

MEETING SUMMARY

STAKEHOLDER SCIENCE AND STAKEHOLDER COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

LAKE TAHOE WEST RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

Tuesday, September 1st, 2020, 1:00pm – 3:00pm

All meeting materials are publicly available on the Lake Tahoe West website

<http://nationalforests.org/laketahoewest>. For questions please contact the program manager/facilitator

Sarah Di Vittorio at sdivittorio@nationalforests.org or (530) 902-8281.

Meeting Synopsis

On September 1, 2020, Lake Tahoe West (LTW) staff and the Stakeholder Science and Community Committees (Stakeholders) met to keep Stakeholders informed on LTW planning status and progress, share the range of public comments on the Scoping Notice, and provide information on what LTW staff teams are working on to advance the environmental planning effort and the level of detail LTW staff are working to bring the Stakeholders at a future meeting.

- **Scoping Comments:** LTW staff shared a summary of public comments received on the Scoping Notice.
- **TRPA Code Change:** LTW staff provided additional information on the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) basin-wide code amendment, why it is proposed, and supporting water quality analysis approach. The current TRPA Code of Ordinances limits treatment on slopes over 30% to hand thinning or aerial yarding. This restriction limits the ability of managers to treat forests at the pace and scale needed to increase landscape resilience and to thin overly dense Basin-wide forests.
- **Roads:** LTW staff acknowledged that they had not specifically discussed with Stakeholders the Forest Plan Amendment and the potential for roads in Backcountry Management Areas (BMAs) prior to the Scoping Notice release. LTW staff reviewed the roads fact sheet and answered clarifying questions on possible roads in BMAs. Staff will have more detail available to present later this year.
- **Status Update:** LTW staff outlined work of the team that is developing the environmental document. Covid-19 interrupted field work significantly, but work is getting back underway. Staff hope to be ready to share more detail that will be brought to the Stakeholders at a November or December meeting.
- **Formal Public Comment:** Members of the public provided three minute comments in response to the issues discussed at the meeting.
- **Schedule and Next Steps:** LTW staff anticipate meeting with Stakeholders in November or December, and LTW staff commit to communicating project updates over email. Stakeholders are able to reach out to LTW staff if they have questions or comments.

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Scoping Comments

Summary: LTW staff shared the range of public comments received on the Scoping Notice. The lead agencies received approximately 80 originally written scoping comment letters and nearly 500 form letters. Ascent Environmental and the Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) reviewed scoping comments for topics relevant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), TRPA, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental review processes.

Summary Analysis Topic Snapshot

- Alternatives and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) vs. Environmental Assessment (EA) for NEPA
- Level of Detail for Proposed Action
- TRPA Code Amendment
- Forest Plan Amendment
- Large Tree Removal / Forest Openings
- Public Health and Safety
- Water Quality
- Fish Removal
- Stream Restoration

Next Steps: Staff will use scoping comments to identify issues that will inform the development of one or more project alternatives to the proposed action (project description). Staff will also use comments to inform refinement of the proposed action elements and identify where additional detail for current proposed action elements is needed. The project record will include responses to all comments received during the scoping period. The lead agencies are interested in engaging the Stakeholders around key issues identified during scoping to better understand concerns. Engagement with Stakeholders may also include sharing information on the refined project description and other details as they are developed.

TRPA Code Change

Summary: LTW staff provided additional information on the TRPA basin-wide code amendment and supporting water quality analysis approach. The current TRPA Code of Ordinances limits treatment on slopes over 30% to hand thinning or aerial yarding. A basin-wide code change that allows for mechanical ground-based equipment on slopes between 30%-50% will allow for faster treatment of more acres that are in critical need of forest restoration. A basin-wide code change is proposed because:

- 1) The Bi-State Compact directs TRPA to create a Basin-wide Regional Plan, from which cascades the Code of Ordinances and Environmental Thresholds. Because of this, TRPA prefers to consider code language for the entire Basin and not on a project-specific case by case basis.
- 2) Advancements in equipment and operations make it appropriate to use ground-based mechanical equipment under certain conditions.
- 3) Current TRPA code is not in line with other regulations and industry standards.

