription 2, to facilitate gondola midstation development. Such development is consistent with allowed activities in Prescription 2, whereas it would be inconsistent with allowed activities in Prescription 9. In order to preserve the scenic backdrop, I do not propose to change the management prescription between the ridgeline and South Lake Tahoe.

The Master Plan is consistent with the Forest Plan Downhill Skiing practice standards and guidelines. These standards and guidelines require an approved Master Plan in order to allow expansion of the ski resort. The Master Plan EIR/EIS/EIS demonstrates that the expansion is consistent with the availability of accommodations and infrastructure to support visitors when they are off the ski area (Section 4.17 - Public Services and Utilities). The Master Plan expansion does not allow the enlargement of any parking facilities. In fact, the Master Plan requires the removal of existing off-site parking at the California base area. This off-site parking will be removed and not used at the time the gondola begins operation, as per the Master Plan revisions adopted by the TRPA on June 26, 1996. Finally, the Master Plan is consistent with the goals and policies of the TRPA Regional Plan as documented in their Governing Board staff report (dated June 26, 1996) and all other standards and guidelines of this forest plan as documented in Chapter 3 of the EIR/EIS/EIS.

Required biological documentation was completed which follows the standards established in the Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2672.42 and complies with the legal requirements set forth under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The purpose of the biological documentation was to review the findings of

biological field studies conducted for threatened, endangered, and sensitive plant and animal species that could occupy the habitat found within and surrounding the Heavenly Ski Resort and to evaluate the potential biological effects of implementing the proposed Master Plan. This document included a determination that Master Plan implementation will not affect threatened or endangered species. While implementing the Master Plan will reduce the amount of potentially suitable habitat for several sensitive species through the creation of additional ski lift and run disturbance within the existing ski resort boundary, the Forest Wildlife Biologist concluded that the project would not lead to a trend towards Federal listing for any sensitive species.

The project is in compliance with section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. Section 470f) and implementing regulations, 36 CFR 800, which require consideration of heritage resource values prior to any Federal undertaking. The LTBMU has consulted with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer on the potential effects to heritage resources eligible to the National Register. In addition, the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California was consulted regarding other cultural values.

The Master Plan complies with all of the water quality plans applicable to the Ski Resort including the Bistate "208 Plan" and 1995 Water Quality Control Plan for the Lahontan Region (Basin Plan). Compliance with these plans provides mitigation for soil and water quality impacts. The Master Plan includes the implementation of a comprehensive soil erosion restoration program developed to correct existing soil disturbances and to protect hydrology and water quality. The Heavenly Ski Area Monitoring Program provides for the monitoring of water quality and preparation of annual reports to document compliance.

ISSUES: The issues raised by the Forest Service, other agencies, and the public, which determined the scope of the analysis were consolidated for analysis and discussion. The significant issues fell into eight main areas:

Water Quality and Soils

Issue: The existing ski area development at Heavenly has resulted in disturbances to Lake Tahoe and Carson River drainages. These disturbances have occurred from past construction of ski lifts, ski runs, roads, snowmaking pipelines and other support facilities, and have affected sensitive lands, stream environment zones, and wetlands. Additional impervious coverage and subsequent sedimentation within subwatersheds may adversely affect water quality, beneficial uses, fish habitat, and soil productivity throughout the watershed.

Resolution: Implementation of the CWE Soil Erosion Reduction Program at Heavenly will reduce soil erosion from the subwatersheds within the Heavenly special use permit area to at or below the TOC's. This reduction will decrease the threat of an adverse cumulative watershed effects from occurring at Heavenly. Use of the identified development methods for all future projects will ensure that new projects will not result in the kinds of disturbances which occurred in the past and that water quality standards will not be exceeded. An agreement entitled Heavenly Ski Area Monitoring Program between Heavenly and the Forest Service is already in place to perform year-round water quality and watershed monitoring. Annual monitoring reports will be prepared by the Forest Service pursuant to this agreement. Modifications to the CWE

roads has resulted in the fragmentation of some of the habitat areas. Ski resort operations include the introduction of people, machinery and noise into these habitat areas, potentially affecting the habitat's ability to sustain diversity. Further operation and expansion of the ski resort may adversely affect the existing population levels and activity of species at the ski resort. (Also refer to Noise issue.)

