

Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact

Feral Pig Damage Control Project on Cleveland National Forest Lands

*Cleveland National Forest
San Diego, Orange and Riverside Counties, California*

1. Decision and Rationale

1.1 Background

Until recently, feral pig populations on the Cleveland National Forest (CNF) and surrounding areas have been very low (a few individuals) or non-existent. Over the past several years, however, feral pigs have been introduced by people, either intentionally or inadvertently, and populations have recently become established in several areas of the CNF. Ongoing monitoring of feral pigs in San Diego County has confirmed that the feral pig population is growing and expanding in distribution.

Feral pigs (*Sus scrofa*) are a non-native and invasive species to California and North America. Populations of feral pigs are the result of either escaped or released domestic livestock, European wild boars or a hybridization of the two. Environmental and agricultural damage from feral pigs across the United States has become a substantial problem nationwide and has been widely documented in scientific literature and media reports. Recently the financial cost of feral pig damage to the environment and agriculture was estimated conservatively at \$1.5 billion annually nationwide (West et al. 2009ⁱ).

On the Cleveland National Forest, feral pig rooting behavior has disturbed native vegetation numerous times, especially in sensitive oak woodland and riparian habitats. One large cultural heritage site has also been damaged by feral pig rooting activity.

Feral pig populations have been growing in San Diego County in recent years as expected for the early phase of an introduction (SDNHM 2010ⁱⁱ). Survey results suggest that the feral pig population in San Diego County remains isolated from populations to the north in Riverside and Los Angeles Counties and to the south in Baja Mexico (SDNHM 2010). Due to this isolation, it is still possible to eradicate the feral pig population in the County. However, the goals of this project are to minimize damage to natural and cultural resources. So, while eradication is preferable and may be possible, controlling and reducing feral pig populations in San Diego County will meet project goals.

The Forest Service is participant in the Inter-Governmental Group on Feral Pig Impacts. This group has developed Principles of Understanding to work together to address feral pig impacts in San Diego County and to develop an “all-lands” approach to dealing with the feral pig population. This group has established a “Working Group” where key participants from multiple agencies in the area have come together to share knowledge and develop strategies for dealing with the feral pig population in the County across jurisdictional boundaries.

Trapping efforts have occurred in San Diego County on private lands. These efforts have resulted in notable decreases to feral pig damage in certain areas. For example, trapping occurred on Vista Irrigation District lands near Lake Henshaw in 2011. There was a notable decrease in feral pig sign on Palomar Mountain following the trapping effort. Feral pig damage has also been reduced in the Upper San Diego River, most likely due to trapping efforts on adjacent private ranchlands and organized hunts organized by the Barona tribe on Capitan Grande Indian Reservation. These efforts demonstrate that a desirable decrease in feral pig damage can occur as the result of actions to reduce pig populations.

Currently, recreational hunting of feral pigs is legal in California with a valid California hunting license and feral pig game tag. The hunting season for feral pigs is year round and there is no limit to the number of tags a hunter can purchase. Hunting is allowed on all Forest Service and BLM lands in the project area with minor exceptions. Despite significant hunter interest and activity on public lands, recreational hunting alone has not resulted in control or stabilization of feral pig population growth in San Diego County. Furthermore, a literature review revealed no known locations in the United States where feral pig recreational hunting alone has controlled feral pig populations.

1.2 Decision

I have selected Alternative 2 of the Feral Pig Damage Control Project on Cleveland National Forest and Bureau of Land Management Lands Environmental Assessment (EA) for implementation.

Project activities and control methods are described below.

1. **Inventory feral pig populations and areas of resource damage.** Prior to taking action to remove feral pigs, detailed data will be gathered to more accurately identify areas of feral pig habitation and environmental impact. This will help concentrate trapping and hunting efforts in key areas and make those efforts as effective as possible. Feral pig location data will be acquired by ground surveys, habitat mapping and modeling and a review of existing documentation concerning location of feral pig populations. Trail cameras may be deployed to track size and habits of sounders of pigs (a sounder is a herd of pigs/swine). Use of radio-collared “Sentinel Pigs” may also occur; this involves capturing feral pigs, outfitting them with radio collars and GPS units and releasing them so that they may be tracked and potentially reveal locations of additional animals.
2. **Removal of Feral Pigs.** Three methods will be employed to remove feral pigs from National Forest System lands within the project area. The methods will be used strategically and in coordination to maximize the reduction in feral pig numbers. It is believed that most animals will be removed by trapping, with professional ground-based hunting being used to pursue “trap-averse” animals

after trapping efforts have taken place. Trapping has already proved to be an effective way to reduce feral pig impacts in San Diego County, as described above. Aerial hunting will be utilized only in remote locations that are difficult to access on foot, and is expected to be used only to pursue animals or sounders that are difficult to trap. Aerial hunting is expected to be the least used feral pig removal method, but may be necessary to completely clear some areas of feral pigs.