Other agencies within the basin currently allow treatment on slopes 30%-50%. For example, Lahontan Regional Water Quality Board covers mechanical thinning on slopes over 30% under their 2019 Timber Waiver with BMPs and monitoring requirements. The University of Idaho and the USFS Pacific Southwest Research Station will analyze the potential basin-wide code change using the Watershed Erosion Prediction Project (WEPP) Model. The code change will not be a blanket code change that allows ground-based mechanical equipment on every slope with no conditions, but rather allow it under the appropriate conditions as determined by the WEPP modeling.

Discussion and Feedback

- It could be helpful for the Lake Tahoe West team to create a **map that highlights watershed boundaries** and shows exactly where the code change will be implemented.
- Is the WEPP assessment report the basis for environmental analysis in the triple document?
 - The WEPP assessment report will be used in the environmental analysis regarding the code change. Additional sources may also be used.
 - There may be additional project-specific analysis if needed. However, the code will likely include best management practices and monitoring to ensure there are not impacts.
- What does the Lahontan timber waiver require?
 - The timber waiver does not have a slope restriction like the TRPA does.
 - Lahontan has told the LTBMU that they will need to review BMPs and resource protection measures for operating on slopes greater than 30%.
- Why were the drainages Incline and Third Creek drainages selected for the WEPP analysis? With the development around Incline it seems like this would be very different from the west shore.
 - They were selected because they have long term stream gauges with good data for the WEPP model.

Roads

Summary: LTW staff acknowledged that they had not specifically discussed the Forest Plan Amendment and the potential for roads in Backcountry Management Areas (BMAs) prior to the Scoping Notice release with Stakeholders. LTW staff reviewed the Roads Fact Sheet with Stakeholders and answered clarifying questions. Staff acknowledged that this understandably left some Stakeholders feeling surprised about the content of the Scoping Notice. Additional comments received during the scoping process highlighted concerns and lack of clarity regarding the potential for the LTW Restoration Project to build new roads in National Forest System lands designated as BMAs or Inventoried Roadless Areas.

The “Roads Fact Sheet” document shared with Stakeholders clarifies: 1) That LTW *may* consider new permanent roads in some BMAs. 2) Why LTW may consider new roads in BMAs. 3) That LTW will **not** consider any new permanent or temporary roads in Inventoried Roadless Areas. 4) How the project team would determine the placement of any new roads.

Discussion and Feedback

Rationale

- Explain why LTW may consider new permanent (as opposed to temporary) roads in some BMAs:
 - New permanent roads in BMAs would provide access for restoration treatments to take place over multiple years.
 - Temporary roads are traditionally used for one year or less, occasionally longer, and then removed and restored.
 - New roads (whether permanent or temporary) would allow the Forest Service to thin forests using mechanical equipment rather than hand crews.
 - Mechanical treatments are able to remove far more biomass from the forest, minimizing remaining fuels.
- Stakeholders expressed desire to see more detail regarding where new roads would be proposed and for what purpose, noting that that level of detail was unavailable in the scoping notice.
- Numerous Stakeholders are concerned about maintaining the wilderness quality of BMAs and the reversal of a commitment that was made during the 2016 Forest Plan revision process.

Field Trips and possible Self-Guided Tours

- Stakeholders would like to have a field trip to see where road construction is being proposed and why treatment cannot be accomplished with hand thinning, etc.
- Stakeholders are concerned that if the draft document is set to be released in August 2021, there will be little time to get out into the field if Stakeholders are not able to go out this fall.
- LTW staff asked the Stakeholders what other information would be helpful to have if a field visit is not possible due to COVID-19.
- The Stakeholders responded that it would be helpful to have GIS information, and asked if a self-guided tour would be possible instead. LTW staff should prioritize at least having the road information for BMAs available by end of October/early November.

Level of Detail

- LTW staff intend to provide greater detail regarding potential for new roads as well as all other restoration actions on the landscape at a future meeting.
- LTW staff will not have greater detail on where the roads might be located until end of October or early November.

