DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR THE
PAUNSAUGUNT VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROJECT

USDA Forest Service
Powell Ranger District
Dixie National Forest
Kane County, Utah
Introduction

The Paunsaugunt Vegetation Management Project (Paunsaugunt Project) analysis area totals about 25,220 acres and is located within the Powell Ranger District of the Dixie National Forest in Kane County, Utah. The analysis area is within the East Fork of the Sevier River watershed, on the southern end of the Paunsaugunt Plateau. The main road access to the area is the East Fork Road (Forest Road 30087).

A comparison of existing condition to the desired conditions for forest vegetation has found the following needs as determined from an assessment of the project area:

1. The need to improve and maintain a balance of VSS classes within forested stands.
2. The need to reduce tree densities to improve and maintain growth and vigor, improve species compositions, and reduce ladder fuels.
3. The need to reduce dwarf mistletoe and susceptibility to bark beetles.
4. The need to regenerate declining aspen stands.
5. The need to reforest burned forest stands.

This decision responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Dixie National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (forest plan), and will help move the treatment areas towards the desired conditions described in that plan (EA pp. 1-6 & 1-7).

The Environmental Assessment for the Paunsaugunt Vegetation Management Project (EA) documents the analysis of a “No Action Alternative” and two action alternatives designed to meet the purpose and need for the project and is incorporated into this Decision Notice by reference.

Decision

I have reviewed the analysis presented in the Environmental Assessment for the Paunsaugunt Vegetation Management Project, considered the comments received on the alternatives, and discussed the project’s anticipated effects with both the project interdisciplinary team and forest staff. As a result I have decided to implement the Proposed Action with Modifications. My decision includes commercial and non-commercial treatments to regenerate and improve aspen and mixed conifer stands along with the associated temporary road construction and design features; and reforestation of fire impacted areas. The modification is that Cutting Units MC-4, MC-8, MC-9, MC-11, MC-12, MC-13, MC-16 and MC-22 will receive a silviculture prescription for a group selection with reserves harvest rather than a shelterwood with reserves harvest. These stands are already in an uneven-aged condition. The group selection is a better way to maintain this structure for the benefit of northern goshawk and other species.

Proposed Action with Modifications

The Forest Service plans to implement the following actions to meet the purpose and needs determined by the Paunsaugunt Vegetation Management Project analysis. This Proposed Action with Modifications is made up of five separate activities designed to improve forest
conditions and northern goshawk habitat. See Figure 1, Proposed Action with Modifications Map.

1. Regenerate 413 acres of aspen clones through a commercial harvest to increase representation of the VSS 1 and 2, seedling-sapling class.
2. Shelterwood system using preparatory and seed cuts to harvest 477 acres of mixed conifer forest. The purpose is to increase representation of the larger diameter classes, increase vigor and cone production, and regenerate desirable tree species such as ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir.
3. Group Selection system to harvest 386 acres of mixed conifer forest. The emphasis is to balance the VSS distribution or tree size classes within the forest stands while maintaining an uneven-aged structure.
4. Reforestation activities on approximately 194 acres. The reforestation treatment will restore fire damaged forest stands to suitable cover.
5. Timber stand improvements on 285 acres to reduce densities of overstocked mixed conifer stands to allow for desirable trees species composition, improved forest health, and increased vigor and growth of the retained trees.

**Activity 1. Aspen Regeneration Harvest, 413 acres**
The Proposed Action with Modifications is to use a coppice regeneration method that is a combination of patch clear felling and partial removal that will retain buffers of older age classes of aspen for ecological benefits. Patch clear fells of 5 to 15 acres will be placed across a stand in areas with the highest concentrations of competing conifers. These patches will be spaced at least two dominant tree lengths apart (100-150 feet apart). The stand density of the buffers or matrix between the patch cuts will be commercially thinned to approximately 40% of the current stand basal area.
- Ground based commercial harvest methods will be used.
- Existing snags greater than 8 inch diameter will be retained for current wildlife habitat. Snags considered hazards near log landings will be felled.
- Non-commercial size conifers will be felled and branches lopped and scattered to a maximum height of 2 feet for the purpose of creating barriers to access from ungulates and protective shelter for aspen regeneration.
- Landing and other slash piles will be burned.
- Monitoring will be conducted to assess treatment results. Stocking surveys will be conducted as outlined in FSH 2409.17 Silvicultural Practices Handbook, Chapter 2 Reforestation. Aspen regeneration stands with at least 500 stems per acre (Mueggler, 1989)\(^1\) (Ferguson, 2004)\(^2\) and 6 feet tall will be considered stocked. Stocking surveys will specifically include monitoring for excessive ungulate browsing. The monitoring

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protocols outlined within the report entitled *Browsed Plant Method for Young Quaking Aspen* (USDA FS, 2004)\(^3\) will be used to determine amount of yearly ungulate use. Ungulate use exceeding the forest plan’s allowable yearly browse of 50% for woody species will be used as a threshold for treatment. If monitoring shows excessive use, additional protection methods as defined in Project Design Feature RG-1 will be initiated.

**Activity 2. Mixed Conifer Shelterwood Harvest with Reserves, 477 acres (total)**

The Proposed Action with Modifications is a combination of preparatory and seed cuts using a shelterwood with reserves system. The purpose of this action is to maintain representation of the larger tree diameter classes, increase vigor and cone production in desirable tree species and regenerate seral conifer species on a forest stand basis.

**Mixed Conifer Shelterwood- Preparatory Cut, 388 acres**

About 388 acres will receive a preparatory cut to encourage crown expansion and to improve the vigor and cone production of prospective seed-bearing trees. The treatment is designed to remove 30-50% of the original stand basal area, mostly in the 5 to 12 inch diameter class, leaving the healthiest and most desirable trees (Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine). The best formed, disease and insect free, wind firm dominant overstory trees will be retained. A minimum of one clump per acre of trees of similar size classes over 5 inches dbh will be retained or formed with this treatment.

**Mixed Conifer Shelterwood-Seed Cut with Reserves, 89 acres**

About 89 acres will receive a shelterwood seed cut to promote natural conifer regeneration. This treatment will remove merchantable trees to create openings and spaces for the purpose of providing seed beds for natural regeneration of conifers. The treatment is designed to remove an average of 59% of the stand basal area, retaining the healthiest and most desirable trees (Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine) for the purpose of providing seed and shelter for conifer regeneration. The best formed, disease and insect free, wind firm dominant overstory trees will be retained. A minimum of one clump per acre of trees of similar size classes over 5 inches dbh will be reserved for wildlife habitat.

Additional actions to occur with both preparatory and seed cuts:

- Ground based commercial harvest methods will be used.
- All snags except those considered hazards near log landings will be retained.
- Non-commercial slash not yarded to landings will be lopped and scattered to a maximum depth of 2 feet within harvest units.
- The following cutting units will receive a fuel reduction treatment detailed in PDF FM-4. Grapple piling will occur within cutting units MC-2, MC-3, and MC-6.
- Landing and other slash piles will be burned.

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- Stocking surveys will be conducted as outlined in FSH 2409.17 Silvicultural Practices Handbook. If seed cut sites have not naturally regenerated with desirable conifer species to a minimum of 150 seedlings per acre, site preparation and artificial reforestation will occur. Containerized stock will be planted with a mix of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir to achieve a stocking of 258 to 300 seedlings per acre. This equates to 12 to 13 foot spacing.
- Site preparation will consist of clearing away all competing vegetation and scalping the exposed soil surface to a depth of 1/2 inch within an 18 inch x 18 inch area for each seedling.

Activity 3. Group Selection Harvest with Reserves, 386 acres
This treatment is designed to maintain an uneven-aged structure in mixed conifer stands. The emphasis is to balance the VSS distribution within the forest stands across the landscape towards the desired distribution by manipulating the over-represented size classes 3 and 4 (currently at 45% and 30%). Trees within these size groups will be targeted for removal to increase VSS 1 representation (currently at 0%) and an emphasis will be made on reserving the largest diameter trees to maintain and develop the VSS 5 and 6 size classes.