- a. Trapping. Trapping is expected to be the largest part of feral pig damage control effort on National Forest System lands. Corral style traps large enough to hold multiple animals will be utilized in areas frequented by pigs. Open corral style traps allow large non-target wildlife such as deer to escape. Areas where trapping will take place will be determined from the results of ongoing efforts to monitor pig populations and impacts. They will likely be set near water sources, riparian areas or groves of oak trees where pigs are likely to congregate and forage. Traps will be set so as to avoid resource damage within areas of sensitive biological, cultural or watershed resources. Trapping in areas easily accessible by or visible to the public will be avoided as much as possible. If an important trapping location is used that is accessible or visible by the public, there may be a need for small scale temporary closures of some areas. Installation of traps may involve minor ground disturbance with the installation of fence t-posts and anchors, as well as the activity of the pigs themselves while they are inside the traps. Traps will be baited with grain or other food attractive to feral pigs. Trapping locations in remote areas may be logistically supported by helicopter as needed; trapping may also be supported by limited use of packstock when feasible. Stock would be restricted to designated trails.

Humane treatment of captured feral pigs will be emphasized during the control program. Thus, during all capture operations traps would be set in the afternoon/evening and checked early the following morning to avoid the possibility of feral pigs overheating in traps prior to the arrival of a technician for dispatch. Captured animals would be dispatched quickly by gunshot to the head. For scientific purposes and for evaluating the progress of the control effort for changes in population age structure, basic biological data will be collected. After dispatch, all carcasses will be removed as soon as possible and transported to another location for disposal in compliance with California Department of Fish and Game codes and regulations and any other applicable laws and regulations. Blood and tissue remaining in or around the traps will be covered with soil or diluted with water to avoid attracting other wildlife.

It was recommended by Sweitzer and Loggins (2001) that during the first intensive trapping session, all traps should be set for captures for a minimum of 5 consecutive nights. Traps should then be locked open and

prebaited for 5-7 days prior to being set for another 5 day capture period. Traps would typically be in one place no longer than two or three weeks to avoid acclimatizing pigs to the traps in those locations. Successive pre-baiting and capture periods would continue for the duration of the trapping session. Technicians/contractors would move traps to new locations when no additional captures are being made in an area. If large numbers of non-target wildlife are accessing the bait that would be unable to escape the set trap, the trap would be moved. At the end of the first session of intensive trapping, all traps would be removed from trapping locations, cleaned, repaired, and stored until the second trapping session. After the initial intensive trapping phase, both professional contract dispatchers and agency personnel would actively track and dispatch pigs during regular surveys in the project areas. This phase may also include tracking with dogs and aerial dispatch utilizing helicopters. Periodic surveys for fresh rooting disturbance would be used to assist trackers in locating areas with active groups of feral pigs.

- b. Ground hunting, potentially with trained dogs. Ground hunting will utilize professional hunters. Ground hunters will systematically cover terrain and work through each drainage basin to ensure no pigs are missed. The hunters will work closely with their trained dogs. The dogs will be trained to bark and corner pigs, but trained not to attack them nor harass wildlife. Dogs will be outfitted with radio collars and/or GPS units so hunters will be aware of their locations at all times. Ground hunting operations may be logistically supported by helicopter as needed and would include landing in remote locations, including Wilderness areas. Limited use of packstock to support ground operations may occur when feasible. Packstock would be restricted to designated trails. Night hunting with the use of night-vision technology may occur.
- c. Aerial hunting with helicopters. Aerial hunting will involve a helicopter with a professional marksman systematically covering the terrain with precise, low altitude flights and working through each drainage basin searching for pigs. Helicopter landings in remote locations during these activities, including Wilderness areas, may be needed. Feral pigs are active in the mornings and evenings, and so most flights are likely to occur during those times. Aerial hunting will typically occur in remote locations that are inaccessible by road. To ensure public safety and minimize noise impacts, buffer zones of approximately ½ mile would be established around communities and residential subdivisions and, where desired, along tribal lands; buffer zones of approximately 1000 feet will be established around private lands and other facilities. Areas actively undergoing aerial hunting activities may be temporarily closed to the public by Forest Order to protect public safety. When pigs are found they would be quickly dispatched by lethal rifle shots. Individual carcasses

may be left in place to decompose; multiple carcasses in the same area may be removed by helicopter and disposed of off-site if feasible.

