

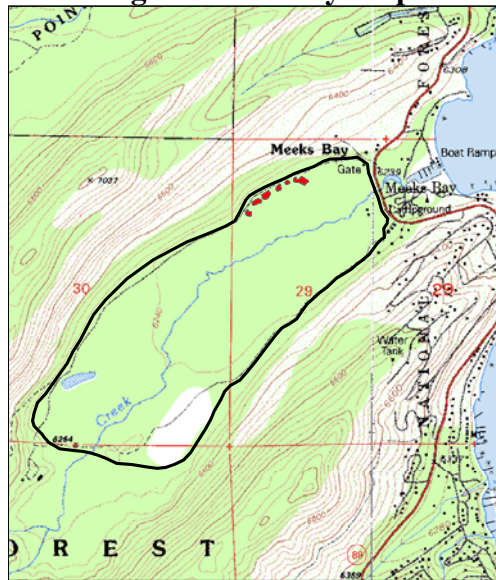
Proposed Action for the Meeks Meadow Washoe Restoration Project

USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
El Dorado County, California

I. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION

The Meeks Meadow project is located in the Meeks Creek Watershed in Section 29, T14N, R17E of the Homewood Quadrangle map.

Figure 1. Vicinity Map



II. PURPOSE AND NEED

The meadow ecosystem is currently in a state of decline. Lack of fire has led to lodgepole and fir encroachment into the meadow. Meadow vegetation and traditionally important plant species to the Washoe Tribe are currently being suppressed by the Lodgepole pine and White fir invasion stands. The dense invasion stands are susceptible to devastating wildfire and insect infestation. The project area is adjacent to urbanized development, developed recreation site, and an area of concentrated public use. There is a need to reduce the risk of wildfire by treating the hazardous fuel loading.

The purpose of the project is to serve as a pilot project to restore the meadow ecosystem through fuels reductions. The project will reinitiate Washoe stewardship practices in order to restore culturally important native vegetation. The Washoe Tribe needs to restore a location to gather and utilize traditional plants. Management of the meadow is expected to improve ecological functions

and promote native flora and fauna. The low intensity burn and use of digging sticks is expected to increase the density of native meadow species and reduce the invasion of upland species.

The project will help support cooperation between the Washoe Tribe and the USFS LTBMU as well as other federal, state and local agencies.

III. PROPOSED ACTION

The Meeks Meadow project is directed at returning Washoe cultural practices to Meeks Meadow in order to restore the meadow ecosystem. The project will serve as a pilot project for future meadow treatments and will include treatments on approximately 10 acres of meadow ecosystem. The project will incorporate thinning, prescribed fire, and traditional stewardship practices to encourage regeneration of the meadow vegetation.

Five plots have been established and will receive treatments consisting of hand thinning, low intensity broadcast burning, disturbance and natural reseeding. A sixth plot has been established to serve as the control plot and will not receive any treatments. Lodgepole pine and fir trees will be hand thinned to allow for regeneration of native meadow vegetation in plots 1-5. All lodgepole pine and fir trees of 20 inch dbh and below will be removed. Cedar and Ponderosa/ Jeffrey pine trees will be retained. Stumps will be flush cut and hatched to encourage natural breakdown. A low intensity broadcast burn will be used in the meadow ecosystem of plots 2-5 to promote the growth of native species and suppress exotic species. Traditional Washoe methods, such as digging sticks, will be used to disturb the surface of the land, following prescribed burn, to promote the growth of native vegetation. The digging sticks will be used in plots 4 and 5 and will break up the rhizomes of the plant species and encourage natural regeneration of native plants. Digging sticks will be used randomly throughout the two designated plots and will break up the top 1-2 inches of soil. The digging sticks will not affect the meadow hydrologic features and are consistent with project design features. The plots will experience natural reseeding following treatments. No artificial seeding will take place. Down logs will be removed from the plots to decrease fuel loading and allow for meadow regeneration. All plots will be monitored pre and post treatment to evaluate effectiveness of treatments. Plots begin approximately 25 feet off of the trail. This will provide for a visual screen or buffer zone between the treatment plots and the trail.