Resolution: The Master Plan includes mitigation programs for the protection or enhancement of many species or their suitable habitats. In addition, the Master Plan requires the continued documentation of all threatened, endangered, and sensitive species encountered during annual surveys for California spotted owl, forest carnivores and other site specific biological resources. Finally, measures are included in the Master Plan which call for modification of summer time resort operations and recreational uses in order to protect, and allow the improvement of, sensitive habitat areas. Forest Service biologists will review annual reports prepared to document the results of surveys for CA spotted owl and American marten. These surveys are a requirement of the mitigation and monitoring program included in the Master Plan.

Visual Resources

Issue: Heavenly Ski Resort facilities, constructed during the past forty years, have resulted in the creation of forest clearings, denuded soils, and other man-made "scars" on the landscape. Following the construction of many of these facilities, the TRPA and Forest Service created visual quality thresholds and visual quality objectives for the Lake Tahoe Basin. Several of the TRPA visual quality ratings for viewpoints within the South Lake Tahoe area are in non-attainment because of past disturbances, including several Heavenly ski runs commonly referred to as "the Face." Further expansion of the ski resort may adversely affect the existing visual quality ratings and the ability to mitigate past disturbances.

Resolution: The Master Plan includes several projects which will include the removal of existing ski resort facilities. The construction of the gondola will result in the removal of the existing Tram from the California base. The Tram and Top of the Tram terminus are contributors to the existing visual quality impacts associated with "the Face." In addition, the Master Plan's CWE Soil Erosion Reduction Program emphasizes the continued revegetation of ski run and road segments within the ski resort. The restoration plan includes the use of woody plants and shrubs which will improve ground cover and, therefore, improve scenic quality ratings. Finally, to reduce new impacts from construction, the gondola has been designed with many self-mitigating features, including the color of the cabins and towers, the height of the towers, the use of non-reflective glass and the proposed construction techniques within the alignment.

Cultural and Historical Resources

Issue: The master plan proposes several new ski lifts and ski runs. While no sites are located immediately within or adjacent to proposed construction areas, sites could be adversely affected due to increased activity in the vicinity from proposed increased summer activities. Increased visibility of the sites may impact their data potential, physical integrity, and eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places.

Soil Erosion Restoration Program will be required if monitoring indicates that the restoration does not meet restoration objectives.

Transportation and Air Quality

Issue: The Heavenly Ski Resort lies adjacent to the heavily congested urban environment of South Lake Tahoe, California and Stateline, Nevada. Existing traffic congestion along U.S. Highway 50 and other local roadways create lengthy delays and subsequent degradation of air quality. Further traffic generation may adversely affect the levels of service at existing roadways and intersections, resulting in concomitant decreases in air quality.

Resolution: A transit-oriented approach has been selected for mitigating traffic related impacts of the ski resort expansion. Known as CTS, the South Shore Coordinated Transportation System will provide improved public transit within the south shore of Lake Tahoe. This approach is considered to be more environmentally superior than the traditional roadway and intersection improvements which are generally used to reduce traffic congestion. In addition, the development of the gondola will bring ski resort access directly to the South Lake Tahoe Commercial Core area, rather than making visitors to this area drive to the resort. Implementation of the CTS will be monitored by the TRPA who is a signatory to the agreement. If the CTS is not successful, provisions of the agreement will be enacted which require amendments to the document to be drafted and approved.

Noise

Issue: The Heavenly Ski Resort operates snowmaking equipment, snow removal equipment and snow grooming equipment during the winter ski season. The use of this equipment contributes to the non-attainment of TRPA noise standards within the vicinity of the Heavenly base areas. On the upper mountain, noise from snowmaking and snow grooming may adversely affect wildlife. In summer, concerts are currently held near the Top of the Tram restaurant. The noise from these concerts may affect wildlife during summer mating or fledgling periods. The implementation of the Master Plan provides an opportunity to reduce existing noise impacts at the base areas with the use of new technology and to study the effects of noise on wildlife near the upper mountain facilities.

Resolution: A noise mitigation program, which includes target attainment goals over the next ten years at the existing base areas, is included in the Master Plan. The mitigation measures for snowmaking activities include the use of new fan gun technology, buffers and setbacks, snowmaking operation controls, and research into quieter nozzle technologies. The goal is to meet the noise thresholds within a ten-year period at all of the base areas. In addition, Heavenly will not hold summer concerts until after the first of August. This restriction allows most local resident birds to complete fledgling, which minimizes the potential for nest failure. However, if Heavenly chooses, they may conduct a more focused study to determine whether concert-related noises result in nest failure of local resident nesting birds. TRPA will monitor Heavenly during project permitting to ensure that appropriate noise reduction methods are put into place at the base areas.