Status Update

Summary: LTW staff provided information on what the Interdisciplinary Team, CEQA, and TRPA teams are working on and the level of detail that will be brought to the Stakeholders at future meetings. Comments from public scoping will be used to refine the proposed action (project description) and inform development of alternatives. Limited progress has been made to date on field work to inform project and planning due to COVID-19. The Project Description will contain additional details related to project elements including how proposed treatments will be designed and where proposed treatments will be implemented, more detail related to temporary and permanent roads, and information on resource protection measures and performance measures. The Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team is currently going through a GIS and paper map exercise to update project maps and determine access points for treatment and whether treatment is feasible in a certain area. The Forest Service will provide estimated miles of temporary road construction, estimated miles of permanent road construction, and

locations of roads within the BMAs. LTW staff are looking at scoping comments and developing issues statements in order to frame up alternatives. LTW staff expect to share information on the project description with Stakeholders. Information shared with Stakeholders will be adequately developed to allow for productive conversation and exchange of ideas. Information provided will also include timelines and next steps.

Discussion and Feedback

- A Stakeholder expressed that they would like to focus their energy on developing the action that is likely to be adopted and asked what the opportunities for this were.
- The LTW lead agencies are thinking through what Stakeholder engagement should look like. They want to bring products to stakeholders that are developed enough for productive conversation but not so far refined that feedback would be difficult to consider or incorporate.
- In the Scoping Notice there was not enough information for the Stakeholders to provide meaningful comments for actions on the ground. There are many lessons learned from this. LTW staff is committed to continue to engage with Stakeholders.

Public Comments

Summary: Members of the public provided the following three minute comments in response to the issues discussed at the meeting.

- Public member 1: I am surprised that the comments surrounding the benefits of using hand thinning and prescribed fire in a wilderness area were not included in the Scoping Comment Summary. These treatments could be used in place of mechanical treatment. CalWild was very involved in the 2016 LTBMU Forest Plan revision, which included a promise that BMAs would remain roadless. CalWild had asked for wilderness areas, and the Regional Forester responded that while no new wilderness areas would be included, the BMAs would remain roadless. The Regional Forester specifically spoke to this issue surrounding the Stanford Rock BMA. This was extensively thought out, and is why the proposed Forest Plan Amendment is surprising. CalWild was also surprised to see that the term, “Outstanding National Resource Water”, was not included anywhere in the Scoping Notice. Lake Tahoe is one of only two ONRWs, and water quality should be prioritized. CalWild also echoes the Stakeholders’ suggestions, and calls for a field trip to be organized if possible. These field trips can be very conducive to resolving issues.
- Public member 2: Are there any maps for where trees of over 30” DBH might be cut?
 - LTW staff response: No, there are not maps at this level of specificity.

Schedule and Next Steps

Summary: LTW staff anticipate meeting with Stakeholders in November or December, and LTW staff commit to communicating project updates over email. Stakeholders are able to reach out to LTW staff if they have questions or comments.

Meeting Attendees

Organizing and Participating Agencies

CTC – California Tahoe Conservancy
FOWS – Friends of the West Shore
NFF – National Forest Foundation
USFS LTBMU – U.S. Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
USFS PSW – U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station
NDF – Nevada Division of Forestry
KTB – Keep Tahoe Blue/The League to Save Lake Tahoe
TRPA – Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
CBI – Consensus Building Institute
TF – The Tahoe Fund
EPA – US Environmental Protection Agency
HW – Homewood
PCAPCD – Placer County Air Pollution Control District
SNA – Sierra Nevada Alliance
UCD – University of California, Davis
SPF – Sugar Pine Foundation
LTSSCC – Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce
AS – Ascent
SFL – Sierra Forest Legacy
SC – Sierra Club
CWC – California Wildlife Coalition
PCTA – Pacific Crest Trail Association

Stakeholder Science Committee Members

1. Jennifer Quashnick, FOWS
2. Roland Shaw, NDF
3. Gavin Feiger, KTB
4. Sue Britting, SFL
5. Jack Landy, EPA
6. Greg Suba, SFL

