

File Code:

Date: January 11, 2018

Last Chance Mastication Project

Stanislaus National Forest

Calaveras Ranger District

Proposed Activities

The Calaveras Ranger District is proposing to mechanically treat 433 acres of mixed conifer and manzanita. All treatment areas were part of the Darby fire which burned in 2001.

Treatments will include mechanically shredding/masticating brush and trees less than 8 inches on three hundred acres and hand cut and thin the remaining acres due to rocky terrain. When the piling is done we will burn the piles.

The fuels reduction in this area will protect the local communities of Forest Meadows, Sunrise Point, Darby Knob and Hathaway Pines. On September 5th 2001, a human caused fire started east of Clarks Flat in the bottom of the Stanislaus River Canyon, (which is directly below the Last Chance Mastication Project). The fire initially burned upslope and immediately threatened the communities of Forest Meadows, Sunrise Point, Darby Knob and Avery. If another wildfire was to start in this area the fuels treatment would give firefighters as well as aircraft a strategic place to hold the fire and slow it down before it was to reach the communities.

Project location

The treatment units are located in T4N, R14E, Sec 20,29,30,31. This area is in the wildland urban interface defense zone. (Defense Zone, Sierra Forest Plan Amendment pg A46) The project will be accomplished from February 2018 to February 2019.

All masticated fuels will be shredded into lengths of 16 inches and below and are not to exceed 12 inches in height. On rocky terrain and slopes greater than 35% fuels will be hand thinned and piled to burn. Road side chipping will occur when feasible.

Review of information

A review was conducted to determine if the project is valid in accordance with all current laws, regulations, and standards and guidelines. The following items were considered in the review.

- The site is compatible with the Strategic Fire Planning objectives and the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (January 2004)
- The project area is within the Urban Wildland Intermix Zone (Defense Zone), which requires fuels treatment to prevent the loss of life and property from wildland fire.

- Biological Assessment (BAs) were prepared for federally proposed, threatened, endangered, and sensitive wildlife and botany species possibly occurring in this area. The BAs indicated that fuels treatments would have no effect on threatened and endangered species and sensitive plant species. However fuel treatments may effect some wildlife sensitive species, but not likely to result in a trend toward Federal listing or loss of viability for the species. Additionally some noxious weeds are in the project area but will be hand treated to prevent the spread of them., or flagged and avoided.
- Review of hydrologic concerns.
- This project would not affect any resource values, including riparian areas, wetland or floodplains.
- There are 10 archeological sites in the area that will be flagged and avoided.
- Ground disturbance will be minimized through the use of low ground pressure track laying equipment, and from the dispersion of woodchips throughout the project area.

Based upon this supplemental report, a 2004 Forest Plan standards and guidelines consistency analysis, and input from interdisciplinary district resource members I have determined the use of mechanized mastication, hand clearing and piling, and mechanized chipping for this fuels treatment is within the scope of this CE. There are no other circumstances or new information affecting other natural or social resources in the project area that require any additional review at this time.

Mitigation Measures

- Areas with noxious weed will be hand treated or flagged and avoided.
- Heritage sites will be flagged and avoided.
- Remove operation created debris from the flume and contact NCPA to let them know to clear there debris trap.
- Do not operate mechanize equipment within 15 feet of a perennial, intermittent, or ephemeral stream or adjacent to special aquatic features.

Ray Cablayan

District Ranger