

ROUND MOUNTAIN/ROCK CREEK
BLM Public Lands

A Neighborhood Land Management Plan

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Introduction

The Round Mountain BLM public lands in Nevada County presents a classic example of the suburban-wild-lands interface, which is becoming increasingly common throughout the west. Local residents in the Round Mountain area, surrounded by federal lands administered by the BLM, have reached an agreement with BLM and the Nevada County Land Trust on a vision for these lands.

The Round Mountain/Rock Creek BLM Public Lands Neighborhood Land Management Plan (hereafter referred to as Round Mountain Management Plan) shall provide the guidelines to attain this vision.

The Partners

Round Mountain Planning Group (RMPG)

RMPG shall include participants from community interest groups, individuals, and the immediate neighbors to the Round Mountain area. Stakeholder participation is strongly encouraged to enable and ensure that the RMPG's activities fully reflect the vision and mission of the organization.

Nevada County Land Trust

The Nevada County Land Trust is a local, non-profit corporation organized to preserve land for natural, recreational, scenic, agricultural, historical, cultural, educational and scientific purposes. The Nevada County Land Trust acquires land, conservation easements, and developmental rights by donation, purchase and other means through voluntary, private action. It manages land held in trust for limited periods of time or forever. The donation of land, conservation easements or other interests may result in substantial tax benefits to the donor or estate. The Nevada County Land Trust follows an American tradition of local land trusts which began in the mid-1800's, joining efforts of over 900 local land trusts nationwide.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

BLM is an agency within the United States Department of the Interior, the nation's principal conservation agency. The BLM manages 272 million acres of public lands and resources in 12 western states, including Alaska, to serve the needs of the American people. Resources are managed under the principles of multiple use and sustainable yield, taking into account the long-term needs of future

generations for renewable and non-renewable resources, fish and wildlife, wilderness and scenic, scientific and cultural values. It is the policy of the BLM to establish partnerships to foster cooperation, discover new ideas and management opportunities and to more effectively manage the public lands.

The Folsom Resource Area office of the Bureau of Land Management is directly responsible for managing approximately 230,000 acres of federal public land, scattered throughout California's historical Mother Lode country from Nevada County in the north to Mariposa County in the south. These lands, the remnants of the old public domain, are designated mostly as multiple-use lands which means that they are managed for several purposes, including forestry, mining, grazing, outdoor recreation, wildlife, cultural resources, watershed values, and similar activities.

Authority

The Founding Fathers deliberately set up a system by which the federal government is restrained from doing anything without properly obtained authority. This means that all proposals by agencies of the Executive Branch must be authorized by an Act of Congress, or an executive action based on an Act of Congress. For the BLM, proper authority is contained within the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, signed into law in October of that year by President Gerald R. Ford.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), Section 102 (a) states:

“The Congress declares that it is the policy of the United States that —

- (1) the public lands be retained in Federal ownership
- (2) the national interest will be best realized if the public lands and their resources are periodically and systematically inventoried and their present and future use is projected through a land use planning process coordinated with other Federal and State planning efforts;
- (7) goals and objectives be established by law as guidelines for public land use planning, and that management be on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield unless otherwise specified by law;

(8) the public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archaeological values; that where appropriate, will preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition; that will provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals; and that will provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use;

(12) the public lands be managed in a manner which recognizes the Nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber from the public lands.”

Further, FLPMA, Section 202 states:

“(a) The Secretary shall, with public involvement and consistent with the terms and conditions of this Act, develop, maintain, and, when appropriate, revise land use plans which provide by tracts or areas for the use of public lands.

(c) In the development and revision of land use plans, the Secretary shall:

- (1) use and observe the principles of multiple use and sustained yield set forth in this and other applicable law;
- (2) use a systematic interdisciplinary approach to achieve integrated consideration of physical, biological, economic, and other sciences;
- (4) rely, to the extent it is available, on the inventory of the public lands, their resources, and other values;
- (5) consider present and potential uses of the public lands;
- (6) consider the relative scarcity of the values involved and the availability of alternative means (including recycling) and sites for realization of those values;
- (7) weigh long-term benefits to the public against short-term benefits;
- (8) provide for compliance with applicable pollution control laws, including State and Federal air, water, noise, or other pollution standards or implementation plans, and;
- (9) to the extent consistent with the laws governing the administration of the public lands, coordinate the land use inventory, planning, and management activities of or for such lands with the land use and management programs of other Federal Departments and agencies and of the States and local governments within which the lands are located.”

(f) The Secretary shall allow an opportunity for public involvement and by regulation shall establish procedures, including public hearings where appropriate, to give Federal, State, and local governments and the public,

adequate notice and opportunity to comment upon and participate in the formulation of plans and programs relating to the management of the public lands.”

In Section 103 (c), FLPMA provides the following definition:

“The term ‘multiple use’ means the management of the public lands and their various resource values so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people; making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions; the use of some land for less than all the resources; a combination of balanced and diverse resource uses that takes into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources, including, but not limited to, recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, wildlife and fish, and natural scenic, scientific and historical values; and harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources without permanent impairment of the productivity of the land and the quality of the environment with consideration being given to the relative values of the resources and not necessarily to the combination of uses that will give the greatest economic return or the greatest unit output.”

Relationship with Other Planning Documents

Management of the federal lands in the Round Mountain area is currently guided by the Sierra Planning Area Management Framework Plan (MFP), as amended in 1988. The Round Mountain Management Plan shall supplement the MFP. All issues not covered in the Round Mountain Management Plan shall continue to be guided by the MFP.

Planning Assumptions

The population of Nevada County, including the Round Mountain area, will continue to increase through the foreseeable future.

