Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group

**Recommendations for UMRWA-USFS Forest Projects Plan (FPP), Phase 2**

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# **Background**

This document contains recommendations developed, and approved by, the ACCG for purposes in the Forest Project Plan (FPP), Phase 2 project on the Eldorado National Forest, Amador Ranger District and the Stanislaus National Forest, Calaveras Ranger District.

Forest Plan Amendment-specific recommendations were developed by the ACCG’s Forest Plan Amendment Ad Hoc group. The Ad Hoc, formed in 2023, is a sub working group to the ACCG Planning work group, charged with discussing and developing recommendations for California spotted owl (CSO)-related forest plan amendments for the FPP Phase 2 planning effort. The Ad Hoc’s charge was expanded in early 2024 to include developing recommendations for dbh limits for all land allocations for the FPP Phase 2 planning effort. The Ad Hoc includes FS wildlife biologists, FS resource staff, and representatives from UMRWA, SPI, CSERC, and SFL.

Other project-specific recommendations, not addressed by the Ad Hoc, in addition to the above-mentioned, were developed by the ACCG Planning work group. The Planning work group charged themselves with discussing and developing recommendations for additional FPP Phase 2 topics not covered by the Ad Hoc.

# **Forest Plan Amendments**

These are pieces of a larger strategy that we are contemplating as we are making recommendations, but they have a bearing on other components that we may or may not make a recommendation on.

## **Protected Activity Center (PAC) Retirement**

* Retain all PACs that have now or prove to have after required surveys (5 years) occupancy (vs. repro., pair status)
* Location matters (gap analysis to determine whether to even look at the PAC for retirement) retain PACs that are geographically important either presently or future population
* Process/Surveys only determine “eligibility” for retirement, use the gap analysis and other information to decide to or not to retire an unoccupied PAC
* 5 years of survey required, preferably consecutive years, but 5 in a 7-year period is acceptable
* Surveys require 2 years of traditional protocol level surveys, the balance of the 5 could be ARUs or traditional surveys

**Amendment language to go forward to FPP Phase, 2 Team, and the FS:**

*California spotted owl (CSO) protected activity centers (PACs) would be deemed eligible for retirement after 5 years of surveys indicating non-occupancy (i.e., territorial singles or reproductive pairs). All PACs that meet occupied status as a result of these surveys, occupied defined as set forth in the spotted owl survey protocol, would be retained as PACs.*

Received consensus support of the PAC retirement recommendations from the ACCG at the September 20th, 2023 General Meeting.

## **California Spotted Owl/Goshawk Survey Timing**

* + Scale/scope of the project will make completing surveys before a NEPA decision on >200,000 acres highly unlikely in the proposed time frame.
	+ Using the SERAL model, include the pre-implementation (defined as pre-award of a contract and modification of habitat) in the “planning period” for the survey requirement.

The 2004 Sierra Nevada Framework requires protocol surveys (both California spotted owl, and northern goshawk) for all suitable habitat that would be affected by vegetation management projects during the planning process. In the past the Eldorado and Stanislaus National Forests have generally interpreted this and completed surveys before NEPA decisions are signed. Given the large scale of the FPP 2 Project > 200,000 acres, this is not feasible. The ACCG Planning Ad Hoc group has discussed and recommends the above survey strategy of completing the surveys before contracting and/or implementation is started for these species.

Received consensus support of the survey timing language from the ACCG at the January 17th, 2024 General Meeting.

## **California Spotted Owl/Goshawk Survey Locations**

* For vegetation treatments that maintain or improve habitat quality in California spotted owl nesting and roosting habitat outside of protected activity centers, pre-implementation surveys are not required.
* Before authorizing mechanical vegetation treatments that may reduce near-term habitat quality in suitable California spotted owl habitat of unknown occupancy, follow the guidance related to survey timing.

Management activities that maintain or improve habitat quality in the highest quality and best available nesting and roosting habitat would:

* Retain existing CWHR canopy cover class (e.g., do not reduce 5D to 5M);
* Retain clumps of the largest available trees greater than 24 inches diameter at breast height; and
* Retain at least two canopy layers at the stand/patch scale in areas where large trees occur.

Received consensus support of the survey location language from the ACCG at the at the February 21st, 2024 General Meeting.

## **Territories**

# **Treatment Criteria (e.g., dbh limits) for all Land Allocations**