

Report of the Jackson Forest Working Group

November 30, 2006

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Preface

The Jackson Forest Working Group consists of six people in Mendocino County who have been intimately involved with Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF): the owners and the manager of the three largest surviving timber mills in the county, the owner of the logging company that performed the bulk of the logging operations in JDSF until logging was halted in 2001, the Sierra Club person most closely involved with Jackson Forest policy, and the head of the Campaign to Restore Jackson State Redwood Forest, which brought the legal actions that have stopped all logging since 2001.

The group came together voluntarily, on the members' own initiative, to see if they could resolve the long-standing differences that have made Jackson Forest a local and state-wide focal point of controversy. The group began meeting in late August and met at least once each month through November 2006.

Recent developments appeared to create an opportunity for the working group to make a useful contribution. The newly appointed Director of the California Department of Forestry, Ruben Grijalva, had publicly given his support to making Jackson State into a "world-class research forest" and to seeking a consensus among all parties. He had initiated discussions with the Campaign to Restore Jackson State Redwood Forest. Legislation was passed that stopped the former practice of funding a variety of state forestry programs from Jackson Forest logging revenues. The Board of Forestry, which has the responsibility for setting policies for Jackson State, had recently begun developing a new policy alternative focused on research and demonstration, with fish and wildlife habitat, forest ecology, recreation, and education as important values. At the same time, the Board's efforts to meet the court's 2003 directive to revise the environmental impact report for the forest appeared to be stalled, and in the background was the threat of another legal challenge in the future.

The group operated from the beginning on the principle of consensus. We felt that only by coming to a shared viewpoint could the group become an effective force for change. The first goal that the group adopted was to develop a path for getting Jackson Forest back into operation, hopefully in 2007. Very early, we agreed that we didn't have the information, resources, or authority to develop a management plan for the forest. What we sought was to develop a set of unanimously agreed-upon *principles* to apply to developing a plan and managing the forest.

Once we felt that we were going to succeed in agreeing on management principles, we turned to the more difficult task: setting out a path and process for developing a management plan incorporating our principles, while simultaneously meeting legal and bureaucratic constraints, environmental concerns and providing for near-term timber harvesting (in order to finance building forest staffing, needed forest maintenance, and development of a detailed management plan, and to provide logs to help maintain the viability of the local timber industry).

All of us involved feel that we've come to a workable solution, one that fairly balances timber, conservation, and recreation interests. We plan to work with the involved state agencies to translate the recommendations into actions.

Working Group Members

Mike Anderson	Anderson Logging Inc.
Kathy Bailey	Sierra Club
Bruce Burton	Willits Redwood Company
Mike Jani	Mendocino Redwood Company
Art Harwood	Harwood Products
Vince Taylor	Campaign to Restore Jackson State Redwood Forest

Acknowledgement

The group was invaluablely aided by the skilled facilitation of Steve Zuieback. We definitely share the consensus opinion that we could never have achieved what we did without Steve.

We owe him double thanks because he generously donated his services, motivated by his belief in the public importance of our work and his desire to serve his local community.

Steve's primary dedication is to assist in improving the educational performance of public schools. The key focus of his work now is in the area of building deep leadership and facilitation capacity within large organizations and systems, especially in educational systems. In this regard, he is currently working with Riverside County Office of Education in the state-wide Focused Monitoring Program, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, Desert Mountain SELPA and with Sacramento City Unified School District. More at: <http://www.stevezuieback.com>

Section 1

November 30, 2006

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
PO Box 944246
Sacramento, Ca. 94244-2460
Attention: George Gentry, Executive Director

Re: Jackson Demonstration State Forest Management Plan

Dear Members of the Board,

As you know our group has been meeting in Mendocino County for the past few months exploring ways to move the JDSF Management Plan process forward. Over the years our members have been involved in numerous forestry issues from the Grand Accord to County Rules to SB 1648. Historically we have been on opposing sides. This process has been unique in that we have reached consensus on an approach we believe has the potential to get JDSF back under management.