The federal BLM lands in the vicinity of Round Mountain will remain in federal BLM ownership for the foreseeable future. They will continue to be managed as undeveloped wildlands. The Bureau of Land Management will continue to hold full legal responsibility for the condition of these lands, and will retain the legal authority to make the final decisions for all management activities.

The Round Mountain area is essentially a low-density suburban neighborhood superimposed on a forest environment. There are numerous private residences, roads, telephone and power lines, and other evidences of modern life. Very few residents earn their living off the land through resource extraction. The fragmentation of the forest is an accomplished fact, and cannot be undone.

Due to logging and other development activity, private lands tend to be kept in an early successional stage. The public lands in the Round Mountain area constitute permanent open space, and present the main opportunity for a late successional forest in the area.

The existing ecosystems on the federal BLM lands in the Round Mountain area are not pristine wilderness. These lands have been heavily disturbed since the Great Gold Rush of 1849. They have been mined, grazed, logged repeatedly, and burned. Many species of native flora and fauna have become severely reduced or extinct.

Both the public and private lands of the Round Mountain area are very susceptible to wildfire. As in most of California, this danger is intrinsic to the land but has locally been exacerbated by a build-up of fuels. If a wildfire were to be ignited under conditions of low humidity and high winds, it could be disastrous in both ecological and human terms.

Casual recreation use of the Round Mountain BLM public lands by local residents and out-of-area visitors has been low to moderate in the past, is occurring now and will continue into the future. This opportunity is why many chose to live in the area.

Goals and Objectives

Purpose

The purpose of this Plan is to establish a collaborative partnership between local residents, public land users and the BLM to establish and implement a lawful program of low-impact, sustainable, multiple-use management of the BLM public lands in the vicinity of Round Mountain in a fashion compatible with the character, tranquility and general welfare of the local community.

Vision Statement

A century from now, the BLM public lands of the Round Mountain area shall mostly consist of forest stands of

different ages and species interspersed in a mosaic of open spaces of diverse plant communities. Many stands will be mature native (late successional) forest (generally, an open understory with big trees) providing habitat for wildlife species which depend on old growth. Some meadows, creeks and springs, rock outcrops, other unique natural features and archaeological sites shall be designated as preservation areas. Most recreational use will be along the South Yuba River and close to county roads. The quality of life for the local community and visitors will be enhanced by an environment of natural beauty where people, plants and wildlife co-exist in a noble alliance to inspire in people an awareness and respect for nature's many living wonders.

Goals (In priority order)

1. Reduce the potential for a catastrophic wildfire.
2. Maintain lands as open space.
3. Encourage the development of a mature native forest ecosystem

Provide opportunities for low-impact outdoor recreation. Provide economic opportunities including forest products and mineral production consistent with the above goals.

Objectives

1. Establish a long-term collaborative relationship among the local residents, adjoining property owners, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, California Department of Parks and Recreation, California Department of Fish and Game, Nevada County, Nevada County Land Trust and other organizations to implement a program of low-impact multiple-use management compatible with the character and tranquility of the local community.
2. Develop a late successional foothill mixed coniferous forest ecosystem in its natural state, preserving appropriate habitats for native species.
3. Provide a model for and educate nearby landowners and the public on fire-risk reduction practices that maintain and protect the natural ecosystem.
4. Consider land purchases or gifts which further the goal of maintaining, enhancing or protecting open space.
5. Utilize natural resource management practices, including forest and mineral commodity production, compatible with the goals statement.
6. Provide low-impact, high-quality public recreational, educational, research, and inspirational opportunities which are compatible with the goals, statement.
7. Preserve, enhance and/or designate for minimal human impact: meadows, scenic views, rivers, creeks and springs, rock-outcrops, sensitive plant and wildlife habitat, other unique natural features and archaeological sites on federal land.

8. Viewing these lands from the perspective of landscape ecology, restore and extend corridors of old growth habitat through the South Yuba Watershed.
9. Respect and protect the property rights of the surrounding landowners, including the rights to privacy and quiet enjoyment of their land. Work with them to voluntarily adopt land management practices, including conservation easements, to support these goals.
10. Establish written monitoring provisions to evaluate in an organized and systematic way, the extent to which plan goals and objectives are being achieved.

Goal 1: To Protect Life, Property and Natural Resources from Wildfire

Wildfire is by far the greatest natural threat to this area and its inhabitants. The cost of both prevention and the limiting of damage is high, but the costs of a catastrophic fire are far worse. Fuel hazard reduction shall be given top priority in the implementation of this plan.

Historical Background

The forest seen today did not exist until the end of the Pleistocene era. As the weather turned warmer and the glaciers retreated, the species of plants and animals seen today moved in and stayed. Among these were humans, believed to be the ancestors of those now known as American Indians.

For at least 10,000 years prior to 1800, hunter-gatherers from several different tribes, manipulated the forest for their own purposes. By today's standards, their means were limited, but they nonetheless had a powerful influence on the forests of the Sierra, primarily through the use of fire. For example, in many areas of California, people whose diet included acorns strongly favored oaks over conifers and systematically applied fire to the forest. Understory vegetation, especially young conifers, was reduced in those areas, leaving forests open and park-like ñ perfect for oaks. In the 19th century, shepherders also burned many acres to create pastures.

Early fires were often of low intensity and short flame length, causing little damage to soils and large trees. Flame length is dependent on weather, slope and fuels. Very frequent, low intensity fires set by lightning as well as people, removed surface fuels, including brush, small trees and ladder fuels, sparing the larger trees. Fuel accumulation was kept low, and few fires grew into stand-destroying events.

Times have changed. The hunter-gatherer cultures were replaced by energetic newcomers with a very different way of viewing the world. As a result, the structure of the forest has changed dramatically.