Biological Resources

Issue: Heavenly Ski Resort facilities are located within habitat for numerous plant, wildlife and avian species. The construction of existing ski runs and

Resolution: Heavenly Ski Resort shall contract for formal evaluation of the known sites for the National Register of Historic Places and TRPA historic resources list by a qualified professional as either contributors to the proposed discontinuous Comstock logging Historic District, or on their own merits as historic properties. Eligible sites shall be monitored to determine current condition and to allow for the documentation of future effects from ski resort operations. Evaluation and monitoring shall be conducted according to the requirements of a Programmatic Agreement (PA) which must be prepared for the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) prior to Master Plan implementation.

Land Use

Issue: Heavenly Ski Resort is located within the planning jurisdictions of three counties, the City of South Lake Tahoe, the TRPA, and the LTBMU. Implementation of the Master Plan would result in conflicts with several of the planning documents from these jurisdictions. At the California base, the proposed ski facilities conflict with city zoning. Installation of the new gondola corridor would not meet the visual quality objective assigned to that area by the Forest Plan. At the gondola mid-station, proposed developments conflict with the Forest Plan prescription for the area. Within the TRPA Plan Area for the Nevada portion of the ski area, skiing facilities are proposed which are not allowed due to a prohibition on additional land disturbance and vegetation removal within the Edgewood drainage. These policies were adopted in order to protect adjacent land uses or sensitive species.

Resolution: The City of South Lake Tahoe will consider amendments to its General Plan to allow for skiing facilities on the lands identified in the Master Plan adjacent to the California Base area, as the proposed skiing facilities are consistent with the adjacent properties and land uses in this location. This decision includes a Forest Plan amendment to accommodate the visual quality changes that will occur within the gondola corridor. In addition, the Forest Plan is amended by this decision to allow for placement of the gondola and mid station restaurant, loading and off loading terminal, and access roadway within an area where such uses would have previously been found inconsistent with the Forest Plan. Finally, the proposed skiing facilities within the Nevada portion of the Lake Tahoe Basin have been removed from the Master Plan in order to be consistent with TRPA policies. However, several facilities located in Nevada, but which drain into California watersheds, will remain in the Master Plan, as their construction will not affect the Edgewood drainage.

Socioeconomics and Demand

Issue: Heavenly Ski Resort currently serves approximately 14,000 skiers at one time during peak periods. The proposed Master Plan would allow for the expansion of the ski resort to serve approximately 22,000 skiers at one time during peak periods. There are concerns that the proposed expansion of the ski resort is not supported because of a lack of proven demand, that unnecessary intense competition will occur between resorts within the Lake Tahoe region, and that the environmental risks associated with expansion do not warrant additional development in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Resolution: The Master Plan has been prepared as a tool to guide the upgrade and expansion of the Heavenly Ski Resort over the next twenty years. The Master Plan has been analyzed in a programmatic manner to cumulatively assess

the environmental impacts associated with its component projects. As a programmatic document, the Master Plan only approves the projects for future environmental analysis and permitting by the Forest Service and other agencies. Each implementing project must be submitted to the Forest Service for review and additional environmental analysis. This future project review will allow for the consideration of current market conditions and participation rates at the time of permitting. In addition, the future implementation of Master Plan elements will be proposed after considering changing market conditions, allowing for flexibility in the proposed development schedule.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: The following is a summary of the alternatives considered in detail in the EIS, but not selected as the project to be implemented. A complete description of these alternatives and a listing of their mitigation measures, management requirements, and monitoring requirements is found in Chapters 2 and 4 of the Draft EIS and Appendix B.G of the Final EIS.

No Action/No Project Alternative

This alternative would maintain the existing conditions at the ski area, except for the replacement of existing lifts and facilities without adding additional skier capacity. The existing capacity of 9,080 persons at one time (as described in Appendix F), would be maintained through the existing network of 25 lifts, 627 acres of ski runs, 238 acres of snowmaking, 1,880 food service seats, 2,570 on-site parking spaces, and 2,300 ski area shuttle bus seats.

I did not select this alternative because it does not achieve the project's purpose and need. This alternative neither provides for improving the skier experience at Heavenly. This alternative would require the Forest Service to pursue remedial correction of past problems through some other avenue than a Master Plan update. Instead of the Master Plan's accelerated program of implementation and scheduling to remediate existing water quality problems, correction of existing problems would be addressed through an annual operating plan.