While we have reached consensus on numerous issues, the enjoined timber harvest plans were not among them. These plans were sold and operated, then stopped as a result of the lawsuit. An equitable resolution to this problem is still needed. In spite of their involvement in this process, the purchasers have not given up any of their legal rights to the two sales.

Our approach to moving the management plan process forward is comprised of two phases. Phase one incorporates the guiding principles we have been developing with the Research and Demonstration focus that Bill Stewart has been designing as the new Preferred Alternative 8. With the adoption of this first phase and the finalization and certification of the EIR, timber harvesting can resume on an interim basis. This interim resumption of harvesting will be guided by the principles in the management plan and the specific criteria developed by this group.

Phase two will be a concurrent and parallel process. This phase will be highlighted by the re-staffing of JDSF including personnel with a broad range of expertise in addition to silviculture, the appointment of a Jackson Advisory Group, the commencement of landscape-level planning on a broad array of issues and the establishment of a credible and verifiable inventory. Our group anticipates this process will result in a detailed and sustainable long term plan for JDSF. This second phase will develop a plan based on detailed specific information that provides for a consensus-based balancing of ecological values, education, research, recreation, timber production and regional economic stability.

This group realizes it has no authority to develop a management plan for JDSF and the Board has no mandate to follow the template provided. Logic however would suggest when a group as diverse as ours can come to consensus on this topic, it deserves some serious consideration.

Sincerely,

Bruce Burton

Art Harwood

Vince Taylor

Kathy Bailey

Mike Jani

Mike Anderson

Attachments:

- 1.) The guiding principles this group developed for management of JDSF.
- 2.) Interim harvesting criteria.
- 3.) A flow chart of the implementation process.

Section 2

Principles for the Management of Jackson Demonstration State Forest

November 30, 2006

Research and Demonstration:

Research and demonstration (R&D) should be the driving force behind all harvest operations on JDSF. The forgoing does not preclude harvest operations designed for manipulation of stand structure for future research. Additional R&D emphasis needs to be directed towards small land owner needs. The following are specific research suggestions:

1. Research and demonstration geared toward small land owners interested in economically maintaining and improving the health, beauty, and recreational value of their holdings.
2. Exploring ways to make timber harvesting more acceptable to the general public should be an important part of the R&D program.
3. The R&D program should test the benefits and or problems associated with forest practice rules existing and under consideration.
4. R&D should explore the process and benefits to wildlife and the aquatic environment of turning even age stands into all aged stands.
5. A integral part of the R&D program should be a well developed economic analysis of these different approaches so land owners and regulators can make the cost to benefit analysis.

Silviculture:

All timber harvest activities on JDSF should preserve or improve the long term forest health. Selection silviculture should be maximized. Even aged management should only be allowed for well justified research projects and as necessary to promote stand health. The size and scope of these projects should be no larger than the minimum needed for scientific validity. Group selection plots will be the minimum size consistent with wildlife concerns and obtaining regeneration, they will only be used when justified as the most ecologically beneficial way to obtain needed regeneration and or habitat. Variable retention should be used sparingly. When used it should be associated with research, stand health, wildlife concerns, and have higher than average retention levels. None of the above should be construed to prohibit the entire spectrum of harvesting intensity and or frequency as long as it is tied to research.

Herbicides:

Herbicides would only be used as a last resort after demonstrating an exhaustive evaluation of all other alternatives in dealing with a specific forest problem. The evaluation of alternatives would also look at the consequences of taking action and of taking no action at all. If herbicides are then considered they would be used as part of a scientifically designed study to answer specific research questions. Under such circumstances the smallest number of acres would be used to achieve the research answers. A maximum acreage cap would be established, and the research would be designed in such a way to minimize the need for future use of herbicides.