Beginning with the Great Gold Rush of 1849, the need for construction timber and firewood led to extensive logging in areas in and around the gold-producing regions, including Nevada County. Through most of the 19th century, there was little or no thought as to what form the forest would take upon renewal. For example, hard rock mines needed huge amounts of fuel for the steam engines which powered the stamp mills to crush gold ore so the gold could be extracted. The result was that forested areas accessible to 19th century technology were stripped of useful wood for the mines and communities of Nevada City and Grass Valley.

In the 20th century, the demand for timber remained high, especially in the years following World War II. Continued logging often took the largest trees, clear-cuts being a favored method. These clear-cut areas would quickly sprout dense and highly flammable stands of newer growth. Loggers preferred to take pines, leaving a higher percentage of firs and cedars, which are less fire-resistant. Slash from the logging added to the emerging problem. Lopping and scattering limbs and branches resulted in fuel accumulations with a high air-to-volume ratio. Downed fuels decay slowly here, because the dry season is long, and the wet season is cold.

Following the great firestorms of 1910 in the Northern Rockies, fire suppression became federal policy to protect permanent settlements and to protect standing timber. This policy of putting all fires out immediately eliminated the low intensity fires, which had kept the forest floor fairly clear of undergrowth. Over the years, dense fuel loads became the rule instead of the exception.

The combination of the practice of removing large trees and the suppression of all fires has led to today's situation. The forests in and around Nevada City are now composed of mostly smallish trees with a dense understory. Numerous homes and some businesses are scattered throughout the area. Because of the highly flammable condition of the forest and the location of human development within the forest, the potential for a wildfire disaster of major magnitude is very high. The greatest danger is in the fall when the dry north wind blows strongly.

In 1910 fire swept through most of the BLM property in the Round Mountain area, but left some very large trees, many of which were logged later in the century. The largest wildfire in recent history was the Forty-Niner Fire of September 1988, which ignited when the north wind was blowing. As long as the wind blew, absolutely nothing could be done to control the fire. It burned 33,700 acres and destroyed 312 structures, including many homes. Since then, two similar, but not quite as destructive, fires burned in the Dobbins area of Yuba County.

From tree ring analysis, it appears that the period from 1937 through 1986 was the third wettest half-century in the past 1,000 years, and the fourth wettest in the last 4,000. Since the surrounding neighborhood experienced forest fires during those wet years, it seems evident that it will be even more difficult to limit the size of fires in drier years.

Desired Future Conditions: A Fuel Model

Not much can be done about the weather and slope, but we can manage the fuel load, much as earlier inhabitants did over 200 hundred years ago.

The ideal fuel model would allow the forest to survive fires and possibly even benefit from them. Big trees would be able to hold their own, due to size, lack of lower branches and the fire resistant nature of their thick bark. Smaller trees designated to eventually replace the mature trees would be spaced away from the large trees so as not to act as ladder fuels. As these matured, people would thin them out and remove their lower branches, so that some could join the ranks of the protected. Thinning would create spacing appropriate to size, species and soils. Stands would not be left so open that brush and other vegetation would come to dominate the stand and worsen the fire hazard. Riparian corridors would have their own fuel model but be separated both horizontally and vertically, from the rest of the forest.

Implementation

The Implementation Plan is a separate document which contains the details necessary to achieve the fuel model, but some general comments can be made here. The basic strategy is to remove as much excess fuel as possible and practical. This can be done through mechanical means or by prescribed fires or, where practical, a combination of both.

Heavily stocked stands are extremely difficult to underburn safely. The U.S. Forest Service estimates one escape per 20,000 acres of prescribed burning is not good enough for a residential area such as Round Mountain. It is far safer to use manual and mechanical treatments first. These are more effective at removing ladder and crown fuels and will greatly reduce the amount of smoke generated by the eventual burns. Since the land in question is surrounded by homes, the perimeter areas may be assigned the highest priority.

Goal 2: Maintain Lands as Open Space

One of the major concerns of local residents is that the BLM may transfer the public's lands to private ownership. If this occurs, the population within the planning area could substantially increase as parcels are developed to the limits established by the county build-out as permitted in the Nevada County General Plan and existing zoning regulations. Infrastructure facilities required to support this additional development would further fragment the forest.

The BLM shall not consider public lands within the Round Mountain area as available for disposal through the exchange or sales processes. These public lands shall be retained in public ownership for open space. Exceptions to this may be made on a case-by-case basis when it is clearly beneficial to the government, private property owners and the local community.

From time to time, private lands which would further the goals and objectives of this plan may become available for purchase. These lands may be acquired by the BLM only when the property owner is willing to sell to the government. Eminent domain shall not be used in the Round Mountain area by the BLM.

Goal 3: Manage for Old Growth Forest

Background

This is perhaps the most important and far-reaching portion of the Round Mountain Management Plan. It will have a major impact in establishing the long-term character of the neighborhood that exists in the Round Mountain area.

The goal of forest management on Round Mountain BLM public lands is the establishment of a healthy forest with late succession old growth large tree characteristics. A variety of different dominant species and vegetative series

shall be allowed to mature throughout the area. This is no simple task, and the results may not be known for decades. It will be expensive in both time and money. Much of the required work which must be done is labor-intensive. There will be times when the forest will be changed, for example just after a prescribed burn or after a commercial thinning.

It is unlikely the federal government, acting alone, will be able to achieve this goal. With the active help of concerned neighbors, dreams become possibilities. It can be done.

