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Recreation Resource Report

Westside Fire Recovery

Happy Camp/Oak Knoll and Salmon/Scott River Ranger Districts
Klamath National Forest
Siskiyou County, California

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Table of Contents

Recreation Resource Report 1

 Methodology 1

 Analysis Indicators..... 1

 Spatial and Temporal Context 1

 Affected Environment..... 1

 Proposed Action and Alternatives Analyzed 3

 Environmental Consequences 4

 Compliance with law, regulation, policy, and the Forest Plan 9

 Literature Cited..... 10

List of Tables:

Table 1: Summary of Recreation Features located within Beaver Fire, Happy Camp Complex Fire, and Whites Fire Project Areas 2

Table 2: List of Recreation Facilities benefiting from Roadside Hazard and Fuels Treatments 5

Table 3: Applicable Desired Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes by Management Area..... 7

Table 4: Compatibility of Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Classes 7

Table 5: Recreation Comparison of Effects of Alternatives for all three fire areas..... 9

Recreation Resource Report

The purpose of the section is to identify recreation use and opportunities in the project area and examine the effects of the project alternatives on these uses and opportunities.

Methodology

A recreation assessment of project activities was conducted using field and office review, professional expertise, and on-the-ground knowledge.

Analysis Indicators

Analysis indicators used to determine the effects of alternatives on recreation include:

1. Recreation use - Will overall use increase or decrease as a result of the action?
2. Recreation Opportunities - How will the project affect existing and or new recreational opportunities?

Spatial and Temporal Context

The geographic extent for analysis of the effects for recreation include the three individual project areas - Beaver Fire, Happy Camp Complex, and the Whites Fire included as part of the Westside Fire Recovery Project. This unit of spatial analysis is used for determining direct, indirect, and cumulative effects. A short-term timeframe of three years allows the activities associated with this project to be mostly completed. A long-term temporal bound of 10 years allows completed activities associated with this project to be established.

Affected Environment

Recreational use in the project areas is low and consists primarily of dispersed recreation opportunities. "Dispersed recreation is outdoor recreation that involves relatively low density use and occurs over broad expanses of land and water. Eighty percent of the Forest's recreational use is dispersed recreation. Most dispersed activity occurs during the summer and fall months. All dispersed areas are currently managed at low standard levels" (Forest Plan, page 3-11). Dispersed recreation opportunities include primitive camping, fishing, hunting, equestrian use, hiking, swimming/water play, whitewater rafting/kayaking, woodcutting, and viewing scenery.

Camping occurs at both developed campgrounds and primitive dispersed campsites within the Wildernesses or along roads throughout the project areas. See Table 1 below for a listing of these features.

Hunting is the most popular primary activity for Forest visitors (USDA Forest Service 2012), with large numbers of people visiting the Forest primarily to hunt deer or other big game (elk, bear). During hunting seasons, developed campground occupancy increases, many primitive campsites are occupied, and All-terrain Vehicles (ATVs) use Forest roads in the project areas.

Hiking occurs on numerous Wilderness trails, the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) and other trails. The 2014 fires burned two bridges (Grider 3 and 4) and some trail signs. Trail treads were also damaged from burned tree roots, soil erosion from increased runoff, and increased sedimentation of water diversion features. For detailed information see the Burned Area Emergency Response reports for Happy Camp Complex, Whites Fire, and Beaver Fire, dated 10/1/2014, 9/12/2014, and 9/12/2014, respectively (reports are available at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/klamath/home>).

Fishing occurs on rivers and high elevation lakes. Drift boats float the Klamath River for steelhead and salmon. Trout fishing occurs at high elevation lakes in the Wildernesses.

Whitewater rafting/kayaking and swimming water play occur primarily on the Klamath and Scott Rivers and to a lesser degree on the North Fork Salmon River. Use occurs from outfitter-guided trips as well as private parties. Some of these users camp at nearby river accesses, dispersed sites along the river or developed campgrounds.

