

California Forest Conservation Plan Virtual Briefing

October 29, 2024

Presentation Notes

Presenter: Rachel Henry, Regional Conservation Coordinator, Pacific Southwest Regional Office

Slide 1: Title Slide - California Forest Conservation Plan

(Alt Text: Decorative Image)

Good morning and welcome. Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to attend this briefing and learn more about the California Forest Conservation Plan. I want to give everyone a fair warning that this is a lot of information. We are recording this, so you will be able to go back and reference the information I will go over.

Slide 2: Impact of High Severity Wildfire

(Alt Text: Side-by-side images of man-made wetland areas in Tahoe National Forest. The image on the left shows the landscape in winter with leaves on the ground, a full pond, and biologists looking at the ponds. The image on the right shows the same area after the Mosquito Fire with all the trees burned and left looking like black toothpicks, and no vegetation on the forest floor. The area looks like a moonscape.)

I think we are all acutely aware of the wildfire crisis. We continue to see a significant and alarming increase in the frequency, size, and intensity of wildfire and the devastating effects it has on our communities, our infrastructure, and on our ecosystems. In 2020, the August Complex Fire occurred in California, which was the largest fire on record and burned over 1 million acres. It had huge impacts. The story that is often told as part of news highlights is the effects that these kinds of fires have on lives and infrastructure, but perhaps the less told story is the one about the effects that these wildfires have on our ecosystems and the wildlife and plant species that depend upon them.

Fire ecology plays a very important role in our ecosystems. Species have evolved with wildfire as a regular and necessary part of the landscape. It's not fire itself that is the problem, but the rate at which they are occurring and the severity at which they burn. These high severity fires wreak havoc on ecosystems resulting in significant and long-lasting impacts. These fires burn hotter and spread more quickly than low to moderate burning fires, and often consume entire plant communities leaving little to no vegetation. This ultimately leads to a loss of biodiversity and disrupts ecosystem processes. And when this occurs in forested areas, it can take decades or even centuries for these ecosystems to recover because they are slow growing.

The intense heat from these fires can also damage soil making it prone to erosion. Erosion can lead to significant impacts to our water resources. We see an increase in the proliferation of invasive species after high-severity wildfires which can often outcompete native species in recovering landscapes. The list goes on, and you can start to get an idea of the snowball of effects these fires can have on the landscape.

Couple that with the compounding effects of climate change, drought, habitat loss, etc., and the result is ecosystems that are being pushed to their limits and unable to recover. They are losing their resiliency to be able to withstand impacts.

The images here show an ecosystem before the Mosquito Fire in the Tahoe National Forest and the aftermath of that same area. This area – was once vibrant and full of life—which is a stark contrast to the decimated landscape shown on the right. This area was a site where biologists created wetlands with the hope of creating additional habitat for the California red-legged frog. A lot of time, money and effort went into this project. Biologists found that this area burned at very high intensity and nearly every tree and shrub around the ponds was killed. The water in the ponds was of low quality due to the unstable soils that were left behind.

I do want to add that frogs were found in this area giving us hope for the recovery of this landscape, but the effects of the fire were devastating.

Slide 3: No Title

(Alt Text: Photo of aftermath from the Creek Fire with burnt trees looking like black toothpicks and no vegetation on the forest floor. The view looks out across the mountain range with barren slopes.)

Here is another image of the Creek Fire in the Sierra Nevada showing just how barren these landscapes are after fires.

We see time and time again the devastating impacts high severity wildfires can have on human health and safety, as well as critical infrastructure. It's imperative that we work to expedite implementation of fuel reduction and forest resilience projects that help to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

These projects often require some level of coordination with natural resource agencies, adding to the procedural requirements to getting these critical projects implemented and on the ground. If you apply that across the entire state, it becomes quickly apparent what a workload issue this can create. This could create a delay for implementation.

Slide 4: California Forest Conservation Plan

(Alt Text: Decorative image of a forest, accompanied by bullets that are explained in the text below)

In response to the wildfire crisis, the Fish and Wildlife Service is developing the California Forest Conservation Plan. This is a statewide conservation plan – covering the state of California. We are building an innovative approach to streamlining compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act. We are building out the statewide approach by developing a series of subplans over smaller geographic areas. I'll provide more information on those subplans later in this presentation.

The plan is not adding new procedures for land managers to comply with but providing a more efficient process to fulfill current processes and requirements.

It is another tool in the toolbox for complying with the Endangered Species Act that project proponents can use if they wish. It is totally voluntary. It does not replace our traditional way of doing business.