In the cutting units, approximately 20% of the area (75 acres) within the units will be regenerated. Trees will be removed in groups using patch clear-cuts, thereby creating openings up to 2 acres in size for regeneration of shade intolerant tree species such as ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir. Most trees within groups would be cut, including sapling and pole-sized trees. A minimum of one clump of trees per acre within a similar size class will be reserved for wildlife habitat within group cut areas. To improve growth and vigor of trees within the matrix between group cuts, individual trees will be commercial thinned to a target density of 60 ft² of basal area. Non-commercial sized trees (1-4 inches in diameter) will be thinned to 300 trees per acre.
- Ground based commercial harvest methods will be used.
- All snags except those considered hazards near log landings will be retained.
- Mechanical thinning methods such as shredding and chipping using tractor mounted masticators are acceptable if conducted concurrently with the harvest (i.e., prior to decommissioning and rehabilitation of skid trails, landings and temporary roads by purchaser).
- Remove beetle infested and any dwarf-mistletoe infected trees to eliminate infection source or isolate infected trees as needed for wildlife habitat and future snags.
- Non-commercial slash not yarded to landings as forest products (e.g., fuelwood, biomass or post and poles) will be lopped and scattered to a maximum depth of 2 feet within harvest units.
- The following cutting units will receive a fuel reduction treatment detailed in PDF FM-4. Grapple piling will occur within cutting units MC-9, MC-11, MC-12 and MC-13.
- Landing and other slash piles will be burned.
- Stocking surveys will be conducted as outlined in FSH 2409.17 Silvicultural Practices Handbook. If group patch cuts have not naturally regenerated with desirable conifer species to a minimum of 150 seedlings per acre, site preparation and artificial reforestation will occur. Containerized stock will be planted with a mix of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir to achieve a stocking of 258 to 300 seedlings per acre. This equates to 12 to 13 foot spacing.
- Site preparation will consist of clearing away all competing vegetation and scalping the exposed soil surface to a depth of \( \frac{1}{2} \) inch within an 18 inch x 18 inch area for each seedling.

**Activity 4. Straight Fire Reforestation Treatment, 194 acres**

The Proposed Action with Modifications is to artificially reforest the 1996 Straight Fire burn area. The fire was a stand replacement event and currently consists of brush, with limited aspen and conifer regeneration, and few standing snags. Reforestation will include site preparation and planting on approximately 194 acres. Actions will include:

- The species planted will be a mixture of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir depending on elevation, aspect and slope.
- Site preparation will consist of clearing away all competing vegetation and scalping the exposed soil surface to a depth of \( \frac{1}{2} \) inch within an 18 inch x 18 inch area for each seedling.
- Trees will be planted at approximately a 12 by 12 foot spacing resulting in a stocking of 300 trees per acre. Wider spacing may be used depending on site conditions utilizing a combination of spacing arrangements.

**Activity 5. Pre-commercial Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) Treatment, 285 acres**

The Proposed Action with Modifications is a pre-commercial thinning to reduce densities of overstocked mixed conifer stands to allow for desirable tree species composition, improved forest health and increased vigor and growth of the retained trees. The thinning treatments will allow for accelerated development of the treated stands into larger structural stages. Silviculture treatments will consist of density reduction (thinning), mistletoe control, and modification of the species composition to early seral. Specifications for treatment are:

- Trees will be hand felled. Leave tree species in order of preference will be ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, limber pine, blue spruce, and white fir. Aspen and bristlecone pine will not be cut or considered in tree spacing.
- Spacing between trees will be variable, based on the diameter of each tree. The larger the tree diameter the wider the spacing. On the average, this will leave approximately 135 trees per acre of pole and saw timber size trees after treatments are complete.
- Trees infected with mistletoe with ratings of moderate or higher will be cut (Hawksworth, 1977). The maximum diameter of trees to be felled will be eight inches with the exception of mistletoe infected trees. Mistletoe infected trees larger than eight inches will be cut; if larger than 14 inches, girdled and left standing for snag habitat recruitment. Infected trees within 100 feet of roads or trails will be cut rather than girdled to avoid becoming a hazard.
- Trees taller than two feet will be subject to thinning. Trees less than two feet will not be thinned nor considered as part of the stocking density.
- Thinning slash will be lopped and scattered to a depth not to exceed 2 feet.
- Cutting Unit T-7 will be required to have a hand piling slash treatment. See PDF FM-4.
- All snags will be retained.
Transportation Plan

The Proposed Action with Modifications will use a combination of designated open roads, administrative use only roads, closed roads, and temporary roads. Designated open roads and administrative use roads will be used for accessing and hauling within harvesting areas. No new permanent system roads will be constructed. Upon completion of harvest activities, motorized access to administrative use only roads will be restricted using signs, gates, or barricades.

System Roads used as Haul Routes

Table 1: Designated haul routes used by Proposed Action with Modifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road Number</th>
<th>Road Length (Miles)</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30087</td>
<td>11.10</td>
<td>3- SUITABLE FOR PASSENGER CAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30092</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>3- SUITABLE FOR PASSENGER CAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30099</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3- SUITABLE FOR PASSENGER CAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30099B</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>3- SUITABLE FOR PASSENGER CAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30105</td>
<td>9.82</td>
<td>2- HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30209</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>2- HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30215</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>2- HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30632</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>2- HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31176</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>1- BASIC CUSTODIAL CARE (CLOSED)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31186</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2- HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31188</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>1- BASIC CUSTODIAL CARE (CLOSED)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31193</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>2- HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31201</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1- BASIC CUSTODIAL CARE (CLOSED)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31211</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>3- SUITABLE FOR PASSENGER CAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31219</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>2- HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33692</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>1- BASIC CUSTODIAL CARE (CLOSED)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33711</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>2- HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Administrative use only route closed to the public.

Temporary Roads

The Proposed Action with Modifications will require use of 4.87 miles of temporary roads. About 2.61 miles of proposed temporary roads are existing closed routes, the remainder being new temporary roads. The roads detailed in Table 2 below are roads closed with the 2009 Record of Decision for the Dixie National Forest Motorized Travel Plan (MTP). For practical reasons, the Paunsaugunt Project intends to re-use the existing closed routes for harvest activities. The Proposed Action with Modifications will then implement the road decommissioning prescriptions as determined by the MTP Record of Decision.

Table 2: MTP designated closed roads used by Proposed Action with Modifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road Number</th>
<th>Miles</th>
<th>Motorized Travel Plan Designation</th>
<th>Proposed Action Designation</th>
<th>MTP Decommission Prescription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30894A</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>Decommission</td>
<td>Open as Temporary Road</td>
<td>Heavy rip, seed and barrier within sight distance of FR 30105.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The temporary roads detailed in Table 3 below will be built to the minimum standard to allow a tractor with a loaded stinger-steer log trailer to safely negotiate the terrain from the log landing to the haul road. All temporary roads will be decommissioned following harvest activities. Road decommissioning will follow one or more of the methods defined within Forest Service Manual (FSM) 7734.1: Decommissioning Treatments.

Table 3: List of new temporary roads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road Number</th>
<th>Miles</th>
<th>Proposed Action Designation</th>
<th>Decommission Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T301</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>New Construction</td>
<td>See PDF HS-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T302</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>New Construction</td>
<td>See PDF HS-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T303</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>New Construction</td>
<td>See PDF HS-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T304</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>New Construction</td>
<td>See PDF HS-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T305</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>New Construction</td>
<td>See PDF HS-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T306</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>New Construction</td>
<td>See PDF HS-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T307</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>New Construction</td>
<td>See PDF HS-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T308</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>New Construction</td>
<td>See PDF HS-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T309</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>New Construction</td>
<td>See PDF HS-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T310</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>New Construction</td>
<td>See PDF HS-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T311</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>New Construction</td>
<td>See PDF HS-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Temporary Road Construction</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Project Design Features

