



Date: JUL 18 2013

DECISION MEMORANDUM FOR THOMAS L. TIDWELL, CHIEF

THROUGH: Leslie A. C. Weldon
Deputy Chief, NFS 

FROM: Tony Tooke, Director, EMC 
William E. Timko, Acting Director, FM

SUBJECT: Emergency Situation Determination, Stafford Fire Salvage and
Restoration Project, Shasta-Trinity National Forest

FILE CODE: 1570/2400

ISSUE:

Pacific Southwest Regional Forester's letter dated June 3, 2013, requesting an Emergency Situation Determination (ESD) pursuant to Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 215.10 (36 CFR 215.10) for the salvage of dead and dying trees located on the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

BACKGROUND:

- The Stafford Fire was a human-caused fire that started on September 5, 2012 along the Wildwood Road in Trinity County, California. The fire burned for two weeks and was finally contained at 4,402 acres.
- The Shasta-Trinity National Forest is requesting an emergency situation determination in order to mitigate threats to human health and safety and to avoid a substantial economic loss to the Federal Government.
- The Proposed Action includes an estimated 780 acres (7.5 million board feet (MMBF)) of salvage to reduce fuels, provide economic return and employment opportunities, and to prepare sites for planting. These salvage actions would occur on an estimated 167 acres (2.1 MMBF) of helicopter yarding, an estimated 464 acres (4.2 MMBF) of cable yarding, and an estimated 149 acres (1.2 MMBF) of mechanical skidding.
- The planning area for the proposed Stafford Fire Salvage and Recovery Project is within the Hayfork Adaptive Management Area land allocation as defined in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The Stafford Project is also within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) of Hayfork, California, a nationally registered Community at Risk.
- The Stafford Project proposes to remove dead and dying trees from the areas impacted by the Stafford Fire and re-establish forested conditions by planting trees.
- The project is within WUI; therefore, the buildup of hazardous fuels over time is of concern. (See enclosed *Determination of an Emergency Situation Relevant Information.*)



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- All proposed treatment stands are a Coastal Mixed Conifer forest type consisting primarily of Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine, with lesser stocking levels of white fir, sugar pine, incense cedar, and black oak.
- The main comments from the community were concern over fuel loading in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), dangers of snags falling and harming people, salvaging dead and dying trees only, reforestation, and watershed restoration.
- If an ESD is granted, treatments included in the Stafford Fire Salvage and Recovery Project could likely begin in September 2013. Local lumber mills in the tri-counties area of Humboldt, Trinity, and Shasta, have expressed interest in the project provided that the project can be completed in the 2013 field season.
- If an ESD is not granted, it is estimated that implementation of the Stafford Project would result in the net recovery of 5.1 million board feet of sawtimber, and would result in an estimated loss of \$1,076,483 to the government.
- Project implementation is normally stayed during the administrative appeal process, often for as much as 105 days. Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.10, a determination of an emergency situation made by the Chief allows implementation to begin immediately after publication of a legal notice of the NEPA decision document.

OPTIONS:

- Approve the request for an ESD on the basis of the potential for hazards threatening human health and safety and loss of economic value to the government.
- Disapprove the request for an ESD.

RECOMMENDATION:

We recommend that the Chief approve the ESD request for the following reasons, as explained in the letters of request from the Forest Supervisor and Regional Forester, and in the supporting documentation:

- **A delay to implementation of the project during the time it takes to complete the administrative appeal process will likely result in further deterioration and could create hazardous conditions along the roadways for the public and Forest Service employees. Road closures are limited due to private land and administrative access needs.** The trees will become less merchantable and more unstable as they deteriorate from insects, stain and decay fungi, and weather checking.
- **At this time, there is financial incentive for private companies to remove the hazard and salvage trees, but as the trees deteriorates, that incentive decreases, potentially decreasing to the point where timber sales would receive no bids.** Delaying the sale of timber could result in a loss of \$473,875 due to continued deterioration of the timber.

DECISION BY THE CHIEF:

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Approve ESD Thomas L. Tidwell Date 7/18/13

Disapprove _____

Discuss with me _____

Reviewed by: _____

cc: Shasta Trinity National Forest Supervisor
R5 Director of Natural Resources
R5 Appeals
WO Forest Management

Enclosures

