UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

December 8, 2008

Alice B. Carlton
Forest Supervisor
Plumas National Forest
159 Lawrence Street
P.O. Box 11500
Quincy, CA 95971-6025

Subject: Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision for Sugarberry Project, Plumas, Sierra, and Yuba Counties, California (CEQ# 20080449)

Dear Ms. Carlton,

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) for the above project. Our review and comments are 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 Plumas National Forest on July 27, 2007. We rated the DEIS as Environmental Concerns – Insufficient Information (EC-2) because of concerns regarding the cumulative effects of the project.

We commend the Forest Service for decommissioning an additional 6.8 miles of roads and proposing watershed improvement projects (replacement of culverts, meadow restoration) to improve fish passage and stream and meadow conditions. EPA supports the effort to reduce hazardous fuels around rural communities and promote a all-aged, multistoried, fire resilient forest.

EPA continues to have concerns with the cumulative effects of Defensible Fuel Profile Zone (DFPZ) construction and Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group (HFQLG) fuel management actions, especially within the context of continued adverse effects from past hydraulic mining, past timber harvests and associated road construction, and proposed soil-disturbing activities on adjacent private lands. We are especially concerned with the potential impacts to water quality and late-successional forest species in light of the existing high road density and the need for additional suitable habitat and canopy cover of 50%.

We urge implementation of road decommissioning and restoration actions simultaneously with proposed fuel management activities in order to offset, to the maximum extent possible, short-term cumulative watershed effects linked to project implementation. We continue to recommend management and enforcement measures be identified in project documentation and the ROD to ensure the identified watershed improvements occur in a timely manner.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this FEIS. If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 972-3521, or contact Laura Fujii, of my staff, at 415-972-3852 or fujii.laura@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

Kathleen M. Goforth, Manager
Environmental Review Office
Communities and Ecosystems Division

cc: Sharen Parker, NEPA Planner, Plumas National Forest