

estimated 1.7 million ha (4.3 million ac) of existing habitat on national forests in the Sierras is within the Old Forest Emphasis Areas. About 49 percent of the California spotted owl sites known on national forest lands in the Sierras lie within old forest emphasis and wilderness areas. Additionally, all stands of high quality habitat outside old forest emphasis areas (*i.e.*, California WHR types 5M, 5D, and 6) will also be identified and protected.

Several protective prescriptions apply in old forest areas, based on their location with respect to other management needs. Where possible, managers are directed to avoid applying the "strategically placed landscape fuel treatments" in Old Forest Emphasis Areas. However, placement of these strategic fuel treatments may be required within Old Forest Emphasis Areas to minimize the risks to human life and property, sensitive resources, or protect the Old Forest Emphasis Area from loss to wildfire. In Old Forest Emphasis Areas (as in spotted owl home range core areas), fuel treatments will be limited to the removal of material necessary to reduce surface and ladder fuels sufficient to achieve an average flame length of 1.8 m (6 ft) or less if the stand were to burn under 90th percentile fire weather conditions.

When treatments are necessary within Old Forest Emphasis Areas, prescribed fire is the first priority to achieve the fuels objectives, rather than mechanical treatment. When prescribed fire will not achieve fuels objectives, mechanical thinning of understory trees less than 30 cm (12 in) dbh will be used to achieve the fuels objectives. However, in some instances those treatments will not achieve the fuels objectives due to existing stand conditions. In those situations incidental mechanical thinning of trees up to 51 cm (20 in) dbh and canopy reductions of up to 20 percent may be conducted in 28 to 61 cm (11 to 24 in) dbh stands with greater than 40 percent canopy cover. An additional analysis of suitable owl habitat will be conducted before applying the mechanical thinning of up to 51 cm (20 in) dbh and canopy reductions of up to 20 percent prescription in Old Forest Emphasis Areas. This prescription may only be utilized when sufficient suitable owl habitat exists to satisfy the requirements of a home range core area within 2.4 km (1.5 mi) of the nest site or activity center. This site specific analysis will be documented in the project environmental assessment. A minimum of 50 percent canopy cover will be retained on the westside and 30 percent will be retained on the eastside

following any mechanical fuel treatments in Old Forest Emphasis Areas;

(5) The General Forest designation is that area outside of other designations. It consists of about 1.69 million ha (4.17 million ac) (after subtraction of overlapping allocations with higher priority). In the General Forest lands, spotted owl home range core areas and PACs are protected as described in the previous paragraphs. Within General Forest that is outside spotted owl PACs and home range core areas, no trees greater than 51 cm (20 in) dbh will be removed and canopy cover will not be reduced more than 20 percent below current conditions. A minimum of 50 percent canopy cover will be retained on the westside and 30 percent will be retained on the eastside following mechanical treatments. The four largest snags per acre over 38 cm (15 in) dbh will be retained.

(6) The threat zone of the urban wildland intermix consists of all areas on Forest Service lands that are between 0.4 km (0.25 mi) and 2.4 km (1.5 mi) of human structures. Recent analysis indicates that this area contains over 849,823 ha (2,100,000 ac) or about 18 percent of the national forest lands in the Sierra Nevada (K. Barber, USFS, pers. comm. 2003). The FEIS stated that about 32 percent of the known activity centers occurred within the threat zone (USFS 2001a). The threat zone overlaps about half of the California spotted owl PACs (an indication of the extensive spread of human development in the region), and about 29 percent of the total PAC acres are overlapped by the threat zone. Generally, no trees greater than 51 cm (20 in) dbh will be removed, and canopy cover will not be reduced more than 20 percent below current levels in the threat zone. A minimum of 50 percent canopy cover will be retained on the westside and 30 percent will be retained on the eastside. The four largest snags per acre over 38 cm (15 in) dbh will be retained. Strategically placed landscape treatments will be implemented to achieve fuels objectives within the Threat zone. Spotted owl PACs will be established and managed as described in (2) above, but, in an effort to balance the need for effective fuels reductions treatments with conservation of owl habitat, the S&GS did not establish home range core areas in the Threat zone. Instead, site-specific analysis will determine whether sufficient suitable habitat exists to satisfy the requirements of a home range core area within 2.4 km (1.5 mi) of the nest site or activity center. Where sufficient habitat will remain within that area, fuels treatments that remove

trees up to 51 cm (20 in) dbh and reducing canopy cover by up to 20 percent, but resulting in no less than 50 percent canopy cover post-treatment, may be utilized outside of PACs in 28 to 61 cm (11 to 24 in) dbh stands with greater than 60 percent canopy cover. Otherwise, the treatment will be constrained to removal of trees less than 30 cm (12 in) dbh. The site-specific analysis will be documented in the project environmental assessment.

(7) The Defense zone of the Urban Wildland Intermix includes those areas of national forest land that are within 0.4 km (0.25 mi) of human structures. The most recent available estimate indicates that the Defense zone totals about 137,995 ha (341,000 ac) of national forest lands (K. Barber USFS pers comm. 2003), representing about three percent of the national forest lands in the Sierra Nevada. About 4.0 percent of the California spotted owl activity centers in the Sierra Nevada occur within the Defense zone (USFS 2001a). The Defense zone overlaps portions of about half of all California spotted owl PACs on Sierra national forest lands, but, based on experience in early implementation of the SNFPA, the Defense zone includes only about 4 percent of the total PAC acreage, as a result of its narrow, linear form (K. Barber USFS pers comm. 2003). This area is the highest priority for fuel treatments, and the relatively intensive treatments allowed in this zone may result in stands that are not suitable for California spotted owls. In the Defense zone, mechanical treatments will be prohibited within a 152 m (500-foot) radius buffer around a spotted owl nest site or activity center.

(8) Vegetation treatments will occur on no more than 30 to 40 percent of each watershed. These vegetation treatments will result in stand conditions meeting the definition of suitable owl habitat.

Effects of The Quincy Library Group Pilot Project—In 1998, the HFQLG designated areas on the Lassen, Plumas, and Tahoe National Forests that would be treated for creation of a landscape-based fuels reduction program. The Record of Decision for the SNFPA (USFS 2001b) directed that all SNFPA S and Gs applying to California spotted owls will be implemented in the HFQLG pilot project, resulting in the inability to carry out about ten percent of the Defensible Fuel Profile Zones that had been proposed in the original HFQLG Environmental Impact Statement (USFS 2001b). As stated earlier, the expected harvest volume of 138 mmbf per year from the HFQLG area would be less than the amount