



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FWS/LR8/IR10

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Greetings,

At the December 2020 Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) Executive Committee meeting, we recognized that a substantial amount of post-fire forest management is likely to occur in light of this year's wildfire season. In 2018, the Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) developed guidance for evaluating the effects of post-fire management on NSO*. This guidance is specific to the interior portion of the NSO range in California. Additionally, the Yreka Fish and Wildlife Office and the Roseburg Fish and Wildlife Office in Oregon developed similar guidance for use during Section 7 consultation with U.S. Forest Service partners.

All these guidance documents describe a similar process for evaluating the effects of wildfire on NSO habitat and they outline how forest management (timber harvesting) following fires may affect the species. They underscore the importance of considering pre-fire conditions and how those conditions change as the result of fire. The existing guidance documents explain how NSO use of burned areas varies depending on the pre-fire conditions, the size and severity of the fire, and the proximity to unburned or lightly burned habitat. The process can be applied throughout the NSO range including both interior and coastal regions.

The 2020 fire season included areas where post-fire forest management is less common than in the interior. Specifically, the August Complex impacted a significant portion of NSO habitat in coastal areas. Regardless of location, the USFWS in California, is comfortable with CDFW using the guidance for both inland and coastal projects in order to evaluate and avoid potential impacts to NSO prior to conducting post-fire forest management.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Senn
Acting Assistant Regional Director
Ecological Services

Enclosure

**Potential Impacts of Post-wildfire Timber Operations on Northern Spotted Owls: Analysis in the Interior of Northern California (CDFW 2018).*

cc:

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