The plan is only available to project proponents that are undertaking activities aimed at reducing fuel loads and increasing ecosystem resilience.

The plan covers all lands – federal and non-federal – and provides a one stop shop for all landowners to seek compliance with the Endangered Species Act should they need it.

Our overall goal for the plan is to help increase the pace and scale of implementation of fuels reduction work that will help to protect our communities and ecosystems.

We developed this plan in response to the growing need to address the wildfire crisis and because of the expected workload that would accompany that effort. We are already seeing an increase in the number of forest resiliency projects. We anticipate implementation of a large number of projects, so we want to not only expedite those projects, but also reduce the workload that will come along with them.

Another goal of ours is to integrate conservation into these projects. We want to ensure these projects are appropriately implemented to account for species and sensitive ecosystems. When and where special consideration is needed for species, we provide the measures, the guidance—the “how to”—to adequately protect and manage for those resources, while also completing the treatments at hand.

We also aim to provide a clear and consistent approach to implementation of fuel reduction and forest resilience projects across all land ownership, federal and non-federal.

Development of this concept has been, and continues to be, developed with partner input. When our region first identified a need to provide an efficient mechanism for compliance for these projects, we spent time coordinating with our partners and potential future users of the plan. We didn’t want to spend time developing a plan that either wasn’t going to be accepted or that wasn’t going to be useful. Part of that initial outreach and coordination was with our Tribal partners. Earlier this year, we hosted a webinar for our Tribal partners to ensure they were aware of this effort and to create an open door for participation and feedback on the plan. Understanding that Tribes are not bound by the same requirements as the federal and non-federal agencies that might be using this conservation plan, their engagement looks different. We wanted to ensure that this plan complements efforts occurring on their lands and jibes with those efforts and there aren’t any red flags.

As we work to develop this plan, there will be many additional opportunities to collaborate. As we move into new areas and begin development of new subplans, more specific and local outreach will occur to the landowners, agencies, and Tribes in those areas.

Slide 5: What Activities are Covered?

(Alt Text: Decorative image of a wildland firefighter managing a prescribed burn. Bullets on the slide are described in the text below).

The plan includes an inclusive and comprehensive suite of covered activities, all of which must be with the intent of reducing fuel loads and increasing ecosystem resiliency.

In the plan, we break covered activities out into five general categories:

- hazardous fuel reduction which includes mechanical and manual treatments, and grazing;
- prescribed fire;
- construction and maintenance of fuel breaks;
- post-disturbance tree and debris removal;
- and restoration.

We received a lot of questions as to who can use this plan – and I'll talk more about that later in the presentation – but also what activities are covered. If the project activities fall within those general categories, and the purpose of the activity is to reduce fuel loads, then project is eligible for coverage.

These activities have been shown to be effective tools to protect the human environment and are necessary actions to conserve and protect species.

Slide 6: How do the Activities Support Conservation?

(Alt Text: Decorative image of a river with forested canyon walls. Bullets on the slide are described in the text below).

How exactly do these activities support conservation?

These activities are supported by a wide body of scientific research demonstrating their positive ecological effects. One of the biggest benefits from the activities – and this will likely come as no surprise – is how these actions mitigate the risk of high-severity wildfire. The reduction of that threat is hugely beneficial because it minimizes the instances where we end up with landscapes that look more like moonscapes like in the examples I shared at the beginning of my presentation. These activities reduce the risk of wildfire by minimizing the buildup of dense, fire-prone vegetation that lead to high-severity wildfires. These activities increase the resilience of the ecosystem making them better able to recover after disturbances thereby supporting species long-term.

The covered activities also help to maintain vegetation cover that stabilizes soil and prevents erosion. As we saw in the picture, high-severity fire can completely remove all vegetation leading to increased runoff, soil erosion and sedimentation. That sedimentation can enter waterways and degrade aquatic habitats.

Fuel reduction creates more open forest conditions that can benefit species by restoring natural habitat structures. Thinning dense forests mimics the effects of historical low-severity fires, which creates a landscape with a patchy framework that supports diverse vegetation types. It increases biodiversity and creates a more heterogeneous landscape.

Working to restore natural fire regimes is crucial for maintaining ecosystem health. I mentioned earlier that species evolved with fire and are adapted to survive and often actually rely on fire that once played a key role in nutrient cycling, vegetation diversity and habitat maintenance.