### Table 4: Project Design Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Design Features for the Proposed Action with Modifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wildlife</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL-1. Maintain hiding cover along 75% of the arterial and collector roads in the project area in order to provide hiding cover for deer, elk, and other wildlife as prescribed within the forest plan. Maintain 50% cover along natural or created openings, and maintain hiding cover along at least 50% of streams and rivers (Hood &amp; Miller, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL-2. All vegetation manipulation activities will comply with the <em>Utah Northern Goshawk Project Decision Notice</em> (USFS, 2000b). Specific guidelines are contained within WL-3 through WL-6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL-3. Within all aspen regeneration units, a minimum of 50 logs per 10 acres exceeding 6 inch diameter and 8 foot length should be retained. A minimum of 30 tons per 10 acres of coarse woody debris (&gt; 3 inches diameter), inclusive of down logs should be retained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL-4. Within all mixed conifer harvest and thinning units a minimum of 50 logs per 10 acres exceeding 12 inch diameter and 8 foot length should be retained. A minimum of 100 tons per 10 acres of coarse woody debris (&gt; 3 inches diameter), inclusive of down logs should be retained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL-5. Within all aspen regeneration units, a minimum of 200 snags per 100 acres with a minimum preferred size of 8 inches DBH and 15 feet tall should be retained. If the minimum number of snags is unavailable, green trees should be substituted. If the minimum size is unavailable, then use the largest trees available on site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL-6. Within all mixed conifer harvest and thinning units a minimum of 300 snags per 100 acres with a minimum preferred size of 18 inches DBH and 30 feet tall should be retained. If the minimum number of snags is unavailable, green trees should be substituted. If the minimum size is unavailable, use the largest trees available on site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL-7. To avoid confining wildlife, aspen cutting unit fencing will be installed prior to the seasonal fawning and calving period. This period generally occurs from April 1 to June 30.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL-8. Trees identified with USFS &quot;wildlife tree&quot; signs within cutting units will be marked for retention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL-9. Treatment units A-19, T-2, T-3, T-4, T-5, MC-8 and MC-9 are located within northern goshawk post-fledgling areas. Management activities should be restricted during the active nesting period. The active nesting period will normally occur between March 15th and September 30th.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL-10. Treatment units A-19, T-2, T-3, T-4, T-5, MC-8 and MC-9 are located within northern goshawk post-fledgling areas. Maximum created opening size is limited to 2 acres.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Hydrology and Soils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Design Features for the Proposed Action with Modifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hydrology and Soils</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-1. All applicable Soil and Water Conservation Practices (SWCPs) will be used during project layout and implementation. See EA Appendix C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-2. Yarding with ground based machinery will be allowed up to the 100 foot buffer on riparian areas but will be excluded from meadows associated with the valley bottoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-3. All newly constructed temporary roads (T301-T311) will be obliterated; the surface re-contoured to original slope and re-vegetated using approved seed mix. See page 11 for additional seed information. Remove temporary culverts from all temporary roads. When removing culverts, be sure all fill material is removed from below the high water line of the stream. All material that is removed should be placed in a safe disposal area. The remaining fill material should be left at a stable angle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-4. Ground based skidding equipment will be restricted to slopes less than 40%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-5. Forester or sale administration with zone hydrologist and purchaser will ensure landings will not be located within defined stream buffers by designating landings during layout and project implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-6. Skid trail crossings along stream corridors will be kept to a minimum and will be designated by forester or sale administrator with district hydrologist and purchaser during sale layout and implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-7. Timber harvest will not occur in soil types identified as non-suitable for timber harvest, based on field verification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-8. Site-specific identification of riparian influence zones for fish-bearing streams (9A and 9B) should include</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Project Design Features for the Proposed Action with Modifications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the area from the edges of the active stream channel to a 300 feet slope distance (600 feet, including both sides of the stream channel).</td>
<td>The following cutting units will include a buffer to exclude activities within 300 feet of the active stream channel: MC-4, MC-5, MC-9, MC-11, MC-12, MC-13, MC-14, MC-15, A-20, A-21, A-22, and A-23. Buffers will be placed during final sale layout.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-9. Site-specific identification of riparian influence zones for permanently flowing non-fish bearing streams should include the area from the edges of the active stream channel to whichever of the following widths is most appropriate:</td>
<td>To the top of the inner gorge, To the outer edges of the 100-year floodplain, To the outer edges of the riparian vegetation, To a distance equal to the height of one site-potential tree, or To a 150 feet slope distance (300 feet, including both sides of the stream channel).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-10. Site-specific identification of riparian influence zones for wetlands, ponds, lakes, reservoirs, and seasonally-flowing or intermittent streams should include the area from the edge of the water body to whichever of the following widths is most appropriate:</td>
<td>To the outer edges of the riparian vegetation, To the extent of the seasonally saturated soil, To the extent of moderately and highly unstable areas, To a distance equal to the height of one site-potential tree, or To a 150 feet slope distance from the edge of the maximum pool elevation of constructed ponds and reservoirs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-11. Prior to use of temporary road U3792, install temporary culverts (18 inch, 14 foot length) at both the north and south intersections with Kanab Creek. Remove temporary culverts upon completion of harvest and haul activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-12. Maintain at least 85% ground cover in ponderosa pine stands and 90% ground cover in aspen and spruce-fir stands following harvest (R4-FSM 2550 and R4-DNF-FSH 2509.18.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-13. The soils prone to severe erosion hazard within the project area are:</td>
<td>Syrett-Venet gravelly loams Sheege-Swapps complex Losee very gravelly loam Badland-Rock outcrop-Paunsaugunt complex Operation of heavy equipment when these soils are wet will be prohibited as compaction will likely occur. See Soil Maps in Appendix A of EA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-14. The Utah Department of Environmental Quality – Division of Water Quality was consulted on the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit needs. The proper NPDES permits will be obtained as needed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-16. Protect spring within treatment unit A-29 with a 100 foot buffer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-17. Protect spring within treatment unit A-30 with a 100 foot buffer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-18. Use of slash mats at existing skid trail crossings of intermittent drainage within treatment unit A-29 is required to protect soil and water resources.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS-19. Place a 50 foot no treatment buffer adjacent to dispersed campsite within harvest unit A-30.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scenic Resources</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR-1. 6 inch maximum stump height required when possible within 100 feet of trails and Concern Level 1 and 2 travel ways. Cutting units with this design feature will be identified on the Sale Area Map.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR-2. Clear slash produced from project implementation from within designated open roads and trails.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR-3. Design treatment unit boundaries by incorporating the characteristic landscape patterns of the surrounding area so that unnatural appearing lines are not created, such as square shaped clear cuts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Project Design Features for the Proposed Action with Modifications

| RG-1 | Minimize impacts to regenerated aspen from browsing by all ungulates until regeneration is an average of 6 feet high. Ungulates may be excluded from aspen stands in order to minimize impacts to aspen suckers. Exclusion measures may include livestock management activities such as hazing and herding and barriers such as slash piling, tree hinge cutting or fences. |
| RG-2 | Range, wildlife, and other structural improvements will be protected from tree felling and prescribed fire. Specific improvements such as fences, cattleguards and other improvements will be identified on Sale Area Map. |
| NW-1 | Ground disturbing heavy equipment and equipment used for spreading straw, mulch or seed will be thoroughly cleaned at an off-forest location prior to being transported to the project area. |
| NW-2 | Log landings will be seeded immediately following the activity to take advantage of the seedbed and prevent the potential establishment of noxious weeds. Seed mixes will include species that germinate rapidly to provide a quick cover of vegetation (the “nurse crop” technique). Seed mixes used for rehabilitation purposes will be noxious weed free certified. See page 11 for additional seed information. |
| NW-3 | Noxious weeds will be controlled on all disturbed areas in accordance with the Dixie NF Noxious Weed Management EA of 2000. |
| NW-4 | If used for rehabilitation purposes, only certified noxious weed free hay, straw, and mulch will be used. |
| AQ-1 | Comply with Utah State Smoke Management Plan, which includes provisions to comply with the Utah Air Quality Rule R307-204. |
| PS-1 | The public will be kept informed through timely media and signage of impending or occurring activities, and changes in access. |
| TM-1 | Whole Tree Yarding: Within all cutting units the purchaser shall leave the tops of felled trees attached to the top log and yard them to landings. |
| TM-2 | Unmerchantable material may be made available for fuel wood and biomass opportunities if markets exist prior to burning. |
| TM-3 | Protect wood fences and structures during felling operations at Podunk Guard Station |
| TM-4 | Microsite planting: Plant on the north side of logs, stumps and other debris where possible. Sites for planting will be selected on the basis of maximizing expected seedling survival. |
| TM-5 | During timber sale layout, identify and retain live trees with visible wildlife use indicated by the presence of nests and tree holes. |
| TM-6 | To protect aspen regeneration from livestock, the following cutting units will be temporarily fenced following harvest and prior to the next growing season. A-5, A-6, A-8, A-9, and A-30. Fencing will be removed when the aspen has reached an average height of 6 feet and are certified as stocked. |
| FM-1 | Hand Piles: Slash to be piled shall include all material from 1 inch diameter up to and including 4 inches in diameter at the large end, having a minimum length of 2 feet. Piles shall have a minimum height of 3 feet and a maximum height of 6 feet. Piles shall be located at least 20 feet away from any residual green tree. If conditions make it impractical to locate piles so that damage to residual green trees can be avoided, an area designated by the Forest Service will be cleared and used as a piling area. No piles are to be made in system roads, streams or within the channel bottom above any culvert intake. |
| FM-2 | Machine (Grapple) Slash Piles: Piles shall be compact, free of soil and of sufficient size to facilitate burning. Piles will be a minimum height of 4 feet and shall be placed no closer than 50 feet from the outside perimeter of the unit, system roads, wet areas, or other areas designated on the ground by the Forest Service. No pile or windrow shall be closer than 30 feet from any standing reserve trees. All material extending more than 5 feet beyond the outside perimeter of the pile shall be trimmed off and returned to the pile. No piles are to be made in system roads, streams or within the channel bottom above any culvert intake. |
| FM-3 | Landing Piles: Piles shall be reasonably compact and free of soil to facilitate burning. Piles will not be |
Project Design Features for the Proposed Action with Modifications

Less than 4 feet in height. Piles shall be of a size and location which will not impair road use or result in damage to residual timber. Piles shall be located at least 30 feet from residual timber. All material extending more than 2 feet beyond the outside perimeter of the pile shall be trimmed off and returned to the pile.