7. Maria Mircheva, SPF
8. Patricia Maloney, UCD

Stakeholder Community Committee Members

1. Skyler Monaghan, TF
2. Dan Blood, HW
3. Nicole Lutkemuller, SNA
4. Steve Teshara, LTSSCC

Public

1. Connor Swift, PCTA
2. Barbara Rivenes, SC
3. Brendan
4. Steve Evans, CWC
5. Greg Suba, SFL
6. David Zelinsky, SC

Staff

1. Christine Aralia, CTC
2. Jason Vasques, CTC
3. Brian Garrett, USFS LTBMU
4. Michael Brumbaugh, USFS LTBMU
5. Jonathan Long, USFS PSW
6. John Marshall, TRPA
7. Kat McIntyre, TRPA
8. Shannon Friedman, TRPA
9. Kim Caringer, TRPA
10. Nanette Hansel, AS
11. Curtis Alling, AS
12. Gina Bartlett, CBI
13. Ekow Edzie, CBI
14. Sarah Di Vittorio, NFF
15. Bri Tiffany, NFF

SCOPING COMMENT SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Lake Tahoe West Stakeholder Committee Meeting
September 1, 2020

SUMMARY: WHERE ARE WE?

This summary focuses on key issues raised during the public scoping process. The lead agencies received approximately 80 originally written scoping comment letters and nearly 500 form letters. Ascent and LTBMU reviewed scoping comments for topics relevant to the CEQA, TRPA, and NEPA environmental review processes. The issues list below is not an exhaustive or comprehensive list; it is a high-level summary only.

WHERE ARE WE GOING? NEXT STEPS

The proposed action in the scoping notice included the largest potential footprint and restoration actions. The rationale for this approach was to solicit comments on the full suite of potential actions and then refine the proposed action based on the comments received. Scoping comments will be used to identify issues that will inform the development one or more project alternatives to the proposed action (project description). Comments will also be used to inform refinement of the proposed action elements and identify where additional detail for current proposed action elements are needed. The proposed action/project description and the alternative(s) may, or may not, encompass the full spectrum of restoration treatments contemplated in the scoping package. The alternative(s) might also include other elements/actions identified through the public comment process. Response to all comments received during the scoping period will be included in the project record.

The lead agencies are interested in engaging the LTW Stakeholder Committees around key issues identified during scoping to better understand concerns. Engagement with the Stakeholder Committees may also include sharing information on the refined project description and other details as they are developed.

This table has issues and comments brought up by public comments and are not prioritized

* Resource Topic or Project Element	Key Substantive Issue
1. Alternatives – Recommendations Related to the Development of Alternatives	Minimize use of prescribed burning
	Limit extent of fuel treatments at higher elevations
	Limit large tree removal
	Limit logging in Backcountry Management Areas (BMAs) and Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs)
	Exclude mechanical thinning and permanent road construction in BMAs and IRAs
	Limit reach of TRPA Code amendment to LTW project versus basin wide
	Add/clarify recreation features in program and how they benefit or impact recreational values
2. TRPA Code amendment and related activities	Approach for analyzing the TRPA Code amendment throughout the Basin, not just within the project area. Need to monitor to verify impacts before applying Basin-wide.
	Mechanical operations on steep slopes greater than 30% will lead to increased erosion and sediment run-off affecting lake clarity.
	Cumulative watershed effects when combined with other project impacts
3. Forest Plan Amendment for permanent roads in the backcountry and related vegetation treatment activities	Commenters expressed opposition to the FPA to allow construction of roads and use of mechanical equipment in BMAs and IRAs.
	Conflict with intent of BMAs and IRAs identified in the Forest Plan and the need to clarify what is actually being proposed in these designated areas
	Agency capacity to maintain additional roads and additional lands that are opened for access to treatment units
	Quality of recreation experience could change based on treatment activities, both positively and negatively
	Scenic impacts associated with roads in BMAs and IRAs could impact recreational experience
	Development of new temporary or permanent Roads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access for fuels reduction and fire suppression • Access for recreation either asset or detriment depending upon user group • Wildlife habitat, aquatic habitat and water quality impacts • Increase non-native plant spread
4. EIS vs. EA for NEPA purposes	FPA requires that an EIS be prepared rather than an EA
	Potentially significant impacts support need for EIS
	Project size is larger than most projects that are typically undertaken
	Controversy is considered high because of confusion over roads in IRAs and BMAs
	TRPA EIS and CEQA EIR creates a varied level of analysis in terms of level of significance and analysis of thresholds
	Implementation of TRPA Code amendment and Forest Plan Amendments
	Impacts on water courses, water quality and Lake Tahoe
5. Implementation of LTW projects	How the different agencies will implement the project
	Monitoring, adaptive management, and use of LTW modeling concerns
	Removal of large trees over 30 inches could impact habitat and wildlife.

