This comparison is a work in progress and open for discussion.

The CSO strategy is located here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd624135.pdf> Guiding principles from the CSO strategy include:

* This Strategy focuses on the immediate need for maintaining high-quality habitat, especially around occupied nest sites, while developing resilient habitat across the landscape.
* Managing the landscape toward NRV is a central and guiding principle of this Strategy and can help develop resilient habitat conditions that provide  
  CSO conservation in the long term.
* The conservation measures aimed at maintaining the CSO and their suitable habitat where they exist today provide some immediate stability for individual owls while we work to align the landscape with NRV.

(CSO strategy, p. 2).

The revised forest plan for the Sierra NF (still draft and some tweaks expected) is located here (CSO begins on p. 59): <https://usfs-public.app.box.com/v/PinyonPublic/file/971084907943> The Region 5 planning team designed the plan components in the revised forest plan to reflect the CSO strategy created by Region 5 in 2019.

The SERAL project documents are located here: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56500>

Habitat definitions based on California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR; <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=65850&inline>)

CWHR 4M: 12-24” DBH, canopy 40-60%

CWHR 4D: 12-24” DBH, canopy >60%

CWHR 5M: >24” DBH, canopy 40-60%

CWHR 5D: >24” DBH, canopy >60%

CWHR 6: multi-layered tree; size class 5 tree over a distinct layer of size class 4 or 3, total tree canopy >60%