Woodcutting is a popular recreation activity on the Forest; Douglas-fir, incense cedar, white oak, black oak, and madrone are preferred woodcutting species.

Scenery is an important component that affects recreation use, setting, and the recreation experience. Viewing scenery from within or outside project area boundaries occurs while driving along roadways such as the State of Jefferson Scenic Byway, floating or fishing rivers such as the Klamath or Scott Wild and Scenic Rivers, hiking on the Pacific Crest Trail other Wilderness trails, or overlooking the area from viewpoints such as fire lookouts.

For the Beaver Fire, there are six recreation features within the project area (one developed campground and five features related to dispersed recreation). For the Happy Camp Complex Fire, there are 23 recreation features within the project area (five developed campgrounds and 18 features related to dispersed recreation). For the Whites Fire, there are 10 recreation features within the project area (one developed campground and nine features related to dispersed recreation). See table 1 for more information.

Table 1: Summary of Recreation Features located within Beaver Fire, Happy Camp Complex Fire, and Whites Fire Project Areas

Recreational Feature	Feature Description
Beaver Fire	
Klamath River	Designated National Wild and Scenic River
Gottville River Access	Klamath River access
Highway 96 State of Jefferson Scenic Byway	National Forest Scenic Byway
Pacific Crest Trail (PCT)	National Scenic Trail
Beaver Creek Campground	Developed Campground
Dispersed Campsites (5) ¹	51D010 (Deer Meadows) adjacent, 51D002, 51D003 (Beaver/Hungry Ck), 51D029, 51D029A (Brown Bear) shown on Motor Vehicle Use Map
Happy Camp Complex Fire	
Klamath River	Designated National Wild and Scenic River
Indian Creek River Access	Klamath River access
Scott River	Designated National Wild and Scenic River
Johnsons Bar River Access	Scott River access
Townsend Gulch River Access	Scott River access
Gold Flat River Access	Scott River access
Sugar Pine River Access	Scott River access

¹ Total number of dispersed campsites shown is taken from 2012 Motor Vehicle Use map and does not include campsites in Wilderness or immediately adjacent to forest roads.

Recreational Feature	Feature Description
Tompkins Creek River Access	Scott River access
Bridge Flat Campground	Scott River access
Elk Creek	Recommended National Wild and Scenic River
Grider Creek	Recommended National Wild and Scenic River
Pacific Crest Trail (PCT)	National Scenic Trail
Cold Springs Trailhead	PCT access/Marble Mountain Wilderness access
Tyler Meadows Trailhead	PCT access/Marble Mountain Wilderness access
Kelsey Creek Trail	National Recreation Trail
Bear Lake Trailhead	Kelsey Creek Trail access
Highway 96 State of Jefferson Scenic Byway	National Forest Scenic Byway
Sarah Totten Campground	Developed Campground
ONeil Creek Campground	Developed Campground (closed for 6 years)
Grider Creek Campground	Developed Campground (currently closed by Forest Order until 05/15/15)
Curly Jack Campground	Developed Campground
Dispersed Campsites (28) ²	As shown on Motor Vehicle Use Map
Lake Mountain Lookout	Fire Lookout
Whites Fire	
North Fork Salmon River	Designated National Wild and Scenic River
South Russian Creek	Recommended National Wild and Scenic River
Pacific Crest Trail	National Scenic Trail
Mule Bridge Trailhead	Dispersed Campsites, Marble Mountain Wilderness access
Timber Camp Trailhead	Russian Wilderness access
South Russian Trailhead	Russian Wilderness access
Music Creek Trailhead	Russian Wilderness access
Idlewild Campground	Developed Campground (currently closed by Forest Order until 05/15/15)
Robinson Flat	Dispersed campsites
Dispersed Campsites (3) ³	54D001, 54D011, 54D012 shown on Motor Vehicle Use Map

Proposed Action and Alternatives Analyzed

Five alternatives were analyzed in this report including: Alternative 1 - No Action, Alternative 2 - Proposed Action, Alternative 3, Alternative 4, and Alternative 5. A complete description of the Westside Fire Recovery Project can be found in chapter 2 of the draft EIS.