For many species that are currently listed on the Endangered Species Act or proposed for listing, catastrophic or high-severity wildfire is identified as a major threat that is resulting in the decline of these species. Mitigating the threat of these disturbances through implementation of fuels reduction and forest resilience projects is a vital species conservation tool.

One of the hot topic species right now is the California spotted owl. In 2023, the Service proposed to list the spotted owl. This is a species that inhabits mature forests which take a long time to grow and are highly threatened by wildfire. The species status assessment that was prepared identifies wildfire as a major threat to the species because it can destroy the species habitat, which can take decades to grow back. We are seeing a reduction in the availability of suitable nesting and foraging habitats, and the forests are not recovering quickly enough to offset the loss that occurs from past fires. This results in a loss of habitat which translates to declines in the species. Low to moderate severity fires can benefit the

owl by creating a mosaic of habitats that supports prey diversity and doesn't destroy mature forests that the species depends on.

Another example of species that is impacted by high-severity wildfire is the foothill yellow-legged frog. High-severity wildfire is identified as a major threat to survival of the species. Wildfires can drastically alter the quality of aquatic habitats by removing riparian vegetation, increasing water temperatures, and causing sedimentation. These effects can lead to declines in breeding success and affect the viability of the species.

We do recognize that there are short-term effects – most of which are temporary in nature – from the covered activities that can impact the species. This is why we are working on this conservation plan to provide a streamlined path to identify and minimize those potential effects. However, when compared to the long-term benefits of reducing wildfire risk, enhancing habitat resilience, and supporting species recovery, these short-term impacts are minimal and manageable. This plan is designed to balance necessary management actions with conservation measures, ensuring the temporary effects are offset by the long-term conservation gains.

Slide 7: What Species are Covered?

(Alt Text: Decorative image of a Yosemite Toad in a forest that is recovering from forest fire. Bullets on the slide are described in the text below).

Given the long-term nature of this plan, we included both currently listed species, as well as those that have the potential to become listed during the life of the plan. We developed a covered species list by applying a set of criteria. We first look at whether a particular species exists within the planning area and where these projects have been implemented in the past or will be implemented in the future.

We next look at the status of the species. Is it currently listed under the federal or California Endangered Species Act, or does it have the potential to be listed? We review species that are considered likely to be listed or those that are proposed for listing, are candidates under the federal or California Endangered Species Act, or a species that has been identified as rare and are declining.

We then look at whether the species is likely to be impacted by the covered activities. If there is no potential impact and the species can be avoided, there is no need for compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

And lastly, do we have enough data on the species to cover them in the conservation plan? We need to know enough about a species life history, habitat requirements, and occurrence data to adequately evaluate impacts on a species.

We then be able to develop conservation measures to meet our regulatory standards.

Overall, we tried to be inclusive as possible to provide the most use of the plan but limit to list to only the species that would require compliance with the Endangered Species Act. The approach I just described for identifying the species will be applied to the subplans. For each of the subplans, the species list will change, though we do expect some overlap in the plans.

Slide 8: How does this Benefit Land Managers?

(Alt Text: Decorative image of a river with forested banks. Bullets on the slide are described in the text below).

The plan benefits land managers by providing a preset, predeveloped framework that project proponents can voluntarily use to comply with the Endangered Species Act. We took the guessing game out of it and did a lot of the regulatory work for project proponents in the plan. As far as what measures and best management practices are needed to comply with our regulations, it's clearly laid out and explained in the plan. We took the guessing work out of the equation. Most of the effects analysis that is required was already completed by the Service in the plan and accompanying documents. Overall, this will reduce time for land managers to seek compliance. And time is money. Time spent on paperwork is less time spent doing the actual work, implementing the projects or conserving the ecosystems.

The measures that are included in the plan are written and crafted to ensure that we are meeting species needs and conserving species, but also supporting implementation of these important projects. We recognize the importance of these projects and want to support their implementation. There is a way to do that while supporting species needs. The intersection of those two things is what we aimed to hit in this plan.

The benefit that comes from this plan will likely look very different to various parties. Federal users that manage a lot of land, such as the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management, can use this plan to request consultations for their project and get coverage in an expedited manner. The same is true for non-federal proponents, though they will request coverage a slightly different way. Smaller private landowners may also need to get Endangered Species Act coverage for covered species if they are doing work themselves. They would be able to coverage in an expedited and simplified manner, or perhaps they are working with NRCS or a local RCD on a grant to conduct these activities. In that case, they might not be the ones requesting participation in the plan, but the RCD would potentially be able to implement the project more quickly because there is one less barrier – that being Endangered Species Act compliance – to implementing the fuels reduction project.