Reduced Project Alternative

This alternative would allow Heavenly to construct many of projects included in Phase I of the existing 1966 Heavenly Ski Area Master Plan following specific plan or project approvals from regulatory agencies. The 1966 Phase I Master Plan includes some, but not all, of the facilities that are proposed in the 1993 Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan. Skier capacity would increase to 14,600 people at one time. This equates to an increase of 5,520 over the existing PAOT level.

I did not select this alternative because, while it provides for some additional resort expansion, it does not include the gondola. As previously stated, the gondola would allow Heavenly to access visitors from the South Lake Tahoe Commercial Core area, reducing the number of vehicles on the local roadways. In addition, the gondola would allow for the removal of the Tram at the California Base.

Maximum Development Alternative

The Maximum Development alternative would be oriented towards enhancing the overall quality of the ski experience at Heavenly by offering a greater number

of lifts and runs, increased snowmaking coverage, and increased skier support facilities. This alternative includes all facilities in the Proposed Action alternative plus the following: three additional lifts in the East Peak Lake area; a new lift in California overlooking the Lake Tahoe Airport; and retention of the West Bowl lift at the California base area which would be removed under the Proposed Action. Skier capacity, as determined using the TRPA PAOT formula (Appendix F of the EIR/EIS/EIS), would increase to 18,800 PAOT. This equates to increases of 9,720 over the existing capacity, 4,200 over the Reduced Project capacity, and 2,620 over the Proposed Action capacity.

I did not select this alternative because it allows expansion to a level beyond what is consistent with the LTBMU Forest Plan.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: The Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan Steering Committee has been meeting regularly since January 1990. All meetings were open to the public and publicly noticed at Heavenly, the TRPA, and south shore post offices. Forest Service representation changed over the years, beginning with Jon Hoefer, then Robert McDowell, and finally Virgil Anderson.

In January of 1990 and March of 1992, a Notice of Preparation/Notice of Intent (NOP/NOI) of an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement was distributed to public agencies and interested individuals in the community for thirty days. The NEPA Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register on December 29, 1989. The purpose of the notice was to formally announce the preparation of a master plan and to solicit public input on the potential environmental consequences of the Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan Update. During the NOP/NOI circulation period in both 1990 and 1992, scoping meetings were held to solicit input from the general public and local, state, and federal agencies regarding the probable environmental effects of the Heavenly Ski Resort Master Plan. Scoping meetings were held on January 18, 1990, and March 4, 1992. The 1992 scoping meeting was held to ensure that the public was given a chance to comment on all Master Plan components as updated following the sale of Heavenly to Kamori Kanko Company, Ltd. of Japan. Appendix D of the EIR/EIS/EIS includes the minutes of the scoping meetings and a list of attendees.

The Master Plan Steering Committee announced the availability of the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS through a well-publicized media effort which began a planned 60-day public comment period on April 4, 1995. The Notice of Availability of the NEPA document was published in the Federal Register on April 14, 1995. The public comment period was extended an additional 30 days, as noticed in the May 26, 1995 Federal Register, and closed on July 5, 1995. However, comments received after this date were also considered in the preparation of the Final EIR/EIS/EIS.

Two hundred and fifty copies of the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS were printed. Copies of the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS were distributed to Federal and State agencies, local governments, elected officials, libraries, organizations and some concerned citizens. It was provided to others upon request, for a printing fee, until nearly all copies had been distributed. Copies of the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS were also available at nine libraries and five government offices for public viewing. A separate summary document was mailed, without charge, to interested persons and distributed at public workshops and presentations.

The Draft EIS received 42 comment letters during the 90-day public comment period. Of the 42 comment letters, 29 included substantive comments. The other 13 letters either requested copies of the draft documents or made no comment. The Final EIS, distributed on April 19, 1996, responded not only to the 42 letters, but also to comments made at TRPA Advisory Planning Commission and Governing Board hearings, and a City of South Lake Tahoe Planning Commission meeting. Refer to Table 8.2-1 of the Final EIS for a complete listing of comments received on the EIS. The Notice of Availability of the final document was noticed in the Federal Register on May 13, 1996. This final document incorporated all of the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS documents and added an Appendix incorporating changes to those documents, as well as the response to comments. Consequently, the reader must reference the Draft EIR/EIS/EIS along with the final documents to have a complete representation of the environmental documentation upon which this decision was based.

