

**Migratory Landbird Conservation
Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA) Restoration and Motorized Travel
Management Project
Six Rivers National Forest
September 12, 2016**

Under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the Forest Service is directed to “provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives.” (P.L. 94-588, Sec 6 (g) (3) (B)). The January 2000 USDA Forest Service (FS) Landbird Conservation Strategic Plan, followed by Executive Order 13186 in 2001, in addition to the Partners in Flight (PIF) specific habitat Conservation Plans for birds and the January 2004 PIF North American Landbird Conservation Plan all reference goals and objectives for integrating bird conservation into forest management and planning.

In late 2008, a Memorandum of Understanding between the USDA Forest Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to Promote the Conservation of Migratory Birds was signed. The intent of the MOU is to strengthen migratory bird conservation through enhanced collaboration and cooperation between the Forest Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service as well as other federal, state, tribal and local governments. Within the National Forests, conservation of migratory birds focuses on providing a diversity of habitat conditions at multiple spatial scales and ensuring that bird conservation is addressed when planning for land management activities. Implementation of the project is in accordance with the objectives within Executive Order 13186 of which outlines responsibilities of federal land management agencies to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The Six Rivers National Forest is proposing to make limited changes to the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS) in order to: provide motorized access to dispersed recreation opportunities (camping, hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, etc.); provide a diversity of motorized recreation opportunities; to provide for administrative needs, and; to reduce ecological and cultural resource risk and maintenance costs. Proposed management is intended to implement direction contained within the Six Rivers National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP).

The Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA) Restoration and Motorized Travel Management Project (referred to hereafter as the “Project”) is located within Del Norte County, California. Table 1 lists the migratory bird species known or thought to occur within the project area. Habitat suitability evaluations were made using the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System, Version 8.2 software, developed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The list of species potentially occurring in the project area was developed using sighting records, breeding bird surveys and published information.

Table 1. Neotropical migratory bird species and habitat associations of Del Norte County, CA and those known or thought to occur within the Project area.

Common Name	Habitat Association		Common Name	Habitat Association
Common Merganser	W		Hermit Thrush	F
Turkey Vulture	O		Swainson's Thrush	F
Osprey	W		American Robin	F, O, R
Peregrine Falcon	W,O,F		Cedar Waxwing	F, O
Northern Goshawk	F		Loggerhead shrike	O
Cooper's Hawk	F, R, O		Cassin's Vireo	F
Sharp-shinned Hawk	F, R		Warbling Vireo	R, F
Red-tailed Hawk	O, F, R		Nashville Warbler	F, O
Band-tailed Pigeon	F, O		Black-throated Gray Warbler	F, O
Flammulated Owl	F		Hermit Warbler	F
Common Nighthawk	O, F		MacGillivray's Warbler	F, R, O
Anna's Hummingbird	R, F, O		Yellow Warbler	F,R
Allen's Hummingbird	F, O		Orange-crowned Warbler	F
Rufous Hummingbird	F, O		Yellow-rumped Warbler	F, O
Belted Kingfisher	W		Townsend's Warbler	F
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	F, O		Wilson's Warbler	F, R
Northern Flicker	F, R, O		Common yellowthroat	W
Red-breasted Sapsucker	F		Yellow-breasted chat	R
Hammond's Flycatcher	F		Western Tanager	F
Olive-sided Flycatcher	F, O		Lazuli Bunting	O
Dusky Flycatcher	O, F		Black-headed Grosbeak	F, R
Pacific-slope Flycatcher	R, F		Spotted Towhee	O
Western Wood-Pewee	F, R		Green-tailed Towhee	O
Willow Flycatcher	R, O		Chipping Sparrow	F, O
Barn Swallow	O, R, F		Fox Sparrow	O,R
Tree Swallow	R, O, W		White-crowned Sparrow	O, F
N. Rough-winged Swallow	W		Song Sparrow	O, F, R
Violet-green Swallow	R, F, O		Dark-eyed Junco	O, F
Cliff Swallow	O, R		Brewer's Blackbird	O
Oak Titmouse	O, F		Brown-headed Cowbird	O, R, F
House Wren	O, F, R		Purple Finch	F,R
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	R, F		Cassin's Finch	F
Golden-crowned Kinglet	F		Pine Siskin	F, R
Townsend's Solitaire	F			

