

**Neotropical Migratory Bird Species Review  
Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA) Restoration and Motorized Travel  
Management Project  
Six Rivers National Forest  
November, 2013**

Under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the Forest Service is directed to “provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives.” (P.L. 94-588, Sec 6 (g) (3) (B)). Implementation of the project is in accordance with the objectives within Executive Order 13186 of which outlines responsibilities of federal land management agencies to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The Six Rivers National Forest is proposing to make limited changes to the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS) in order to: provide motorized access to dispersed recreation opportunities (camping, hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, etc.); provide a diversity of motorized recreation opportunities; to provide for administrative needs, and; to reduce ecological and cultural resource risk and maintenance costs. Proposed management is intended to implement direction contained within the Six Rivers National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP).

The Smith River National Recreation Area (NRA) Restoration and Motorized Travel Management Project (referred to hereafter as the “Project”) is located within Del Norte County, California. Table 1 lists the migratory bird species known or thought to occur within the project area. Habitat suitability evaluations were made using the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System, Version 8.2 software, developed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The list of species potentially occurring in the project area was developed using sighting records, breeding bird surveys and published information.

**Table 1. Neotropical migratory bird species and habitat associations of Del Norte County, CA and those known or thought to occur within the Project area.**

Common Name	Habitat Association	Common Name	Habitat Association
Common Merganser	W	Northern Goshawk	F
Turkey Vulture	O	Cooper’s Hawk	F, R, O
Sharp-shinned Hawk	F, R	Osprey	W
Red-tailed Hawk	O, F, R	Common Nighthawk	O, F
Flammulated Owl	F	Allen’s Hummingbird	F, O
Band-tailed Pigeon	F, O	Northern Flicker	F, R, O
Anna’s Hummingbird	R, F, O	Red-breasted Sapsucker	F
Rufous Hummingbird	F, O	Western Wood-Pewee	F, R
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	F, O	Willow Flycatcher	R, O
Belted Kingfisher	W	Tree Swallow	R, O, W
Hammond’s Flycatcher	F	N. Rough-winged Swallow	W
Olive-sided Flycatcher	F, O	Barn Swallow	O, R, F

Dusky Flycatcher	O, F	Golden-crowned Kinglet	F
Cordilleran & Pacific-slope Flycatcher	R, F	Cedar Waxwing	F, O
Violet-green Swallow	R, F, O	Swainson's Thrush	F
Cliff Swallow	O, R	American Robin	F, O, R
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	R, F	Cassin's Vireo	F
House Wren	O, F, R	Orange-crowned Warbler	F
Townsend's Solitaire	F	Yellow-rumped Warbler	F, O
Hermit Thrush	F	Townsend's Warbler	F
Warbling Vireo	R, F	Wilson's Warbler	F, R
Nashville Warbler	F, O	Yellow Warbler	F, R
Black-throated Gray Warbler	F, O	Black-headed Grosbeak	F, R
Hermit Warbler	F	Spotted Towhee	O
MacGillivray's Warbler	F, R, O	Fox Sparrow	O, R
Western Tanager	F	White-crowned Sparrow	O, F
Lazuli Bunting	O	Green-tailed Towhee	O
Chipping Sparrow	F, O	Brewer's Blackbird	O
Song Sparrow	O, F, R	Cassin's Finch	F
Dark-eyed Junco	O, F	Pine Siskin	F, R
Brown-headed Cowbird	O, R, F		

**W – Wetland** habitat including streams, ponds, lakes, reservoirs, rivers, marshes and associated wetland vegetation. **F – Forested** habitat including conifer forest, hardwood forest, mixed conifer/hardwood and oak woodlands. **R – Riparian** forests including willows and alder along streams, rivers and around ponds. **O – Open** country habitat including grasslands, meadows, burned areas, clearcuts, brushlands and residential areas.

The Project occurs in forested areas ranging in seral stage from shrub and pole to patches of late mature and old growth. All proposed actions would occur in the road prism on current National Forest Transportation System (NFTS) roads and unauthorized routes. No new construction would occur on previously undisturbed lands.

### *Project Description*

#### **Proposed Action (Alternative 3)**

This alternative was modified from the original Proposed Action (Alternative 2) which could not be carried forward for analysis because it included Traditional Cultural Properties that needed to be excluded from the action.

Alternative 3 will affect 214 miles of roads and will include the following:

- 1) The addition of 15 unauthorized routes as roads, totaling 7.14 miles, to the current NFTS;
- 2) The addition of 45 unauthorized routes as motorized trails to the NFTS, totaling 43.98 miles;
- 3) The seasonal gate closure on 2 roads and 5 motorized trails, totaling 13 miles;
- 4) The mixed-use of 1 road (17N49), totaling 4 miles;
- 5) The decommissioning of 112 NFTS roads, totaling 54.88 miles, and;
- 6) The restoration of 162 UARs totaling 79.43 miles.

**Add to Road or Motorized Trail System:** Desirable unauthorized routes will be added to the NFTS either as a road with an identified OML, or as a motorized trail with an Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) designation.

**Upgrade to OML2:** Upgrading may involve road surface improvements, such as installing, repairing or replacing culverts, rolling dips or water bars.

**Downgrade to OML1:** Downgrading and managing as OML 1 may involve removing culverts and other drainage features and leaving the road in a hydrologically maintenance-free condition.

**Resource Risk Mitigations:** Resource risk mitigations apply to NFTS roads and trails to reduce risk and impacts to botanical, wildlife, aquatic, or Port Orford-cedar on system roads and trails. Actions in this category include: seasonal gate closures, installation of barricades and route delineators and gravelling.

