



DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION
NORTHERN REGION HEADQUARTERS
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Date: November 30, 2021
Reference: 1-21-00137 HUM
Subject: Official Response to Significant Environmental Points from Public Comment

Lewis Lester
lester@asis.com

Dear Lewis Lester,

You submitted a letter to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE / Department), through email received at the Northern Region Headquarters Office in Santa Rosa, CA on October 28, 2021 regarding Timber Harvesting Plan (THP) 1-21-00137 HUM "Bosco THP". The primary concerns were the boundary line location, increased fire hazard, and the condition of trees to be harvested. Additionally, there were concerns for impacts to Miller Creek, Miller Creek Road, and to the watershed through climate change. The original letter has also been scanned and is available through the attachments of this THP online in CalTREES.

CONCERN: boundary line location, increased fire hazard risk

Our parcel (220-211-002-000) borders that land on the South and southeast of the proposed THP. These are some of our concerns.

There have been previous encroachments at the border where firewood seems to have been cut on our land, one resulting in a fire which required the deployment of a Hot Shot team. Have the lines been surveyed adequately to avoid logs being taken from our property and will this logging increase our fire hazard?

RESPONSE: The property boundary concern is a domestic issue. The Department recommends contacting the RPF or landowner directly to initiate any discussions where concerns may exist for ownership lines. Property boundary issues are best resolved through consultation with a license land surveyor and contacting the county assessor's office and is not the jurisdiction of the Department. During the preharvest inspection (PHI) the CAL FIRE inspector did not report any potential boundary line issues.

Item 30 of the THP, starting on page 52, outlines the proposed hazard reduction for the timber operations, including fuel treatment adjacent near roads and structures. This includes the potential for slash management by; removal, lopping, chipping, or piling and burning.

The THP discusses in detail the wildfire risk hazard starting on page 135 in Section IV:

"The proposed project will reduce total fuel loading through the harvest of forest products and rearrange the continuity of the fuels; however the proposed project is unlikely to result in a change to the FHSZ designation within the assessment area. In addition, the assessment area is within the influence of coastal weather conditions, particularly summer time fog and cool nighttime temperatures. Given the discussion above, this proposed project is not expected to result in a significant adverse or cumulative impact relating to fire hazard

severity zones as mapped by FRAP.

The project area is located within an ownership that has been managed in the past for commercial timber production. Timber stands within the assessment area generally range in age from 30-80 years old. There are a few younger regenerating stands within the assessment area as well as a few older stands that are associated with resource protection.

The proposed harvest area is comprised of uneven age merchantable timber (30-60 years old) with a dense crown canopy, moderate cover of surface fuels (grasses, forbs, brush and down material) and moderate levels of ladder fuels (understory trees, lower branches of overstory trees, or other biomass located between the top of the surface fuels and below the overstory tree canopy). Other mature timber stands and WLPZ/RMZs in the assessment area generally have relatively dense canopies with light to moderate understories. Recently harvested areas have higher levels of dead surface fuels composed of logging slash and live fuels consisting of conifer regeneration and competing brush. Slash within recently harvested areas may be dispersed within the harvest areas or piled in the units or along roads.

The proposed harvest operations will reduce the overall fuel loading of standing fuels in the harvest area by the removal of commercial forest products. Fuel loading in the WLPZ/RMZs will not be significantly changed.

Surface fuels in the form of logging slash will be increased following operations. Logging slash in ground based areas is generally crushed or scattered during shovel yarding operations but may also be gathered into piles if needed to successfully regenerate the site. Slash in cable yarding areas is generally left on site dispersed across the harvest area. Non-merchantable conifer tops and some hardwoods in the way of yarding the conifer may be yarded to a landing and piled. Additional non-merchantable material may be yarded and piled if needed to successfully regenerate the site. Piles will be burned if required for hazard reduction as per the FPRs and otherwise burned by the landowner to the extent feasible given regulatory and economic constraints. Conifer regeneration and growth of other vegetation following operations will also increase surface fuels. However the overall total fuel load will be reduced via the removal of commercial forest products from the harvest areas.

Given the general discontinuous nature or mosaic pattern of the fuels in the assessment area, and the overall reduction of fuels that will occur due to removal of commercial forest products, this proposed project is not expected to result in a significant adverse or cumulative impact relating to fuel conditions.

There are no public nor private fuel-breaks within the assessment area. Existing roads may serve as a "fuelbreak" as defined in 14 CCR 895.1 (a strip of modified fuel to provide a line from which to work in the control of fire). The narrow width of local roads may limit their ability to stop the spread of a wildfire, but they do provide a cleared area that can be used for suppression activities. Fuelbreaks in the form of existing logging roads on the ownership are present in the assessment area as shown on the THP maps. The logging roads proposed for use as part of this project will continue to serve as a "fuelbreak" to the extent that they serve in that function in a preharvest condition.