| **Issue** | **SNFPA 2004** | **Revised SNF forest plan** | **SERAL** | **Notes** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Definition:** “Highest quality nesting and roosting habitat” | Roughly aligns with “nesting and roosting” habitat (CWHR 5M, 5D, and 6) | CWHR 5M/5D/6 with 2 or more canopy layers and very large (>45” DBH) snags and higher levels of large down wood | Same |  |
| **Definition:** “Best available nesting and roosting habitat” | Not defined. Recognizes that CWHR 4M and 4D are suitable habitat. | CWHR 4D or 4M with very large remnant trees, large snags  Important where highest quality nesting and roosting habitat is unavailable or scarce and may be providing conditions that support current spotted owl reproduction | Some similarity, but fails to identify importance of CWHR 4M and 4D when highest quality is unavailable or scarce |  |
| **Definition:** “Management activities that maintain or improve habitat quality” | Not defined and phrase not used in forest plans. | Applied to “highest quality” and “best available” habitats  Defined as actions that maintain CWHR cover class (e.g., CWHR 5D is not reduced to CWHR 5M) | Applied only to “highest quality habitat” and not to “best available” habitat  Definition allows degradation of highest quality habitat |  |
| **Definition:** Dry versus mesic conifer types | Not defined and term not used in forest plans. | Defines dry and mesic for Sierran mixed conifer (SMC) in CWHR based on topographic (slope and aspect) position  Significant amounts of dry and mesic SNC occur throughout Sierra National Forest  This distribution of dry versus mesic is used to establish desired conditions for territories | Invents a classification that is not based slope/aspect nor on published literature  SERAL project concludes that there is almost no mesic type in the project area  This distribution of dry versus mesic is used to establish desired conditions for territories  The consequence is that few PACs have desired conditions of 60% high quality habitat |  |
| **Survey requirements** | Conduct surveys when proposed vegetation treatments are likely to reduce habitat quality in suitable California spotted owl habitat with unknown occupancy | 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. | Permissive or limited definition of “maintain or improve” allows logging to occur in suitable habitat that has not been surveyed |  |
| **Land allocation:** HRCAs or Territories | Uses Home Range Core Areas (HRCAs) of 1,000 acres defined as best available contiguous habitat within 1.5 miles of the activity center to incorporate, in descending order of priority, CWHR classes 6, 5D, 5M, 4D and 4M and other stands with at least 50 percent tree canopy cover (including hardwoods). | 1,000-acre circular area centered around activity center  May be adjusted to be non-circular, as needed, to include the entire protected activity center and the most sustainable areas of high-quality habitat and exclude areas less likely to support suitable habitat. | 1,000-acre circular area centered around activity center  Not adjusted for habitat quality  Includes non-habitat like lava caps and other unsuitable habitat, and industrial timber lands | Included in John Buckley’s summary |
| **Land allocation:** PACs | 300-acre area of best available habitat around activity center  Created around territorial singles and pairs | 300-acre area of best available habitat around activity center  Created around pairs | 300-acre area of best available habitat around activity center  Created around pairs |  |
| Logging in PACs - general | Allowed in WUI Defense with 30” DBH  Hand thinning in WUI threat  Not allowed in general forest | Management activities must maintain or improve habitat quality in the highest quality nesting and roosting habitat.  100 acres outside of highest quality may be treated with some constraints including increasing QMD and maintaining average canopy cover of PAC >50% | 20-inch DBH limit  Allows high quality habitat to be degraded due to permissive definition of “maintain or improve habitat”  100 acres outside of highest quality may be treated with some constraints including increasing QMD and maintaining average canopy cover of PAC >50% | Included in John Buckley’s summary |
| Logging in PACs – priority setting | When treatment areas must intersect PACs and choices can be made about which PACs to enter, use the following criteria to preferentially avoid PACs that have the highest likely contribution to owl productivity.  • lowest contribution to productivity: PACs presently unoccupied and historically occupied by territorial singles only.  • PACs presently unoccupied and historically occupied by pairs,  • PACs presently occupied by territorial singles,  • PACs presently occupied by pairs,  • highest contribution to productivity: PACs currently or historically reproductive. | Similar to SNFPA  Avoid vegetation treatments that may reduce habitat quality in the near term in PACs with the highest likely contribution to reproductive success  Otherwise prioritized as follows (from highest to lowest priority for treatment):  1. Currently unoccupied and historically occupied by territorial singles only.  2. Currently unoccupied and historically occupied by pairs.  3. Currently occupied by territorial singles.  4. Currently occupied by pairs.  5. Currently occupied by pairs and currently or recently reproductive. | Vegetation treatments that may reduce habitat quality in the near term should be minimized or avoided in protected activity centers with the highest likely contribution to reproductive success  Despite this plan component, the project does not minimize or avoid logging in most reproductive PACs and reduces habitat quality to the maximum extent allowed for most PACs |  |
| Logging in HRCAs or territories – diameter limits | Diameter limit = 30” DBH | Diameter limit = 30” DBH | Diameter limit for pines and Douglas fir = 24” DBH  Diameter limit for shade tolerant species = 30” DBH | Included in John Buckley’s summary |
| Logging in HRCAs or territories – other constraints | Maintain 40 or 50% canopy cover depending on location in landscape (WUI versus outside WUI)  Includes limits on basal area and canopy cover reduction | Maintain or improve when amounts are less than the desired 40-60% of territory in highest quality habitat  If this desired condition has been met, vegetation treatments to improve resilience and increase heterogeneity should maintain highest quality nesting and roosting habitat  In territories where survey data indicate pair occupancy and DC-02 is not met, if retaining habitat quality in the highest quality nesting habitat is insufficient to achieve the desired condition, also retain habitat quality in the best available nesting and roosting habitat to the level described in the desired condition | Permissive or limited definition of “maintain or improve” allows degradation of suitable habitat, including degrading suitable habitat to unsuitable, even though desired conditions have not been met |  |
| Logging outside of HRCAs or territories – diameter limits | Diameter limit = 30” DBH | Diameter limit = 30”  Outside of California spotted owl territories live trees greater than 30 inches but less than 40 inches in diameter may be felled for coarse woody debris, or removed, under the following limited circumstances:  • When removing trees is needed for aspen, oak, or meadow restoration treatments or for cultural or Tribal importance;  • In overly dense stands to favor retention or promote the growth of even larger or older shade-intolerant trees to meet tree species composition and forest structure restoration goals more effectively;  • To promote the establishment, growth, and development of shade-intolerant species by creating small gaps (generally less than 0.5 acre) in stands historically dominated by shade-intolerant species;  • To improve the growth and vigor of rust-resistant sugar pine trees greater than 16 inches in diameter by reducing competition from surrounding trees; or  • To reduce loss of large-diameter trees due to competition in overly dense stands within homogeneous plantations. | Diameter limit for pines and Douglas fir = 30” DBH  Diameter limit for shade tolerant species = 34”  Diameter limit for other actions = 40” DBH:   * Within 66 feet of Rust Resistant Sugar Pine * Within 66 feet of Live Aspen Stand * Within a Meadow | Included in John Buckley’s summary |
| Logging outside of HRCAs or territories – general direction | Generally, suitable CSO habitat will be suitable after logging | Follow desired conditions in forest plan  Suitable CSO can be degraded to unsuitable | Follow desired conditions in forest plan  Suitable CSO can be degraded to unsuitable |  |
| **Survey results:** Retirement of PACs | Retirement allowed for PACs affected by fire or other disturbance if insufficient habitat remains within a 1.5-mile radius around activity center | Retirement allowed after 3 (or 5 years) of surveys indicate that activity center is not occupied by a CSO pair | Retirement allowed after 3 (or 5 years) of surveys indicate that activity center is not occupied by a CSO pair | Included in John Buckley’s summary |