

MINUTE ITEM

This Calendar Item No. C20
was approved as Minute Item
No. 20 by the State Lands
Commission by a vote of 2
to 0 at its 2/25/82
meeting.

CALENDAR ITEM

C 2 0

2/25/82
RW 21884
Childress

CERTIFICATION OF NEGATIVE DECLARATION

State Lands Commission

At the May 1980 Commission meeting, the Commission endorsed a Timber Management Program for State school lands and authorized the Executive Officer to solicit bids for the sale of timber.

Staff is requesting approval of the Negative Declaration No. 300 for the harvest and sale of approximately 1,260,000 board feet of mature, overmature, and smaller, suppressed and diseased trees on a 48-acre parcel of State school land located approximately nine miles west of Lake Almanor and 14 airmiles southwest of Chester in Section 36, T27N, R5E, MDM, in Plumas County.

Subsequent to the Negative Declaration being certified a Timber Harvest Plan shall be forwarded to the Department of Forestry for approval. The sale will be advertised, sealed bids received and submitted to the Commission for award of a Timber Sale Contract in May 1982.

AB 884: N/A.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

1. A negative declaration was prepared by the Commission pursuant to CEQA and the State EIR Guidelines. The Commission's staff has found that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

EXHIBIT: A. Negative Declaration.
B. Site Map.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE COMMISSION:

1. DETERMINE THAT A NEGATIVE DECLARATION HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR THIS PROJECT BY THE COMMISSION AFTER CONSULTATION WITH RESPONSIBLE AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES.

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CALENDAR ITEM NO. C 20 (GONTD)

2. CERTIFY THAT NEGATIVE DECLARATION NO. 300 HAS BEEN COMPLETED IN ACCORDANCE WITH CEQA, THE STATE EIR GUIDELINES AND THE COMMISSION'S ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS, AND THAT THE COMMISSION HAS REVIEWED AND CONSIDERED THE INFORMATION CONTAINED THEREIN TOGETHER WITH COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE REVIEW PROCESS.
3. DETERMINE THAT THE PROJECT WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT.

STATE LANDS COMMISSION

1807 11th STREET
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814 Draft FinalNEGATIVE DECLARATION

EIR NO 300

File Ref.: RW 21884

SCH#:

Project Title: Yellow Creek Timber Sale on State-owned Lands.

Project Location: Lots 2, 3, and 4 of Section 36, T.27 N., R.5 E., M.D.M., in Plumas County, California.

Project Description: Harvest and sale of approximately 1,260,000 board feet of mature, overmature, and smaller, suppressed and diseased trees.

This NEGATIVE DECLARATION is prepared pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (Section 21000 et seq of the Public Resources Code), the State EIR Guidelines (Section 15000 et seq, Title 14, of the California Administrative Code), and the State Lands Commission regulations (Section 2901 et seq, Title 2, of the California Administrative Code).

Based upon the attached Initial Studies, it has been found that:

the project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

the attached mitigation measures will avoid potentially significant effects.

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CALENDAR PAGE

103

MINUTE PAGE

409

INITIAL STUDY
FOR
CALIFORNIA STATE LANDS COMMISSION

YELLOW CREEK TIMBER SALE ON STATE-OWNED LANDS IN THE
LOTS 2, 3 & 4 SECTION 36
T27N, R5E, MDB&M
PLUMAS COUNTY

PREPARED UNDER WORK ORDER RW 21884

BY THE
SCHOOL LANDS MANAGEMENT UNIT
LAND MANAGEMENT SECTION
OF THE
DIVISION OF LAND MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION
STATE LANDS COMMISSION

CALENDAR PAGE	104
MINUTE PAGE	470

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Yellow Creek Timber Sale is a proposal by the State Lands Commission to harvest approximately 1,260,000 board feet of mature and overmature merchantable ponderosa pine, Jeffrey pine, sugar pine, incense-cedar, and white fir. As a sanitation measure smaller, suppressed and diseased conifers were also marked for harvesting. One short temporary access road to a landing north of Forest Service Road 27N65 will be constructed. This road will be less than 100 yards in length. Additionally, right-of-way agreement will be sought across land being managed by Beatty and Associates for access to the State's land south of Road 27N65 where there is an existing landing adjacent to the east boundary of the State's parcel north of Yellow Creek. A right-of-way agreement must also be secured from the U.S. Forest Service to haul timber on Forest Service Road 27N65.

