



KEY ISSUES IN THE INYO-SEQUOIA-SIERRA DRAFT FOREST PLANS

Wilderness Recommendations

What's Good: The draft plans identify nearly 1.5 million acres (out of approximately 4.4 million acres in the 3 forests) of wilderness quality lands. The conservation-oriented Alternative C recommends about 743,000 acres of new Wilderness (about 51% of the inventory). But the Forest Service's "preferred" Alternative B recommends no new Wilderness on the Sequoia and Sierra Forests, and only 37,000 acres on the Inyo.



Significant Improvements Needed:

- The Forest Service should choose a strengthened Alternative C for the Sierra and Sequoia Forests that includes important areas inexplicably left out, including the Bright Star Wilderness addition, Rattlesnake Creek/Durwood Creek watersheds in the Golden Trout addition, Slate Mountain, Long Canyon and Dennison Peak on the Sequoia Forest. On the Sierra Forest, Alternative C should be improved by adding Cat's Head Mountain and Soaproot as recommended Wilderness.
- On the Inyo National Forest, the agency should recommend at least the Piper Mountain Additions (1&2), South Sierra Addition East 1, White Mountains Additions (East & West), Ansel Adams Addition Northeast (Horse Meadows), Inyo Mountains Addition, Excelsior, Deadman Canyon, Deep Springs North, Dexter Canyon, Glass Mountains, and Soldier Canyon.

Wild & Scenic Rivers

What's Good: The draft plans assessed 3,754 miles of waterways and identified nearly 870 miles of rivers and streams eligible for potential Wild & Scenic River protection. All eligible streams in the final plans will be protected by the Forest Service.



Significant Improvements Needed:

- Despite the extensive inventory, some key streams were not determined eligible and should be, including Dexter Canyon and Wet Canyons on the Inyo Forest; Salmon, Trout, Brushy, and Dry Valley Creeks on the Sequoia Forest; and lower Dinkey Creek on the Sierra.
- Specifically recognize the water quality and biotic integrity protection value of recommending Wilderness for roadless lands in the watersheds of existing and eligible Wild & Scenic Rivers (particularly the North Fork Kern, Kings, and South Fork Merced Rivers, and Dinkey Creek).

Fire Management

What's Good: The draft plans allow for prescribed fire and fire managed for resource benefits, when conditions are right, across the landscape.

Significant Improvements Needed:

- Apply prescribed fire and use managed fire on roughly 150,000 acres per year across the three forests to more closely follow the natural fire regime for the different vegetation types and to reduce build-up of fuels.
- Increase focus on reducing surface and ladder fuels and using prescribed and managed wildfire as the primary forest fuels reduction and forest restoration tools.



Old Forests and Complex Early Seral Forests

What's Good: The draft plans recognize the ecological importance of a variety of fire severities in shaping the landscape.

Significant Improvements Needed:

- Diameter limits needed to protect large trees from logging (the draft plans provide no limits to the size of a tree that can be logged on more than 1 million acres).
- Restrictions on salvage logging to protect most of the complex early seral habitat that is created by fire and other disturbances.
- Adopt a system of old forest emphasis areas where fire is actively managed to support old forest habitats.
- Include standards and guidelines for snag recruitment and retention.



Wildlife Species At-Risk

What's Good: Nothing – The draft plans fail to sustain viable populations of at-risk wildlife species and their habitats.

Significant Improvements Needed:

- Protect high quality habitat (dense, large structured forests) for old forest associated species like California spotted owl, Pacific fisher and northern goshawk.
- Add conservation measures for species considered at-risk by experts and wildlife agencies; these include black-backed woodpecker, northern goshawk, and western pond turtle.
- Follow all recommendations made by scientists in the Fisher Conservation Strategy and the Interim Recommendations for California Spotted Owl.
- Provide assurances, through use of standards and guidelines, that habitat quality for at-risk species will maintain population viability or contribute to recovery.
- Recognize actions like logging and grazing as threats to some at-risk species.
- Add standards and guidelines for logging and grazing to ensure that habitat is not degraded for species that are recognized as at-risk.



Aquatic and Riparian Ecosystems

What's Good: A few Critical Aquatic Refuges (areas to protect at-risk species such as golden trout, Lahontan cutthroat trout, Sierra yellow-legged frog, Kern River slender salamander) were added, but these were limited to wilderness areas and have little impact on management.

Significant Improvements Needed:

- Add Critical Aquatic Refuges to protect areas of high biodiversity and aquatic/riparian species that are at-risk.
- Eliminate grazing in meadows that are degraded, poorly functioning, or that sustain at-risk species.
- Eliminate grazing from seeps, springs, fens, and other special aquatic features.
- Increase number of meadows improved or restored.



Recreation

What's Good: The draft plans recognize the importance of high quality forest recreation and the need for sustainable recreation opportunities that can be maintained into the future without harming the land. The draft plan recognizes changes in use of recreation on the Forest and the need for partnerships to sustainably manage recreation. In an attempt to better address emerging recreational interests, the plans also revise the recreational opportunity spectrum.

Significant Improvements Needed:

- Include plan components, beyond desired conditions, to assure adequate protection and maintenance of national forest recreation areas.
- Provide direction to improve education and interpretation so that all visitors better understand how to act responsibly.
- Provide quantifiable visitor use levels for each type of recreation and projections of how these levels would be affected by declining federal budgets.
- Commit to more robust partnerships with local communities, conservation groups and others to help achieve desired conditions for recreation.
- Improve recreational opportunity spectrum (ROS) understanding by providing more detailed maps, including standards and guidelines for the management of each ROS allocation, and by adjusting some primitive and non-motorized boundaries to better protect inventoried roadless areas.
- Identify and address different seasons of recreation in the plan, including differentiating between summer and winter ROS; this can help lay the groundwork for winter travel planning.
- Better integrate recreation to other aspects of the plan such as fire and ecological integrity.



For more information about Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers, contact Steve Evans at CalWild, email: sevans@calwild.org, phone: (916) 708-3155. For more information about Fire Management, Old and Early Forests, Wildlife Species at Risk, and Aquatic and Riparian Ecosystems, contact Sue Britting at Sierra Forest Legacy, email: britting@earthlink.net, phone: (530) 295-8210.

More information can also be found in the *Sierra Club Citizens' Guide to Protecting the Inyo, Sierra and Sequoia National Forests* at <http://sc.org/28T3vBS>