There are permanent structures within the assessment area that require fuel hazard reduction zones. There is neighboring properties adjacent to this property. These are primarily private residential properties and timberland some of the neighboring properties are managed for timber production. There are houses and structures adjacent to the THP

within the assessment area. Hazard reduction is proposed adjacent to all buildings and publicly accessible roads this proposed project is not expected to result in a significant adverse or cumulative impact relating to fuel breaks or fuel hazard reduction activities.

The project area is located within a moderately developed area with an extensive public road system. The assessment area is accessed by a network of both paved and forest roads. The proposed project will maintain and improve the access road into the logging area to facilitate the removal of forest products. These same road will provide access for fire suppression resources. Given the discussion above and the publicly maintained road network, this proposed project is not expected to result in a significant adverse or cumulative impact relating to road access for fire suppression.

There is a high density of residential dwellings within the fire hazard and risk assessment area. The city of Eureka and the community of Cutten both overlap the assessment area. The proposed THP would reduce risk to these resources by including site specific measures which treat logging slash to reduce fire hazard and risk as required under 14 CCR 917.2. This proposed project is not expected to significantly increase the fire hazard and risk to residential dwellings or communities.

The proposed project is not expected to significantly change the fire hazard rating within the assessment area because fire hazard ratings are based in a large part on topography, slope conditions, fire weather and vegetation types. While fuel loads will be reduced by removal of commercial forest products from the harvest area, they will not be entirely eliminated from the assessment area. The proposed project will significantly reduce canopy fuel load from the harvest area and this reduction in canopy fuels has the potential to reduce the potential for extreme fire behavior in the event.”

During timber harvest operations, equipment and personnel are required by regulation to be available to fight a fire if one should start in the immediate vicinity when harvesting is occurring. Code section PRC 4428 requires that each logging crew have a fire cache and PRC 4431 requires that each chainsaw operator have at least one serviceable round point shovel or one serviceable fire extinguisher within 25 feet. These firefighting tools, and equipment such as tractors/skidders allow operators to immediately respond should a fire start as the result of natural causes, harvest operations, or and other causes in the vicinity of harvest operations. Periodic inspections by Cal Fire inspectors include the verification of the required firefighting equipment on-site, and a violation may be issued for non-compliance.

The Department does not find any unusual, unmitigated fire hazard risk with the proposed operations.

CONCERN: condition of trees to be harvested

I am not opposed to logging of a few individual trees but feel that the requirements of this THP and the economy of scale could cause serious damage to the watershed. Are the trees being referred to the ones that are dying or are they healthy and stabilizing old growth firs?

RESPONSE: The CAL FIRE Inspector addressed the timber stand and proposed silviculture starting on page 2 of the PHI report. It was concluded that the proposed silvicultural methods were appropriate for existing stand conditions, and will ensure the establishment and/or maintenance of a balanced stand structure, and establishment of new reproduction. The Plan complies with goals of 14 CCR § 913.10, 933.10, 953.10 to restore, enhance, and maintain the productivity of the state's timberlands. It also assures that growing stock will be harvested in a manner which prevents

significant delays in reaching or maintaining Maximum Sustainable Production of High Quality Wood Products (MSP) [14 CCR § 913, 933, 953(a)]. Additionally, the CAL FIRE inspector identified that the timber stands were sufficiently marked to evaluate the silviculture prescriptions. The Inspector also stated the following in the report:

“The Plan calls for Group Selection outside of the Geology areas and Single tree selection or no harvest for the remainder of the Plan. The property is heavy to hardwoods, but Group selection will allow some defensible space around the houses and clean-up the understory.”

Section II, Page 9, Item 14 of the THP outlines the proposed silviculture for the Plan. Section III, page 73 also describes the stand conditions prior to harvest and is consistent with the PHI Report. The Department has no concerns on the proposed trees to be harvested for this THP.

CONCERN: impacts to Miller Creek

Miller Creek had been highly impacted. There are 2 streams that feed into Miller Creek on the Northwest and South East side of the THP. The stream on the Southeast flows through our land. We are concerned about reduced flow and increased sedimentation on these creeks and Miller Creek. Numerous truck loads of logs will greatly increase the dust which is already an issue for us. Even if tamped down by a water truck, will this dust layer wash off in the winter rains and add to the siltation of Miller Creek and Redwood Creek? This watershed is already impacted and flows have been greatly reduced in the 51 years we have lived here, and as noted by Fish and Wildlife.

RESPONSE: The Plan covers detailed provisions for the protection of watercourses starting on page 37, Section II, Item 26. Per 14 CCR 916, 936, and 956 it is the intent of the Department to ensure that timber operations do not potentially cause significant adverse site-specific and cumulative impacts to the beneficial uses of water, native aquatic and riparian-associated species and the beneficial functions of riparian zones. The Plan proposes no timber operations in the channel zone, or core zone of the watercourse lake protection zones (WLPZ), except at mitigated crossings per 14 CCR 916.9. Additionally, the Inner zone of the WLPZ will allow limited operations adhering to a strict overstory canopy retention, species and diameter restrictions, and quality of residual trees as outlined on page 39 of the THP and pursuant to the goals of 14 CCR 916.9.