FM-4: Slash Treatment: Objective is to reduce activity slash and existing coarse woody debris (> 3 inches in diameter) by at least 50% to reduce fire hazard while meeting other resource needs. A combination of grapple and/or hand piling will be required. In units authorized for mechanical operations, it will be the contractors’ responsibility to choose which method is used to achieve the desired results without causing excessive resource damage. Slash to be piled includes all woody debris (tree branches, tops, logs, etc.) which are lying on the ground. It does not include standing dead trees. It does not include stumps or wood that is so thoroughly rotted that it cannot be picked up by the machinery without breaking into small pieces. The minimum size of slash to be piled is 3 inch in diameter on the large end of the piece and 2 feet in length. Retention of large logs takes precedence over other coarse woody debris to meet post slash treatment objectives of 5 to 7 tons per acre within aspen coppice units and 10 to 15 tons in mixed conifer harvest and thinning units. Refer to PDF WL-3 and WL-4 above for retained log requirements.

Erosion and Noxious Weed Controls

The following seed mix has been developed by the project interdisciplinary team to quickly recover harvest disturbed soils. The seed mix of native and non-native grass and forbs would be used for erosion and noxious weed control of log landings, skid trails and temporary roads as described in the transportation plan and project design features HS-3 and NW-1.

Table 5: Project seed mix and rate of application

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species of Seed</th>
<th>PLS* Pounds per Acre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Agropyron intermedium</em> (intermediate wheatgrass) (I)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bromus inermis</em> (smooth brome) (I)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bromus carinatus</em> (mountain brome) (N)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dactylis glomerata</em> (orchardgrass) (I)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hedysarum boreale</em> Nutt. var. mackenziei (northern sweetvetch) (N) (1st preference)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or <em>Hedysarum boreale</em> Nutt. var. gremiale (Utah sweetvetch) (N)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Medicago sativa</em> (alfalfa) (I)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total 15.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total 15.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Application Requirements

- Soil on areas to be seeded shall be left in a roughened condition favorable to the retention and germination of the seed. Scarification of traveled ways listed above shall be to a minimum depth of 1/4 inches and a maximum depth of 1 inch.
- Seed shall be spread evenly at the rate of 15 pounds of seed/acre.
- Seeding shall be done during the period **MAY 15 to JUNE 30** and under the above specified conditions unless otherwise approved by sale administrator.
Quality Control Requirements

- Certification that the seed has been tested for germination (TZ test acceptable), purity (weed seed content, crop seed content and inert matter) and noxious weeds within the past 120 days. Tests on purity (weed seed content, crop seed content, and inert matter) and noxious weeds may be older than 120 days if approved by the Forest Service. Seed certification tag without testing documentation will not be accepted.
- All seed will have no less than 80% germination (TZ test acceptable) and 90% purity. Some shrubs and other species that cannot meet these requirements (big sagebrush, saltbush, etc.) will be evaluated and approved individually by the Forest Service and may be excluded from these requirements on a case-by-case basis.
- All seed will be certified NOXIOUS WEED FREE according to the Utah State Noxious Weed List (All States Noxious Weed Test will be required for seed certification).
- Seed companies must certify that mixtures contain individual plant seed purity % values within 5% of the proportion of individual plant seed requested by the Forest Service.
- Provide seed lot tracking and verification information and proof of test results for seed lots that will document lot germination, purity (percent weed seed content, percent crop seed content, and percent inert matter) and certification that seed is free from Utah State listed noxious weeds.
- Bulk weight will need to be provided on all seed prior to delivery.

Reasons for the Decision

I have selected the Proposed Action with Modifications because it provides the greatest attainment of the Paunsaugunt Project’s purpose and need while still being sensitive to other resource concerns within the project area. I considered the Dixie National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended, for the project area. I also took into account the competing interests and values of the public.

My decision to modify the Proposed Action took into account existing forest conditions and the effects of the analyzed alternatives on forest resources such as soils, wildlife, fuels, recreation and timber. I recognized that while either Alternative 2 or 3 would meet the Purpose and Need, modifying the Proposed Action and creating more uneven-aged acres through harvest is more responsive to comments that requested uneven-aged management.

Meeting the Purpose and Need to improve and maintain a balance of age structure classes and desirable tree species within forest stands.

Implementation of the Proposed Action with Modifications will improve the age class distribution of forested stands across the Paunsaugunt Project area. This will be accomplished by converting those stands containing an overabundance of age classes VSS 3 & 4 (young and mid-aged) to those age classes currently lacking in VSS 1 & 2 (seedlings and saplings) and VSS 5 & 6 (mature and old forest age classes). The use of a combination of group selection, shelterwood and coppice clear fell harvest systems will best restore and maintain desirable tree species such as aspen and ponderosa pine.
Aspen Forests

Aspen, a disturbance dependent species, will benefit from the Proposed Action with Modifications. Mature stands of aspen that are converting to white fir and blue spruce will receive coppice clear fell treatments to remove competing conifers and the existing aspen overstory. The harvest will stimulate root suckering to regenerate and maintain dominance of aspen within the forest stands treated.

In making my decision for restoration of aspen, I considered current science and comments from the public. The interdisciplinary team considered the report entitled *Guidelines for Aspen Restoration on the National Forests in Utah* along with the forest plan to determine the aspen restoration treatments. The EA documents the existing condition and causal factors for aspen decline and the Proposed Action with Modifications implements the appropriate treatment (EA pp. 1-2, 3-3 & 3-11). Monitoring for ungulate browse is defined and design features such as temporary fencing have been included to ensure success of the aspen treatments.

Mixed Conifer Forests

Past insect outbreaks and harvest history has led to a current deficit of seral conifers such as ponderosa pine and large trees (VSS 5 & 6) within mixed conifer stands of the project area (EA pp. 1-2 & 1-3). In many of these stands, dense shaded conditions promote establishment of white fir and blue spruce while inhibiting regeneration of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir. Activities such as the group shelterwood with reserves harvest will help retain a large tree component while preparing stands for natural regeneration of seral tree species. Some forest stands are currently multi-storied or in goshawk post-fledgling areas and the group selection treatment will capture existing large structure and maintain uneven-aged characteristics while creating forest openings for regeneration of seral conifer such as ponderosa pine. Many of the remaining forest stands outside of goshawk post-fledgling areas will receive shelterwood harvests since they are single-storied, suffer from disease or are succeeding to white fir and blue spruce. The shelterwood system is best suited for regeneration of desirable conifers and long term sustainability within existing even-aged forest stands. The combination of harvest systems to promote natural regeneration will best diversify forest structure by creating VSS 1 age classes and develop VSS 5 and 6 classes.

Meeting the Purpose and Need to create and maintain conditions that promote growth and vigor of forest stands while reducing mortality from fire, insects and disease.

Implementation of the Proposed Action with Modifications will improve growth and vigor of trees, improve species composition and reduce surface fuels within forested stands. The decision includes treating 285 acres of conifer stands with pre-commercial thinning and 863 acres with shelterwood and group selection harvest systems. Aspen regeneration harvests are planned on 413 acres to manage for the forest plan’s standards and guidelines for long term retention of aspen ecosystems (DNF, 1986, pp. IV-25). The treatments will also focus retention on early successional species such as ponderosa pine. The treatments will also eliminate competition to improve growing conditions for the residual trees (EA p. 3-16).
The Proposed Action with Modifications will also reduce hazardous fuels within the project area by the commercial and non-commercial removal of ladder fuels on 1,148 acres. Hazardous fuel treatments involving machine piling and burning on 513 acres will also reduce surface fuels to improve forest stands resiliency to unplanned fire events (EA p. 3-16).

Implementation of the Proposed Action with Modifications will improve forest health by reducing occurrence of dwarf mistletoe and reducing susceptibility of forest stands to bark beetle infestations. This need will be accomplished by pre-commercial thinning and harvesting trees moderately or highly infected with mistletoe on 1,148 acres. Forest stand susceptibility to bark beetle infestations will also be reduced by using pre-commercial thinning and harvest methods to reduce tree densities. I believe these methods will best achieve the purpose and need to improve conditions for forest health.

**Meeting the Purpose and Need to restore or maintain forested landscapes in a properly functioning condition for the benefit of wildlife species such as the northern goshawk.**

As described within Chapter 1 of the EA, forest stands, through a lack of disturbance are becoming more homogeneous in age, size and species composition (EA p. 1-2). The Proposed Action with Modifications will best meet wildlife needs through its mix of aspen coppice clear-fells, group selection patch cuts and shelterwood treatments. Based on the analysis of my interdisciplinary team, the Proposed Action with Modifications provides more diversity in wildlife habitat needs.

The Paunsaugunt Project area is home to a multitude of wildlife species each with different habitat needs for shelter and forage. By creating gaps in the forest canopy through aspen clear-fells, mixed conifer patch cuts and shelterwood harvests, edge and foraging habitat is increased (EA pp. 3-14, 3-89 & 3-90). The regeneration treatments proposed with my decision will open up forest canopies and promote development of a more diverse understory, both in terms of plant species (i.e., forbs, grasses, and shrubs) and structure. This diversity will improve habitat for recreational wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities for game species such as Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer and wild turkey.