d. Euthanization of pigs. Feral pigs trapped or hunted during this project will be put to death as quickly and humanely as possible. Experienced professional hunters will be used to minimize the chances that pigs are wounded and escape an encounter with hunters. Trapped pigs will be put to death as soon as possible after trapping to minimize distress to the animals. Use of aerial hunting methods is expected to reduce the number of pigs put to death during the project by shortening project duration and thereby reducing the reproduction of pigs in that time.

3. **Disposal of carcasses:** Disposal of feral pig carcasses will be dependent on location of dispatch. Food safety regulations and concern for disease transmission limit options for dealing with feral pig carcasses. In order for feral pig carcasses dispatched on Federal lands to be donated or sold for human consumption, there is a legal requirement that the pigs be slaughtered at a USDA inspected slaughter facility. Capturing and transporting live pigs to slaughter facilities would add greatly to the cost of the program to the public and is therefore not being considered. Based on discussions, donation of carcasses to zoos or wildlife facilities is unlikely due to similar concerns about disease transmission and prohibitive costs associated with testing each animal prior to donation. If a wildlife facility is identified that could accept carcasses in a cost effective manner, this option may be pursued.

When feasible, pig carcasses from trapping in accessible locations will be taken off site and disposed of according to applicable regulations. This may include transport to an animal rendering facility or landfill. In remote locations pig carcasses will be left in the project area to decompose and provide food for native wildlife (See Alternative 2.5.1).

4. **Temporary fencing.** Short spans of temporary fencing may be constructed within the project area to restrict or funnel movement of feral pig populations during trapping and hunting activities to enhance the effectiveness of those efforts. Fencing may also be used to protect environmentally sensitive areas from feral pig damage. Feral pig fences will be constructed with openings at ground level so as not to restrict the movement of small wildlife.
5. **Monitoring.** Basic biological information about pigs trapped or taken by professional hunters will be taken. Areas cleared of feral pigs will be regularly monitored for up to three years to ensure the pigs have truly been eliminated and do not return. Subsequently, intermittent long-term monitoring will continue indefinitely in case the animals are re-introduced to the area. Monitoring methods could involve the use of trail cameras, and the monitoring of likely use areas for signs of fresh rooting. In the event that feral pigs are found in an area in which

they were believed to have been eliminated, trapping and hunting activities will resume there.

The Forest Service will maintain involvement with San Diego County-wide monitoring and inventory efforts that are part of the Inter-Governmental Group on Feral Pig Impacts. Monitoring by this group will be able to track estimates of total pig populations in the County and whether the current infestation in the County continues to remain isolated from adjacent populations.

6. **Adaptive management.** If after five years of intensive efforts, resource impacts from feral pigs have not been eliminated from the project area, then project goals shall be re-evaluated. Information from County wide monitoring being undertaken by multiple agencies will be used to determine if feral pig populations are being significantly reduced and if the geographic distribution of feral pigs is being reduced. If it is determined after five years that elimination of feral pig impacts from the project area is not a practical objective, then efforts will be scaled back to focus on reducing, rather than eliminating, environmental impacts of feral pigs by decreasing their numbers to the extent that is effective and feasible. Feral pig activity would be regularly monitored with trapping and hunting activities prescribed as needed to reduce impacts in sensitive areas.
7. **Public Safety:** Public and worker safety will be a top priority during all feral pig management activities. Professional hunters are highly trained individuals who will only take shots when target is visible and identifiable. If operations need to occur in an area with public access, there may be temporary trailhead or road closures. Any signage posted will be in English and Spanish and will use standard universal symbols to express the closure.

Aerial hunting operations are generally going to occur in very remote areas with little to no public access in the way of roads or trails. All special use permittees in an area where professional hunting (including aerial hunting) may occur will be notified prior to activities commencing. The military will be notified in advance if aerial hunting will be occurring in areas under special use permit for military training. It is unlikely that aerial hunting will ever be used in these areas as they are generally highly accessible by roads and trails.