* Resource Topic or Project Element	Key Substantive Issue
6. Large tree removal/ Forest Openings and Habitat	Quality of wildlife habitat for short vs long term; potential habitat fragmentation
	California spotted owl and treatment in PACs; Marten habitat quality
7. Proposed Action - Level of detail	Level of detail: programmatic vs project level documentation
	Size: this project has many different elements and a complex set of ownerships
	Restoration: what is being proposed on a given acre of ground and rationale for treatment type
	Roads: Their placement on the landscape re: watershed position, Both permanent and temporary, their use classification, and maintenance; legacy roads
8. LTW Modeling	Questions related to the quality of the models, the assumptions in the models, the field verification, and the ability to provide location specific information
9. Public health and safety	Evacuation, including cumulative effects on emergency response and evacuation due to truck traffic
	Public Health and Safety issues associated with the restoration activities
10. Wildfire risk / Fuel Reduction	Potential for increased risk of wildfire from the project and increased fire severity
	Thinning and burning can increase erosion and smoke emissions but untreated wildfires could increase erosion and smoke emissions to a greater extent
11. Water quality	Mechanical treatments and the project as a whole could have potential impacts on sensitive resources in Lake Tahoe and on Lake clarity.
	Thinning, prescribed burning, and road building could increase runoff and impact road infrastructure.
12. Fish Removal	Removal of fish in Meeks and Eagle Creek drainages could impact recreational fishing opportunities in a popular recreation area with limited benefit
13. Stream Restoration	Large wood placed in stream could damage road infrastructure downstream
	Restoration in Blackwood Creek could reduce/destroy the natural stream stabilizing restoration that has been created by beavers, creating diverse and unique habitat

TRPA Basin-wide Code Change and Supporting Water Quality Analysis

Prepared for Sept. 1, 2020, Lake Tahoe West Joint Stakeholder Committee Meeting

Background

The current TRPA Code of Ordinances limits treatment on slopes over 30% to hand thinning or aerial yarding. The 30% slope restriction limits the pace and scale of treatment needed to increase landscape resilience to climate change and disturbance and to thin overly dense Basin-wide forests. While hand thinning and aerial yarding are good options in sensitive ecosystems with erosive soils, a Basin-wide code change that allows for mechanical ground-based equipment on slopes between 30%-50% will allow for faster treatment of more acres that are in critical need of forest restoration.

Approximately 40,000 acres of the LTW landscape are overly dense stands.

- Of these 40,000 acres, 24,000 acres are on slopes 30% and lower (currently allowed to be treated with ground-based mechanical equipment per the TRPA code).
- Approximately 15,719 acres within Lake Tahoe West are on slopes 30%-50%.
 - Most erosive soils on western slope are Melody and Ellis Peak which make up 5,532 acres or 12% of LTW landscape.

Outside of LTW acreage, there are approximately 43,427 acres Basin-wide on slopes between 30%-50% (about 30% of total basin acreage).

Why a basin-wide code change?

There are several reasons why TRPA is proposing a basin-wide code change.

