Bald Fire Salvage and Restoration Project

Hat Creek Ranger District

Transportation Report

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Introduction

The Bald project area is located in the Hat Creek Ranger District of the Lassen National Forest. The general location is approximately 14 miles southeast of Fall River Mills, California, within Shasta and Lassen Counties.

Successful implementation of the recommended treatments for the Bald project is dependent on the Lassen National Forest road system. To complete the vegetation treatments road construction and maintenance will be required.

Analysis was driven by road-related resource concerns and opportunities to accomplish project needs. Non-system routes in the analysis area that will be needed for project implementation were analyzed for temporary use and decommissioning, or addition to Forest transportation system based on needs for future use versus the negative impacts to resources.

Existing Condition/Assessment

The analysis area contains a number of National Forest System (NFS) roads ranging from smooth cinder–surfaced roads to rough, primitive, and un-surfaced roads. Most of these system roads were planned and constructed during past commercial timber harvest activities and many are not considered to be all weather roads.

Main forest system roads link with county roads, which link to double-lane paved State highways to form a transportation system that provide access to National Forest System lands for a variety of uses for towns and communities in the surrounding area. Traffic is normally low within the project area, and most traffic originates from timber, recreation, and grazing activities.

National Forest System roads within the analysis area are managed in accordance with current management objectives based on a variety of needs for access and use of forest resources. The project area contains roads that are operated and maintained by the Forest Service for use by high clearance vehicles, over snow vehicles, and non-motorized uses such as hiking, horseback riding and cross-country skiing.

In order to achieve the recommended vegetation management prescriptions while minimizing impacts to water quality, Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be used during road construction, and during road maintenance in the course of logging operations (pre haul through post haul).

Desired Condition

From a transportation standpoint, the desired future condition involves a network of roads that provide safe access for vegetation/ fuels treatment, fire suppression, administrative needs, and public use. Maintenance in accordance with the road Objective Maintenance Levels is recommended.

Road Development Plans

Arterial/Collector

The existing transportation system is adequate for the immediate project needs. No further developments are planned on this project.

Local Roads

The existing roads consist of NFS roads and inventoried non-system routes, as well as local roads owned and operated by privately owned timber management companies. Within the project area there are many non-system routes, some of which are needed for project implementation. Non-system routes are remnants of past cultural settlement, land management practices or may be user-created by the public and do not have any maintenance performed and are not part of the NFS. Two general options are made for the inventoried non-system routes.

The first option is to bring the non-system route into the NF transportation system for long-term availability. These roads would generally be managed as maintenance level 1 road (closed to wheeled motor vehicle traffic and kept in long-term storage except when periodically used for administration of NFS lands) and as maintenance level 2 roads (open, low standard roads maintained for periodic high clearance vehicle traffic). The second option is decommissioning non-system routes that are not needed for long term management and use of NFS lands. Decommissioning of non-system routes can follow temporary use, such as utilization for a timber sale activity. It should be noted that decommissioning has a variety of physical treatments; however, the routes are no longer considered "existing" and are no longer available for motorized use.

There is also a need for temporary roads in order to access certain treatment areas. There are no long term needs for roads in these areas, thus the strategy will be to decommission temporary roads at the conclusion of their use on this project.

Discussion of Alternatives

Alternative 1: Proposed Action

The proposed action includes transportation recommendations to actively manage the forest transportation system within the project area for project needs. This will include road construction and maintenance.

2.2 miles of non-system route, which currently meet Forest transportation standards, will be added as NFS roads. These routes were determined to have long-term needs for future management. These additions will be classified as maintenance level 2.

One mile of temporary roads may be constructed for access during project implementation. These temporary roads will then be decommissioned upon project completion.

Forest Service lands in the project area lie adjacent to and in some cases are isolated by large sections of private lands. Most of these private lands are owned by timber management companies which have their own transportation system. These roads were designed and constructed to accommodate log trucks and

chip vans and are suitable for hauling. In order to access certain treatment areas there will be a need to use roads located on private land. The Forest Service will need to acquire legal access to in order to use these privately owned roads.

Summary of Transportation Actions

Table 1: Summary of Transportation Actions.

Action	Miles
New Road Construction ML 2 (existing non-system route)	2.2
New Temporary Road (and decommissioning)	1.0

Source: Lassen National Forest Transportation GIS (Bald Fire Salvage and Restoration Transportation Treatment)

All NFS roads used for hauling will receive pre, during, and post haul maintenance as per Forest Service Road Maintenance T-Specifications for Timber Sale Contracts as needed. A dust abatement plan will also be included to control wind-caused erosion from road use.

All water sources proposed for use in this project for dust abatement meet best management practice (BMP) standards. The following water sources would be used for dust abatement:

- Halls Flat (T33N R6E, N ½ sec. 1)
- Bidwell Pond (T34N R4E, S ½ sec. 1)

Alternative 2: No Action

Under the No Action alternative, none of the activities proposed under Alternative 1 would be implemented. The No Action alternative would not preclude activities already approved in this area or activities planned as separate projects

Alternative 3: Road Hazard Only

Under this alternative, only roadside hazard tree removal treatments along existing NFS roads will occur, and the existing NF road system within the project area will remain as is.

Alternative 3 includes transportation recommendations to actively manage the forest transportation system within the project area for project needs. This will include road maintenance.

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- Halls Flat (T33N R6E, N ½ sec. 1)
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Environmental Effects

Alternative 1: Proposed Action

Activities with the potential to affect the existing transportation system include proposed new road construction (addition of existing non-system route as a NFS road), temporary road construction and decommissioning, road maintenance, and increased traffic.

Direct Effects

For the short term during the sale contract, depending on the length and timing of the project, there will be the potential of erosion from the construction of temporary roads. There will be standard provisions in the contracts to require erosion control measures in case seasonal closures are needed. For the long term temporary roads will be decommissioned after haul operations or post sale activities are completed.

Other short term effects will be increasing traffic due to the movement of equipment, materials and personnel into and out of the project area. Increased traffic can impact the safety of the public and employees using the roads in the area. Traffic management measures will minimize these impacts. With the use of standard contract provisions for traffic control, effects will be negligible.

Indirect Effects

A well-managed and maintained road system provides for safe and efficient public access and firefighter safety. The road maintenance activities and hazard tree removal proposed will improve both public access and firefighter safety.

Cumulative Effects

All past actions have led to the existing transportation system which includes county roads, NFS roads, non-system routes on NF lands, roads located on State and other government lands, and private lands which are owned and operated by timber management companies. Active management of the transportation system will improve public access and firefighter safety, as well as minimizing adverse environmental effects and reducing future maintenance costs.

Alternative 2: No Action

Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

Under this Alternative, no treatments will be performed and the existing road system within the project area will remain as is. There will be no direct or cumulative effects. National Forest System roads may need to be closed for public safety due to numerous snags that will pose a danger to users. Without any planned hazard tree removal these roads could effectively be closed to public and administrative use due to the large accumulation of potential tree fall. Without access for maintenance, some of these roads have the potential to deteriorate to the point where they will no longer be accessible to high clearance vehicles, including fire suppression equipment. This will limit ingress/egress for firefighting ground resources and will therefore reduce firefighter safety.

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