Aerial hunting will not be conducted during extreme fire weather conditions. Helicopter operations will only occur during weather conditions and at altitudes where safe operations are possible.

8. **Helicopter Flight Paths and Landing Areas.** Helicopter flight paths and landing areas will be screened for effects on threatened, endangered and sensitive species to avoid negative impacts to those resources. Monitoring of nest locations for golden and bald eagles occurs annually. This information will be used to establish operating buffers and season of use restrictions for helicopters around active nest sites. Helicopter landing areas will be located in existing openings in

vegetation and in previously disturbed locations. No improved landing areas will be constructed.

9. **Helicopter use in Wilderness.** The use of mechanized equipment is generally prohibited in federally designated wilderness areas, "... except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act...(The Wilderness Act, 1964)" For the Cleveland National Forest, the Pacific Southwest Regional Forester has the authority to authorize the use of mechanized equipment in Forest Service wilderness areas in certain situations. The approval considers the relative impact of the activity (in this case helicopter use) on wilderness characteristics and weighs that impact against consideration of necessity, safety, potential alternatives, and cost effectiveness.

In order to receive approval the proposal must go through the Minimum Requirements Analysis process, which documents the necessity for the prohibited action in relation to the requirements for the administration of the wilderness area. This process also explores alternatives to the prohibited action. In the case of feral pig removal activities, the Forest Service will have to also consider whether project goals could be accomplished using pack teams and ground based hunting in wilderness areas. Trade-offs in terms of project success, cost effectiveness, and duration of the project will be considered before an approval for helicopter use can be made.

The approval process requires a level of specificity about the number and duration of helicopter flights that is impossible to determine at this time.

As feral pig control activities are undertaken, a clearer picture will emerge about what control methods will be most effective in various landscapes. This will lead to more detailed plans for helicopter use in areas that include wilderness. When this occurs, the Cleveland National Forest will go through the Minimum Requirements Analysis process to seek appropriate approval for the activity. It is expected that this approval will be sought on a per contract or per hunting season basis.

Helicopter use in wilderness areas will be considered when it is evident that their use would improve the likelihood of success of feral pig removal activities and would reduce the cost and duration of feral pig removal activities in wilderness areas compared to non-mechanized options. Impacts from helicopter use in wilderness areas are analyzed in this document in section 3.7.

9. **Recreational Hunting:** Public hunting of feral pigs is currently legal and expected to remain so throughout the duration of the project. It is possible that the Forest Service, in coordination with CA Fish and Wildlife, may ask for organized hunts to put pressure on specific locations. California Fish and Wildlife has organized special pig hunts in the state and there is the potential for these to take place in San Diego County.

10. **Public Information.** The Forest Service currently maintains a webpage with information for the hunting of wild pigs, including maps. This page can be found via the Cleveland National Forest homepage (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/cleveland>). This website will be updated with current information throughout the life of the project and provide links to other websites as they are developed.

California Fish and Game also maintains online information about feral pig hunting at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/hunting/pig/>. California Fish and Game also hosts a website about feral pig damage and options for private landowners at <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/keepmewild/pig.html>.

The following design features will be implemented as part of the selected alternative to avoid negative effects to resources and public safety as a result of implementation:

- **Pre-Activity Surveys for Feral Pig Damage and Focused Removal Efforts:** Prior to initiation of feral pig removal activities, surveys will be carried out to identify those specific locations being impacted by feral pigs. Pig removal efforts will be highly focused and limited to such areas.
- **Trap Placement and Vegetation Trimming:** Proposed trap locations and vegetation trimming activities will be screened for threatened, endangered and sensitive species and archeological sites to avoid impacting those resources. Traps may be placed in riparian areas but will not be placed directly in or directly adjacent to stream channels to avoid water quality impacts. Trap placement will avoid areas visible from recreation facilities, trails and roads to protect recreation resources and avoid potential vandalism.
- **Lead Free Ammunition:** Only lead free ammunition will be used during aerial hunting, ground hunting and euthanization of trapped pigs to avoid lead contamination and therefore potential adverse effects to wildlife.
- **Short Term Closures of Public Lands:** During periods of active aerial and ground based hunting operations, limited areas of public lands might be closed to public access for safety reasons. Closures will be restricted to the minimum size and duration needed for public safety. Closures of high use recreation areas will be avoided during weekends and holidays whenever possible.
- **Use of Weed-Free Feed for Packstock:** Any use of packstock will require certification of weed-free feed to minimize chances of introducing non-native and noxious weeds into the project area.

