



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

May 14, 2015

Mr. Thomas L. Tidwell
Chief
United States Forest Service
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief Tidwell:

CEQ is authorizing alternative arrangements in accordance with 40 C.F.R. § 1506.11 for the proposed King Fire Restoration Project outlined in your May 7, 2015 letter with the attached memorandum from the Regional Forester (copy attached).

Specifically, you have requested alternative arrangements that:

- a. Shorten the comment period for the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) from 45 to 30 days;
- b. Eliminate the minimum 90-day requirement between the Notice of Availability of the draft EIS and the publication of the Record of Decision (ROD); and
- c. Eliminate the 30-day waiting period between publication of the final EIS and the ROD.

We are granting your request to shorten the comment period for the draft EIS from 45 to 30 days, and will continue to consider whether to grant your request to eliminate the 90-day requirement and the 30-day waiting period, based upon continued progress to enhance the outreach and engagement with the public and local stakeholders.

This alternative arrangement takes into account your commitments to:

1. Continue to enhance public and stakeholder engagement during the scoping initiated by the Notice of Intent to prepare the EIS which was published in the *Federal Register* on December 24, 2014;
2. Post the draft EIS on the Forest Service website for public review prior to publishing the official Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*;
3. Continue communication with agency officials including the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Fish and Wildlife;
4. Continue the on-going government-to-government consultation with the Federally recognized Tribes within the affected area;
5. Complete formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act; and
6. Actively discuss and exchange information with interested parties on the potential parameters of the components of the alternatives and their projected



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- environmental consequences during the public review and comment period and thereafter as the final EIS is prepared. Discussions will include:
- a. Focusing treatments on major system roads and lands previously identified for timber production;
 - b. Limiting work in riparian areas;
 - c. Limiting impacts from the wildfires such as sedimentation impacts (e.g. Rubicon River, South Fork American River), and other potential impacts from proposed treatments;
 - d. Using prescribed fire to treat fuel on steep slopes;
 - e. Strengthening and maintaining strategic fuel breaks around communities and important infrastructure;
 - f. Limiting work during wet weather;
 - g. Assessing current science on snag retention in order to better understand the effects of fire and proposed treatments;
 - h. Emphasizing the development of future forested habitat for species protected under the Endangered Species Act (e.g., amphibians);
 - i. Identifying treated and untreated areas for monitoring ecosystem response and post-treatment effectiveness;
 - j. Identifying ways to capture the economic value of burned timber to support and accomplish restoration objectives; and
 - k. Treating areas to reduce the effects of severe fire in future wildfire events.

We appreciate your personal attention to this matter, and look forward to working with you as you continue planning for the King Fire Restoration Project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christy Goldfuss".

Christy Goldfuss
Managing Director
Council on Environmental Quality