Old Growth and Mature Forest Stands:

The remnant stands of original forest that have not ever been harvested should be preserved so as to provide a baseline from which comparisons can be made. Using these areas as cores, logical corridors, buffers, and extensions should be developed, utilizing existing older second growth stands when possible, to provide habitat for species associated with the late seral stages of forest development and to provide opportunities for human enjoyment. When these habitat areas overlap an older second growth stand, at a minimum, a portion, or at a maximum, all of that stand should be considered for inclusion into designation for a “late seral” management alternative. Within this management unit, the old growth cores shall remain unharvested, while the second growth components may be subject to some harvest designed to accelerate development of late seral characteristics.

Scattered individual remnant old growth trees identified as such because of size, special characteristics, or known stand history, should be protected from harvest unless they pose a hazard to persons, property, or natural resource values. Additionally, at a minimum, immediately adjacent trees or trees which are close enough to influence growth and form of the retained old growth tree, shall be retained.

However, if after careful study including examination of the canopy, a known old growth tree is determined to be without any identifiable old growth characteristics, and other trees of the same species in the same height class will be retained, in conjunction with a research project to confirm the determination, the old growth tree may be harvested and utilized.

Old growth trees mistakenly cut due to misjudgment of age or absence of old growth characteristics shall be left in the woods to provide large wood on the forest floor and for wildlife refuge.

Threatened and Endangered Species:

Given that this is a publicly owned forest, sufficient acreage should be dedicated towards management alternatives that specifically contribute to the maintenance and recovery of the region's threatened and endangered species.

Wildlife and Riparian Management:

Recognizing the unique positive regional status of the wildlife and riparian habitats in JDSF, develop overall wildlife and riparian management strategies consistent with a balance of economic, environmental, and recreational goals and objectives. These strategies are to be implemented through all management activities (see also, principles for Old Growth and Mature Forest Stands and Threatened and endangered Species)

All management activities need to be evaluated as to how they impact or enhance fish and wildlife and their habitat.

JDSF should scientifically explore the benefits and problems associated with various riparian management strategies and their contributions to salmon recovery.

Until research results provide a scientific basis for estimating the effects of alternative riparian management regimes, JDSF should take a very conservative approach toward timber harvesting in riparian zones other than in conjunction with the research program.

Timber Revenues:

Harvest levels should be determined by the needs of the forest, the guiding principles, as reflected in the management plan, not a revenue target. All revenue from JDSF sales should be re-invested back into the forest first; excess can be put to use by the state forest system and, in infrequent emergency situations, by other natural resource programs. The top priority should be funding an on-going timber sale program which will help to generate revenue to fund other programs including, but not limited to: demonstration, research, recreation, and infrastructure improvements. JDSF timber revenue should be augmented through grant funding, or general fund dollars, depending upon the type of programs the forest is trying to support. If there is not sufficient funding for all identified programs, funding will be allocated on a priority basis.

Jackson Advisory Group:

Overarching Principle: The advisory Group should represent and consider a broad range of views, with emphasis on local input and resource expertise.

Purpose: Initially to participate in the development of the Phase II management plan and to review and field evaluate the implementation of the proposed 2007 and 2008 Timber Harvest Plans. Subsequent responsibilities would include field based evaluations (prospective and retrospective) which would provide information for future research and management activities.

Participation: Open nominations, appointed by the Board of Forestry. Members would represent the public interest and be drawn from a broad spectrum of backgrounds and resource expertise with an emphasis on appointments of local representatives. Professions represented should include forest ecologist, fisheries biologist, botanist, Registered Professional Forester, Licensed Timber Operator and recreational planner. Views represented should include local timber industry, environmental community, recreational users, local businesses and forest neighbors. 10-12 people.

Authority and reporting: Group would interact directly with JDSF staff and management team and report to the Board of Forestry in an advisory capacity. Decision making would preferably be consensus based.

Term: 2 years, staggered.

Support staff: Permanent position, CDF staff with an independent facilitator.

