



File Code: 1950

Date: February 11, 2009

Dear Interested Individuals, Organizations and Agencies:

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) is seeking public comment on the Proposed Action for the Angora Fire Restoration Project. The Angora wildfire started on June 24, 2007, destroying more than 250 structures and burning approximately 2,700 acres of National Forest System land.

Since July 2007, we've completed or are continuing restoration work consisting of: water quality monitoring, stabilizing soils and installing erosion control devices; survey and removal of noxious weeds; removing hazard trees along roads and trails; and seeding and replanting urban lots.

This project represents our final stage of planning restoration activities with focus on restoring portions of National Forest System lands. The project area encompasses the boundary of the Angora Fire area (see attached location map).

We approached this project from an integrated and multi-resource perspective since the fire affected the entire landscape within this project boundary. Our resource specialists looked at resources (vegetation, fuels, wildlife, watershed, roads, and trails) across the project area. We identified opportunities for potential restoration activities which we shared and sought your feedback between May and June 2008 (45-day input period). Approximately 60 people attended a public open house meeting and an additional 15 people submitted written comments or called with verbal input.

The input we received reflected a wide array of values and concerns. Overall, the input and comments confirmed we were addressing the right resources and restoration opportunities. The degree and magnitude of how much restoration is needed resulted in a range of public comments for a few resources. Fuels reduction is an example. Some wanted to see most of the burned trees removed while others wanted to see them all remain. We considered that range of comments and this proposal addresses both scenarios: tree removal will occur in portions of the project area to reduce future fuel loading near residential areas and on other portions we are not proposing to remove trees.

Based on your input, as well as comments from local agencies, conducting additional resource inventories, water quality monitoring and Forest Service resource management direction, we propose the following restoration activities:



| Areas of Restoration | Summary of Major Activities | Purpose |
|--|--|---|
| Fire, Fuels, Vegetation, and Forest Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove standing and downed dead trees – up to 1,398 acres • Planting conifers on up to 1,100 acres • Construct up to 7.7 miles of temporary roads for fuels reduction purposes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas near neighborhoods receive number one priority for treatment • Reduce future wildfire severity and risk in the Wildland Urban Interface (defense zone) |
| Wildlife Habitat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate snag and down wood components into fuel reduction and reforestation prescriptions • Plant aspen and thin conifers to expand aspen stands (8 acres) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain and enhance wildlife habitat |
| Aquatic Habitat and Stream Channel Restoration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore 1,200 feet of Angora Creek floodplain • Restore hydrological connectivity and riparian wetlands at Seneca Pond to Angora Creek • Place large woody debris in 2 miles of Angora Creek • Restore Gardner Mountain meadow by removing encroaching conifers and restoring water flow patterns by filling in 1,500 feet of an incised channel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce erosion and sedimentation • Restore aquatic habitat • Improve natural wetland and meadow conditions |
| Road and Trail Delineation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct 6.2 miles of new road (includes 3.6 mi. on existing prisms) • Construct 7 miles of trails (includes 2.2 miles on existing prisms) • Move 1.4 miles of trails out of sensitive areas (Streamside Environment Zones - SEZs) • Move 0.3 miles of roads out of SEZs • Decommission and restore 2.7 miles of road • Decommission and restore 16.3 miles of trail | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide road access for administrative resource management; • Provide non-motorized recreational trail access • Relocate roads and trails away from sensitive areas to the extent possible; • Decommission and restore roads and trails not needed for the classified road and trail system • Upgrade classified roads and trails to FS standards with water quality Best Management Practices • Over-the-snow vehicles allowed where currently authorized |

Note: for complete details and locations of all activities, please see the "Proposed Action" document

More detailed information on how we arrived at the proposed activities above is posted on the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit website, <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/ltbmu/projects> under the Angora Fire Restoration Project Proposed Action and maps.

The Angora Fire Restoration Project activities are consistent with the objectives and management direction of the LTBMU Land and Resources Management Plan (Forest Plan) and forest plan amendments including the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision (SNFPA) for restoration of fire-damaged ecosystems, stream and meadow areas and travel and trail opportunities.

We are hosting a public meeting on March 3, 2009, to share the proposed project activities, answer questions and encourage comment on the project. The location of the meeting is the Inn by the Lake, 3300 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, CA, 96150. The meeting will use an open house format with brief presentations at 4:00 p.m. and again at 5:30 p.m. to explain the proposed action. In between the presentations, you will have the opportunity to learn about the project in more detail through information stations for addressing specific resources, asking questions and submitting comments.

Announcements regarding this meeting and continuing project progress will be posted on the LTBMU website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/ltbmu/projects> and will be provided to media outlets.

As the Angora Fire Restoration Project continues through the environmental analysis process, the Forest Service will be lead agency for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. We work closely with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (LRWQCB) to meet applicable regulations. This project would carry out the necessary planning through NEPA to be consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and policy.

How to Comment and Timeframe:

This public comment period is the scoping stage under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. This scoping notice is intended to provide those interested in, or affected by, this project with an opportunity to make their concerns known. We encourage you to be as specific as possible in your comments with regard to potential effects of the proposed action.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this project will be most helpful if they are submitted by March 13, 2009, which is the end of the 30-day public scoping period. The office business hours for those providing hand-delivered comments are 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Oral comments may be provided during normal business hours via telephone at (530) 543-2600 or in person, or at an official agency function (i.e. public meeting) that is designed to elicit public comments. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to comments-pacificsouthwest-ltbmu@fs.fed.us using subject: Angora Restoration Project. Comments in written, hand delivered or facsimile forms can be submitted to Matt Dickinson, NEPA Planner, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, 35 College Dr., South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150; 530-543-2693 (FAX).

If you would like to review the Proposed Action and maps, they are posted on the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit website, <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/ltbmu/projects>. You may also request a CD or a hard copy from the Lake Tahoe Basin Forest Supervisor's office. For further information regarding this proposed action, contact Duncan Leao or Richard Vacirca, Interdisciplinary Team Leaders at (530) 543-2600.

We appreciate the formal and informal feedback we've received in developing the restoration efforts we feel are needed to be proposed and implemented over the next couple years in order to meet resource and recreation needs into the future. We ask for your continued input by reviewing the proposal as provided in summary through this letter and described in detail on our website.

Sincerely,



TERRI MARCERON
Forest Supervisor