This proposed 48-acre timber sale has been designed and laid out on the ground to conform to the Forest Practice Act and the current rules and regulations of the Northern Forest District. Timber harvesting will be conducted under an approved Timber Harvest Plan.

The timber sale is located approximately nine miles west of Lake Almanor and 14 air miles southwest of Chester, California in T27N, R5E, lots 2, 3 and 4 Section 36, MDM.

There is one blue-line stream which will be protected by a variable-width Stream Protection Zone (SPZ) in excess of 50' but less than 150 feet from Yellow Creek. The SPZ was flagged with blue ribbon along the old trail which parallels Yellow Creek. Yellow Creek supports trout and the willows shading Yellow Creek will be protected by this SPZ.

There are no road construction problems anticipated along the short access road. There were no faults or unstable areas observed on the State's parcel. The slopes on the parcel are less than 40 percent.

This timber sale will be a typical summer operation and will conform to 14 CAC 935.5 (Winter Period Erosion Control). Crawler tractors will be utilized for timber harvesting. Cable yarding would be too destructive of the residual younger timber for post-logging stocking purposes, and economically unfeasible on the gentle slopes.

The timber was marked under the Selection Method to remove the large mature and overmature trees (trees over 140 years old). In some instances younger trees were designated

CALENDAR PAGE

105

MINUTE PAGE

411

for removal when severely suppressed, mechanically damaged, or infested with insects, disease or dwarf mistletoe. The silvicultural system is in compliance with 14 CAC 933.2 (Selection Method).

The majority of the parcel north of Yellow Creek falls within Dunning Site Classes II and III, or good timber growing sites.

The timber stand is two storied with mature and over-mature ponderosa pine, Jeffrey pine, sugar pine, incense-cedar and white fir in the overstory with white fir and sugar pine reproduction (more tolerant to shade) in the understory. The understory ranges from seedlings to immature sawtimber.

The scattered holes created by harvest operations will be cleared of logging slash and planted with conifers during the spring following harvest operations. It is anticipated that the majority of the area will meet stocking pursuant to 14 CAC 932.7 (Resource Conservation Standards for Minimum Stocking).

II. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Yellow Creek Timber Sale is located in western Plumas County near the corner common to Plumas, Butte and Tehama Counties. The parcel is bordered on the south, west and north by the Lassen National Forest. The parcel to the east is held by Crocker National Bank and is being managed by Beatty and Associates for timber production. The Lassen National Forest's "Happy Days Timber Sale" is adjacent to the State's parcel and will be logged in 1984. The Forest Service is managing its land for multiple uses.

The average annual precipitation is about 40 inches, the majority in the form of snow packs. The elevation of the sale area ranges from 5,500 to 6,200 feet.

The U.S. Forest Service has conducted a third-order soil survey on the site. The surface soils are in the "24BC Shield" family, story phases complex with 15 to 50 percent slopes (all slopes in the area are less than 40 percent). There is also "Rubbleland" which is a layer of basaltic lava about 12 to 18 inches deep where exposed in the cut bank of Road 27N65. The "Rubbleland" series occupies about two acres, is presently understocked, and will be extremely difficult to regenerate. These soils are very permeable and little runoff occurs because of the soil permeability, and because the majority of the precipitation is in the form of snow which slowly melts releasing water over a prolonged period of time.

CALENDAR PAGE

106

MINUTE PAGE

412

The State's parcel is 74.7 acres in size, but only 48 acres north of Yellow Creek will be harvested in this timber sale; the area to the south of Yellow Creek will not be harvested during this project. The existing 20-mile haul route to Chester, California, from the sale area will be over the Butte Meadows Road (Forest Service Road 27N65) and Highway 89. About one third of the haul route is paved and the remainder is graveled road which is in good condition. The timber operator will be responsible for obtaining use permits for all haul roads.