The goal of the proposed project is to restore meadow ecosystem to approximately 10 acres of Meeks Meadow. The project will serve as a pilot project for future meadow restoration work. Through the project the Washoe Tribe hopes to:

- Restore meadow ecosystem to approximately 10 acres of meadow
- Improve ecological function in Meeks Meadow

- Regenerate native flora and fauna (especially culturally important species)
- Reinitiate cultural practices
- Reintroduce fire to meadow ecosystem
- Reduce the risk of noxious weeds, dwarf mistletoe and mountain pine bark beetle by reducing tree densities and encouraging native plant regeneration

IV. PROJECT DESIGN FEATURES

Project design features are elements of the project design that are applied in treatment areas. These features were developed to reduce or avoid negative environmental effects of the proposed action on forest resources. The project is expected to meet the Forest-wide standards and guidelines, and the Management Area direction.

Fire and Fuels –

1. Adhere to Federal, Regional, State and local guidelines regarding air quality including the LTBMU Smoke Management Plan. (Forest Plan IV-44, 2). All prescribed burning will adhere to Federal, regional, State and local guidelines regarding air quality including the LTBMU Smoke Management Plan. A Prescribed Burn Plan and Smoke Management Plan have been completed with detailed prescriptions for smoke management and prescribed fire operations.
2. Plots will be monitored for cheat grass invasion into the meadow following disturbance.

Wildlife and Fish -

1. Conduct surveys in compliance with the Pacific Southwest Region's survey protocols during the planning process when vegetation treatments that are likely to reduce habitat quality are proposed in suitable northern goshawk nesting habitat that is not within an existing California spotted owl or northern goshawk PAC. Designate protected activity centers (PACs) where appropriate based on survey results (SNFPA 54.34).
2. As part of the project planning process, survey emphasis habitat (suitable habitat) within 5 miles of occupied willow flycatcher sites to determine willow flycatcher occupancy (SNFPA 58.62). Implementation of a limited operating period (June 1-Aug 31) may be necessary depending on results of surveys.
3. If northern goshawk PACs are designated within the project action area as a result of above mentioned surveys: Maintain a limited operating period (LOP), prohibiting vegetation treatments within approximately ¼ mile of the nest site during the breeding season (February 15 through September 15) unless surveys confirm that northern goshawks are not nesting. If the nest stand within a protected activity center (PAC) is unknown, either apply the LOP to a ¼- mile area surrounding the PAC, or survey to determine the nest stand location. (SNFPA 60.76)

4. Retain an average of 2-4 of the largest snags per acre (SNFPA 51.11) where snags occur within the project area, preferentially retaining fir snags if available.
5. Retain any large (> 10 inches diameter) woody debris that occurs within the project area to the extent feasible and at levels that do not compromise the goals of meadow restoration (~5 tons/acre or ~ 3 logs 60 ft long/acre). Emphasize retention of woody debris in decay classes 1, 2 and 3 (SNFPA 51.10).
6. Manage sensitive plants to ensure that species do not become threatened or endangered because of Forest Service activities.
7. Require use of plant species native to the area or species approved for local use when revegetating disturbed sites and landscaping improvements.
8. Prohibit or mitigate ground-disturbing activities that adversely affect hydrologic processes that maintain water flow, water quality, or water temperature critical to sustaining bog and fen ecosystems and plant species that depend on these ecosystems. During project analysis, survey, map, and develop measures to protect bogs and fens from such activities as trampling by livestock, pack stock, humans, and wheeled vehicles. (SNFPA 65.118)

Water Quality Maintenance and Improvement –

1. Restore damaged watersheds and sites contributing to water quality degradation. Schedule restoration of land identified in the watershed improvement needs inventory to be completed within 20 years. The priority for restoration will be 1) stream environment zones; 2) shore zones; and 3) high hazard land.

Soils -

1. Design projects to reduce potential soil erosion and the loss of soil productivity caused by loss of vegetation and ground cover. Examples are activities that would: (1) provide for adequate soil cover in the short term; (2) accelerate the dispersal of coarse woody debris; (3) reduce the potential impacts of the fire on water quality; and (4) carefully plan restoration/salvage activities to minimize additional short-term effects (SNFPA 52.13)

The Meeks Meadow project will reduce the long term potential for soil erosion and increase the soil productivity by restoring meadow vegetation within the meadow complex. Additional, short term impacts will be minimized through the use of BMP's during all treatment activities.