The following forest management practices shall be used to guide all work done to re-establish and sustain a forest with old growth characteristics. They are intended to be general guidelines. These guidelines have been gained from the current understanding of ecoforesters, from those defining criteria for ecologically certified forest products such as the Institute for Sustainable Forestry, and from Eric Beckwitt of the Yuba Watershed Institute as described in the Inimim Forest Management Plan of 1995. Adopted sections are described in the forest practices section below. This forest shall be managed in accordance with the current understanding of the highest and best science of ecological forest management as this science evolves. These forest practices shall always be considered when developing site-specific projects.

Principles

Ecosystem Management

The principles of ecosystem management shall be utilized to guide management on Round Mountain BLM public lands. Essentially, this means that all ecological, economic, and social factors shall be integrated to manage the area's biological systems (including humans) in a manner that safeguards long-term ecological sustainability, viability, and native plant and animal biodiversity. This will place a priority on maintaining the health of the entire ecosystem of the area to ensure that present and future generations will continue to derive benefits from the land. To be effective, a cooperative effort which involves all contiguous property owners and other concerned citizens will be necessary. The proposed management actions will provide opportunities and challenges as we move toward an ecosystem management philosophy. It is important to understand that natural processes don't necessarily follow property boundary lines. Land management actions in a portion of the area on public or private lands may have an impact on other areas within the watershed. Actions on adjacent private lands shall continue to be controlled by existing regulations of other governmental agencies. The

Round Mountain Planning Group's education efforts shall be directed toward local property owners and shall focus on the ecological principles being used to manage their adjacent public lands.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is defined as the full variety of life and its associated patterns and processes. It includes a variety of living organisms, the genetic differences between them, and the communities and ecosystems in which they occur. For the Round Mountain area, this means that a mosaic of all vegetative series, habitat types and their wildlife associations existent in the Round Mountain BLM public lands and typical of this elevation in the western Sierra Nevada shall be encouraged and maintained. This will include a variety of plant species with different age classes of vegetation.

As defined in the Manual of California Vegetation, by John Sawyer and Todd Keeler-Wolf, 1995, published by the California Native Plant Society, the following series of native vegetative habitats currently exists and shall be managed to maintain their viability and maturity: California Mixed Conifer series, Blue Oak Woodland series, Foothill Oak Woodland series, Black Oak series, Canyon Live Oak series, Riparian White Alder series, Deer brush series, and White leaf Manzanita series. The Montane Wetland Shrub habitat including wet and dry meadows as defined by Robert Holland, 1986, in Terrestrial Natural Communities of CA., shall be maintained where they currently exist.

The above vegetative habitats are capable of supporting many bird, reptile, amphibian, insect, mammal and plant species of special status as defined by federal, state, and CNPS standards. See Appendices B, C, and D for details of these species.

Forest Practices Guidelines

Practice 1: Natural Cycles and Processes

The goal of this practice is to allow natural events to unfold without human interference. Fire suppression to protect human dwellings and threatened, rare or endangered species is required. Native plant communities shall be managed by keeping in mind the effects that the elimination of natural fire occurrences has on natural processes. Fuel accumulations shall be managed. Fire may be used as a management tool for fuel reduction and forest health only when safe to do so.

Practice 2: Restoration/Working with Succession

This practice applies to forestlands of moderate to high productivity that have been cleared in the past by logging, mining or intense fire. The goal is to assist the natural soil regeneration process that results, step by step, in gradual replacement of shrub and grass species with trees and finally with those tree species that would naturally be most abundant and dominant after several hundred years of uninterrupted growth. Working with succession involves recognizing the role that meadows, chaparral and broadleaf plants play in modifying soil conditions for the benefit of forest trees. It also involves avoiding activities that cause erosion or negate the soil-improving effects these species have in the process of reforestation.

Practice 3: Transplantation, Natural Seeding and Reforestation

It is important to recognize that not only are different tree species unique, but each species on the west slope of the Sierra has evolved to particular local conditions over the past 10,000 years.

Ponderosa pine only a few miles apart can be adapted to growing on moist, north-facing slopes at 1,400 feet or on dry, shallow soil 2,000 feet higher. Buds break at different times. Trees grow to different heights at different rates. Trees are adapted to feast or famine regarding critical nutrient elements. It is recognized that recurring natural fire plays a critical role in maintaining the health of the forest.

To maintain the historic genetic intelligence in these local site adaptations, reforestation on Round Mountain BLM public lands is focused on preparing seedbeds for natural reseeding and transplanting local stock into the small clearings that have been created in overgrown thinned-out areas. The preferred practice is to let nature reseed, but replanting the herbaceous layer shall be encouraged where it is now mostly missing as a result of prior logging practices, and where overgrown vegetation exists due to the elimination of fire.

In general, plant and animal species native to the Round Mountain area shall be given preference over exotic species (those not normally found in the Sierra Nevada at this elevation). The presence of exotic plant species, however, shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. For a number of reasons, including historical interest, it may be desirable to maintain some exotic plant species (fruit

trees, for instance). Noxious invasive non-native plants as identified by the California Native Plant society shall be removed where possible.

Practice 4: Thinning From Below

This is a method of selecting for removal only suppressed or smaller trees beneath the main canopy. Thinning from below is the opposite of high-grading. Logging is targeted on the understory, not the dominant trees, while still maintaining a reasonable age diversity and distribution in given areas.

Both commercial and non-commercial species (such as broadleaves) may be cut.

Fuelwood sales may be used to obtain a more desirable stand structure. Others may be cut, leaving stumps no higher than 18 inches above ground, with stumps allowed to decay and build soil fertility. A prescription for old snags shall be developed to maintain and improve wild life habitat.