W – Wetland habitat including streams, ponds, lakes, reservoirs, rivers, marshes and associated wetland vegetation. **F – Forested** habitat including conifer forest, hardwood forest, mixed conifer/hardwood and oak woodlands. **R – Riparian** forests including willows and alder along streams, rivers and around ponds. **O – Open** country habitat including grasslands, meadows, burned areas, clearcuts, brushlands and residential areas.

The Project occurs in forested areas ranging in seral stage from shrub and pole to patches of late mature and old growth. All proposed actions would occur in the road prism on current National Forest Transportation System (NFTS) roads and unauthorized routes. No new construction would occur on previously undisturbed lands.

Impacts to NTM

None of the changes made to any of the alternatives between the draft and final EIS change the level of impact or effects to Neotropical Migrant Species.

All action alternatives will reduce road densities of ML 1, 2 roads and unauthorized routes across the NRA (Table 2). Reducing road density across the District will reduce fragmentation of habitat as the decommissioned roads revegetate, increase patch size, reduce sedimentation in stream channels, and reduce disturbance and direct mortality. In addition, cross-country travel is prohibited under the Smith River NRA Act of 1990. An overall reduction of road densities across the NRA will benefit wildlife in the short-term through elimination of noise disturbance on closed roads/routes and in the long-term through the reduction of fragmentation and habitat restoration. The project will benefit NTM.

Table 2. Road/route reductions and road density by Alternative

5th Field Watershed	Alternative 1	Alternative 4	Alternative 5	Alternative 6
	Road Density (mi/mi ²)			
Lower Smith River	0.58	0.41	0.22	0.37
Middle Fork Smith River	1.62	1.30	1.05	1.25
North Fork Smith River	0.42	0.30	0.15	0.24
South Fork Smith River	1.12	0.86	0.58	0.80

During culvert repair, replacement and/or removal, there will be minor habitat degradation for stream and riparian habitat within the project area due to the removal of brush and small diameter trees sapling trees less than 11 inches dbh, on approximately one-tenth per worksite.

It is estimated that an average of 0.1 acres of vegetation may be affected at any one site where culverts are repaired, replaced or removed. Alternative 4 would remove 82 culverts for 8 acres of habitat affected, Alternative 5 would remove 251 culverts (approximately 25 acres), and Alternative 6 would remove 170 culverts (17 acres affected). This is an overestimate of the amount of vegetation to be removed in that not all culverts sites have been brushed in, the roads may occur in naturally open areas, or the amount of vegetation to be removed is less than one-tenth of an acre. Habitat removal will be negligible in any one area. Due to different habitat requirements, not all culvert sites occur in suitable for all NTM, therefore acres of habitat removed under any alternative greatly overestimates the amount of habitat potentially affected for any one species. In the long term, the project will benefit NTM by reducing road density across the District.

In the long term, this project will benefit NTM species by restoring habitat on unauthorized routes and decommissioned roads. It will also prevent further habitat disturbance by delineating authorized routes and barricading vehicle use in unauthorized areas.

This project will not impact NTM species or their associated habitats.

No Action

Under the No Action alternative, there would be no reduction in road density across the District, and no habitat restoration would occur for NTM from decommissioning roads and restoring unauthorized routes. Disturbance and direct mortality from on-going road use would not be eliminated on removed roads. Sedimentation into streams would not be reduced.

Cumulative Effects

Given the small amount of acreage the project will impact (less than one-tenth acres in any one area), and that all other proposed actions will occur in the road prism, it is not likely that past, present, or planned projects will have a negative cumulative impact on NTM species when combined with the RMTM project. It is expected that the trend for these species will be towards recovery as past, present, and reasonably foreseeable federal actions in the watershed are predominantly habitat restoration projects.

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