# Migratory Landbird Conservation on the Stanislaus National Forest

Under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the Forest Service is directed to “provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives.” (P.L. 94-588, Sec 6 (g) (3) (B)). The January 2000 USDA Forest Service (FS) Landbird Conservation Strategic Plan, followed by Executive Order 13186 in 2001, in addition to the Partners in Flight (PIF) specific habitat Conservation Plans for birds and the January 2004 PIF North American Landbird Conservation Plan all reference goals and objectives for integrating bird conservation into forest management and planning.

In late 2008, a *Memorandum of Understanding between the USDA Forest Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to Promote the Conservation of Migratory Birds* was signed. The intent of the MOU is to strengthen migratory bird conservation through enhanced collaboration and cooperation between the Forest Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service as well as other federal, state, tribal and local governments. Within the National Forests, conservation of migratory birds focuses on providing a diversity of habitat conditions at multiple spatial scales and ensuring that bird conservation is addressed when planning for land management activities. In early 2016, both USDA Forest Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service have agreed to extend the MOU as currently written and the MOU extension document is in the process of review and signature.

The Stanislaus National Forest is proposing to manage lands on the Calaveras Ranger District and located in the Lower North Fork Stanislaus River fifth field watershed. Proposed management is intended to implement direction contained within the Stanislaus National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA 1991), as amended (Forest Plan Direction, USDA 2017). Opportunities to promote conservation of migratory birds and their habitats in the project area were considered during development and design of the Last Chance Mastication project (MOU Section C: items 1 and 11 and Section D: items 1, 3, and 4).

The Stanislaus National Forest is a Globally Important Bird Area in the United States (American Bird Conservancy). The following species occur in or near to the project area and are identified in the current FWS Birds of Conservation Concern: peregrine falcon, flammulated owl, spotted owl, Lewis’s woodpecker, Williamson’s sapsucker, white-headed woodpecker, and olive-sided flycatcher.

Likely impacts to habitats and select migratory bird populations resulting from the Last Chance Mastication project have been assessed in detail within the project MIS report and impacts to select TES birds and their habitats have been analyzed in the project BA or BE. These impacts are summarized below:

The project will not adversely impact migratory landbird species or their associated habitats.

Potential impacts to migratory species would be minimized through the adherence of the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for snags and downed woody debris, riparian conservation area buffers, limited ground disturbance, and maintenance of canopy closure (USDA 2017). These standards and guidelines will benefit all the aforementioned species by maintaining and promoting both nesting and foraging habitat across the landscape for those species that occur in and near the project area. The project is designed to improve habitat conditions by addressing an accumulation of fuels since the 2001 Darby Fire, thereby maintaining vegetation species diversity and composition. The majority of the roject activities are designed to occur prior to the breeding season although some activities may occur in small increments (a few acres at a time) during the breeding season in order to minimize potential negative effects to avian species breeding within and near the project area.

References:

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