The California Archaeological Site Survey, Chico Regional Office, was consulted regarding the location of historically significant sites within the project area. After a literature search and offsite evaluation the Regional Office responded, not recommending a survey. The Lassen National Forest was contacted; its archaeologists had already conducted an archaeological survey through the State's parcel and had found no evidence of cultural resources. Should any significant evidence of such be found during harvest operations, logging will be stopped in that area and an archaeologist consulted.

Yellow Creek is the only "blue-line" stream within the project area. A variable-width Stream Protection Zone had been flagged along the old Forest Service trail which parallels Yellow Creek. This SPZ varies from over 50 feet to 150 feet wide as the trail is straight and the stream meanders within its flood plain. The trail is located north of the stream above the high water flood plain. The variable-width SPZ will give adequate protection to the stream and conforms to 14 CAC 936.1 (Stream and Lake Protection Zone - Timber Operations). There will be no stream crossings on this timber sale.

Squirrels and chipmunks were observed on the parcel, along with buzzards flying overhead. There were no other animals observed except trout in Yellow Creek. Dan Airola, Wildlife Biologist for the Almanor Ranger District was contacted; he said that the State's management of this parcel for timber was compatible with the Forest Service's multiple use management on their adjoining property. He found no wildlife problems associated with harvesting timber under the selective method.

The timber stand on the portion of the State's parcel to be harvested is two-storied. The upper story consists of mature and overmature ponderosa pine, Jeffrey pine, sugar pine, incense-cedar and white fir. The understory is a result of old fires preparing a seed bed semi-shaded by the old overstory; this has resulted in the establishment of shade-tolerant white fir and some sugar pine. There are also patches of ceanothus and manzanita being taken over by the white fir.

CALENDAR PAGE	107
MINUTE PAGE	413

Stage falling will be necessary to reduce breakage of timber and reduce damage to the residual trees. Crawler tractors will be used for yarding the logs to the landings.

III. REGIONAL SETTING

The State's 74.7 acre parcel is bounded on the north, west, and south by the Lassen National Forest's "Happy Days" Timber Sale scheduled for harvest in 1984. The east side of the parcel is privately owned and is being managed for timber production by Wm. Beatty and Associates. The historical setting for this area has been continuous logging. The U.S. Forest Service land is currently being administered under approved multiple use management plans which includes the "Happy Days" timber sale. The harvesting of timber from the State's parcel is compatible with both the U.S. Forest Service's and Wm. Beatty and Associates' Management Plans.

The State and federal ownerships are not zoned by Plumas County Tax Assessors Office. The private parcel east of the State's ownership inland is owned by a portion of the Walker family, held in trust by Crocker National Bank, and is being managed by Wm. Beatty and Associates. This parcel is in a Timber Preserve Zone in the Plumas County Tax Assessors Rolls.

There is some minor recreation in the area related to hunting and fishing, but there will be little if any impact on recreation by the project because of its isolated location.

IV. SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

1. Road Building. There will be soil disturbance in building the temporary access road to the landing. This road will be about 200 feet in length. Upon completion of the timber sale the road will be obliterated and the cut bank restored to its original shape. The road bed will be back-bladed and planted with trees when the timber sale area is being reforested after logging. There are no drainages associated with this road location.

Mitigation. The temporary access road will be flagged on the ground prior to construction. All waste material will be stored near the road to be used in obliterating it after completion of logging. The road location will be planted with conifers during the spring following logging operations.

2. Logging. Yarding operations will be done by crawler tractor resulting in soil disturbance and removal of

vegetation where skidding occurs. Felling operations will remove the old growth protective canopy. The result of harvest operations will be a series of openings in the canopy to allow the snow to accumulate directly on the ground instead of being intercepted by the tree crowns and then sliding off the crowns to the ground.

After logging there will be a temporary buildup of ground water in the areas where harvest activities removed existing vegetation and have exposed the soil. Since the soils are highly permeable, the moisture from precipitation will penetrate rapidly resulting in minimal surface runoff. Additionally, since transpiring vegetation has been removed in the area of operations, the summer ground water yield, and thus the summer stream flow in Yellow Creek, will increase. After regeneration has been established, transpiration will gradually increase, and the stream flow will stabilize.