Education:

Part of the legislative mandate for JDSF has never been adequately fulfilled; education needs to become a high priority. The forest has a unique opportunity to reach out to and educate the general public on issues associated with ecology, biological diversity, forest processes, forest management etc.

Roads:

The inventory and improvement plan should be finalized as a matter of highest priority and work scheduled on an accelerated basis.

Budgeting:

JDSF should not load the forest maintenance and operational costs on the timber sales. These costs should be funded through a budgeting process for JDSF.

Staffing:

The staff of JDSF needs to be augmented with recognized professionals to protect all public trust resources. This needs to be a team approach commensurate with being a world class leader in demonstration forestry.

Recreation:

JDSF should identify, with citizen input, the recreational opportunities on the forest and develop a recreation action plan to advance such opportunities. This plan would be integrated with forest management and the ecological outcomes developed for the forest. This would include reaching out to recreational experts to help put this plan together. Trans-forest hiking and horse trails should be pursued, working with neighboring landowners. With public input, staff should explore ways to expand funding for the recreation program.

Data Collection:

High Quality research requires accurate baseline and ongoing data on all forest components. Sufficient staffing at JDSF is critical to insure valid data collection. The following are minimum data collection needs at JDSF:

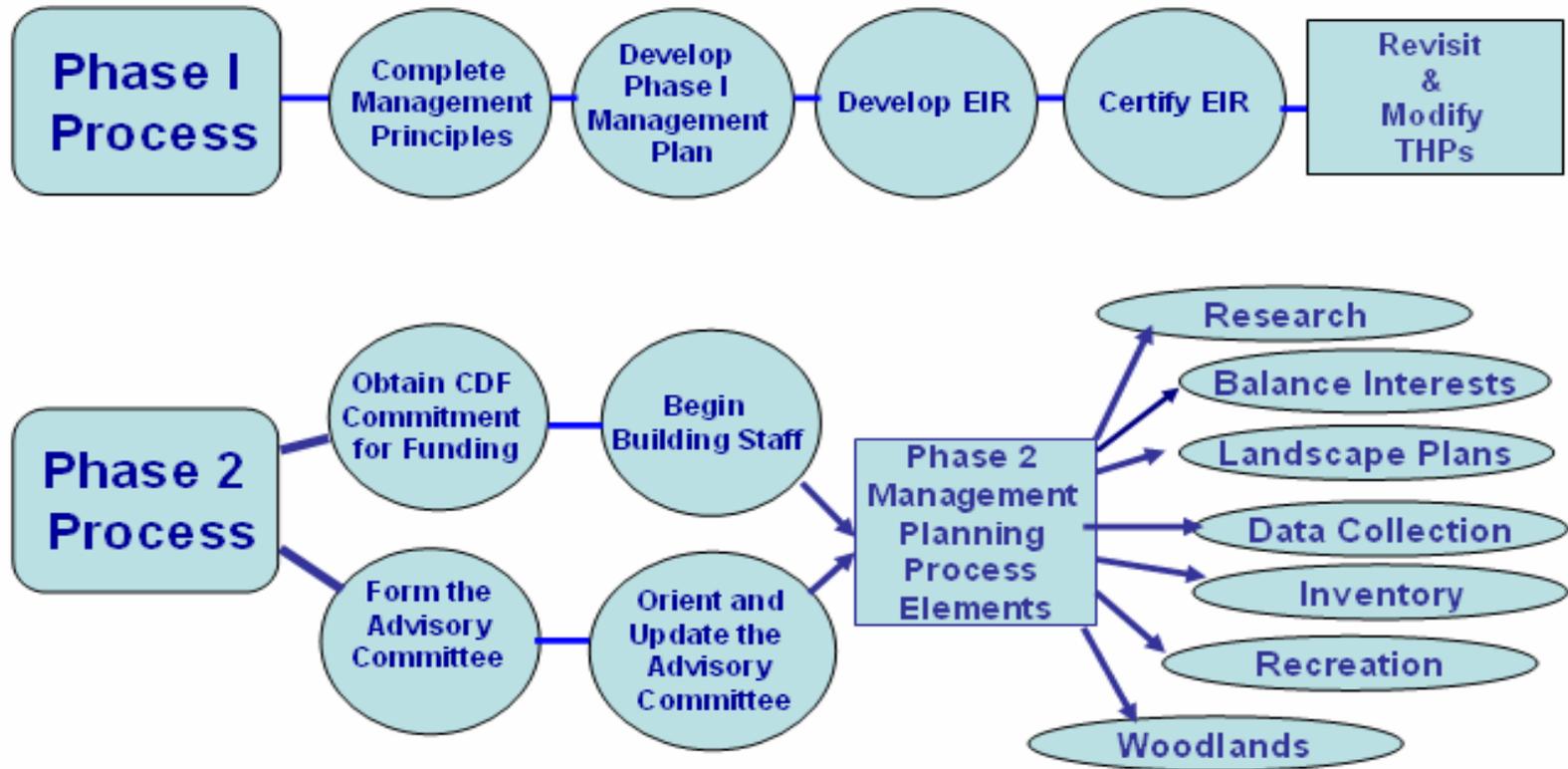
1. Credible forest inventory and growth information easily understandable by the general public.
2. A forest wide wildlife and botanicals inventory, and monitoring program.