Practice 5: Use only Existing Roads and Skid Trails

Construction of roads, landings (places where logs are loaded on trucks) and skid roads (where logs are dragged) are the most destructive aspects of forestry (much more destructive to soil fertility and watersheds than the felling of trees). No new hauling roads shall be constructed on the Round Mountain BLM public lands unless absolutely necessary. Where necessary existing hauling roads shall be reclaimed by soil improvement, stabilization and plant replacement. An example of what may be permitted are temporary access roads for fuel reduction and thinning projects in hazardous fuel areas.

Because of the complexity of this topic, implementation guidelines for logging and its associated access points shall be developed by the Round Mountain Planning Group in close consultation with the local logging community, specifically including National and State Agency Foresters. The priority shall be to permanently allow only the designated roads that exist at the time of the adoption of this plan.

Existing Roads

Existing roads, which are county-maintained or have a right-of-way across them, shall be kept open. Consideration may be given to closing and rehabilitating others. Persons who depend on roads over the public lands for

access to their property shall be encouraged to obtain a legal right-of-way from the BLM. Otherwise, the road could be closed. Existing roads which provide access to private property or which provide escape routes from a wildfire shall be maintained in good condition to reduce erosion and meet state fire-safe standards. Existing roads and lands immediately adjacent shall be maintained to serve as the primary fire breaks in the area.

Practice 6: Maintain Soil Cover

Within the Round Mountain forested areas, soils are typically forming at the rate of 25 thousandths of an inch per year. This is thinner than a piece of paper. The same type of soil exposed to the washing rains has been lost from clearcuts on the nearby upper San Juan Ridge at the rate of over 2 inches per year, with over 18 inches of soil having been lost in 15 years. On some soils, the difference between those that support low productive commercial conifer forest (30 inches to bedrock) and manzanita chaparral (20 inches) is only 10 inches of soil. Thus catastrophic, accelerated soil erosion can convert forest soils to chaparral soils in 5 years or less. Weathering can restore such soils, but it will take over 400 years. Even then, soil will be restored to previous depth only if surface erosion can be completely halted during that entire period.

As a general rule, mineral soil which is directly exposed to rain will be lost at unsustainable levels. The only certain way to prevent such loss is to keep it covered with litter and duff. On the Round Mountain BLM public lands, prescribed fire shall only be used when it can be controlled to burn cool enough so as not to completely consume the duff. In addition, any soil exposed by logging, skid roads or landings shall be thoroughly mulched before the completion of each project. Any use or activity that causes or is likely to cause significant soil degradation erosion, or pollution of any surface or subsurface waters, shall not be permitted. Those areas identified as already seriously disturbed or soil deficient shall be improved as time and resources permit.

Practice 7: Maintain Soil Organic Matter

Soil organic material shall be measured using a statistically sound procedure for each soil/plant association at the inception of the plan. By monitoring soil organic material over time, an index of the net effect that logging or the lack thereof, is having on soil fertility shall be obtained. See Appendix E for soil type definitions, and Appendix F for a soil map of the Round Mountain area.

Organic material levels shall be maintained or increased through the careful use of:

- Low intensity cool prescribed burns that will eliminate ladder fuels and open up the forest floor, but keep fire out of the tree crown;
- Retention of fallen logs on the forest floor;
- Leave in place chipping slash and shrubs cut in the course of logging and fuel load reduction
- Mastication of overgrown areas;
- Returning all possible slabs, bark and other cast-off material from timber processing to the general vicinity of the logging site.

Agrochemicals, including but not limited to fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, biocides, insecticides, and rodenticides shall not be used unless these are the only effective way to address urgent, hazardous problems.

Practice 8: Grow and Maintain Late Succession Forest Conditions

All forest practices on Round Mountain BLM public lands shall be based on the goal of encouraging natural processes of growth and decay to reestablish late succession/old growth forest conditions. The forest will include multi-layered canopies, with large snags and fallen logs, large diameter trees several hundred years old, and deep organic matter in rich forest floors. The living and dead trees will provide essential habitat for late-succession forest dependent species. Such woody material will also maintain the fertility of the forest soil, storing and cycling essential nutrients and maintaining stable water flows in the forested watersheds of the Round Mountain area.

Retain the Largest Trees

Retaining the largest trees enables a quicker return to late succession old growth forest conditions. The intent is to use the best available science to manage the Round Mountain BLM public lands, so they can be restored to their appearance prior to the arrival of Europeans. Each identified plant series shall be maintained and allowed to mature. Management shall be implemented to reverse the modern effects of logging, mining, fire elimination and introduction of invasive non-native species.

Until series specific standards are developed using an adaptive management approach, the cutting of any tree or snag throughout the BLM public lands whose diameter at breast height (dbh) is greater than the 65th percentile dbh for all live trees of that species of 8 inches dbh or larger shall not be permitted. The 65th percentile dbh shall be

determined by means of a 10% timber cruise, to be re-checked prior to the development of a timber harvest plan or non-industrial timber management plan, prior to a sanitation or salvage operation, prior to any harvest which removes more than 5 percent of the previously cruised inventory or prior to cutting any tree over 8 inches dbh if existing cruise data is more than 20 years old. This restriction applies to all tree species, including hardwoods. The 65th percentile dbh is that diameter for which 65% of the trees have a dbh that is smaller or the same and 35% of the trees having a dbh that is larger.

The specific intent of this section is to manage the forest not for the purpose of old growth harvest but to allow the forest to mature to a late successional community, while maintaining the diversity of vegetative series. Routine resurveying to allow old growth harvest is expressly prohibited.

Favored species

Past forest practices have severely impacted the populations of several tree species. To correct this sugar pine shall be reestablished. In addition, no live, healthy blue oak, western maple, or Pacific yew shall be removed until such time as these species are well represented and account for at least 10% of the volume of trees of all species growing in their vegetative series. Cutting of live black oak and madrone shall be limited until these species account for at least five percent of the volume of trees of all species growing in their series.