Several commenters during scoping periods were concerned about the effects of harvest and thinning activities on the northern goshawk. A review of the analysis indicates that the Proposed Action with Modifications will maintain or improve forest conditions desirable to the goshawk (EA pp. 3-17, 3-74). The Proposed Action with Modifications is also compliant with the forest plan and current science (USDA FS, 2000) (Rodriguez, 2012)\(^4\). In mixed conifer stands within goshawk post-fledgling area, individual openings within the forest canopies are limited to a maximum of 2 acres. The use of preparatory cuts, group selection patch cuts, non-commercial thinning and project design features will be consistent with this requirement. No treatments are planned within goshawk nest areas with the Proposed Action with Modifications. Activities will occur within two goshawk post-fledgling areas. Within the Seiler

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Creek/Crawford Pass PFA, a total of 121 acres is proposed for treatment with 14 acres of aspen coppice cuts and 107 acres of group selection harvest. Within the Left Fork Kanab Creek PFA, a total of 226 acres is proposed for treatment with 14 acres of aspen coppice cuts, 28 acres of shelterwood preparatory cuts and 184 acres of non-commercial thinning. Within the combined goshawk foraging areas, a total of 1,220 acres of harvest and thinning is planned.

The Proposed Action with Modifications improves northern goshawk habitat by managing forest vegetation towards a properly functioning condition. Through mechanical harvests and silvicultural activities, structure, tree densities, composition and patterns within the treated acres will diversify. The diversification will improve the resiliency of the home ranges to disturbances, reducing chances that the current desirable goshawk habitat will be lost from fire or insect outbreaks (EA p. 3-17).

Meeting the Purpose and Need to Regenerate Declining Aspen Stands.
Implementation of the Proposed Action with Modifications will achieve regeneration of aspen stands in a project area where much of the older aspen is being succeeded by conifers. Retention of aspen within the landscape has several benefits. Maintaining a diverse landscape with a variety of seral species such as aspen across the landscape will reduce susceptibility of forest stands to insect and disease outbreaks. Regeneration treatments within aspen stands will create additional VSS 1 age classes in a landscape where it is currently lacking (EA p. 3-17). Regeneration of declining aspen stands will assure that aspen is present to benefit forest resources such as aesthetics for the long term. I believe that my decision best meets the purpose and need to regenerate aspen (EA p. 3-19).

Meeting the Purpose and Need to Restore Burned Forest Stands.
Implementation of the Proposed Action with Modifications will meet the purpose and need of the Paunsaugunt Project through artificial reforestation of 194 acres impacted by the Straight Fire. The fire event resulted in inconsistently stocked stands that have a reforestation need. The planting of conifer seedlings will accelerate the establishment of fully stocked stands of desirable conifer species and the long term recruitment into larger VSS classes (EA p. 3-16).

Consideration of Other Resource Areas
I considered effects to other resource areas analyzed by the interdisciplinary team in the process of preparing the Proposed Action and identifying the consequences of the alternatives in the EA.

For forest recreation users, the analysis beginning on page 3-53 of the EA shows that more diversity in stand structure and age would lead to improved scenic quality. A combination of group selection and shelterwood harvests along with the aspen restoration treatments in blocks of 5 to 15 acres will diversify scenic views while retaining natural appearing lines and patterns (EA p. 3-51). Regeneration of declining aspen stands will assure that aspen is present to benefit forest resources such as scenic quality for the long term.
Timber harvesting affects forest soils and associated hydrological function through compaction by logging machines (EA p. 3-92). Soils over time will recover from this disturbance (EA p. 3-93). Selection systems by design return on a regular schedule of entries to maintain an uneven-aged structure balance. These repeated harvest entries can affect the recovery of the soils depending on the time between entries (EA p. 3-26). By limiting use of the group selection system to forest stands most suitable for it, long term effects to soils by repeated entries will be limited.

The Proposed Action with Modifications will utilize more merchantable timber volume than Alternative 3 but will also have higher service costs due to more fencing and hazardous fuels treatments. The Proposed Action with Modifications will have the potential to create between 64 to 72 new jobs and over $3 million of labor income benefits within the economic impact area from the timber products offered and services requested (EA pp. 3-40 & 3-42).

The Proposed Action with Modifications when compared to the other alternatives is best at reducing ladder and hazardous surface fuels. My decision proposes to pile and burn a total of 537 acres within treatment areas that have hazardous quantities of surface fuels. This number of acres is more than either Alternative 2 or 3 and will best meet the purpose and need of the Paunsaugunt Project.

Other Alternatives Considered
In addition to the Proposed Action with Modifications, I considered three alternatives in detail and three other alternatives that were considered but eliminated. A comparison of the alternatives considered in detail can be found in the EA on page 2-10 and those considered but eliminated can be found in the EA on pages 2-16 and 2-17.

Alternative 1, No Action
Under the No Action Alternative, current management plans would have continued to guide management of the project area. No silvicultural treatments to harvest timber, regenerate aspen, reforest within fire impacted lands or thin forested stands would have been implemented to accomplish the forest plan’s desired conditions. Upland aspen stands would have continued to be succeeded by conifers resulting in a potential loss of aspen forest within the analysis area. Mixed conifer stands would continue to be overstocked with undesirable species and decreased growth and vigor leading to a high risk to agents of disturbance such as insect and disease outbreaks and severe fire behavior. Fire impacted lands would have continued to slowly recover, but without the assurance that a desirable mix of tree species would have occurred.

Alternative 2, the Proposed Action
The Proposed Action Alternative would have regenerated aspen stands on 413 acres using coppice cuts ranging in size from 5 to 15 acres. A shelterwood with reserves system using preparatory and seed cuts would have harvested 866 acres of mixed conifer forest to increase representation of the larger diameter classes, increase vigor and cone production, and regenerate desirable tree species. Pre-commercial timber stand improvement thinnings would have been conducted on 285 acres to reduce densities of overstocked mixed conifer stands.
Reforestation activities were proposed on approximately 194 acres to restore fire damaged forest stands to suitable cover.

**Alternative 3, an Uneven-aged Emphasis Alternative**
The Uneven-Aged Emphasis Alternative proposed a group selection harvest with reserves. This is an uneven-aged silvicultural system, and was proposed on 1,385 acres to increase age classes within mixed conifer forested stands. Age class diversity would have been promoted through cutting all trees within small groups or patches up to two acres in size at a time. These openings would be allowed to regenerate to seral conifers naturally through seed blown in from nearby seed trees adjacent to the openings. A commercial thinning would have occurred between the patch cuts. The treatments were designed to increase structural diversity by creating a new regenerating class that is lacking in these stands, while retaining the larger diameter classes. The actions were intended to move forested stands towards a more balanced VSS. A burned area reforestation treatment consisting of planting conifers was planned on 194 acres and a non-commercial thinning was proposed on 33 acres. This alternative also proposed to regenerate aspen stands on 528 acres using coppice cuts.

**Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study**
In addition to the No Action, Alternative 2 and Alternative 3, three additional alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed study. These alternatives were either devised during project development or to respond to issues raised by the public during scoping. However, after analysis these alternatives were eliminated from further consideration. An alternative to regenerate aspen using a lop and scatter method was considered. Another alternative that did not use temporary roads was also considered. Finally a landscape scale approach to manage aspen and tree densities using prescribed fire along with mechanical harvesting was developed and considered. Reasons for elimination from detailed analysis can be found on pages 2-16 and 2-17 of the EA.

**Public Involvement and Scoping**
The need for this action arose in March of 2007. A proposal to conduct mechanical and prescribed burn treatments in aspen, mixed conifer and meadow cover types on a total of 10,918 acres was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions on September 25, 2008. The Proposed Action was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during a 30 day combined scoping and notice to comment period beginning on August 30, 2011. The purpose of the comment period was to identify potential issues and concerns associated with the Proposed Action. A notice was placed within the St. George, UT newspaper The Spectrum to solicit responses from local communities.

Using the comments from the public and other agencies, the interdisciplinary team identified several key issues regarding the effects of the Proposed Action. Issues included the effects of temporary logging roads on forest resources; the effects of the Proposed Action on the habitat of the northern goshawk; the effects of commercial harvesting within aspen forests; and the
scale of aspen regeneration treatments. These key issues led to development of the alternatives described in the section above.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

Endangered Species Act
The Paunsaugunt Project will have no effect on the California condor, Mojave Desert tortoise, Utah prairie dog, western yellow-billed cuckoo, bighorn sheep, sage grouse, pygmy rabbit, or bald eagle (p. 3-67). It will also have no effect on the Last Chance townsendia (p. 3-46). It will not jeopardize the continued existence of Mexican spotted owl (EA p. 3-77). A biological assessment is included in the project record.