1.3 Rationale for the Decision

As stated in Chapter 1 of the EA, the purpose and need for the project is to eliminate or reduce impacts of feral pigs on the natural and cultural resources of the Cleveland National Forest. There is also a need to prevent Cleveland National Forest lands from becoming refuges for feral pig populations in order to aid County-wide feral pig management efforts on other government, private and Tribal lands.

When compared to other alternatives, Alternative 2 best responds to the purpose and need of the project and allows for the most flexibility to address the feral pig problem on the Cleveland National Forest. The selected alternative is an integrated feral pig management approach wherein the most effective, selective and environmentally desirable method or combination of methods would be tailored to site-specific field conditions. The proposed action can be implemented at different levels of intensity depending on the amount of funding that is received to carry out the effort.

The Environmental Analysis for this project concluded that implementing Alternative 2 would not have negative impacts on natural resources, or human health and safety in the project area. The EA also concluded that Alternative 2 would be the most effective alternative in eliminating or reducing negative impacts from feral pigs in the project area.

The Cleveland National Forest is required to implement the current Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan (LMP) and work towards achieving the desired conditions for the Forest as outlined in the plan. The most applicable goal in the LMP relating to this project is Forest Goal 2.1 which states:

Forest Goal 2.1: Reverse the trend of increasing loss of natural resource values due to invasive species. The LMP desired condition is that the structure, function and composition of plant and animal communities are not impaired by the presence of invasive non-native plants and animals (LMP, Part 1 p. 32).

Alternative 2 is the course of action most likely to lead towards desired conditions on the Forest as determined by the LMP.

1.4 Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative. Under this alternative no feral pig control efforts would be undertaken on National Forest System lands. The EA showed that, under this alternative, feral pig populations would continue to expand, and damage to resources and water quality would continue. The No Action Alternative would run counter to the direction of the Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan (LMP), which directs the Forest Service to work to reverse the trend of loss of resource values to non-native species, improve wilderness character, improve watershed and riparian conditions and to provide ecological conditions to sustain viable populations of native species.

In addition, the Cleveland National Forest would become a large refuge for feral pig populations that would hamper feral pig control efforts that are likely to occur on adjacent lands.

Many comments were received during scoping in support of the No Action alternative (see EA Appendix C – Comment Analysis). One category of these comments was general opposition to killing animals on the forest for any reason. I do not take the killing of these animals lightly, but the impact that feral pigs are having on native wildlife and flora and the potential for major impacts to human health and safety make the selection of an action alternative necessary. The selected alternative is expected to be the most effective method for dealing with feral pigs. The more swift and effective the implemented action is, the fewer animals will need to be killed over the duration of the project.

Another category of comments received in support of the No Action alternative was to either allow recreational hunters alone to work to reduce or eliminate feral pig impacts, or to manage feral pigs as a game species in San Diego County. The EA, in analyzing the No Action alternative, determined that recreational hunting alone was unlikely to result in a reduction or control of the feral pig population. A literature review revealed no examples, nationwide, where recreational hunting alone had resulted in feral pig population control. Managing this species as a game species only would not meet the purpose and need of the project nor would the Cleveland National Forest be meeting the commitments it made in adopting the current Land Management Plan. For these reasons, I did not select the No Action Alternative.

I also considered Alternative 3, the no aerial hunting alternative. This alternative was considered due to a large number of public comments expressing concern about the human safety and animal welfare/humane treatment as a result of aerial hunting. After considering the evidence presented by commenters and in the EA, I felt there was no compelling reason to choose this alternative. Aerial hunting is expected to be a small part of the total effort to control feral pig damage on the Cleveland National Forest, but it will likely prove to be a valuable tool for completely removing feral pigs from some CNF lands. Concerns about public safety will be mitigated by only using highly trained professionals and by conducting aerial hunting operations in inaccessible areas or utilizing temporary closures. Aerial hunting of feral pigs for population and damage control is occurring in states like Texas and Florida without public safety incidents. Concerns about noise will be mitigated by operational buffers around developed areas. Concerns about animal welfare and impacts to wilderness character from aerial hunting are expected to be offset by the fact that the use of aerial hunting is expected to reduce the total time of the project and ultimately reduce the number of animals needing to be killed by more effectively removing all animals from areas during control efforts.