**Decommission Road / Restore Unauthorized Route:** The suite of actions within this category is aimed at re-establishing vegetation and, if necessary, initiating restoration of ecological processes interrupted or adversely impacted by the unneeded road or route. Actions in this category include outslipping, removal of culverts and associated fill and installation of water bars and barricades (large boulders or berms).

**Stormproofing:** The suite of management actions that will be applied to NFTS roads and trails to reduce water quality and sedimentation risks through culvert and road surface improvements, including redesigning of culverts for fish passage. Actions in this category include installation of culverts and rolling dips, repair/replace culverts and removal of culverts and associated fill. There are 3 other action alternatives. The difference between the alternatives involves adding or removing more roads/routes than Alternative 3.

#### **Alternative 4**

The addition of 21 unauthorized routes as roads, totaling 11.85 miles, to the current NFTS;  
The addition of 91 unauthorized routes as motorized trails to the NFTS, totaling 60.23 miles;  
The seasonal gate closure on 11 roads and 6 motorized trails, totaling 37 miles;  
The mixed-use of 1 road (17N49), totaling 0.5 miles;  
The decommissioning of 112 NFTS roads, totaling 54.43 miles, and;  
The restoration of 192 UARs totaling 78.85 miles  
The addition of 7 parking areas

#### **Alternative 5**

The addition of 11 unauthorized routes as roads, totaling 3 miles, to the current NFTS;  
The addition of 16 unauthorized routes as motorized trails to the NFTS, totaling 12 miles;  
The seasonal gate closure on 3 roads and 1 motorized trails, totaling 3 miles;  
No mixed-use;  
The decommissioning of 107 NFTS roads, totaling 53.29 miles, and;

The restoration of 411 UARs totaling 135 miles  
 The addition of 1 parking areas

**Alternative 6 (Preferred Alternative)**

The addition of 18 unauthorized routes as roads, totaling 4 miles, to the current NFTS;  
 The addition of 75 unauthorized routes as motorized trails to the NFTS, totaling 43 miles;  
 The seasonal gate closure on 13 roads and 7 motorized trails, totaling 34 miles;  
 The mixed-use of 1 road (17N49), totaling 0.5 miles;  
 The decommissioning of 110 NFTS roads, totaling 53.98 miles, and;  
 The restoration of 210 UARs totaling 101 miles  
 The addition of 4 parking areas

**Summary: Impacts to NTM**

All action alternatives will reduce road densities of OML 1, 2 roads and unauthorized routes across the NRA (Table 1). Reducing road density across the District will reduce fragmentation of habitat as the decommissioned roads revegetate, increase patch size, reduce sedimentation in stream channels, and reduce disturbance and direct mortality. In addition, cross-country travel is prohibited under the Smith River NRA Act of 1990. An overall reduction of road densities across the NRA will benefit wildlife in the short-term through elimination of noise disturbance on closed roads/routes and in the long-term through the reduction of fragmentation and habitat restoration. The project will benefit NTM.

Table 1. Road/route reductions and road density by Alternative

	<b>Alternative 1 No Action</b>	<b>Alternative 3</b>	<b>Alternative 4</b>	<b>Alternative 5</b>	<b>Alternative 6</b>
Total percent restored/decommissioned	0	30%	29%	47%	36%
District-wide Road Density	1.59 mi/mi <sup>2</sup>	1.34 mi/mi <sup>2</sup>	1.34 mi/mi <sup>2</sup>	1.17 mi/mi <sup>2</sup>	1.32 mi/mi <sup>2</sup>

During culvert repair, replacement and/or removal, there will be minor habitat degradation for stream and riparian habitat within the project area due to the removal of brush and small diameter trees sapling trees less than 11 inches dbh., over areas that are approximately one-tenth acre in size per worksite, and slight short-term degradation of water quality as areas where culverts are removed re-vegetate.

It is estimated that an average of 0.1 acres of vegetation may be affected at any one site where culverts are repaired, replaced or removed. The Alternative 3 would remove approximately 78 culverts for an estimated total of 8 acres affected across the District. This is an overestimate of the amount of vegetation to be removed in that not all culverts sites have been brushed in, the roads may occur in naturally open areas, or the amount of vegetation to be removed is less than one-tenth of an acre, which will be negligible in any one area. Disturbed areas would be re-vegetated with native grasses, shrubs and trees reflective of what was previously growing at the site. Due to different habitat requirements, not all culvert sites occur in suitable for all NTM, therefore 8 acres of habitat degraded under this alternative greatly overestimates the amount of

habitat potentially affected for any one species. These effects are expected to be offset by the long term benefits of reducing road density across the District.

Alternative 4 would remove 82 culverts for 8 acres of habitat affected, Alternative 5 would remove 251 culverts (approximately 25 acres), and Alternative 6 would remove 170 culverts (17 acres affected). These effects are expected to be offset by the long term benefits of reducing road density across the District.

In the long term, this project will benefit Neotropical migratory birds by restoring habitat on unauthorized routes and decommissioned roads. It will also prevent further habitat disturbance by delineating authorized routes and barricading vehicle use in unauthorized areas.

This project will not impact Neotropical migratory birds or their associated habitats.

#### *No Action*

Under the No Action alternative, there would be no reduction in road density across the District, and no habitat restoration would occur for MIS from decommissioning roads and restoring unauthorized routes. Disturbance and direct mortality from on-going road use would not be eliminated on removed roads. Sedimentation into streams would not be reduced.

#### *Cumulative Effects*

Given the small of acreage the RMTP will impact (less than one-tenth acres in any one area), and that all other proposed actions will occur in the road prism, it is not likely that past, present, or planned projects will have a negative cumulative impact on NTM species when combined with the RMTP. It is expected that the trend for these species will be towards recovery as past, present, and reasonably foreseeable federal actions in the watershed are predominantly habitat restoration projects.

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