Slide 9: Streamlined Process

(Alt Text: Graphic that outlines the traditional process for getting a take permit under Sections 7 and 10 of the Endangered Species Act and the streamlined process that will occur under the California Forest Conservation Plan. The process is described in the talking points below).

Here is a simplified visual of the process for compliance with the Endangered Species Act. It is generally a 3-step process that is broken into project design, project review, and documentation.

The traditional process starts with development of project design that, for federal agencies, is done in preparation of a biological assessment. For non-federal landowners, it is done through the preparation of a habitat conservation plan. That document is then provided to the Service for coordination. We review those documents and undergo some type of negotiation or collaborative effort to make sure both parties have what they need and ensure we're meeting regulations. Then the document is sent back to the project proponent for them to formally submit to us. Then, the documentation is provided to the project proponent from the Fish and Wildlife Service. The final product from the Service comes in the form of a biological opinion or an incidental take statement under section 7 or section 10, respectively.

Under the streamlined process, most of step 1 is essentially done. Step 1 is the California Forest Conservation Plan. We do need some project specific information that is provided in a project documentation form. While it is not final yet, a few examples we have from our region range from 2 to 9 pages in length. We will make it a fillable pdf to ensure it's easy for folks to complete. We will also request an eligibility determination form. This will also be a fillable pdf that the project proponent uses to self-certify that the project they are requesting compliance for falls within the scope of the plan.

Those forms are submitted to the Fish and Wildlife Service office for review. If there are requested deviations from the plan or flexibilities that are needed by the project proponent, that review might take longer than if a project proponent is following the plan "as is." But that step will be much faster because we aren't starting from square one. The project proponent will know where the bar is at the get go and we can have discussions from there. Another thing I want to highlight in step 2 is that this process does not remove all coordination with our agency. We are still here to help and coordinate with folks on their project.

And the final product is exactly the same.

The takeaway from this slide is that the process is generally the same, the product is the same, but the time it takes to get from step 1 to step 3 is drastically reduced. The traditional process can take 1-3 years. In either case, under the California Forest Conservation Plan, it can be as little as 2-4 months.

Slide 10: CFCP Takeaways

(Alt Text: A table that has a synopsis of what the Plan is and isn't; the details are in the bullets below)

As we have been requesting feedback, we have received some common questions as to what exactly this plan is. And in that exercise, it's become clear that it is helpful to also explain what this plan is not or what it does not do.

All this plan does is provide a means to comply with the federal Endangered Species Act. That's really it. There are two ways for project proponents to seek compliance with the Endangered Species Act. For federal agencies, that falls under section 7 of the Act through a consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service. For non-federal agencies or landowners, that falls under section 10 of the Endangered Species Act. Those two processes are what we are providing a streamlined mechanism for under this plan.

This conservation plan also supports conservation and recovery of the covered species. We worked to carefully tailor measures to ensure species are getting the protections they need while allowing for forest fuel reduction treatments on the landscape. These treatments reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire which is currently threatening the continued existence of species.

This plan provides a framework for compliance. There is still project specific coordination that will be required which we discussed on the last slide. We don't have the specifics of every single project, so we aren't able to provide for an automatic process. This plan does shorten the time to complete Endangered Species Act compliance, but there is still coordination that will need to occur.

This plan is voluntary. If project proponents would like to continue to do business the traditional way and develop project specific documents, they can absolutely do that. This plan is simply a tool in the toolbox to provide efficiencies for existing processes. These are not new regulations – we're just providing a way

to get section 7 consultations or incidental take permits completed faster to support implementation of these projects.

What this plan is not...

It is not a way to circumvent other processes or cut corners. It is efficient, yes. But we are still fulfilling the same regulations and the same requirements for Endangered Species Act compliance.

This plan does not provide any other necessary approvals for projects. Projects still have to comply with all other state, local, and federal laws. This does not give blanket approval to any project.

This plan does not approve fuels reduction projects. That is not in the purview of the Fish and Wildlife Service. That is not our job, nor do we have authority to do that. We are responsible for conserving and managing fish, wildlife, and plants.

This plan does not provide a process for prioritizing areas to be treated or what treatment types should be used. Again, that is not our job, nor our expertise.

This plan is not a land management plan. The plan only provides a framework for compliance with the Endangered Species Act, if and when, that is needed.

As I mentioned, this plan is not required for use. It's a tool provided to project proponents who need or want it.

Somewhat related to this is how it intersects with existing consultations or processes that have been completed or currently underway. Those will not be affected. Those will not change. Project proponents can still comply with the Endangered Species Act in the traditional way.

And lastly, this plan is not creating new regulations or processes.

Slide 11: Statewide Approach

(Alt Text: A map of California and the Klamath Basin in Oregon. The map is broken out into four areas. One region, called the Northern Subplan, is shaded in blue and encompasses the Klamath Basin in Oregon plus 12 California counties, including Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Lake, Colusa, Glenn, Tehama, Shasta, Siskiyou, Modoc, and Lassen. An orange shaded area is called the Plumas-Tahoe Subplan and includes Plumas, Butte, Sierra, Yuba, and Nevada counties. A yellow shaded area is called the Sierra Subplan and includes Eldorado, Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Mono, Mariposa, Madera, Fresno, Inyo, Tulare, and Kern counties. The rest of California is shaded in gray.)

We are building out the statewide approach of this plan throughout California and the Klamath Basin by developing a series of subplans that will cover the state. While I would have loved to get this done in one fell swoop and create one plan, it would be far too complex to be successful and be crushed by its own weight. So, we are taking smaller geographic areas and creating plans to cover those.

We anticipate that only the geographic areas and covered species will change by subplan. We want to provide consistency under this plan so the covered activities and implementation of the plan will remain consistent. As will the conservation measures for specific species. For example, California red-legged frog

occurs in the Plumas-Tahoe Subplan and the Sierra Subplan, and the measures for that species will not change.

We are nearing completion of the Plumas-Tahoe subplan and expect to have that available for public comment and review early in the new year. That plan is drafted and going through internal review right now. Next, we will be focusing on concurrently developing the Northern California subplan and the Sierra subplan. We know what we're doing now and will kick off development of those two plans simultaneously. We are also starting discussions on the planning areas for the remainder of the state.

We are also initiating development of a programmatic EIS that will cover the entire state – along with the Klamath Basin – and will provide NEPA compliance for all subplans. The Service is only required to complete NEPA on our issuance of incidental take permits as that is a major federal action subject to NEPA. Given the programmatic nature of this plan, we don't know where projects will occur and what issuance of our permit will facilitate. In other words, we don't know exactly what the scope of our NEPA analysis would be on any particular project. So, we are taking a conservative approach and assuming all non-federal projects would require a permit to proceed and analyzing the impacts of all covered activities on the human environment.

The first plan that will be available for public review and comment is the Plumas-Tahoe subplan that is shown in orange.

Slide 12: Plumas-Tahoe Subplan

(Alt Text: A grid of four species photos. Species shown are a brown California spotted owl in a tree. An olive-green foothill yellow-legged frog basking in shallow water, multiple monarch butterflies in a tree, and Layne's butterweed, a yellow flower that looks like a starburst. All bullets on the slide are described in the speaker's notes below.)

That plan covers approximately 3.2 million acres across Plumas, Butte, Sierra, Yuba, and Nevada counties and covers the Plumas and Tahoe national forests, as well as the other interspersed lands within the planning area. I should also note that two of the priority landscape areas designated by the Forest Service fall within the planning area. Those two landscapes are the North Yuba and Plumas Community Protection Areas. This plan covers 11 species, including the California spotted owl, fisher, gray wolf, Lahontan cutthroat trout, foothill yellow-legged frog, California red-legged frog, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, northwestern pond turtle, monarch butterfly, whitebark pine, and Layne's butterweed.

Slide 13: Timeline

(Alt Text: Horizontal timeline that has 5 highlighted times: Winter 2025, Spring 2025, Summer 2025, 2026 and Spring 2027. The descriptions of what happens at each of those points highlighted on the timeline is described in the speaker's notes).

Our timeline for completion of the subplans and our NEPA document is generally shown here. In early 2025, the Plumas-Tahoe subplan will be ready for public comment and review. In the spring of 2025, we plan to publish our notice of intent to prepare an EIS in the Federal Register and formally request information for the scoping of that document. We aim to complete development of the Northern California and Sierra subplans by next summer. We aim to finish off the remainder of the state after that,

which I expect will take about a year. During that time, we will be working to develop our NEPA document and aim to finish that by spring of 2027.

This is a very broad, big picture timeline. We recognize that the wildfire crisis calls for action now, and we need to increase the pace and scale of fuels reduction work. We will work to implement actions and parts of the action sooner but are limited by our regulations. Where we have flexibility or can do things quicker, and “turn on” compliance sooner, without waiting for completion of the NEPA document, we are looking into those solutions. One example is turning on the federal compliance immediately because that process does not trigger the need for NEPA. So, we don’t have to wait for that to be completed. We are also looking at other ways to allow for issuance of permits –that would be compliance for non-federal projects – prior to the EIS being done by completing other NEPA compliance earlier. More to come on that, but my point is we recognize the need to rapidly implement projects and will find solutions to meet the needs though we are limited by regulations in certain instances.

One question that I think folks might be wondering is “When or where in this timeline can I actually start using the plan?”

I’ll give you the most unsatisfying answer, which is, it depends. As I mentioned, federal project proponents will be able to use the plan for coverage once we complete the accompanying section 7 consultation for each of the subplans. I expect those will be completed within 6 months of a final subplan. For non-federal proponents, it’s not as simple because we must complete NEPA. If we are waiting for the final EIS, those projects would not be eligible for coverage until that NEPA process is complete. If we do smaller NEPA on particular projects or a particular suite of activities, those projects would be eligible sooner. Regardless, the first step is drafting and completing the CFCP subplan. If you’re interested in using a particular subplan, once we have a better idea of when that will be completed, feel free to reach out and we can discuss your project and how we can be support you.

Slide 14: Participation in the Plan

(Alt Text: Decorative images of forms to fill out. Bullets are described in the speaker notes below.)

This plan is available for use by any landowner or land manager who is implementing fuel reduction or forest resilience project and who needs to comply with the Endangered Species Act or may want to comply with the Endangered Species Act. This plan is also available to landowners who may want to get coverage now because there is a species that is likely to be listed that could be impacted by a project, so it’s not a need yet but will be soon. It can also be used by land managers that want to protect ecosystems and conserve species. This document can provide guidance on how best to integrate conservation into these activities.

To participate, all project proponents must meet the eligibility criteria. The eligibility criteria do differ a bit for federal and non-federal project proponents based on the different regulations that each party has to adhere to. One criterion that is common to both parties is that to be eligible for coverage, the intent of the project has to be fuel reduction or forest resilience. We’ve covered that a few times, but that is an example of one of the eligibility criteria required under the plan. I know I’ve said that quite a few times in the presentation, but it’s an important point I want to get across related to who can use this plan or what types of projects are eligible for coverage.

The process to participate in the plan also differs for federal and non-federal project proponents also based on regulations. Both proponents must submit the eligibility determination form, which is a self-certification checklist indicating that the project fits within the scope of the plan. They must also submit a project documentation form which provides us with the specifics of the project. We need to review each project, know the species in which coverage is being requested for, track the impacts, etc. We need to know the who, what, where, etc. to track projects and impacts and to approve coverage under the plan. That information is provided in the documentation form. That form will be a fillable pdf that will be very approachable to all land managers. Non-federal applicants must also submit an application for an incidental take permit along with the permit fee of \$100.

The last requirement for participation is adhering to the reporting and monitoring requirements which is standard practice.

Slide 15: Closing

(Alt Text: Decorative image of trees, along with contact information for the presenter, Rachel Henry (Rachel_henry@fws.gov). And the webpage address: <https://www.fws.gov/office/sacramento-fish-and-wildlife/california-forest-conservation-plan>)

I hope this answered a lot of questions and provided some insights into what this plan is and why the Service developed this plan. As I mentioned, the first subplan will be available for public comment and review in early 2025. Even if you do not live, work, or manage lands within the planning area of the first subplan, I encourage you to read and comment on the first plan. The remaining subplans will have the same look and feel as that plan, so it's not only a good way to know what to expect in other subplans, but if there are changes to consider, it would be great for us to know them now.

I tried to incorporate many of the FAQs we received from you all, but if you feel something was not adequately answered or perhaps you have a whole new set of questions, please feel free to send those and we will work to answer them in the FAQ we are putting together. Or please feel free to reach out to me with any other questions. My contact information is on the slide.

If you have comments on the subplan when that is released, please formally submit those through the Federal Register when we kick off that public comment process. Please do not email those to me. We want to make sure those formally get included in the record and responded to accordingly. If you would like to participate in the NEPA scoping process, we anticipate kicking that off in the spring. Again, we will provide updates on that as well.

The website for the plan is here as well. We will keep up to date so please use that as a resource.

Again, I know that was a lot of information and hopefully you don't feel too overwhelmed, especially given it's not even 10:00 in the morning. The recording of this presentation will be made available in a few days. Please feel free to share and reference the link to that video we will send out. And thank you all for coming.