³ Total number of dispersed campsites shown is taken from 2012 Motor Vehicle Use map and does not include campsites in Wilderness or immediately adjacent to forest roads.

Environmental Consequences

Alternative 1

Direct Effects and Indirect Effects

Recreation Use

Under this alternative no project treatment activities are proposed. Without treatment there would be about 640 miles of untreated roadways with fire-killed tree hazards. Fallen snags along 640 miles of roadways would substantially impact access for recreational uses such as dispersed camping, scenic driving, and hunting. As fire-killed trees continue to decay and fall, public and worker safety would be threatened and the likelihood of potential injuries or death to individuals would increase. Forest Orders to restrict public access might be needed to mitigate risks to the recreating public.

With the exception of temporary closures by Forest Order, there is no reason to expect recreation use to measurably increase or decrease as a result of this alternative. Temporary closures of campgrounds, roads, rivers, or trails or portions of the burn area would displace users to other available areas within or outside of the burn affected area.

Fire-killed trees from the recent fires would greatly increase firewood availability for permitted collection; the permitted public would be most likely to collect fallen fire-killed trees and/or newly created (fire-killed) snags adjacent to roads. Firewood cutting use would likely increase in burned areas in the short term. Since re-sprouting of hardwood trees and brush in burned areas would attract deer by providing browse, if Forest Orders do not affect public access, deer hunting use in burned areas would likely increase in the short term. Recreation use is also associated with scenic vistas; see the scenery section of this chapter and the Scenery resource report for detailed information.

Recreation Opportunities

The likelihood of damage to infrastructure such as campgrounds and trails would progressively increase. As fire-killed snags continue to fall, it is anticipated that maintenance work and associated costs would increase, as well as the safety hazard to Forest visitors, workers, and volunteers who use or maintain Forest trails and other recreation infrastructure.

If and where access to the recreating public is not restricted, then fire-killed snags and resultant loss of shade would create hot and dry dispersed campsites and trail sections for hikers, adversely affecting their recreational experience. Assuming no Forest Orders are issued closing public access, camping at both developed campgrounds and primitive dispersed campsites would be expected to continue at their current rates.

Cumulative Effects

Based on current and reasonably foreseeable future actions (listed in appendix C of the draft EIS), there are no cumulative effects to recreation because these do not overlap in time or space with recreation use and opportunities.

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5

Direct Effects and Indirect Effects

Recreation Use

The operational impacts from project activities such as traffic, noise, dust, and smoke are short-term adverse impacts to recreationists; effects would be temporary in nature. Safety hazards from fire-killed snags along Forest roadways used for access by the recreating public would be abated. Forest Orders to restrict public access because of road conditions would not likely be required, providing for continued public access for recreational opportunities. Recreational use is not expected to measurably increase or decrease as a result of this alternative.

Project implementation may result in short-term changes in recreational use patterns but will not impact recreational opportunities.

Recreation Opportunities

Indirect long term beneficial effects to recreation facilities such as river accesses, campgrounds, dispersed campsites, and trailheads would occur from adjacent fuels treatments and roadside hazard removal. These activities would minimize damage or protect Forest Service infrastructure (i.e. signage, toilets, tables, etc.) at developed sites from future wildfires. Removal of hazard trees adjacent to dispersed campsites would increase safety at these sites. Table 2 provides a list of recreation facilities that benefit from roadside hazard and fuels treatments.