On June 26, 1996, the TRPA's Governing Board certified the technical adequacy of the Final EIS, pursuant to the TRPA's Rules of Procedure, and approved the Master Plan. Public comments made to the steering committee after the final EIR/EIS/EIS release were addressed and presented to the TRPA Governing Board. Subsequently, any findings made by the board or any additional public comments received at the hearings were considered in the formulation of this ROD.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: This decision may be implemented beginning October 14, 1996. If administrative appeals are received on this decision, implementation will be delayed pending the results of appeal resolution.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS: My decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215. Appeals must be filed within 45 days from the publication of the legal notice of this decision in the Tahoe Daily Tribune (legal notice will be published August 23, 1996; appeal period ends October 7, 1996). Notices of appeal must meet the specific content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. Your notice of appeal should: state under which regulation your appeal is being filed, include your name, address, and telephone number, identify this decision being appealed (include the title of this document, its date and the name and title of the Forest Officer who signed it); specify that portion of the decision to which you object or identify the specific change(s) in the decision that you seek; state how the decision fails to consider comments previously provided; and, if applicable, state how the decision violates law, regulation, or policy. Appellants must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.11.

CONTACT PERSON: Questions related to this decision may be addressed to Robert McDowell, Forest Planner, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, 670 Emerald Bay Road, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150; or phone (916) 573-2623.