Retain Snags and Fallen Trees

At least 10 snags per acre shall be retained, but no snags will be artificially created. There shall be a similar number of large fallen trees on the ground. The amount of down logs shall be visually estimated on a tonnage basis. The target shall be 20 tons per acre of large dead down trees. Cutting snags which are visibly or highly likely to be wildlife trees, regardless of the number per acre or the tree size, shall not be permitted. Wildlife trees shall be marked with signs.

Practice 9: Protect Riparian Zones

Streamside or riparian wetlands serve as wildlife habitat, key zones in watershed protection and flood prevention and are, therefore, critical parts of the Round Mountain ecosystem as. Vegetation on both sides of fish bearing streams and streams that dry to pools in the summer shall

be completely protected within the zone. These areas shall include moisture-requiring riparian vegetation—alders, willows, clump grass, big leaf maple, dogwood, and black oak. Artificial ponds on public lands shall also be maintained.

Vegetation shall be protected to provide shade for streams, to provide woody material (leaves, branches and coarse wood, which are major energy sources for the stream animals), and to reduce the time in which streamside soils are saturated and contribute to flooding. During intense storms, the volume of water simply falling on the surface of perennial water bodies can cause flooding downstream. The surface area of this wet zone can be greatly increased, with severe results, if streamside vegetation is cleared and streamside soil is saturated.

Practice 10: Use Fire as an Ecological Tool

An old growth forest needs fire. In order to reintroduce fire into the ecosystem, fuels shall be reduced using a variety of methods, including mechanical removal of brush, chipping, thinning, and pruning. The preferred methods shall have the lowest impact on soils (e.g., hand crews are preferred to mastication).

The purpose of reintroducing fire through controlled prescribed burns is to reduce the likelihood of catastrophic fires, to increase the rate of nutrient cycling in the system, to prepare the seedbed for regeneration of new forest trees and plants, and to create forest openings. In some areas fire shall provide places for early succession forests to mature.

Details for prescribed burn practices have been discussed in Goal 1.

Practice 11: Small Group Selection Logging

Small group selection shall be the dominant logging method on Round Mountain BLM public lands. This method minimizes the damage to soil, the bark of other living trees and the canopy (which gets broken up as large trees drop through it). In group selection, logging focuses on the small aggregations of trees within a stand that have grown in response to a previous disturbance, logging or fire 100 or more years earlier.

Clearcutting

Clear-cutting shall not generally be permitted on the Round Mountain BLM public lands. However, this

practice may be used when necessary to further the goal of the Plan to foster reestablishment or to protect the health of old growth forest. Group selection logging shall occur only within small groups of older, large trees of the same age class. Young trees of all species shall be left to grow in the increased sunlight, if they can survive the felling of the group above them in the canopy and forest floor.

Retain the Canopy

In the tree zones, the maximum size of openings shall be 1.5 times the mature height of the forest canopy on the site. This distance is needed for wind to disperse conifer seeds and woody material in the surrounding uncut forest. This is also the distance within which logs can fall in from the side and enrich the soil. Snags and healthy young trees of shade-intolerant species shall be left in the openings. Any timber cutting that would result in a canopy closure of the dominant overstory trees to less than 50%, except in natural meadow areas, is not permitted. In other words the dominant tree in each zone shall be maintained in at least 50% levels.

Within the first two years after logging, trees shall be transplanted into the new openings as necessary to maintain stocking suitable for the site. Both broadleaves and conifers shall be “planted” in the following ways:

- seedlings on the forest floor released by opening the canopy above,
- nuts or acorns planted,
- seedbeds prepared,
- conifers transplanted from nearby seedbeds
- natural seeding of herbaceous plants in the immediate zone of the logging

Practice 12: Develop Timber Harvest Criteria

The end result of timber management on the Round Mountain BLM public lands will be the establishment of a forest with old growth late successional characteristics capable of providing natural habitat for associated wildlife and high quality recreation. Both conifers and hardwoods shall be managed. Forest development and health shall take priority over material sales. Contract thinning shall be the primary form of timber harvest on the Round Mountain BLM public lands, with consistent monitoring and contract review provided by BLM and the Round Mountain Planning Group.

Timber Sales and Harvest Procedures

Advertised sales of timber from the Round Mountain BLM public lands shall be by auction, with sealed bid or

oral bidding. The high bidder shall be awarded the contract. The opportunity to submit a bid shall be equally available to all. Bidding shall begin at the appraised fair market value of the timber to be sold. Both softwoods and hardwoods may be sold. The sale of timber shall be conducted by the BLM. Other non-advertised sales shall follow all the rules and regulations as set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 5410.

Timber sales on the Round Mountain BLM public lands shall be limited to activities designed to further the goal of re-establishing a late seral stage forest. All timber sales shall conform to the Forest Management Guidelines previously stated.

Fuel wood permits shall be issued and monitored only for specifically designated areas where it has been determined necessary to achieve the objectives of this plan.

Goal 4: Provide Opportunities for Outdoor Recreation that Protect the Natural Environment and the Local Community

Recreation Guidelines

The guiding principle for recreation is to keep BLM public lands in the Round Mountain area as wild as possible, while letting people use them.

Use Areas

There shall be two basic usage zones in the management area: Multi-Use Areas and Wildlife Areas. The exact location of the zones shall be defined after further public input. Multi-Use Areas and Wildlife Areas are defined below.

Wildlife areas

There shall be no trails or facilities in the designated Wildlife Areas. People may enter and use wildlife areas. However, they may enter these areas on foot only. Existing trails, roads and logging roads within the Wildlife Areas shall be allowed to return to nature.