Table 2: List of Recreation Facilities benefiting from Roadside Hazard and Fuels Treatments

Project Area	Recreational Feature
Beaver Fire	Beaver Creek Campground
	Gottville River Access
Happy Camp Complex Fire	Johnson Bar River
	Townsend Gulch River Access
	Gold Flat River Access
	Sugar Pine River Access
	Thompkins Creek River Access
	Bridge Flat Campground
	Cold Springs Trailhead
	Bear Lake Trailhead
	Sarah Totten Campground
	ONeil Creek Campground
	Grider Creek Campground
Whites Fire	Mule Bridge Campground/Trailhead
	Idlewild Campground
	Robinson Flat

An indirect beneficial effect to recreation from prescribed burned, site preparation and replanting would be both a short- and long-term improvement in big game habitat and future big game hunting opportunities.

A project design feature blocking access to temporary roads upon project completion would mitigate unauthorized public travel off system roads.

An indirect beneficial effect to recreation would be that non-merchantable (less than 16 inches in diameter at breast height) trees felled during roadside hazard treatments would be left along non-strategic roads for wood-cutters. This readily available wood would cause a short-term increase in permitted fuelwood collection.

When Forest visitors recreate on National Forest System lands, they use a variety of recreation settings. The settings or Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Classes are identified in the Forest Plan for each Management Area and are listed in table 3.

Table 3: Applicable Desired Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes by Management Area

Forest Plan Management Area		Desired ROS Class*					
#	Management Area	Primitive	Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	Semi-Primitive Motorized	Roaded Natural	Rural	Urban
Ma-5	Special Habitat		X	X	X		
Ma-7	Special Interest Area		X	X	X		
Ma-10	Riparian Reserves		X	X	X		
Ma-11	Retention Visual Quality Objective		X	X	X		
Ma-12	Designated And Recommended Scenic Rivers		X	X	X		
Ma-13	Designated And Recommended Recreational Rivers		X	X	X		
Ma-15	Partial Retention Visual Quality Objective		X	X	X		
Ma-17	General Forest				X	X	

* A range of ROS Classes is specifically identified by a Standard and Guideline for each Management Area.

While visitors are recreating in these settings, they would see some evidence (visual disturbances) of management activities within various recreation settings. The effects to the naturalness of these settings are measured using Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) which are compatible with ROS Classes. Table 4 displays compatibility between ROS Classes and VQOs.

Table 4: Compatibility of Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Classes

ROS Class	Visual Quality Objectives				
	Preservation	Retention	Partial Retention	Modification	Maximum Modification
Primitive (P)	Norm	Inconsistent	Unacceptable	Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)	Fully Compatible	Norm	Inconsistent	Unacceptable	Unacceptable
Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM)	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Norm (1)	Inconsistent	Unacceptable
Roaded Natural (RN)	Fully Compatible	Norm	Norm	Norm	Inconsistent
Rural (R)	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Norm	Norm	Inconsistent
Urban (U)	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Not Applicable

1 = Norm From Sensitive Roads And Trails.

Source: Usda, Forest Service. 2000. Landscape Aesthetics A Handbook For Scenery Management. Agriculture Handbook Number 701. Page F-3.

Some recreation settings would be adversely affected in the short-term from project activities not meeting the compatible VQO. Salvage harvest and roadside hazard treatments may affect the quality of the recreation experience while driving, floating, hiking, or camping at the following locations: Highway 96, Klamath Wild and Scenic River, Tyler Meadows Trailhead, Cold Springs Trailhead, Grider Creek (recommended Wild and Scenic River), Grider Creek Campground,

Grider Creek Road (46N66, 46N24X), Tom Martin Peak trail, Bear Creek Trail, and the Pacific Crest Trail (between Cold Springs Trailhead and Highway 96).

