

**USDA-FOREST SERVICE**

**HAZARD TREE SALVAGE REMOVAL**

**Kibbie Roadside Hazard Tree Salvage Timber Sale**

**T.1N., R.19E., Section 4; T.2N., R.19E., Sections 21, 22, 28, 33 & 34; MDB&M.**

**Adjacent to F.S. Road 1N04 on the Groveland Ranger District, Tuolumne County**

**(G020467)**

**DECISION**

I have decided to implement the proposed action. I have reviewed the environmental analysis and have decided to remove the identified roadside trees proposed in this project.

The decision rationale for implementation of this project is based on the fact that a risk to life and property exists from hazard trees falling on someone or facilities within the project area. The decision and action implemented need to be the most expeditious, cost efficient method available to address concerns about public safety and to minimize value loss. Harvest costs would be minimized within site specific resource constraints and material would only be removed that is not needed for long-term resource recovery needs.

**PROPOSED ACTION**

The Groveland Ranger District on the Stanislaus National Forest is proposing to use a commercial timber sale to remove roadside hazard trees (primarily as a result of the Kibbie Fire of September 2003) from adjacent to Forest System (F.S.) Road 1N04 (from F.S. Road 1N14 to Trailhead Parking) within the Lower Cherry Creek (180400090307) Watershed. Roadside hazard trees will be identified using the hazard tree characteristics set forth in the Stanislaus National Forest Hazard Tree Identification Guidelines, approved November 21, 2002, and the best available information for identifying dead and dying trees for salvage purposes as developed by the Pacific Southwest Region Forest Health Protection Staff.

F.S. Road 1N14 falls under Category 2 of the Forest's Hazard Tree Procedures for Forest Plan Compliance, approved May 2, 2003. The Proposed Action will adhere to the Hazard Tree Procedures to allow prompt elimination of the imminent safety hazards associated with standing roadside hazard trees. In addition, dead "windthrown" and sawlog-valued trees felled by firefighters may also be designated for removal (within tree length to F.S. Road 1N04) for roadside maintenance and in order to recover economic value that would otherwise be lost. The project area lies between F.S. Road 1N14 and the trailhead parking area at the end of F.S. Road 1N04. Dead and dying trees within a tree length (up to 200 feet) of F.S. Road 1N04 will be designated for removal. The proposed treatment would be initiated this year.

A limiting operating period, outside and south of the fire's perimeter, prohibiting harvesting operations (with the exception of road maintenance, dust abatement and the hauling of products) between January 1 and August 31 within 800 meters of the historical bald eagle nest site will be required unless surveys determine bald eagles are not nesting. When the sale is active, the Sale Area may be closed to Public-Use. Outside of Controlled Areas and Streamside Buffer Strips, Logging Slash within the 100-foot disposal strip adjacent to F.S. Road 1N04 will be machine or hand piled by the Purchaser. Elsewhere, Logging Slash will be scattered to reduce slash concentrations with slash being generally left within 18" of the ground. Non-Sawlog Roadside Hazard Trees designated by Forest Service are to be felled by Purchaser and left in place (where needed) to meet down woody material requirements of at least 10 to 20 tons per acre of large diameter material adjacent to Maintenance Level 1 and 2 Roads.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Proposed Action is the removal of designated standing hazard trees and roadside salvage from the project area utilizing the most expeditious mechanical method available for tree removal. These trees pose a serious safety threat to the public.

The Society of American Foresters Dictionary of Forestry defines salvage cutting as “the removal of dead trees or trees damaged or dying because of injurious agents other than competition to recover economic value that would otherwise be lost.”

## **CATEGORY OF THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The proposed hazard tree removal action falls under Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Section 31.1b, 4 “Repair and Maintenance of Roads, Trails and Landline Boundaries” and is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment.

Based On field review, specialist’s input and past experience, the effects of implementing this action will be of limited complexity and intensity and will result in little or no environmental effects to either the physical or biological components of the environment.

## **FINDING OF NO EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES**

Extraordinary circumstances include, but are not limited to, the presence of steep slopes or highly erosive soils, threatened and endangered species or their critical habitat, flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds, inventoried roadless areas, Congressionally designated areas (such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas), Research Natural Areas, or Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.

This action does not involve extraordinary circumstances.

I have concluded that the project is not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species known or suspected to occur in the project influence zone. While implementation could possibly adversely impact individuals of pertinent sensitive species, the action is not likely to result in the loss of viability in the project influence area nor cause a trend toward Federal listing or loss of species viability range wide.

The decision meets all requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1996, as amended. Heritage Resource Managers are now able to apply to the District’s site specific analysis regarding removal of hazard trees along roads under the terms of the “Programmatic Agreement among the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, California State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Regarding Identification, Evaluation and Treatment of Historic Properties Managed by National Forests of the Sierra Nevada, California of 1996” (PA).

## **SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Details pertaining to site-specific projects identifying and removing hazard trees adjacent to Forest system roads, as they arise, will be available on the internet at <http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/stanislaus> (Schedule of Proposed Actions on March 2004).

Internal scoping included regulatory agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, City and County of San Francisco and Yosemite National Park.

I conclude from scoping that there is demonstrated public interest in performing this work. This decision is being distributed to interested and potentially affected parties and will also be posted on the Forest’s Internet site.

**FOREST PLAN DIRECTION / FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS**

This Proposed project is consistent with laws, regulations, and policy, as well as Standards and Guidelines in the 1991 Stanislaus National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (SNFP) as amended and requirements of the National Forest Management Act. Hazard trees and their management are issues addressed in the Stanislaus NF Hazard Tree Procedures, dated May 2, 2003.

This decision is also in accordance with other applicable federal regulations and laws, and agency policies.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

This decision can be implemented immediately and is not subject to administrative appeal pursuant to 36CFR215.8(a) (4).

**CONTACT PERSON**

For additional information concerning this decision, contact Denise New, Acting Public Service Program Area Leader, Groveland Ranger District, 24545 Highway 120, Groveland, CA. 95321, (209) 962-7825, Ext. 526.

**APPROVED BY**

/s/ John R. Swanson  
**JOHN R. SWANSON**  
**District Ranger**

September 27, 2004  
**DATE**