Multi-Use Areas

The Multi-Use areas are all those areas not designated as Wildlife Areas. Human use shall be focused in the Multi-Use Areas. The existing trail and road system shall remain

in place for human usage. No new trails or facilities shall be established within the Multi-Use areas. (Exceptions to this are delineated in the “Trails and Road” section that follows).

Persons entering the Round Mountain BLM public lands shall be encouraged to remain on the existing roads and trails. Hiking, bicycle and equestrian use are permitted uses and shall be confined to existing trails and roads. Motorized vehicles shall be limited to established roadways, and unauthorized vehicles shall not be allowed on trails or logging/skid roads.

Trails and Roads

There are both authorized and unauthorized trails in this area. No new trails or facilities shall be established within the management area. Some trails may be re-routed for safety and to protect fragile ecosystems and wetlands. Road cabling may be established in some areas to implement plan goals. (This shall not apply to roads leading to private property).

The principle reason for existing trails shall be to provide for hiking, biking and equestrian use. Persons entering the Round Mountain BLM public lands shall be encouraged to remain on existing roads and trails. Unauthorized motorized vehicles shall not be permitted on trails or logging/skid roads. Bicycle and equestrian use in particular shall be confined to existing trails and roads. Bicycles and equestrian use may not be permitted on certain trails during the wet season (November through April), to prevent erosion and trail damage. No impervious surfaces shall be created (no paving of BLM roads, trails, or parking areas).

Overnight Use

Overnight use is discouraged. No facilities shall be established. No impervious surfaces shall be created to support overnight use. Fires of any kind are prohibited, including campfires and camp stoves (except for control burns by authorized agencies to implement plan goals).

Organized Groups

Groups of more than 25 people shall obtain BLM permission. Permitted group uses include hiking, nature observation, education and research. Competitive events such as marathons, bike races, simulated combat games etc., are not permitted due to environmental concerns.

Hunting/Shooting

Limited hunting shall be allowed in designated areas where there is no threat to public safety. Target shooting may be permitted at a designated area. For safety reasons, existing trails shall be re-routed away from the designated area.

Signage

Signs shall be developed as needed, in conjunction with BLM.

GOAL 5: Provide Economic Opportunities Consistent with the Above Goals

Commercial Use

The public lands will be available for public uses when an event promoter charges a fee for participation or when forest materials are gathered for sale. However, a Special Use Permit shall be obtained from the BLM. These uses could include commercial gathering of forest materials (such as mushrooms or forest herbs), fund-raising events, guided tours or commercial filming.

Mining Claims and Mineral Development

Although little gold is known to exist in the area, the Round Mountain BLM public lands are open to activities authorized under the 1872 Mining Law. It is possible that prospecting activities could have an impact on the long-term goal of the re-establishment of an old growth forest. BLM will work closely with mining claimants to ensure their activities have a minimum effect on forest vegetation and riparian values.

Contract work

Local businesses shall be included on lists of potential bidders for contract work, which may be available from time to time.

Other Goals

Provide an Example for Private Land Management

The BLM public land parcels of the Round Mountain area are interspersed with parcels of private land. One of the core goals of the Round Mountain Management Plan is to provide an educational and inspirational example for state-of-the-art sustainable forest management for the local

community. All work undertaken on the BLM public lands of the Round Mountain area shall be pursued with this educational model-project goal in mind. Further, cooperative projects with adjoining private landowners for mutual benefit (e.g., prescribed burns) shall be encouraged.

Work with Surrounding Landowners

BLM and RMPG will work with surrounding owners to keep them informed of planned activities and to help them improve the management of their lands, if requested.

BLM Boundary Identification

Due to the scattered nature of the public land parcels and to their irregular shapes, it is sometimes difficult for a person to know when they are on federal lands. Because the federal lands are intermingled with private, often residential properties, this can lead to some problems, including inadvertent trespass. The borders will be marked where appropriate or necessary.

Rights of Way

A right-of-way is the federal equivalent of an easement under state law. A right-of-way, however, is granted to an individual for a specific time period, rather than being attached to a property deed in perpetuity. BLM rights-of-way are transferable, if the original holder decide to sell. Requests for right-of-way for purposes such as access roads, power lines, water lines or telephone lines will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and evaluated for conformity to management goals and objectives. Applications for a right-of-way shall be made to the BLM.

Provide Educational and Research Opportunities

Communication

Round Mountain Planning Group shall inform the community about the history of the BLM property and provide a forum for knowledgeable discussion about issues raised by the Neighborhood Land Management Plan and BLM implementation of the plan. Individuals with special background and experience will be invited to help in resolving complex issues. These individuals shall participate with members of the community in public workshops

and seminars. The information generated in these forums shall be published in a newsletter to document the proceedings and to reach those not in attendance.

The following are possible general topics for which workshops and/or seminars may be developed.

History

Workshops and seminars will be presented by local historians, descendants, and others familiar with the cultural artifacts of the Indians who lived in this area and with the settlers who came here during the 19th century Gold Rush. Topics may include the use made of the land, including gathering, logging and mining. One of the major topics of interest to the community is the history of fire on the BLM land and on land adjacent to it.

Private use of BLM Public Lands

Private use of BLM public lands has a long tradition. To better understand the relationship between public and private use, valuable discussions about commercial use, mining claims, mineral development, and the BLM requirements for obtaining a special use permit for these and other private uses may be held.

Neighborhood issues

Round Mountain Planning Group encourages the exploration of the issues raised by the neighborhood community from many different viewpoints, including history, science, politics, economics, and safety. Important neighborhood issues include recreation use, the boundary between BLM and private lands, and rights-of-way.

