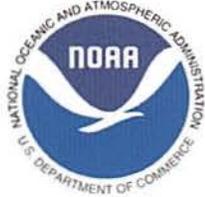




OCT 15 2012



Dear Reviewer:

In accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), we enclose for your review the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Program Timberland Environmental Impact Report (DEIS/DPTEIR) for Authorization for Incidental Take and Implementation of a Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Communities Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) and Timber Management Plan for most of the land owned by Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC) in Mendocino County, California. The DEIS portion of this DEIS/DPTEIR was prepared pursuant to NEPA to assess the environmental impacts associated with the Services proceeding with the proposed issuance of Incidental Take Permits (ITPs) to MRC pursuant to Section 10 of the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

This DEIS was jointly prepared by NMFS and the USFWS (collectively "Services") as four species listed under the ESA and two species not listed under ESA and managed by the USFWS are "Covered Species" in the draft HCP, in addition to five salmonid species managed by NMFS. NMFS and USFWS proposed ITPs would allow MRC to take these listed species on most of their forest lands in Mendocino County during their forest management activities for 80 years as long as they follow their Habitat Conservation Plan. Their draft HCP contains measures to minimize and mitigate the impacts of taking these listed species.

This DEIS was prepared jointly as part of the same document with a DPTEIR according to the requirements of the California Forest Practice Rules (FPRs) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The California Department of Forest and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is the lead agency for the PTEIR to ensure compliance with applicable sections of the FPRs and CEQA. The California Department of Fish and Game is a responsible agency for the DPTEIR because MRC is seeking 1) a section 2835 Take Permit under the California Natural Community Conservation Planning Act of 2002 for their NCCP, jointly prepared with their HCP, and 2) a programmatic Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement (in this case known as a Management Agreement for Timber Operations).



Additional copies of the documents may be obtained from the Responsible Correspondence Coordinator identified below. The documents are also accessible electronically through the NMFS Southwest Region's website at <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/nepa.htm>

Written comments should be submitted through mail, facsimile (fax), or email to the Responsible Correspondence Coordinator identified below. Written comments on the enclosed documents will be accepted during the agency's 90-day public comment period which begins with publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. When submitting fax or email comments, include the following document identifier in the comment subject line: **MRC HCP ITP**.

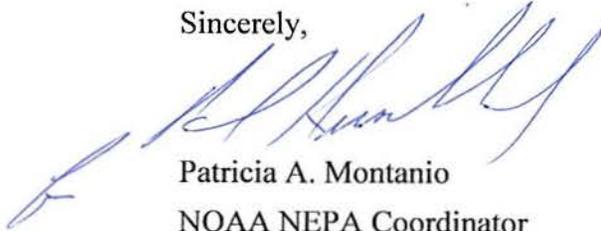
Responsible Official: Rodney R. McInnis
Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southwest Region

Responsible Correspondence Coordinator:

Eric Shott, Fishery Biologist
NMFS
777 Sonoma Avenue, Room 325
Santa Rosa, California 95404
Phone: 707-575-6089
Fax: 707-578-3435
Email: mrc.hcpitp@noaa.gov

For additional copies and other information please call Eric Shott at 707-575-6089. For information about the DPTEIR please call Chris Browder at CAL FIRE at 916-653-4995. For information about the draft NCCP please call Brad Valentine at CDFG at 707-527-5361. All comments received at the address above will be made available to USFWS, CAL FIRE, and CDFG.

Sincerely,



Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosures:

1. *Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Program Timberland Environmental Impact Report for Authorization for Incidental Take and Implementation of Mendocino Redwood Company's Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Communities Conservation Plan, and Timber Management Plan (HCP/NCCP) (CD)*
2. *Mendocino Redwood Company Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan and Timber Management Plan (CD)*
3. *Draft Implementation Agreement for the Mendocino Redwood Company HCP/NCCP/TMP (Appendix A of the HCP/NCCP)*