National Historic Preservation Act
Cultural resource surveys have been conducted following protocols approved by the State Historic Preservation Office (Jacklin, 2012). Native American tribes have been contacted and they expressed no concerns about the proposed activities. No cultural or historic resources would be impacted.

Clean Water Act
The Clean Water Act (CWA) requires each state to implement its own water quality standards. The State of Utah's Water Quality Antidegradation Policy requires maintenance of water quality to protect existing instream Beneficial Uses on streams designated as Category 1 High Quality Waters. All surface waters geographically located within the outer boundaries of the Dixie NF, whether on private or public lands are designated as High Quality Waters (Category 1). This means they will be maintained at existing high quality. New point sources will not be allowed, and non-point sources will be controlled to the extent feasible through implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs). The State of Utah and the Forest Service have agreed through a 1993 Memorandum of Understanding to use Forest Plan Standards & Guidelines and the Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 2509.22 Soil and Water Conservation Practices (SWCPs) as the BMPs. The use of SWCPs as the BMPs meets the water quality protection elements of the Utah Nonpoint Source Management Plan.

The proposed action is designed not to change or add sediment to the waters of the United States anywhere within the project area.

The Utah Department of Environmental Quality – Division of Water Quality was consulted on National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit needs. The proper NPDES permits will be obtained as needed.

Clean Air Act
Emissions anticipated from the implementation of any project activities associated with the Proposed Action with Modifications would be of short duration and are not expected to exceed State of Utah ambient air quality standards (18 AAC 50). Prior to burning, approval would be obtained in accordance with the Utah Division of Air Quality's Smoke Management Plan.
**Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands**

This order entitled *Protection of Wetlands* requires the Forest Service to take action to minimize destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands and to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands.

The Dixie NF performed the following measures to ensure compliance with E.O. 11990.

1. A hydrologist was enlisted as a member of the Paunsaugunt Project interdisciplinary team to advise on project development and to provide an analysis of the effects of the project on wetlands (EA pp. 3-90 to 3-96).
2. A list of Project Design Features beginning on page 8 identifies measures to be taken to meet the requirements of E.O. 11990 during timber sale layout and harvest activities.
3. During October, 2011, the Paunsaugunt Project interdisciplinary team field reviewed the temporary road locations. Some temporary road locations were adjusted and some existing roadbeds were abandoned and suitable routes established to ensure compliance with SWCPs. Appropriate road decommissioning treatments were defined and design features were revised during this field review (DNF, 2011).
4. Soil and water conservation practices referenced from FSH 2509.22 were identified for site specific applicability and are defined within Appendix C of the EA. Consideration of these practices during layout and implementation of harvest activities will ensure compliance with this order.

**Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management**

This executive order entitled *Floodplain Management* requires the Forest Service to provide leadership and to take action to (1) minimize adverse impacts associated with occupancy and modification of floodplains and reduce risks of flood loss, (2) minimize impacts of floods on human safety, health, and welfare, and (3) restore and preserve the natural and beneficial values served by flood plains. In compliance with this order, the Forest Service requires an analysis be completed to determine the significance of proposed actions in terms of impacts to flood plains. The Dixie NF performed the same measures to ensure compliance with E.O. 11988 as it did to meet E.O. 11990 listed above.

**Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186**

Executive Order 13186, entitled *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, directs Federal agencies to protect migratory birds by integrating bird conservation principles, measures, and practices into agency activities and by avoiding or minimizing, to the extent practical, adverse impacts on migratory birds’ resources when conducting agency actions. This Order directs agencies to further comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and other pertinent statutes. Based on specific reasons cited below, this analysis is compliant with the National Memorandum of Understanding between the USDA Forest Service and the USFWS to promote the conservation of migratory birds. In addition, the Dixie NF is compliant with the Letter of Understanding from the Dixie NF to the USFWS Utah Field Office concerning compliance with MBTA and Executive Order 13186.
1. The project as defined within the purpose and need is designed to restore or maintain forested landscapes in a properly functioning condition (PFC) for the benefit of wildlife species by improving the balance of VSS classes, composition and densities of forest stands within the project area. This meets the Forest Service’s agreement “to restore or enhance the composition, structure, and juxtaposition of migratory bird habitats in the project area”.

2. Project design features beginning on page 8 define measures to minimize incidental take including retention of existing wildlife trees, site specific timing restrictions and snag and coarse woody debris retention guidelines to benefit northern goshawk and migratory bird habitat needs.

3. An analysis describing the effects of the Paunsaugunt Project on migratory birds is included within this assessment and can be found beginning on page 3-62 of the EA.

**Travel Analysis Process**

FSH 7709.55 Travel Planning Handbook directs that a Travel Analysis Process (TAP) be completed for projects to inform the deciding official of travel management issues. The Paunsaugunt Project does not propose any changes to the current Dixie NF Motorized Travel Plan. Therefore a TAP is not necessary to perform.

**Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice**

Executive Order 12898 entitled *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* requires federal agencies to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low income populations. Based on the analysis beginning on page 3-42 of the EA, there is no indication that the Paunsaugunt Project would adversely or disproportionately affect American Indians, other racial minorities, or low-income groups.

**National Forest Management Act (NFMA)**

This decision to harvest and regenerate aspen forests; to harvest, regenerate, and thin mixed conifer forests; and to artificially reforest fire burned land is consistent with the intent of the forest plan’s long term goals and objectives listed on pages IV-1 to IV-15. The project was designed in conformance with the forest plan standards and incorporates appropriate forest plan guidelines (pp. IV-24 to IV-120 as amended).

I have determined the Proposed Action with Modifications is consistent with the following provisions of the National Forest Management Act:

1. **Suitability for Timber Production:** No timber harvest, other than salvage sales or sales to protect other multiple-use values, shall occur on lands not suited for timber production (16 USC 1604(k)).

The forest stands proposed for treatment meet the criteria of being on land suitable for timber production as described by the forest plan on page IV-37. Physical suitability and the desired future condition for the various management areas were considered to determine suitability for timber production (EA p. 3-1).
2. Timber Harvest on National Forest Lands (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)): A Responsible Official may authorize site-specific projects and activities to harvest timber on National Forest System lands only where:

a. Soil, slope, or other watershed conditions will not be irreversibly damaged (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(i)).

Soil and water conservation practices implemented in project design and contracts are effective in minimizing impacts to site productivity and conserving soil and water resources. For instance, project design features embedded within timber sale contract clauses will be used that implement soil and water conservation practices, such as directional felling, designated skid trails, endlining, etc. There has been no finding of irreversible damage to soils, slopes, or other watershed conditions from proposed treatments (EA p. 3-98). Monitoring of past timber sales indicate that the design features included with the Proposed Action with Modifications is adequate to protect soil and water resources (DNF, 2011b).

b. There is assurance that the lands can be adequately restocked within five years after final regeneration harvest (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(ii)).

Stands proposed for commercial harvest treatment in the mixed conifer forest type have been identified as being capable of adequate restocking within five years of final harvest (EA, p. 3-1). Treatments are designed to maintain stand density levels above stocking rates. Past tree planting within the project area has resulted in certified stocked stands. Project features include adaptive management provisions if timely and satisfactory natural regeneration does not occur. Aspen stands proposed for regeneration treatment have been designed to optimize suckering rates and survival from browsing pressures as disclosed within the vegetation resource section. These treatments are located on areas suitable for timber harvest. The design of the project uses best science and experience on the forest in treating large blocks, removing competing conifer, and clearfelling aspen to stimulate sprouting. Forest experience shows that following these techniques can result in adequately stocked stands of aspen regeneration. Monitoring would be used to assess the success of regeneration efforts following project completion. Desired results and forest plan standards would be specifically stated in the detailed silvicultural prescriptions written for each area.

c. Protection is provided for streams, streambanks, shorelines, lakes, wetlands, and other bodies of water from detrimental changes in water temperatures, blockages of water courses, and deposits of sediment, where harvests are likely to seriously and adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(iii)).

The analysis of the Proposed Action with Modifications shows that there would be no change to the water quantity in the affected watershed. Affects to water quality and fish habitat would be negligible due to the implementation of the required soil and water conservation practices. Soil and water conservation practices provide protection for streams, streambanks, shorelines, lakes, wetlands, and other bodies of water. There has been no finding that project activities are likely to seriously and adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat through changes in

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water temperatures, blockages of water courses, or deposits of sediment (EA pp. 3-98, 3-106 & 3-109).

The forest plan requires a 100-foot treatment buffer on all perennial streams in Dixie NF. Project design features through consideration of best science has increased this buffer from 150 to 300 feet depending on stream type. The road system has been revised through time to avoid wet areas and the crossing of perennial or intermittent streams. Moreover, timber sale layout procedures include intensive surveying of ground conditions and identification of additional wetland features.

d. The harvesting system to be used is not selected primarily because it will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output of timber (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(iv)). While forest product outputs were considered in the decision process, other factors related to managing properly functioning ecosystems, enhancing diversity of aspen, and improving wildlife habitat within the project area were the primary factors used to determine the harvesting system.