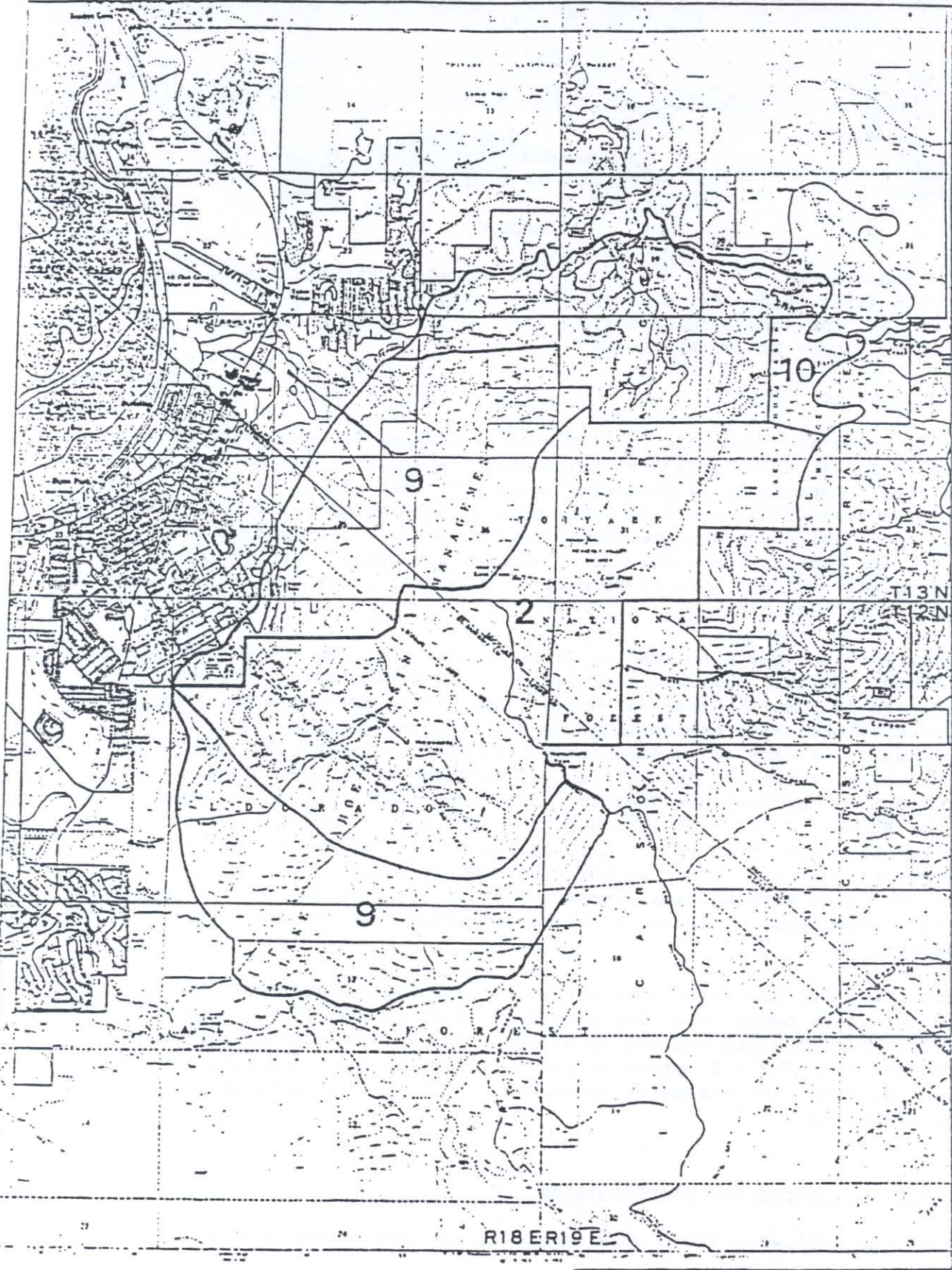
for *Robert E. Harris*

ROBERT E. HARRIS
Forest Supervisor

DATE: 8/20/96

Attachment: Revised Heavenly Management Area

HEAVENLY VALLEY MANAGEMENT AREA



- PREScriptions
- 2 Alpine Skiing
 - 9 Maintenance
 - 10 Timber Stand Maintenance

(Amended, 1996)
Management Area Direction

HEAVENLY

9,868 Gross Acres	7,408 National Forest System Acres
TRPA Plan Areas: 082, 086, 087, 088, part of 080, and land outside basin.	5,288 In Basin
Unsuitable Timber Lands: All Acres	2,120 Outside Basin

I. Description

The management area consists primarily of land which is under special use permit to Heavenly Ski Area for construction, operation, and maintenance of a ski resort. Topography is generally steep with most slopes in excess of 30%. The entire area within the Lake Tahoe hydrographic boundary is considered high hazard land. Although not included in the land capability rating system, the area outside the basin boundary is of similar character. Except where ski runs have been cleared, the area is forested. Subalpine forest conditions prevail at the higher elevations.

Heavenly Ski Area began in 1955 in California at the edge of the City of South Lake Tahoe. In 1965 the resort expanded to the Nevada side. The original master plan for the ski area was dated 1966. There are currently (in 1996) twenty-five lifts with the combined uphill designed capacity of 29,630 skiers/hour. As many as 14,000 people have been served by the resort on a peak day. In 1996, a revised master plan was approved after over five years of development by the Heavenly Steering Committee, consisting of representatives from the Forest Service - LTBMU, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Heavenly Ski Area, El Dorado County, the City of South Lake Tahoe, and Douglas County. Implementation of that plan, at build out, would result in a total of thirty-two lifts with an uphill capacity of 52,800 skiers/hour. In addition, the 1996 master plan projects increased summertime activities within the resort boundaries.

Although base facilities on both the California and Nevada sides of the area are on privately owned land, day lodges and food service facilities situated at mid-level locations are located on national forest land, as is a storage and maintenance shop for hill grooming and lift maintenance equipment. The ski area is equipped with extensive snowmaking facilities on both the California and Nevada sides.

II. Issues, Concerns and Opportunities

In 1988, the following ICO's were developed for the Heavenly Management Area.

1. Ski trails are the most significant visual man-made alteration of the national forest landscape at Lake Tahoe. Modest attempts to soften the effects with feathered tree removal along the edges of cleared ski trails has not successfully reduced the visual impact.

2. Removal of boulders, tree stumps and other obstacles, as well as shaping of terrain on ski trails, has resulted in substantial soil disturbance, leading to high rates of soil erosion and nutrient transport to Lake Tahoe. The decomposed granite soils are difficult to stabilize and revegetate. Since about 1965, major efforts have been made to stabilize eroding areas and establish protective cover of low vegetation at a cost in excess of \$3 million. Although many acres of disturbed area have been stabilized, water quality standards have not been attained for much of the area. Major failures of some erosion structures occurred during a severe localized summer thunderstorm in 1983, requiring extensive repairs.

Recent ski run clearing techniques with over-the-snow logging and spot blasting of rocks promises to be less disturbing to the landscape.