- The Bi-State Compact directs the TRPA to create a Basin-wide Regional Plan, from which, cascades the Code of Ordinances and Environmental Thresholds. Because of this, TRPA prefers to consider code language for the entire Basin and not on a project-specific case by case basis.
- The current TRPA code is not in line with other regulations and industry standards. Other agencies within the Basin currently allow treatment on slopes 30%-50%.
 - Specifically, Lahontan Water Board covers mechanical thinning on slopes over 30% under their 2019 Timber Waiver with BMPs and monitoring requirements.
- Outside of the Basin, operating ground-based mechanical equipment on slopes up to 50% is regular practice.
- Advancements in equipment and operations make it appropriate to use ground-based mechanical equipment under certain conditions.

What will support the basin-wide code change?

- The University of Idaho and USDA Forest Service PSW Research Station will use the Watershed Erosion Prediction Project (WEPP) Model, which is a process-based hydrology and sediment transport model designed to assess the impact of management practices on runoff, erosion, and delivered sediment (Brooks et al. 2016). Analysis is currently underway and will be available for use in the environmental document preparation.
- Working with University of Idaho and USDA Forest Service PSW Research Station on several key Tasks:

- Task 1: Calibrate and Assess the Ability of WEPP to simulate Streamflow and Water quality from East Lake Tahoe Watersheds
- Task 2: Analysis of impacts of forest management strategies in East Lake Tahoe.
- Task 3: Synthesis of factors driving soil loss response to management.
- Task 3b: Synthesis of Existing Information Regarding Treatments on Steep Slopes.
- Deliverables will include:
 - Assessment Report for East Lake Tahoe Watersheds, specifically Third, Incline, and Trout creeks watersheds
 - The report will include a watershed by watershed comparison in tables and figures between simulated and observed:
 - Annual water yield
 - Daily and Peak Snow water equivalent depth at available SNOTEL sites
 - Peak Streamflow
 - Daily Streamflow
 - Annual Sediment load
 - Annual Fine Sediment load
 - Annual Total Phosphorus load
 - Simulate the impact of the following scenarios on hillslope scale fine and coarse soil loss:
 - Existing conditions
 - High Severity Wildfire
 - Low Severity Wildfire
 - Prescribed Burn
 - Thinning with minimal disturbance (96% cover)
 - Thinning with low disturbance (90%)
 - Thinning with moderate disturbance (85%)
 - Thinning with high disturbance (75%)
 - Identify the most sensitive factors driving soil loss response to treatment. These factors will include slope steepness, slope length, aspect, soil depth, soil texture, soil water holding capacity, ground cover, type and conductivity of subsurface geology, precipitation/temperature, and canopy cover.
 - Provide guidance to managers on determining the risks of specific types of thinning on in the Lake Tahoe Basin. This will include recommendations on minimum post-harvest ground cover following harvest for sensitive landscape positions as defined by the analysis in 1). This will be provided as a percent exceedance probably for a specific post-harvest soil loss or increase in soil loss compared to non-harvest conditions.

How TRPA envisions the code language?

- It will not be a blanket code change that allows ground-based mechanical equipment on every slope with no conditions, but rather allow it under the appropriate conditions as determined by the WEPP modeling
- TRPA will use the analysis to develop code language that considers slope, ground cover, soil type, treatment options, etc.

STAKEHOLDER INFORMATION SHARING

Potential for New Roads in Lake Tahoe West Restoration Project

[8.03.20]

About this Document: This document will serve as the starting point for a series of conversations between stakeholders and the Lake Tahoe West facilitation team. The Lake Tahoe West project team understands that stakeholders have questions and concerns about the potential for the LTW Restoration Project to build new roads in National Forest System lands. In July of 2020 the LTW project team hoped to provide stakeholders more details about the nature and location of any potential roads in the LTW project; however, the Covid-19 epidemic has prevented the collection of field data and slowed progress on the LTW project. The project team expects to be able to commence collection of field data and further detail the proposed action over the next few months. In the meantime, the LTW facilitation team would like to speak with LTW stakeholders about the proposed action to help the LTW project team better understand stakeholders' interests and concerns and to inform the next stages of development of the proposed action and alternatives. *We thank you for your continued engagement and look forward to speaking with you.*

The proposed Lake Tahoe West Restoration Project (LTW) aims to restore forests and watersheds and to reduce risks from high-severity wildfire, drought, and insect and disease outbreaks across Lake Tahoe's west shore.

