



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

June 1, 2010

Tina J. Terrell, Forest Supervisor
Kern River Ranger District
Piute Fire Restoration Project
105 Whitney Road, P.O. Box 9
Kernville, CA 93238

Subject: Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Piute Fire Restoration Project,
Kern County, California (CEQ#20100152)

Dear Ms. Terrell:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and our NEPA review authority under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

EPA reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and provided comments to the Forest Service on December 18, 2009. We rated the DEIS as Environmental Concerns – Insufficient Information (EC-2) and asked that the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) include additional information on air quality mitigation measures, how climate change may affect the proposed project (particularly reforestation efforts), and how the potential use of pesticides during reforestation may affect aquatic and non-target species.

EPA is pleased that many of the issues identified in our DEIS comment letter (enclosed) have been addressed in the FEIS. Additional information was provided that addresses our concerns about potential emissions of fugitive dust and particulate matter during the project, as well as the potential use of pesticides during reforestation.

EPA's comment letter for the DEIS recommended that the Forest Service include a detailed description of climate change and its implications for the proposed action and successful reforestation. We ask that, as the Piute Fire project moves from the planning phase to implementation, the Forest Service incorporate consideration of climate change into its adaptive management plan. A section devoted to climate change was added to the FEIS, and includes information on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated from the 2008 Piute Fire, as well as a discussion of likely GHG emissions resulting from project activities (including salvage treatments). The document does not, however, address how a changing climate may affect the proposed project, particularly reforestation efforts.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this FEIS. If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 972-3521, or Jason Gerdes, the lead reviewer for this project. Jason can be reached at (415) 947-4221 or gerdes.jason@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Kathleen M. Goforth, Manager
Environmental Review Office (CED-2)

Enclosure: EPA's DEIS comment letter