3. Optimum use of the area for skiing will continue to require modification of lifts, additional lifts, snowmaking facilities, and trail modifications. These improvements may occur without an increase in skiing capacity.
4. There is considerable opportunity to expand skiing capacity at Heavenly. This has been estimated at 5,400 new skiers at one time (SAOT) on the California side and 3,600 new SAOT on the Nevada side outside the basin. Some of the expansion may be outside the boundary of this management area. Expansion will be controversial because of the potential effects upon water and air quality. Furthermore, parking facilities will not be allowed to expand in the basin. Access is therefore dependent upon alternative transportation systems. Heavenly Valley began bus service in 1975 and as of 1984 has 9 busses in operation.
5. Water rights allocation in the basin may limit the amount of water available for irrigation and snowmaking.
6. Security of improvements, hazards from equipment, and sensitivity of erosion control work has limited the extent of summer recreation use in the area. There remain opportunities to expand summer recreation through the construction of hiking trails, such as the Tahoe Rim Trail.

In 1996, the following ICO was added to the list for the management area.

7. Through studies initiated as part of the master planning process, numerous cultural and historical resources were identified, from past logging and Washoe activities. These resources could be affected by area activities.

III. Resource Management Emphasis

Alpine skiing will continue to be the emphasis throughout most of the management area. The 1996 master plan directs the future development in the area, in compliance with other regional plans. The steep northwest facing slopes of East Peak and the slopes into Cold Creek will be managed to protect the watershed and to serve as a visual backdrop.

The desired future condition is a quality ski resort with ski runs and other disturbed areas stabilized to reduce the potential for soil erosion. Some improvement in the visual quality of the area will be noticeable. Implementation of the Construction Erosion Reduction Program (CERP), a program of measures designed to mitigate impacts to water quality, will provide for water quality improvements.

IV. Management Area Prescription

<u>Prescription</u>	<u>Acres</u>
2 - Alpine Skiing	4,250
9 - Maintenance	2,761
10- Timber Maintenance	185
12- Urban Lots (not mapped)	212

V. Management Area Standards and Guidelines

Forestwide standards and guidelines apply. The following direction supplements them:

<u>Practice</u>	<u>Standard and Guideline</u>
4- Downhill Skiing	<p>Implement the 1996 Heavenly Ski Area Master Plan, including development of the gondola, new ski lifts and runs, support facilities, and mitigation measures, including the CERP. Encourage the implementation of components of the 1996 Master Plan's mitigation program not entirely under the jurisdiction of the USDA Forest Service.</p> <p>The 1996 Master Plan includes expansion of the ski resort within and outside of the TRPA basin. Maximum enlargement of the ski area will be an additional 5,400 Persons at One Time (PAOT, as defined by the TRPA Ski Area Master Plan Guidelines, 1990) over the existing level inside the basin and 3,600 PAOT outside the basin. Existing (1996) PAOT levels are 6,751 within the basin and 2,329 outside of the basin.</p> <p>Routinely reassess and update the 1996 Master Plan at least every five years, or as needed to keep it current with any modifications to the Forest Plan or TRPA Regional Plan.</p> <p>Update the Summer Operations and Erosion Control Plan annually. Use this Plan as a guide for, and tool to document, the administration of erosion control projects,</p>

visual rehabilitation, run improvements, and lift construction and reconstruction.

Use the "Operation and Avalanche Plan," as updated annually, as a guide for administration of winter activities within the ski area.

7- Dispersed Recreation
Management - Summer

When constructed, the gondola will be the focus of summer recreational uses rather than the tram. The tram will be removed and replaced with a quad that will not be used in the summer.

Maintain the OHV closure. Work with Heavenly Ski Area to provide public access from the ski area to general forest lands for nonmotorized recreation activities.

Maintain the camping closure.

8- Dispersed Recreation
Management - Winter

Maintain the public OHV closure. Access may be required for Forest Service or ski area administration.

9- Visual Quality

New ski runs will be constructed without denuding or removing groundcover, typically using only temporary roads for construction. Clearings should have varied edges, and colors of facilities should blend with natural surroundings.

Structures and improvements will be attractive and harmonious with a rural mountain ski development setting as viewed in the foreground.

The visual quality objective (VQO) for the alignment of the gondola, as described in the 1996 Master Plan, is Partial Retention. While lands allocated to this prescription are normally governed by a Retention VQO, this guideline makes a specific modification to accommodate the gondola.

29- Water Use Management

Obtain water rights, or purchase water, sufficient to irrigate stabilization projects and for snowmaking.

30- Water Quality
Maintenance and
Improvement

Continue to treat sources of soil erosion.

Emphasize use of native drought-tolerant species in revegetation projects.

As described in the cumulative watershed effects analysis, activities designed to enhance the quality of skiing will proceed in concert with stabilization of disturbed areas.