Within Retention VQO areas, salvage harvest and roadside hazard treatments would likely not meet the Retention VQO in the short term – where management activities are not visually evident to the casual Forest visitor. The presence of high stumps and tree marking paint (if used) would be noticeable for five to 10 years even after “greening up.” This includes salvage and roadside hazard treatment units located in the foreground distance zone of Highway 96, Klamath Wild and Scenic River, Tyler Meadows Trailhead, Cold Springs Trailhead, Grider Creek (recommended Wild and Scenic River), Grider Creek Campground, Grider Creek road (46N66, 46N24X), and the Pacific Crest Trail (between Cold Springs Trailhead and Highway 96). A recovery time of up to ten years for “greening up” and plant growth may be required to soften these effects.

Although the action alternatives appear to be inconsistent with the assigned Retention Visual Quality Objective (VQO) and certain Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for Retention, an exception is allowed under Forest Plan Standards and Guideline 11-7 which states

“In the case of recovery activities after extreme catastrophic events such as intense wildland fires, time periods to achieve the VQOs stated in Forest-wide and Management Area Standards and Guidelines may be extended. This would be necessary where previously unnoticed scenery alterations are exposed to view due to loss of vegetative screening, or during timber salvage activities where recovery of forest vegetation is determined to be of greater importance than achievement of VQOs within the time periods established.”

Within Partial Retention VQO areas, salvage harvest and roadside hazard treatments in the foreground distance zone along hiking trails would likely not meet the Partial Retention VQO in the short term— where management activities may be noticeable, but are subordinate to the characteristic landscape. The presence of high stumps and tree marking paint (if used) would be noticeable to hikers for 10 years or more until screening vegetation hides effects. This includes units bisected by both the Tom Martin Peak and Bear Lake trails. However, the same exception under Standard and Guideline 11-7 (cited above) also applies to partial retention areas for this project.

Thus in the long-term project activities would appear natural or near-natural to Forest visitors and meet Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) which are compatible with ROS Classes. Forest Plan direction would be met. The Scenery and the Wild and Scenic Rivers sections of this chapter and related resource reports provide more information on the relationship between recreation and those resources.

Cumulative Effects

The cumulative effects of action alternatives are the same as those of alternative 1.

Comparison of Effects

Recreation effects are displayed by alternative in table 5.

Table 5: Recreation Comparison of Effects of Alternatives for all three fire areas

Indicator	Alternative 1 (No Action)	Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5
Recreation Use	<p>Potential short-term impact or displacement of recreational use if a Forest Order is needed to mitigate for public safety.</p> <p>There would be no short-term adverse effects associated with project implementation.</p> <p>Increased short-term use of burn areas for firewood cutting and deer hunting.</p>	<p>Recreational use is not expected to measurably increase or decrease as a result of this alternative.</p> <p>Direct short-term adverse effect from smoke, road closures, or increased traffic during project implementation.</p> <p>Indirect short-term increase in use from firewood cutting of felled (non-merchantable) trees left along non-strategic roads from roadside hazard treatments.</p>
Recreation Opportunities	<p>Direct long-term adverse effect to dispersed camping and hiking opportunities in burn areas from loss of shade.</p> <p>Increased short-term and long-term safety concerns from fallen snags.</p> <p>Increased maintenance costs for Forest infrastructure.</p> <p>No adverse effects to recreation settings from project implementation.</p>	<p>Indirect short and long-term beneficial effect to big game hunting opportunities from prescribed fire and replanting.</p> <p>Indirect long-term beneficial effect to developed recreation facilities and dispersed campsites from fuels and roadside hazard treatments. These treatments would protect Forest Service infrastructure and/or increase safety at these sites.</p> <p>Indirect long-term adverse effects to recreation settings from project activities in some locations.</p>

Compliance with law, regulation, policy, and the Forest Plan

This project will help achieve Forest Plan desired conditions to perpetuate ecologically established scenery and maintain existing Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes. Integration of scenery and recreation project design features insures this project is consistent with Forest Plan scenery and recreation desired conditions. See Forest Plan consistency checklist for details about applicable standards and guidelines.

Literature Cited

USDA, Forest Service. 2000. Landscape Aesthetics A Handbook for Scenery Management. Agriculture Handbook Number 701. Page F-3.

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