3. Clearcutting and Even-aged Management (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)): Insure that clearcutting, seed tree cutting, shelterwood cutting, and other cuts designed to regenerate an even-aged stand of timber will be used as a cutting method on National Forest System lands only where:
   a. For clearcutting, it is determined to be the optimum method, and for other such cuts it is determined to be appropriate, to meet the objectives and requirements of the relevant land management plan (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(i)).
   Shelterwood systems and aspen regeneration harvests through coppice cuts are considered even-aged management techniques with respect to NFMA. These harvest treatments are silviculturally appropriate for all forest stands and cover types proposed with this harvest method as described on pages IV-38 to IV-40.
   
   b. The interdisciplinary review as determined by the Secretary has been completed and the potential environmental, biological, esthetic, engineering, and economic impacts on each advertised sale area have been assessed, as well as the consistency of the sale with the multiple use of the general area (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(ii)). The Paunsaugunt Vegetation Management Project EA and Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact constitute the interdisciplinary review of the potential environmental, biological, aesthetic, engineering, and economic impacts. The project is consistent with the multiple uses of the general area.

The interdisciplinary review has considered the potential environmental, biological, aesthetic, engineering, and economic impacts of the Paunsaugunt Project. This is summarized in the EA, and further documented in the project file. The cutting methods are consistent with the forest plan’s multiple-use management program.

c. Cut blocks, patches, or strips are shaped and blended to the extent practicable with the natural terrain (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(iii)).
The proposed treatments areas are located within the natural terrain features of the project area and generally follow natural stand boundaries.

d. Cuts are carried out according to the maximum size limit requirements for areas to be cut during one harvest operation, provided, that such limits shall not apply to the size of areas harvested as a result of natural catastrophic conditions such as fire, insect and disease attack, or windstorm (FSM R1 supplement 2400-2001-2 2471.1, 16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(iv)).

Maximum size limits for areas to be treated with regeneration harvests, including coppice clear-cuts, are set by the forest plan at 40 acres (p. IV-40). The Proposed Action with Modifications limits coppice clear-cuts to no larger than 15 acres in size.

e. Such cuts are carried out in a manner consistent with the protection of soil, watershed, fish, wildlife, recreation, and esthetic resources, and the regeneration of the timber resource (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(v)).

The effects on each resource are disclosed in the Paunsaugunt Vegetation Management Project EA. The effects of implementing the regeneration harvests proposed by the project are consistent with the protection of soil, watershed, fish, wildlife, recreation, and esthetic resources, as well as the regeneration of the timber resource. This is supported by the project record.

4. Stands of trees are harvested according to requirements for culmination of mean annual increment of growth (16 USC 1604(m)).

Proposed even-aged regeneration treatments within the aspen stands occur in mature, seral stands which have exceeded rotation age or are converting to other forest types through succession. Furthermore, the stands proposed for harvest have attained culmination of mean annual increment of growth. Best science suggests an average rotation age of 80 to 100 years given various factors for judging culmination of mean annual increment (Jones & Shepperd, 1985). The aspen stands proposed for cutting are mature and are declining due to age, disease, and competition from conifer trees.

5. Construction of temporary roadways in connection with timber contracts, and other permits or leases: Unless the necessity for a permanent road is set forth in the forest development road system plan, any road constructed on land of the National Forest System in connection with a timber contract or other permit or lease shall be designed with the goal of reestablishing vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover has been disturbed by the construction of the road, within ten years after the termination of the contract, permit, or lease either through artificial or natural means. Such action shall be taken unless it is later determined that the road is needed for use as a part of the National Forest Transportation System (16 USC 1608(b)).

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All temporary roads will be decommissioned following harvest activities and will follow project design features and decommissioning methods as described within Forest Service Manual 7734.1: Decommissioning Treatments (EA p. 2-9).

These methods have been used on other projects within the Dixie NF and monitoring indicates that adherence to project design features will reestablish vegetative cover in the appropriate time (DNF, 2011b, p. 24).

6. Standards of roadway construction: Roads constructed on National Forest System lands shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources (16 USC 1608(c)). The Paunsaugunt Project’s Proposed Action with Modifications proposes to only construct temporary roads. The temporary roads will be built to the minimum standard to allow a tractor with a loaded stinger-steer log trailer to safely negotiate the terrain from the log landing to the haul road (EA p. 2-9).

Finding of No Significant Impact

The following is a summary of the project analysis to determine significance, as defined by Forest Service Handbook 1909.15.05. “Significant” as used in NEPA requires consideration of both context and intensity of the expected project effects.

Context

Context means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts (i.e., local regional, worldwide), and over short and long time frames. For site-specific actions significance usually depends upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. The Paunsaugunt Vegetation Management Project (Paunsaugunt Project) is a project-level analysis. Its scope is confined to addressing the issues and environmental effects of the project. The context is limited to the locale of the project area. Project activities are limited to the specific vegetation and fuel treatments as defined by the Proposed Action with Modifications on lands managed by the USDA Forest Service in the Paunsaugunt Project area. The physical, biological and social effects of this action vary according to the resource area analyzed. Some analyses considered the extent of effects beyond the project boundaries.

Activities proposed in the Paunsaugunt Vegetation Management Project EA are of limited scope and duration, affecting only the immediate area in and around the proposed treatment units. Implementation will occur over a period of three to seven years. The project will ensure persistence of aspen in the project area, improve vegetative conditions for wildlife habitat and create resiliency to disturbances such as insects and fire. There will not be any significant short or long term effects.

The project was designed to minimize environmental effects through inclusion of project design features. Features include activity timing restrictions to avoid disturbances to northern goshawks; soil and water conservation practices to minimize and prevent anticipated effects of timber harvesting; and provisions to limit effects to scenic quality of forested environments.
Intensity
Intensity refers to the severity of the expected project impacts and is defined by the 10 points below.

1) Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on the balance the effects will be beneficial.

Potential Beneficial Effects
The Paunsaugunt Vegetation Management Project EA documents the following beneficial effects of implementing the Proposed Action with Modifications:
The vegetation treatments such as shelterwood and aspen coppice clear-fells will have direct effects to establish breaks and fuel continuity. The proposed activities will reduce ladder fuels via grapple piling of existing and activity generated slash within cutting units will reduce high surface fuels to quantities that will provide soil and wildlife benefits while reducing hazardous fuels to an acceptable level (EA pp. 3-16 & 3-22).

The Proposed Action with Modifications will have the potential to create between 64 to 72 new jobs and over $3 million of labor income benefits within the economic impact area from the timber products offered and services requested (EA pp. 3-40 & 3-42).

Landscape character, an attribute of scenic quality, will benefit as short and long term vegetation patterns changed by the project activities would create a colorful forest floor and diversify forest stand structure and age (EA p. 3-54).

Potential Adverse Effects
The Paunsaugunt Vegetation Management Project EA documents the following adverse effects of implementing the Proposed Action with Modifications:

Air Quality: The Proposed Action with Modifications will have a limited immediate adverse effect on air quality from proposed burning of slash piles. These effects will be localized and will last for a short duration. Proposed prescribed burning will be monitored and controlled by airshed regulations to avoid violation of air quality standards (EA p. 3-66).
Water Quality: There are no proposals to occupy, cross or otherwise damage any wetlands or floodplains associated with East Fork Sevier River, Podunk Creek, Crawford Creek, or Upper Kanab Creek this alternative is in compliance with 9A and 9B management areas objectives found in the forest plan. Project design features and soil and water conservation practices regarding riparian and wetland areas of concern used during implementation will protect all perennial streams from surface damage, compaction and erosion.

Soil Productivity: Direct effects due to temporary road construction and harvest activities are predicted, however, the total disturbance will be far less than 15 percent in the cumulative effects area. Soil impacted by activities is expected to recover within 25 years (EA p. 3-99).

Sensitive Species: The proposed activities may impact individual, flammulated owl, northern goshawk, spotted bat, Townsend’s big-eared bat, three-toed woodpecker, boreal toad, Bonneville cutthroat trout, and southern leatherside chub or their habitat. However, only minor effects are expected and will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or affect the long term persistence to the species or populations (EA pp. 3-77 to 3-79, Biological Evaluation pp. 18, 21, 26, 27, 34, 40, and 44).

Management Indicator Species: The proposed activities may impact individual mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, northern flicker wild turkey, Bonneville cutthroat trout, southern leatherside chub and “nonnative trout combined” or their habitat. However, only minor effects are expected and will not indicate a local or regional change in habitat quality or population status (EA pp. 3-79 to 3-81).

Migratory Birds: The proposed activities may impact individual birds. However, benefits from the increased foraging habitat by the vegetation treatments promoting a diversity of tree age classes and densities would be expected (EA p. 3-81).