The CAL FIRE Inspector addressed the protection of watercourses starting on page 5 of the PHI report. It was concluded that the proposed protection measures were adequate for areas near and areas with the potential to directly impact watercourses and lakes, and that the objectives and mitigations outlined in the Plan were in conformance to the Forest Practice Rules.

Most erosion to watercourses comes from road use. The Plan contains detailed road work points starting on page 42, outlining proposed mitigations to crossings and the protection of watercourses. These road work points were discussed and revised with the input of review agencies on the PHI to ensure the protection of resources. Page 5 of the PHI report concluded that crossings have been accurately described and have appropriate mitigations prescribed to protect the integrity of the crossings.

CONCERN: impacts to Miller Creek Road

I am concerned about the impact on Miller Creek Road. This road is mostly used by residents who live on it and is maintained by the residents. This is a residential neighborhood. We are concerned about the safety of numerous residents due to possibly dozens of logging truck loads if not more.(we were told there are over a million board feet in this 35 acre site but we don't know how many will be removed).

RESPONSE: Section IV, page 128 of the Plan discusses the traffic assessment of the proposed timber operations:

“Log trucks route includes a shared private road and public county and state roads. The public county and state roads include sections of Miller Creek Road, Briceland Thorn Road, Redwood Drive and Hwy 101. This THP contains less than 40 acres and is expected to result in the transport of logs 2-3 times a day for 2 months at time of operation. This is a small temporary increase in an area where log truck and other commercial vehicle use is common. Truck traffic has historically occurred on these roads and they were built to accommodate log truck traffic. Continuation of hauling operations at historic or current levels is not expected to cause a significant adverse impact to traffic on these roads. There are not any existing traffic or maintenance problems along these routes that block the routes completely. During the summer tourist season there have been no major problems, which caused significant traffic involving logging trucks. Logging truck and trailer fees, use fee permits, and fuel taxes generate revenues that provide funds for maintenance of public roads.”

The Review Team did not find any evidence that would suggest that the proposed operations would have an unusual negative addition to traffic in the area. The Plan documents that Miller Road is a private road and accessible through a road use agreement as stated under Item 38, page 61 of the Plan:

“Miller Road Committee maintains and repairs road and bridges. Landowner is member of the committee and is presently the coordinator for the committee. Landowner has legal right of way use. Landowner will leave the road in the same condition or better after use.”

CONCERN: impacts to the watershed through climate change

We hope that the impact on the land and the watershed are taken into account in light of the serious and increasing awareness of the impact of these practices on the California drought and climate change.

RESPONSE: The THP contains a detailed discussion and analysis of the watershed and climate change impacts in Section IV under the cumulative impacts assessment as required by the Board of Forestry Technical Rule Addendum No. 2. Starting on page 120 of the Plan, there are many discussion points describing the mitigations for the protection of the watershed, and concludes the following:

“All the watercourses mentioned above provide groundwater recharge, warm and cold freshwater habitat, wildlife habitat, rare and endangered species habitat, and migration habitat for anadromous fish, and spawning and rearing habitat for fish.

This THP addresses the protection of the various beneficial uses by protecting offsite fisheries habitat through standard watercourse protection measures and slope stabilization measures. These measures are contained in Addendums to Item 18 and 26 in Section II of the THP. No significant adverse impact to the beneficial uses of water is expected to occur as a result of this THP.”

Additionally, starting on page 129 of the Plan there are several cited studies and points to ensure that the project will not contribute negatively through climate change and green house gases. This is supported in the conclusions of the PHI report from the CAL FIRE inspector on page 9:

“Upon review of the THP file, including the Cumulative Impacts Analysis, my field review of the plan area, and the proposed mitigation measures, the RPF’s conclusion that a significant adverse cumulative impact would not occur appears reasonable.”

The Department agrees with the conclusions from Page 133 of the Plan:

“In summary it is the RPF’s opinion that after having performed the Cumulative Impacts Assessment, it has been determined that the proposed project as presented and mitigated, in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects will not cause, or add to significant cumulative impacts within the assessment area.”

Please consider this letter as the Department’s “Official Response” to Significant Environmental Points Raised during Public Review of THP 1-21-00137 HUM. The concerns brought up by your public comment letter have been addressed. The Plan was found in conformance with the Forest Practice Act on November 30, 2021

Thank you for your comments with this Plan. I hope you will continue to support timber operations, which are done professionally and in compliance with the rules and regulations required by the Forest Practice Act.

Sincerely,



Shawn Headley, RPF # 2970
Forester II, Forest Practice

cc: RPF, Unit, File; Timber Owner, Timberland Owner, and/or Submitter
CP, CDFW, DPR, & RWB through <https://caltreesplans.resources.ca.gov/caltrees/caltrees.aspx>