2. Recommend restoration practices in: (1) areas with compaction in excess of soil quality standards, (2) areas with lowered water tables, or (3) areas that are either actively down cutting or that have historic gullies. Identify other management practices, for example, road building, recreational use, grazing, and timber harvests, that may be contributing to the observed degradation (SNPFA 66.122)

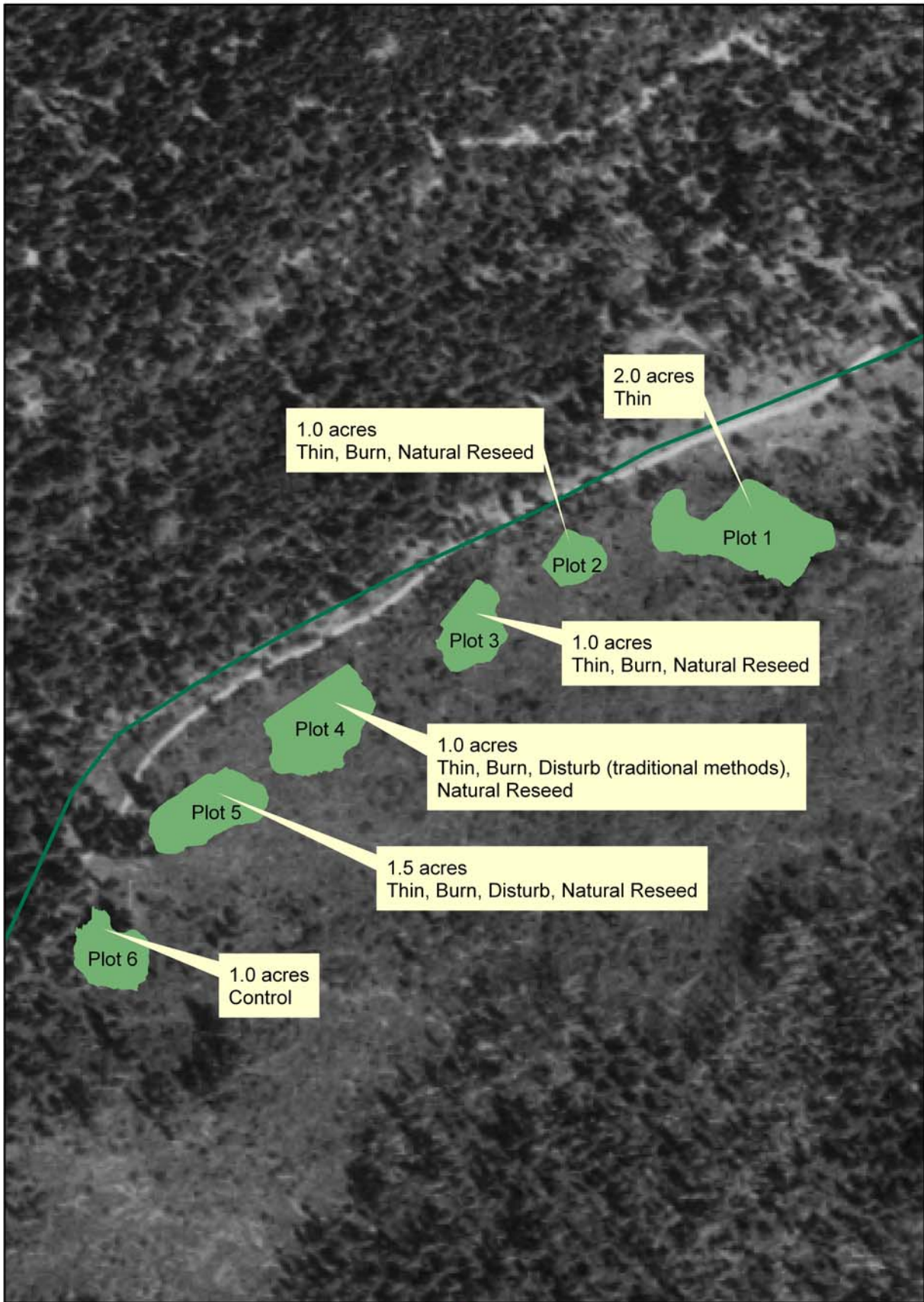
V. TIMELINE


Public Scoping – May 2008

Completion of NEPA documentation – July 2008

Project Implementation –

- *Phase 1 (Fuels Reduction) – August 2008*
- *Phase 2 (Prescribed Fire) – October 2008*



 Treatment Plots



This data has been compiled on a geographic information system for the use of Washoe Tribe Environmental. The data does not represent survey delineation and should not be construed as a replacement for the authoritative source. The Washoe Tribe assumes no liability as to the sufficiency or accuracy of this data.