



File Code: 1950/2430

Date: APR 01 2016

Dear Interested Parties:

The Forest Service is seeking comments on the Tobias Ecosystem Restoration (Tobias) Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). This DEIS describes three alternatives developed to provide ecological restoration by thinning of dense, fire-suppressed tree stands and by prescribed burning. It would also remove hazard trees from public roadways.

The project area is estimated at 11,000 acres in the Portuguese pass area of southeastern Tulare County, with a small area within Kern County. Approximately 4,898 acres are proposed for treatment in each action alternative. Each alternative responds differently to the major issues and concerns identified during public and internal scoping.

Alternative 1 is the no action alternative. Alternative 2 is the Proposed Action as described in the Notice of Intent published in the Federal Register and the scoping letter, dated February 6, 2015. The proposed action would use logging to thin trees large enough to have commercial value, thin small trees and brush, treat surface fuel, use prescribed burning, and decommission several roads. Alternative 3 addresses potential impacts on fuels, wildlife, visuals, soils, and watershed resources by limiting thinning to trees less than 8 inches diameter. Alternative 2 is the preferred alternative because it provides a more balanced approach to addressing the short-term and long-term ecological concerns and issues, while providing timber to the local wood industry.

Enclosed is a copy of the Tobias Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement for your review. The DEIS is also available online at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=40890>.

A comment period is intended to provide those interested in or affected by this proposal an opportunity to make their concerns known prior to a decision being made by the Responsible Official. This project is subject to comment pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B. Only those who provide timely project specific written comments during a public comment period are eligible to file an objection. Individuals or representatives of an entity submitting comments must sign the comments or verify identity upon request. The Forest Service will accept comments on the DEIS for 45 days following the publication date of the Notice of Availability (NOA) in the *Federal Register*, which is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period. Commenters should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. It is the commenter's responsibility to ensure timely receipt of comments (36 CFR 218.25).



Written comments may be submitted electronically in common formats (.doc, .docx, .pdf, .rtf, .txt) to: comments-pacificsouthwest-sequoia@fs.fed.us, Subject: Tobias Project; mailed to: District Ranger, Western Divide Ranger District, 32588 Highway 190, Springville, California 93265; hand delivered to the district address during business hours, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; or submitted by FAX to: (559) 539-2067. Names of commenters will be part of the public record subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Additional information on the proposed action may be obtained from O'Dell Tucker, District Planner, (559) 539-2607.

Sincerely,



KEVIN B. ELLIOTT
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure