

## **Forest Practice Committee (FPC)**

*The mission of the FPC is to evaluate and promote an effective regulatory system to assure the continuous growth and harvesting of commercial forests and to protect soil, air, fish and wildland, and water resources.*

### **COMPLETED OR SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETED IN 2021:**

#### **1. Santa Cruz Weekend Emergency**

**Objective:** *To extend the allowed days of operation of chainsaws and other power-driven equipment within, and the hauling of forest products from, Timberland affected by the CZU Lightning Complex Fire of 2020 in Santa Cruz and San Mateo Counties in response to requests from those counties, as well as timber operators in those counties.*

**Status:** *The Board responded to requests from these stakeholders to provide temporary regulatory relief to facilitate fire cleanup efforts through the adoption of emergency regulations in May of 2021 to extend allowable periods of timber operations in these counties to include Saturdays and Sundays. These regulations were submitted to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) on May 21, 2021 and became effective on May 26, 2021. The regulations will expire on March 22, 2022.*

#### **2. Southern Subdistrict Broadcast Burning Amendments**

**Objective:** *Review existing regulations related to Broadcast Burning, specifically its prohibition in the Southern Subdistrict of the Coast Forest District and consider lifting the prohibition in order to provide more flexibility for fuels treatment and hazard reduction in this geographic region.*

**Status:** *The Board adopted permanent regulations titled "Southern Subdistrict and Broadcast Burning Amendments" on September 22, 2021 which were intended to provide an opportunity to utilize Broadcast Burning, for any purpose, within the Southern Subdistrict, as well as to develop a regulatory scheme related to the reduction of hazardous forest fuels generated by timber operations, both statewide and specific to the Southern Subdistrict of Coast Forest District, which is clear and effective. The regulations were submitted to OAL on October 8, 2021 and are anticipated to become effective on January 1, 2022.*

#### **3. Emergency Notice RPF Amendments:**

**Objective:** *The December 23, 2019 "Report On Emergency Notice Of Timber Operations Monitoring Results And Exemption Notice Use" identified sites of surface erosion and sediment delivery which resulted from Emergency Notice Timber Operations. The report indicated that Forest Practice Rule non-*

compliance and the lack of RPF involvement in those operations may have been contributing factors to those sites. The Committee reviewed these findings and associated regulations for opportunities to improve operational outcomes and overall compliance in Emergency Notice Timber Operations.

**Status:** The Board adopted emergency regulations titled “Emergency RPF responsibilities” to modify existing Emergency Notice processes to address the current needs for improved compliance with the Rules in all Emergency Notice timber harvests. The rulemaking requires the Timber Owner or operator retain an RPF to provide professional advice and that the RPF be present on site at a sufficient frequency to know the progress of operations and advise the Timber Owner or LTO. The increased presence of the RPF and subsequent increase in compliance and implementation of the Rules was intended to avoid impacts to water quality resulting from non-compliance. The rulemaking additionally addressed potential inadequacies of fuel treatment timelines and wildfire risks in the Emergency Notice for Fuel Hazard Reduction. The emergency regulations were adopted by the Board in July, 2021, submitted to OAL on July 29, 2021, and were approved on August 5, 2021. The Board continues to work on permanent rulemaking on this issue

#### **4. Consistency Between Sections 1080 and 913.8**

**Objectives:** Between these two provisions (14 CCR §§ 895.1 and 913.8), there exists an issue of clarity and consistency regarding what stocking requirements apply on Substantially Damaged Timberlands within the Southern Subdistrict of the Coast Forest District. Special Harvesting Methods in the Southern Subdistrict includes an exclusive list of stocking requirements, however the definition for and provisions of Substantially Damaged Timberland allow for stocking standards which are not included within the exclusive list in 14 CCR § 913.8

**Status:** The Committee recommended rule text for Board consideration in November 2021 and the Board anticipates effective regulations by January 2023.

#### **Priority 1 for 2022:**

##### **1. Review of Forest Practice Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) Rules:**

**Objective:** The FPC recommended publication of a 45 Day Notice of Rulemaking for the “Activity Center Definition” rule proposal in 2013. The Board subsequently authorized the publication of the 45 Day Notice. However, publication was postponed as the Fish and Game Commission considered a petition requesting in state listing of NSO. The Commission accepted the petition and has determined that state listing for the NSO is warranted. Currently, CAL FIRE, CDFW, and USFWS are developing tools to assist timberland owners with conserving NSO and their habitat. The Forest Management Task

Force's "California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan" requires the Board to assist in this effort through the development of a strategy to incorporate the management of barred owl intrusion into spotted owl habitat.

**Status:** The FPC discussed the issue of NSO extensively during the second half of 2018. The Committee received presentations from a variety of individuals such as Ken Hoffman (USFWS) who spoke about NSO biology, and Mandy Culpepper (CDFW) who spoke about scoping sessions that CDFW has performed with affected landowners.

Additionally, the Board held its September 2018 meeting in Yreka, CA with the specific intent of seeing NSO issues first hand via a field tour of NSO habitat areas on industrial and non-industrial lands. Many issues were raised by industrial landowners, non-industrial landowners, Board members, and members of the public. Staff Biologists from CDFW and the USFWS helped answer questions and facilitate the discussion during the tour of a variety of Siskiyou County timberlands. These discussions have culminated in an attempt to develop a well-defined problem statement related to NSO and possible courses of action to address this problem statement.

In 2019 the USFWS has engaged in revising Attachments to the No-Take Guidelines for NSO and is also working on developing a Safe Harbor Agreement for NSO. CAL FIRE and CDFW are also working on the development of a Spotted Owl Resource Plan for a geographically distinct portion of northern California. Upon the completion of these projects, the Board will continue discussions of NSO and contemplate updating regulations to reference new management opportunities.

In March of 2020, the Board received a presentation on the roll-out of the Eastside Spotted Owl Resource Plan and the January 2021 "California's Wildfire And Forest Resilience Action Plan" requested that the Board, CAL FIRE, and CDFW develop a strategy to incorporate the management of barred owl intrusion into spotted owl habitat.

**Status:** The committee will continue to monitor and review the status of the above efforts, as well as other potential large-scale programs such as Safe Harbor Agreements which would allow landowners to operate under agency-approved agreements. The committee may consider evaluation of existing NSO rules, including the 2012 proposed definition of Activity Center. The Board and committee will continue collaboration with the Department and CDFW to address the issue of Barred Owl management within their authority.

## **2. Addition of Botanical Resource Considerations to the Forest Practice Rules**

**Objective:** CDFW requests that the Board prioritize strengthening the Forest Practice Rules to include specific rules for botanical resources. CDFW initially made this request to the Board in November 2018, and it was further supported

by a related presentation at the May 2019 Board meeting in Chico.

The Forest Practice Rules contain no botany-specific regulations. Instead, the timber harvesting process relies on guidance documents written by CDFW and CAL FIRE to fill in the regulatory gaps. The omission of scoping, mitigation, and management practices for botanical resources creates regulatory uncertainty and results in avoidable impacts to these resources. Augmenting the Forest Practice Rules would provide clear direction to applicants prior to plan submittal, reduce plan review time, and lead to more flexible management strategies for these resources. CDFW is ready to collaborate with the Board and stakeholders to develop rules for the disclosure and protection of California's botanical resources.

**Status:** The Committee evaluated several options for addressing this issue in 2021, including potential rulemaking, and has chosen to pursue the creation of a guidance document in order to the evaluation of botanical resources within the existing THP creation and review process.

### **3. 14 CCR § 1032.7(d) and 14 CCR § 1092.04(d) [in part]:**

Notices of intend require disclosure of "The regeneration methods and intermediate treatments to be used."

#### **Objectives:**

The Board should consider amending this provision. This paragraph may not capture all possible treatments that may occur, e.g., special prescriptions and other types of associated timber harvesting, such as road right-of-way or timberland conversion.

**Status:** This item was initially addressed by the Management Committee in 2010 in the form of a rule proposal to amend the NTMP NTO requirements. The item was remanded to the Management Committee following publication of a 45-day Notice of Rulemaking in December 2010 and initial hearing in February 2011. No further action was subsequently taken. No reportable actions were made on this topic in 2021. The item was moved to priority 1 to promote resolution on this item.

### **4. 14 CCR § 915.4 [935.4, 955.4] Site Preparation Addendum [All Districts]**

**Objective:** At least one CAL FIRE Unit has identified the concern that certain Site Preparation Addendums drafted by RPFs are not consistent with the definition of "Site Preparation" in 14 CCR § 895.1. This has caused some timberland owners and RPFs to believe that silviculture objectives may be achieved by Timber

Operations after the harvest document has expired. It is difficult for a CAL FIRE Forest Practice Inspector to enforce the Forest Practice Rules on an expired harvest document. Completion reporting requirements should be evaluated and potential regulatory solutions considered.

**Status:** The Committee has not begun deliberation on this item

#### **5. 14 CCR § 917.2 [937.2, 957.2] Treatment of Slash to Reduce Fire Hazard [All Districts]**

**Objective:** At least one CAL FIRE Unit has identified the timing and extent of Slash treatment as contributing to additional hazardous fuel conditions. In one documented instance on the Dixie Fire this year, multiple Slash piles created by Timber Operations that had been awaiting chipping for multiple years adjacent to a public road were ignited and became part of the fire. Regulations related to hazard reduction should be evaluated for efficacy.

**Status:** The Committee has not begun deliberation on this item

#### **6. Effective period of an Emergency Notice (14 CCR § 1052 et. seq.)**

**Objective:** The size of modern wildfires makes it very difficult to get the resources needed to salvage what could be many thousands of acres. Constraints in the availability of harvest systems to do the work has been identified as an issue.

**Status:** The Committee has not begun deliberation on this item

### **PRIORITY 2 FOR 2022:**

#### **1. Review the Regulatory History, Implementation, and Future of 14 CCR § 916.11; Monitoring for Adaptive Management in Watersheds with Coho Salmon:**

**Objective:** The Rule requires the Board to develop a monitoring and adaptive management program for timber harvesting operations in watersheds with coho salmon. Multiple purposes for this program are stated within the Rule. The Board has since established a new science-based, multi-stakeholder, and multi-disciplinary Effectiveness Monitoring Committee (EMC) for the purpose of reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Board's Forest Practice Rules relative to forestry and environmental protection, including the protection of watershed resources critical to listed species such as coho salmon. The FPC will review the history and requirements of 14 CCR § 916.11 to ensure the mission and activities of the EMC adequately address the purposes stated for this Rule

and will determine if any additional specific Board action is necessary.

**Status:** No reportable actions were made on this topic in 2021.

## **2. Watercourse and Lake Protection Rule Review (14 CCR § 916):**

### **Objectives:**

- Mapping of Class III Watercourse crossings. Language in 14 CCR §§ 1034(x)(7) and 916.4 [936.4,956.4] needs to be considered and potentially reconciled for purposes of consistency.
- Review the necessity and utility of assessing and mapping standards of 14 CCR § 916.4 for spawning and rearing habitat for anadromous salmonids.

**Status:** The Committee has not begun deliberation on this item

## **3. Geospatial Completion Reporting Requirements for Exemption and Emergencies**

**Objective:** Evaluate the value of required improved geospatial reporting for all timber harvesting activities to allow state agencies and research institutions an opportunity for improved assessment of ecological performance measures.

**Status:** The Committee has not begun deliberation on this item

## **PRIORITY 3 FOR 2022:**

### **1. Review of Stocking Reporting & Procedure**

**Objective:** Evaluate current stocking sampling regulations in regard to their application within very small, or partially harvested, logging areas.

Evaluate silvicultural requirements for restoration of areas not normally bearing commercial species provided that these areas are excluded from stocking requirements.

**Status:** The Committee has not begun deliberation on this item.

### **2. Review of Regulations pertaining to Archaeological Training, Identification and Protection of Sites (14 CCR § 929 et seq.)**

**Objective:** CAL FIRE indicates that existing Board regulations are not clear in terms of when a 5-year refresher training course for identification and protection of archaeological resources must be completed. It is recommended to review the existing rules to determine if further regulatory clarity or protection of these resources could be achieved.

Additionally, CAL FIRE has archaeological or historical sites along appurtenant roads that are not specifically associated with the commercial harvesting of forest products, but are associated with operations such as road construction, re-construction or maintenance. Considering these findings, CAL FIRE has requested a review of the definitions of Site Survey Area and Logging Area, balanced against the definition of timber operations in PRC § 4527, to address the issue of potential impacts to archaeological resources located along appurtenant roads where commercial harvesting is not occurring.

Comments have been received which request review of archaeological coverage mapping rules within 14 CCR § 895.1 to consider excluding existing sites which are not significant.

Furthermore, comments have been received which request a reduction in the required 10-day period between Native American notification and plan submission.

**Status:** No reportable actions were made on this topic in 2021.

### **3. Road Construction Restrictions**

**Objective:** Evaluate regulations related to the construction of roads used in Timber Operations under permitting vehicles other than the THP for the purposes of thinning and fire prevention.

**Status:** The Committee has not begun deliberations on this issue.

### **4. Board Policy Review:**

**Objective:** The Board currently has many policies in place, some dating back decades. The Board aspires to review and contemporize all policies and make them available to the public via the Board's website. Board policies cover a myriad of topics; committee assignment of this ongoing policy review will be based upon the subject matter of the individual policy under review.

**Status:** Continuously ongoing.

### **5. Revision of Emergency Notice for Fuel Hazard Reduction**

**Objective:** Evaluate requirements that an RPF develop fuels treatments to meet the objectives of a community fuelbreak area (per 14 CCR § 895.1) or other objectives which have the written concurrence of a public fire agency. Additionally, evaluate the current regulatory effective period of an emergency notice (1 year) for efficacy and suitability of modern Emergency Notice timber operations.

**Status:** *The Committee has not begun deliberation on this item.*

## **6. Review RPF Marking Requirements**

**Objective:** *Evaluate existing requirements for RPF tree marking & sample marking where narrative descriptions and operator selection may improve operational efficiencies.*

**Status:** *The Committee has not begun deliberation on this item.*

## **7. Watercourse and Lake Protection Rule Review (14 CCR § 916):**

Objectives:

- Consider revision of watershed restoration standards.
- Consider examination of watercourse protections and potential new rules that allow for vegetative fuel reduction, mosaic vegetation patterning, scarified soil created by machinery and fuel discontinuity to better protect watercourse related resources during fire events.

**Status:** No reportable action in 2021.