Public Comments and Roads

In April-May 2020, the lead agencies collected public comments on the proposed project through a public scoping process. Comments received during the public scoping process highlighted both concerns and some lack of clarity regarding the potential for the LTW Restoration Project to build new roads in National Forest System lands designated as Backcountry Management Areas or Inventoried Roadless Areas.

The purpose of this information sharing document is to clarify:

- That LTW may consider new permanent roads in some Backcountry Management Areas.
- Why LTW may consider new roads in Backcountry Management Areas.
- That LTW will not consider any new permanent or temporary roads in Inventoried Roadless Areas.
- How the project team would determine the placement of any new roads.

LTW may consider new permanent roads in some Backcountry Management Areas

The [Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit Forest Plan](#) identifies approximately 50,000 acres of National Forest System lands within the Lake Tahoe Basin as Backcountry Management Areas (BMAs). The Forest Plan calls for minimal management activities within BMAs to support recreation, forest health, habitat improvement, healthy watersheds, and fuels reduction. The Forest Plan prohibits construction of permanent roads in Backcountry Management Areas; the proposed action includes a Forest Plan amendment to allow permanent roads if they are deemed necessary.

LTW proposes thinning 5,400 acres of forest within Backcountry Management Areas. The proposed action identified these areas as a priority for thinning based on tree density and fire risk. Of the 5,400 acres, about 3,200 acres are within Inventoried Roadless Areas, and LTW is not considering any new roads in Inventoried Roadless Areas. LTW is considering new permanent roads in the 2,200 acres of Backcountry Management Areas, which are not Inventoried Roadless Areas.

Why LTW may consider new permanent (as opposed to temporary) roads in some Backcountry Management Areas

LTW may consider new roads in Backcountry Management Areas to allow for multi-year restoration treatments and effective fuels thinning.

New permanent roads in Backcountry Management Areas would provide access for restoration treatments to take place over multiple years. Temporary roads are traditionally used for one year or less, occasionally longer, and then removed and restored.

New roads (whether permanent or temporary) would allow the Forest Service to thin forests using mechanical equipment rather than hand crews. Mechanical treatments are able to remove far more biomass from the forest, minimizing remaining fuels. Hand crews, by contrast, cannot remove biomass from the forest and instead leave behind slash piles, which crews must later burn. When burned, piles generate smoke emissions without the ecological benefit of broadcast (prescribed) burning.

LTW will not consider any new roads in Inventoried Roadless Areas

Inventoried Roadless Areas are National Forest System lands that are undeveloped, typically greater than 5,000 acres, meet minimum criteria for wilderness consideration, and were inventoried and mapped by the Forest Service in accordance with the 2001 Roadless Rule. The 2001 Roadless Rule governs management within these areas and does not allow construction of new permanent or temporary roads.

LTW proposes thinning 3,200 acres of forest within Inventoried Roadless Areas. The LTW Restoration Project is not considering any new temporary or permanent roads in Inventoried Roadless Areas.

Lake Tahoe West Project Planning Update

Overview

- Current Work and Status
- Stakeholder Engagement

Joint Stakeholder Committee Meeting
Sept 1, 2020

Current Work and Status

Comment analysis

Comments will be used to:

- Refine the proposed action (project description)
- Inform development of alternatives
- Considered in resource sections

Field work to inform project and planning

- Limited progress made to date due to COVID-19
- Field work will occur through September

Refine project description

Develop additional details related to project elements including:

- How proposed treatments will be designed and where proposed treatments will be implemented
- More detail related to temporary and permanent roads
- Resource protection measures and performance measures
- Updated maps

Forming alternative(s)

Expectations for Stakeholder Engagement

- **We will share information on the project description with stakeholders**
- **Information that we share with Stakeholders will be adequately developed to allow for productive conversation and exchange of ideas**
- **Information provided will include timelines and next steps**

Scheduling and Next Steps

- **Anticipate meeting in November or December**
- **Anticipate sharing information when it is ripe for discussion**
- **Commit to communicating email updates**