35 -Land and Resource
Management Planning

Individually assess whether additional site-specific analyses are needed to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act prior to implementing project level actions directed by the 1996 Master Plan.

An annual report on the status of the implementation of the mitigation program should be submitted by Heavenly Ski Area to the Forest Service. At increments of five years or less, the 1996 Master Plan and its associated environmental documents should be reviewed to assess the effectiveness of planned mitigations in light of Heavenly's annual reports. If measures are not effective in mitigating impacts, they must be reapplied or new measures must be developed and applied.

VI. Proposed Resolution of Issues and Concerns

These resolutions have been updated (in 1996) from the original responses in the 1988 Forest Plan.

1. The CERP, included as part of the 1996 Master Plan, implements revegetation for existing ski trails using both grasses and woody plants. This program includes summertime irrigation of the revegetated areas using the snowmaking system, allowing for increased likelihood of successful revegetation efforts. Improved revegetation should benefit the visual quality of ski trails. In addition, the CERP requires the obliteration of any existing roads that are not essential to resort operations.
2. Past run clearing activities included "summer grooming," a practice which resulted in a smooth ground surface that could be skied upon with only six inches of snow. Thus, obstacles such as boulders and stumps were removed, resulting in soil disturbance. With expanded snowmaking, new construction no longer requires summer grooming. Instead, most boulders, tree stumps and trunks and existing groundcover can be retained since snowmaking allows minimum snow depth to be controlled. Water bars will be installed on ski runs to reduce the high rates of soil erosion associated with long slope lengths. In addition, the snowmaking system can be used for summertime irrigation of the grasses and woody shrubs used for revegetation, benefitting slope stabilization. Thus, the goals of the CERP -- including improved water quality -- can more readily be achieved.

All new run or lift clearing will be performed using techniques that are less land disturbing than past practices, including over-snow or helicopter tree removal and spot blasting. Helicopters will be used to place towers and use of existing and temporary roads will be maximized to minimize the need for new road construction.

3. The 1996 Master Plan details the future operations of the mountain and identifies where modifications will occur, as well as necessary mitigations. Other facilities, such as day lodges, restaurants, restrooms, maintenance facilities, etc., are described. It also provides for increases in skiing capacity.
4. A new skiing capacity indicator, the TRPA PAOT, was created as part of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's TRPA Ski Area Master Plan Guidelines (1990). The Forest Service cooperated in the development of the guidelines. While the definition of "PAOT" has been modified, the number of PAOTs allowed through the Heavenly master planning process is the same: 5,400 for the California side; 3,600 in Nevada.

As approved in the 1996 Master Plan, the gondola will extend to outside the boundary of the management area. The development of the 1996 master plan and its associated environmental documents provided for public and interagency participation, including public workshops, public hearings, and numerous Heavenly steering committee meetings, which were open to the public and noticed both in the newspaper and through post office postings. The documents identify mitigation for water quality (the CERP) and air quality (the coordinated transit system, or CTS). The 1996 Master Plan does not provide for new parking facilities. Additional access is dependent on expanded bussing, walk-ins, the gondola, and the CTS. In the 1995-96 season, Heavenly provided 34 busses, operated by the local public bus service, the South Tahoe Area Ground Express.

5. The 1996 Master Plan identifies adequate supplies of water, with the needed water rights, for build out of the master plan including its associated irrigation and snowmaking needs. California and Nevada will appropriate water based upon requests from all interested parties. If water rights are later found to be unavailable, water can be purchased from local purveyors.
6. The 1996 Master Plan envisions an increase in summertime activities. It provides for the development of both cultural and nature interpretive centers, controlled hiking on the mountain, fishing at East Peak Lake, horseback riding at East Peak Lake, and concerts at the Gondola Top Station, as well as mountain biking on existing roads. The Tahoe Rim Trail was constructed through the area in 1991 and will be maintained.

In 1996, the following ICO's were added to the list for the MA.

7. Areas that may be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places will be either protected, avoided, or interpreted. In cooperation with the Washoe Indian Tribe of Nevada and the Forest Service, Heavenly will provide an interpretive facility and interpretive experiences.

VII. Specific Monitoring and Evaluation Requirements

Implement the monitoring requirements assigned to the Forest Service, as described in the "Heavenly Ski Area Water Quality, Watershed Condition, and Best Management Practices Monitoring Program," included as part of the 1996 Master Plan.