Noxious Weeds: Implementation of proposed activities will increase the risk of weed spread. Appropriate actions as defined within Project Design Features NW-1 through NW-4 will be taken if new populations of noxious weeds are discovered within the project area (EA p. 3-34).

Visual Quality: The proposed harvest activities such as regeneration harvests via shelterwood and coppice clear-fells along with temporary road construction will be visually evident. However, the visual effects will probably go unnoticed by most recreation visitors. The visual absorption capabilities of the area will absorb project disturbances because of dense vegetation and steep slopes (EA p. 3-54).

Recreation: The proposed harvest and thinning activities may temporarily impact recreation users during project implementation through seasonal increases in logging traffic and felling, yarding and processing activities at landings. These impacts would be very localized and limited to the cutting units actively worked. Project design features such as PDF 3-7 would ensure that existing recreation sites are maintained.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.
This action does not pose a significant effect on public health or safety. The fuels reduction treatments via grapple piling will directly reduce fire hazards within the area. The vegetation treatments will indirectly create fire breaks to moderate fire behavior. Due to reduction in tree densities, ladder fuels and surface fuels there will be improved safety to forest users as the chance of suppressing a wildfire within the project area increases (EA p. 3-62).

Project design features require adherence to the Utah Smoke Management Plan. Conducting prescribed fire activities such as slash pile burning under coordination with the Utah Division of Air Quality will ensure that burning will occur only when weather and air conditions are favorable for smoke dispersal, thereby protecting air quality and public health (EA p. 3-66). Project design feature PS-I and programmatic timber contract clauses and provisions will ensure that the public safety concerns of forest users are provided for.

3) **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.**

The project area has no park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas that will be affected by the Proposed Action with Modifications. Twenty-four acres of the Fishhook inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) falls within the Paunsaugunt Project boundary. There are no treatments planned within or impacts to IRA resources (EA p. 3-51).

Bryce Canyon National Park is immediately adjacent to the Paunsaugunt Project Area. Due to topography, distance and project design features, the Proposed Action with Modifications will have minimal to no impact on visual quality from the National Park (EA p. 3-55).

Bryce Canyon National Park is within a Class 1 airshed and as stated above is adjacent to the project area. With adherence to project design features and coordination with the Utah Division of Air Quality, effects to air quality from prescribed fire treatments will be short lived with smoke being most intense on ignition days and rapidly reducing and dispersing within a few days after (EA p. 3-66).

There are no proposals to occupy, cross or otherwise damage any wetlands or floodplains associated with the East Fork Sevier River, Podunk Creek, Crawford Creek, or Upper Kanab Creek. The Proposed Action with Modifications is in compliance with 9A and 9B management areas objectives found in the forest plan. Project design features including soil and water conservation practices regarding riparian and wetland areas of concern used during implementation, will protect all perennial streams from surface damage, compaction and erosion (EA p. 3-99).

The Proposed Action with Modifications will not impact any known cultural sites (EA p. 4-1). Recognizing that the potential exists for unidentified sites to be encountered during project activity, a programmatic contract provision is included within timber sale contracts allowing the Forest Service to unilaterally modify or cancel a contract to protect cultural resources regardless of when they are identified.
4) **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.**
The effects of proposed activities on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. This is based on: the limited context of the project; a long history of forest management including similar harvest treatments within the project area; a review of public comments received to date, and the project’s analysis. Not all of the comments received were in support of the project. However, after reviewing the project record and EA, I am confident that the Interdisciplinary Team reviewed these comments, identified the issues and either incorporated them into an alternative, created a project design feature or addressed them in the appropriate resource section. In fact, through the Proposed Action with Modifications, I have chosen to implement activities such as the use of a group selection harvest system, based on comments received by the public. No highly-controversial or significant issues related to the human environment were identified during previous scoping efforts (EA p. 1-8). No significant issues were raised during the analysis process (EA Chapter 3).

5) **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.**
Possible effects on the human environment that are uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks are minimal or non-existent based on a review of project analysis that employed scientifically accepted analytical techniques, available information, and best professional experience and judgment to estimate effects to the human environment. Proposed activities similar to the Paunsaugunt Project have been conducted on many acres across the project area and the Dixie National Forest. These past projects exhibited environmental effects similar to those predicted to occur with implementation of the Proposed Action with Modifications including the desired changes in forest vegetation structure, composition, growth and vigor that are the objectives of this project. Implementation monitoring of similar projects that have been implemented on the Dixie NF supports this conclusion (DNF, 2011b). The effects associated with the Proposed Action with Modifications are recognized, familiar, and predictable.

6) **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.**
The Proposed Action with Modifications is site-specific and will not set precedence for future actions or present a decision in principle about future considerations. This action does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Any proposed future project must be evaluated on its own merits and effects. The proposed activities are in accordance with the best available science we have to manage forest vegetation for multiple resource benefits.

7) **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.**
Based on the analysis and disclosure of effects in the EA (Chapter 3), and the specialist reports, the Proposed Action with Modifications will have no significant impacts when considered in combination with other past actions or reasonably foreseeable future actions.
8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant cultural or historical resources.
Cultural resource surveys have been conducted following protocols approved by the State Historic Preservation Office. Native American tribes have been contacted and they expressed no concerns about the proposed activities. No cultural or historic resources would be impacted. The Proposed Action with Modifications will comply with the Natural Historic Preservation Act (EA p. 3-111).

9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act.
This Proposed Action with Modifications won't significantly adversely affect Threatened or Endangered species or their habitat. The Paunsaugunt Project will have no effect on the California condor, Mojave Desert tortoise, Utah prairie dog, western yellow-billed cuckoo, bighorn sheep, sage grouse, pygmy rabbit, or bald eagle (EA p. 3-67). The Proposed Action with Modifications will also have no effect on the Last Chance townsendia (EA p. 3-46). The Proposed Action with Modifications will not jeopardize the continued existence of Mexican spotted owl (EA p. 3-77, Biological Assessment pp. 9-12).

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.
The Proposed Action with Modifications meets federal, state, and local laws for Threatened and Endangered species, heritage resources, water quality, air quality, wetland protection, floodplain management, migratory birds, and environmental justice (EA pp. 3-111 to 3-114). The Proposed Action with Modifications is consistent with the National Forest Management Act and the Dixie NF Land and Resource Management Plan (EA p. 3-111). All management activities will be in compliance with Management Area direction, including goals and objectives, as described for each resource in the Paunsaugunt Project Forest Plan Consistency Checklist and in accompanying specialist reports (Project File). This proposal does not require any forest plan amendments.

Conclusion
Based on the analysis and disclosure of effects in the EA (Chapter 3), and the specialist reports, the Proposed Action with Modifications will have no significant impacts when considered in combination with other past actions or reasonably foreseeable future actions. Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Best Available Science
I am confident that the analysis of the Proposed Action with Modifications was conducted using consideration of the best available science. My conclusion is based on a review of the record that shows my staff conducted a thorough review of relevant scientific information, considered responsible opposing views, and acknowledged incomplete or unavailable
information, scientific uncertainty, and risk. Please refer to the specialist reports in the project file for specific discussions of the science and methods used for analysis and for literature reviewed and referenced.

Administrative Review and Appeal Rights

Appeal Standing

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11 on August 30, 2011, a legal notice in the St. George, UT newspaper, The Spectrum, announced a 30-day Comment Period on the Proposed Action. Individuals or organizations which submitted substantive written or oral comments during the 30 day Comment Period established “standing” to appeal this final decision.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215. Only individuals or organizations that submitted comments during the comment period may appeal. Notice of Appeal must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. Appeals can be submitted in several forms, but must be received by the Appeal Deciding Officer within 45 days from the date of publication of this notice in the St. George, UT newspaper, The Spectrum. Appeals may be:

1) Mailed to: Appeal Deciding Officer, Intermountain Region USFS, 324 25th Street, Ogden, Utah 84401;

2) E-mailed to: appealsintermtn-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Please put APPEAL and Paunsaugunt Vegetation Management Project in the subject line. E-mailed appeals must be submitted in rich text (rtf) or Word (doc);

3) Delivered to: Intermountain Region USFS, 324 25th Street, Ogden, Utah 84401, OR hand delivered between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30 pm, M-F; or

4) Faxed to: Intermountain Region, USFS, ATTN: APPEALS at (801) 625-5277.

Implementation

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

Contract advertisement and award is tentatively scheduled for September of 2012. Project activities are scheduled to begin in 2013.
Contact

A detailed record for the Environmental Assessment of the Paunsaugunt Vegetation Management Project is available for public review at the Powell Ranger District Office, 225 E. Center Street, Panguitch, UT, 84759. For further information concerning the Paunsaugunt Vegetation Management Project, contact Karen Schroyer, District Ranger at (435) 676-9300 during normal business hours.

Approved by:

Kevin Schulkoski
Acting Forest Supervisor
Dixie National Forest

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