Hardwood:

As part of a research project, JDSF should work towards hardwood utilization as an alternative to herbicide use. This research should consist of: identifying what hardwood component is needed in the timber stand, how to manage hardwood for a high quality product, determine habitat contribution, economic return for the land owner, creation of employment opportunities and the development of a market for these hardwood products.

Section 3

JDSF Planning & Implementation Process



Phase 1 and 2 are to begin immediately and proceed simultaneously. Phase 2 should be complete in 3 years.

Section 4

Interim Harvesting Criteria

We recognize the need for interim harvesting beginning in 2007 and for the duration of Phase I of the Management Plan development. This interim period should not exceed three years. During Phase I, Timber Harvest Plans (THPs) shall be submitted consistent with the following:

1. Utilize uneven aged management
2. Apply all silvicultural principles stated elsewhere in our recommendations.
3. Aim to generate sufficient revenue to fund the development of Phase II of the Management Plan, including rebuilding adequate staff at JDSF and implementing our recommendations for forest, wildlife and botanical inventories. In addition to financing routine operations, long term initiatives should be limited in Phase I to completion of the road inventory and rehabilitation plan, an expanded timber inventory and demonstration and research related expenditures.
4. THP locations should be chosen so they do not preclude future options for long-term landscape-level planning in Phase II.
5. To facilitate (4), every effort should be made to avoid harvesting areas that:
 - (a) have not been logged since 1925 or
 - (b) are mature second-growth stands contiguous with existing CDF-designated late seral development areas or adjacent to state park lands.
6. With the exception of the enjoined THPs, to assure harvesting in 2007 and 2008, emphasis should be placed on revising and finalizing harvest plans already in the system or those with the necessary field work completed.
7. If timely THP submission is not possible consistent with (5) the department may propose harvesting consistent with (1-4) using selection harvesting that removes no more than 30% of the conifer basal area of the stand, leaves at least 70% of the overstory stand canopy and maintains or increases the average stand diameter of the residual crop trees. Any such proposed plan shall be submitted to the Demonstration State Forest Advisory Group (DSFAG) for review. The DSFAG shall recommend to the director whether the plan should be submitted, modified or eliminated from consideration. At such time as the Jackson Advisory Group (JAG) informs the Director that it is willing to do so, JAG shall take over the Phase I THP review function from the DSFAG.
8. The enjoined THPs, Brandon Gulch and Camp 3, will be harvested, if at all, within the context of Phase II of the Management Plan.