Additional sedimentation in Yellow Creek will be minimal because of the physical location of Yellow Creek on the State's property. The majority of harvest activities are above Forest Service Road 27N65, and a wide protective buffer has been established between the old trail and Yellow Creek. Only one tree within the SPZ is scheduled for removal; it will be felled perpendicular to and away from the stream.

The slopes in the sale area are less than 40 percent, the average precipitation is 40" (mostly in the form of snow), and the soils are sandy loams. The calculated Soil Erosion Hazard Rating is moderate.

There will be temporary animal habitat disruption created by removal of vegetation on about half of the logged area which will force any wildlife to temporarily relocate. This disruption will be temporary because the area will be artificially regenerated with conifers and natural regeneration will include both conifers and brush, thus reestablishing the animal habitat.

Large mature and overmature trees are selected for removal and younger trees (less than 140 years old), even though merchantable, are left as a residual stand. All snags will be left for wildlife habitat pursuant to 14 CAC 937.1 (Snag Disposal and Retention).

The removal of the stagnated old growth timber from this stand will be offset by leaving the healthy, younger, more vigorously growing understory more room for additional growth.

Within five years both natural and artificial coniferous regeneration will become established to replace the harvested old growth trees. Thus the stand will be perpetuated as a more healthy all-aged stand, producing more volume per acre per year (as a managed stand) than it did prior to logging as a natural stand.

After logging operations have been completed, logging slash will be disposed of during the site preparation phase, in order to establish suitable ground for planting conifers in the areas disturbed by logging activities. This conforms with 14 CAC 932.7 (Resource Standards for Minimum Stocking).

Mitigation. After logging operations, skid trails will be waterbarred pursuant to 14 CAC 935.4 (Water breaks). Upon completion of logging, site preparation and burning operations, the understocked openings created by harvest activities will be artificially regenerated with conifer seedlings genetically compatible with the site. It is anticipated that natural regeneration will also become established.

In the event any nests are observed in trees designated for harvest, a wildlife biologist will be consulted to determine whether or not the nest and associated trees should be felled. All snags on the parcel will be left for wildlife habitat except those designated for removal pursuant to 14 CAC 937.1 (Snag Disposal and Retention). The Almanor Ranger District's Wildlife Biologist stated that the type of selection marking that has been used for this timber sale is compatible with the U.S. Forest Service multiple-use management plans. Neither U.S. Forest Service nor Department of Fish and Game personnel knew of any flora or fauna on the rare or endangered list likely to inhabit the State's parcel. There is a Spotted Owl's nest approximately one mile west of the State's parcel, but the U.S. Forest Service wildlife Biologist said there would be no problem of disturbance by reason of this timber sale.

As was previously mentioned an archaeological survey was not recommended by the California Archaeological Survey, Regional Office at Chico. Also, the U.S. Forest Service has conducted one on the State's parcel for an adjacent U.S.F.S. timber sale and found nothing. If archaeological sites are found, operations will be stopped and an archaeologist consulted.

The use of natural resources by the project (fuel, displacement, etc.) are minimal, but irretrievable.

The project will not result in any measurable increase in demand for public services.

CALENDAR PAGE	110
MINUTE PAGE	416

V. REFERENCES AND PERSONS CONTACTED

This report was prepared by Registered Professional Foresters on the staff of the State Lands Commission. Below are additional persons contacted.

Sassen National Forest - Susanville, CA

Jim Shively	Land Surveyor
John Rea	Land Surveyor
Wes Burch	Survey Technician

Almanor Ranger District - Chester, CA

Dusty Rhodes	Resource Officer
Charlie Little	Silviculturist
Lawrence Crabtree	Project Forester
Mary Lou Mini	Appraisal Specialist
George Kliever	Soil Scientist
Greg Greeway	Archaeologist
Dan Airola	Wildlife Biologist

To Redding 25 Miles ↑

EXHIBIT "B"
RW 21884