1.5 Public Involvement

The proposal is listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA). The 30-day scoping period for this project began with a legal notice published in *The San Diego Union-Tribune* on May 28, 2011. The legal notice summarized the proposed action and requested public

input on the proposed action. A scoping letter explaining the proposed action was sent to the CNF mailing list of approximately 1,000 individuals, agencies, tribes, and organizations. Approximately 600 comments were received from the public during the 30-day scoping period. The draft EA included modifications made in response to scoping comments. The public was notified of a 30-day public comment period to comment on the draft Environmental Assessment on June 19th, 2012. Over 100 comments were received by email, approximately 20 comments were received by mail, and approximately 10 comments were received by telephone during this time period.

Comments on the draft EA were used to help modify and clarify the Proposed Action and alternatives as described in the Final EA. In addition, a cost/benefit analysis was added to the EA as section 2.7.

2. Finding of No Significant Impact

After considering the environmental impacts described in the EA and after examining supporting documentation found in the project record, I find that implementing the selected alternative will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment, considering the context and intensity of impacts (see 40 CFR 1508.27). Therefore an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

- 1. No significant negative environmental impacts were determined to be likely as a result of the selected alternative. My finding of no significant impact is not biased by the potential beneficial impacts of the selected alternative.** The beneficial impacts of controlling feral pig damage on National Forest System lands will improve natural resource conditions and water quality. Negative environmental impacts from the proposed action are very limited and temporary in nature involving some minor ground disturbance and temporary increases in noise and activity in some remote areas.
- 2. No significant impacts on public health and safety will occur due to the selected alternative.** Undertaking the proposed action is not expected to impact human health and safety. Proper precautions will be put in place to minimize public exposure to professional hunting and trapping activities. The selected alternative is not expected to lead to water quality concerns, and is designed to improve water quality and minimize impacts to human health resulting from the the presence of feral pigs (see Chapter 3 of the EA).
- 3. No significant impacts to unique geographic features such as parklands, prime farmlands, or wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical area located in the project area.** The selected alternative is not expected to have significant or lasting impacts on any unique geographic features in the project area. Mitigations are included to avoid trap placement in sensitive ecological areas or areas with historic or cultural resources. There may be temporary impacts to Federally Designated Wilderness Areas from helicopter noise or trap placement. These impacts are expected to be transient and minor.

4. **The impacts on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial because there is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of the project.** Potential environmental effects of the selected alternative are well known and easy to predict. Scientific controversy does not exist over the potential environmental impacts of professional hunting and trapping of feral pigs. While some disagreement and controversy exists regarding whether feral pigs should be removed from the environment, or removed using the methods proposed, no evidence has been identified showing that the environmental effects of the selected alternative in the project area have been wrongly predicted.
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The selected alternative does not present risks for uncertain or unknown impacts to the human environment. Feral pig damage control projects have occurred and continue to occur in many locations worldwide, including locations with similar flora and fauna to the project area.
6. **The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant impacts because the purpose and need for the project will be met by the selected alternative.** The selected alternative does not set a new precedent for future action. The selected alternative utilizes a similar approach to feral pig damage control projects elsewhere. The selected alternative is not a precursor to future actions not analyzed in the Environmental Assessment.
7. **The cumulative impacts associated with the selected alternative are not significant (see Chapter 3 of the EA).** The selected alternative does not have effects which when considered with other impacts occurring in the area achieve the level of significance. The selected alternative will reduce overall negative impacts to native plants and wildlife and to water quality and watershed condition. The selected alternative may add to negative impacts to wilderness character from additional helicopter activity in and near wilderness areas. This impact is expected to be temporary in nature and not significant.
8. **The selected alternative will have no significant adverse impact on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects either listed or eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.** Ground disturbance is expected from the proposed action in areas of trap placement. These areas will be pre-screened to avoid impacting cultural resources. The selected alternative will not have an impact on any historic

structures or sites, highways, or objects listed or eligible for the National Historic Register.

9. **The selected alternative will not significantly impact any endangered or threatened species, or habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973.** With design criteria in place to avoid trap placement in occupied habitats for listed species, it was determined that the proposed action will not affect any endangered or threatened species listed under the ESA.
10. **The action will not violate federal, state, or local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.** Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA.

3. Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

3.1 National Forest Management Act of 1976, as amended

All project activities fully comply with the Land Management Plan. This project incorporates all applicable Land Management Plan forest-wide standards and guidelines, as they apply to the project area, and complies with Land Management Plan goals and objectives. All required interagency reviews and coordination have been accomplished; new or revised measures resulting from these reviews have been incorporated. The Land Management Plan complies with all resource integration and management requirements of 36 CFR 219.14 through 219.27. Application of Land Management Plan direction for the project ensures compliance at the project level. With the inclusion of this direction, the selected alternative will move the existing condition further toward the proposed desired condition.

3.2 Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended

The Biological Assessment prepared for this project concluded that, with the design criteria contained in the selected alternative, there would be no effect on threatened, endangered or candidate species listed under the Endangered Species Act.

3.3 National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended

Cultural resource surveys have been conducted, following inventory protocols approved by the California State Historic Preservation Officer. Trapping locations will be pre-screened for the presence of cultural resources. Native American communities and Tribal governments were contacted and comments were solicited. The Cleveland NF heritage resource program manager determined that consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Office was not necessary for this project (See Chapter 3).

3.4 Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act) of 1972, as amended

The design of project activities is in accordance Land Management Plan standards and guidelines, best management practices, and applicable Forest Service Manual and Handbook direction. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of Land Management Plan standards and guidelines and best management practices will occur. Project activities are expected to meet all applicable state water quality standards. It is

expected that implementing this project will help prevent microbial and nutrient pollution introduced by feral pigs in the environment (See Chapter 3 of the EA).

3.5 Executive Order 11988, Clean Water

This project is fully consistent with this executive order.

3.6 Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice

This executive order insures that, to the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law, all populations are provided the opportunity to comment before decisions are rendered on, are allowed to share in the benefits of, are not excluded from, and are not affected in a disproportionately high and adverse manner by, government programs and activities affecting human health or the environment. Implementation of any project activity is not anticipated to cause disproportionate adverse human health or environmental impacts to minority or low-income populations.

3.7 Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species

Implementation of the selected alternative is not expected to create conditions for the introduction and establishment of non-native plant species or animal species. Weed free feed will be used for packstock. The purpose of the project is to minimize or eliminate damage from an existing non-native animal species. This project is fully compliant with this executive order.

3.8 Executive Order 13186, Migratory Birds

Management objectives of this executive order will be met. No significant impacts on migratory bird species are expected (see Chapter 3 of the EA).

4. Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11. A written appeal, including attachments, must be postmarked or received within 45 days after the date this notice is published in *The San Diego Union-Tribune*. Electronic appeals in common formats (.doc, .rtf, .pdf or .txt) may be submitted to: appeals-pacificsouthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us with Subject: Feral Pig Damage Control. Appeals may also be faxed to (707) 562-9229 to the attention of "APPEAL: Feral Pig Damage Control," sent by mail to the following address, or hand-delivered during normal business hours of 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays:

Regional Forester
ATTN: Appeals
USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region
1323 Club Drive
Vallejo, CA 94592

Persons or organizations who meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.13 may appeal this decision. Appeals must meet content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14.

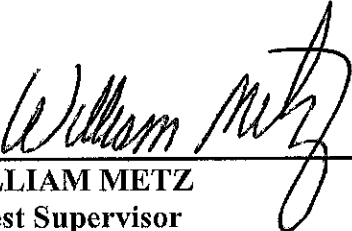
5. Implementation Date

As per 36 CFR 215.9, if no appeal is received within the legal appeal period, implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, the fifth business day following the close of the appeal-filing period (36 CFR 215.15). If an appeal is filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of appeal disposition (36 CFR 215.2).

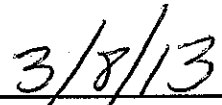
Contact

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact:

Lance Criley
Rangeland Management Specialist
Descanso Ranger District
3348 Alpine Blvd, Alpine, CA 91901
Phone: (619) 445-6235



WILLIAM METZ
Forest Supervisor



Date

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ⁱ West, B.C., A.L. Cooper, and J.B. Armstrong. 2009. Managing wild pigs: A technical guide. Human-Wildlife Interactions Monograph 1:1-55.

ⁱⁱ San Diego Natural History Museum (SDNHM) 2010. Feral Pig Distribution Survey Report, San Diego County; prepared for the Nature Conservancy. Available online at: <http://sdferalpigs.org/>
