DECISION MEMO
BLACK GULCH STREAM STABILIZATION PROJECT
USDA Forest Service, Plumas National Forest
Mt. Hough Ranger District
Plumas County, California

PROJECT LOCATION
The Black Gulch Stream Stabilization Project proposes to stabilize the crossing of National Forest System (NFS) road 25N95 at Black Gulch where the culvert is no longer functional and is resulting in excessive erosion and the obstruction of aquatic organism passage. The road is currently impassable at the Black Gulch crossing, and will continue to be so after implementation. The stream stabilization activities would be located in the southeast ¼ of section 17, T24N, R8E, MDBM and are necessary in order to prevent further migration of the existing head-cut and subsequent sedimentation in the Spanish Creek watershed.

DECISION
I have decided to implement stream stabilization activities at the crossing of National Forest System (NFS) road 25N95 and Black Gulch. Actions would include the removal of one dead hazard tree, the nonfunctional culvert, and the remaining road fill material that is within the channel. Placement of no more than 200 cubic yards of large rock (1-3’ in diameter) would occur to stabilize and realign the channel gradient. Re-vegetation will be accomplished with local riparian species (big leaf maple and alder) to hasten stream bank stability. My decision is based on a review of the record that shows thorough consideration of the proposal using best available science.

Project design features include:

1. Protection of Threatened, Endangered, and Region 5 Forest Service sensitive (TES) wildlife species as outlined in the Plumas National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (PNF LRMP) (1988), as amended. Other than the California spotted owl, there are no known TES species present within or adjacent to the project area. If the project is implemented in the fall, no limited operating period (LOP) is required. However, if the project is not completed this fall, the LOP will be in effect from March 1 to August 30, 2011.

2. No known heritage resources exist in the area of potential effect. In the event that new heritage resources are observed during project implementation, operations will cease immediately and District Archaeologist(s) will determine the appropriate course of action.

3. No Threatened, Endangered, Region 5 Forest Service sensitive plants, or plant species proposed for federal listing (TESP) are known within the project sites. No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to TESP plants are anticipated.

4. Desirable on-site plants will be salvaged from the project area and used in the revegetation portion of the project whenever possible.

5. No noxious weeds are known within the project area. Standard weed mitigation measures will be implemented to reduce the risk of noxious weeds being introduced to the area as a result of the project:
• All earth-moving equipment, gravel, fill, or other materials need to be weed free. Onsite sand, gravel, rock, or organic matter should be used where possible.
• Weed-free mulches and seed sources will be used. Avoid seeding in areas where revegetation will occur naturally, unless noxious weeds are a concern.

These actions are categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or an Environmental Assessment (EA) because they are routine activities that meet requirements of the Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Chapter 30, Categorical Exclusion from Documentation, 31.2, Category 7, "Modification or maintenance of stream or lake aquatic habitat improvement structures using native materials or normal practices."

The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects which may significantly affect the environment as stated in the Hydrology/Soils Input, Botany Input, Lands, Minerals and Recreation Input, Wildlife Input, Heritage Resources Input, Forest Vegetation Input, Fire, Fuels, and Air Quality Input. I considered:

a. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, and Region 5 Forest Service sensitive species:

There are no known wildlife TES species or TES habitat impacted directly, indirectly, or cumulatively by this project assuming that the project is not implemented in nesting season (March 1-August 30). No change in MIS species or habitat trends would occur. This action would have no effect to the fish, wildlife, TES species or habitat on the Plumas National Forest (Wildlife Input, Gary Rotta, August 4, 2010). No TESP plants are known within the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to TESP plants are anticipated (Botany Input, Jim Belsher-Howe, August 4, 2010).

b. Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds:

No wetlands or municipal watersheds exist within the project area. Stream stabilization will occur within the flood plain and will benefit the flood plain and active channel. Applicable Best Management Practices will be implemented.

c. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas:

The project is not within or adjacent to any congressionally designated areas.

d. Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas:

The project is not within or adjacent to any inventoried roadless areas.

e. Research natural areas:

The project is not within or adjacent to any research natural areas.

f. American Indian religious or cultural sites:

No cultural resources were located in the Area of Potential Effect (Heritage Input, Cristina
Weinberg, July 23, 2010).

g. Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas:

No archaeological sites or historic properties exist within the Area of Potential Effect.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT
This project was entered into the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) in April 2010. One supportive comment was received from an adjacent landowner.

The lifting of the injunction on 36 CFR 215 §§ 4 (a) and 12 (f) means that decisions categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) are no longer subject to notice, comment, and appeal. External scoping was neither required, nor initiated for this project.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS
This action is in accordance with NEPA Implementation Regulations, 40 CFR 1501.2 and with the goals, objectives, and management direction of the Plumas National Forest 1988 Land and Resource Management Plan as amended by the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group 1999 Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD), the 2003 HFQLG Supplemental EIS and ROD and the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA) supplemental EIS and ROD (USDA 1988; USDA 1999a, b; USDA 2003a, b; USDA 2004 a, b).

This project will be conducted in accordance with requirements of the California Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board to ensure compliance with California Water Code and the Federal Clean Water Act.

This project meets the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and implementing procedures outlined in the Region 5 Programmatic Agreement.


The project will not affect any threatened, endangered or candidate species and thereby complies with the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE
Implementation is planned for October 2010.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL AND REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES
This decision is not subject to appeal by individuals or organizations.

CONTACT PERSON
Kelby Gardiner, Hydrologist, Mt. Hough Ranger District, can be contacted at 39696 Highway 70; Quincy, CA 95971; (530) 283-7686; kgardiner@fs.fed.us.
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