Land Management Practices

BLM shall work with private property owners who wish to voluntarily adopt land management practices, including conservation easements and forest practices, to support the integrity of the ecosystem. Information about historical Indian management practices as well as current scientific knowledge can provide useful guidance. BLM and private landowners may participate in cooperative projects that could include forest management, controlled burns, and other techniques for developing a safe, attractive environment and a protected natural ecosystem.

Educational and Research Opportunities

The joint activities of BLM and the neighborhood community could provide educational and research opportunities that could benefit not only the local neighborhood but also other communities, in Nevada County and beyond. Some suggestions for doing this include documenting completed projects, designating areas for use by educational institutions, designing and installing interpretive signs at key points, and holding periodic seminars on various aspects of forest management.

Protect Cultural Resources

Protection of cultural resources is required under federal law. Both American Indian and 19th century gold rush and settlement period artifacts can be found in the Round Mountain area. American Indian artifacts will remain in situ and be protected by fencing, unless removed as part of a university-sponsored archaeological investigation.

Determine Land Use Designations

A map shall be completed which will contain proposed land use designations. It shall show unauthorized trails that will be eliminated, and shall legitimize those to be kept. It shall depict group camping areas, parking areas, the target shooting area, wildlife areas, historical sites, and other features. It shall also show the areas to be primarily reserved for wildlife, and areas for more concentrated human use.

Inventory and Monitor the Round Mountain BLM Public Lands

How can an independent observer be certain that sustainable forestry is being practiced on Round Mountain BLM public lands? How can the community know? On Round Mountain BLM public lands, this dilemma shall be resolved by a statistically valid inventory and monitoring process by which a small portion of the places in the forest are measured periodically to determine, with known levels of precision, the current condition, quantity and location of forest species and resources. This will allow the partners to quickly, efficiently and accurately determine if sustained yield guidelines are being followed and if unexpected problems occur (such as the decline of a certain tree species, size or age class of tree, or other plant or animal species).

An active program of monitoring conditions on the Round Mountain BLM public lands shall be instituted. The information from the monitoring program shall be compared to baseline data to identify trends, and shall be used to evaluate progress in achieving management goals and objectives. For effectiveness, the monitoring objectives shall be closely tied to management objectives. Monitoring methodology shall be simple and consistent. Monitoring by local college and high school classes shall be encouraged providing a valuable educational opportunity for the students.

Inventory Forest Conditions

The BLM shall establish a database for basic forest conditions: slope/aspect, soil, crown closure, tree volume, species composition, size class distribution, snag and down log density, reproduction, recent mortality or disease. Additional primary inventory to determine the presence and distribution on Round Mountain BLM public lands of plant and resident animal species shall be completed prior to implementation of the first logging projects.

Monitor Wildlife

The Round Mountain BLM public lands shall provide a variety of suitable habitats for wildlife. Consideration for wildlife over the long term shall be one of the primary criteria used to evaluate management proposals. Federal or state listed rare, threatened or endangered species shall be given special attention, and a list of the species that may occur on Round Mountain shall be prepared. Species primarily adapted to forests with old growth characteristics shall receive preference over species with wider habitat preferences. The long term benefits to wildlife are to be given priority over possible short-term harm due to management activities. Priority is given to creating and maintaining old growth habitat. Wildlife species historically known to inhabit the Round Mountain BLM public lands may be re-established if suitable habitat is available. A wildlife monitoring plan shall be developed.

Encourage Cooperative Management

The relationship between the Round Mountain BLM public lands and the following agencies and individuals shall be explored. Where mutual objectives exist, a cooperative management agreement shall be negotiated and implemented.

U. S. Forest Service

California Department of Parks and Recreation

California Department of Fish and Game

California Department of Forestry

Nevada County

Private property owners of the Round Mountain area

Round Mountain Planning Group

Nevada County Land Trust

Implementation of Proposed Actions

A separate Implementation plan shall be created describing the potential projects and their priorities, with projected costs for implementation.

Plan Amendments

To be effective, the plan shall have some flexibility built into it. This is because even the best of plans sometimes have unforeseen consequences which might be undesirable. On the other hand, plans that are easy to change have no stability (one of the main reasons for having a plan in the first place).

The Round Mountain Management Plan can be modified if a good case can be made for the change. For example, if the monitoring program or an independent research project produces information, which would justify a change, then a plan amendment shall be prepared.

Plan amendments and projects shall be treated formally.

The process for proposing projects or amendments to the Round Mountain Management or Implementation Plans shall be as follows:

Any RMPG Committee can make recommendations for projects or amendments to the Round Mountain Management or Implementation Plans, based on a 2/3 vote taken by the committee.

The BLM or NCLT can propose projects or amendments to the Steering Committee, who shall route them to the appropriate committee.

The Steering Committee shall review committee recommendations, suggest changes, and ultimately approve finalized recommendations. The NCLT, BLM and appropriate agencies shall be consulted during this process.

The Steering Committee shall present approved recommendations to the general membership of RMPG. If Steering Committee consensus cannot be reached on recommendations, alternatives may be proposed to the general membership.

The general membership shall pass recommendations by at least a 2/3 vote.

If approved, the Steering Committee shall meet with BLM, the appropriate agencies and NCLT to present project recommendations or amendments to the Management Plan.

If a project or amendment is approved by all parties, the BLM shall prepare an Environmental Assessment, and submit both the proposed project or amendment and the EA for public review. A plan project or amendment shall not be finalized until the public review process has been completed.

Community Stewardship

Public participation in the stewardship of the Round Mountain BLM public lands is essential to the project. The basic guiding principle is that those who make the decisions must live with the consequences. It shall be the policy of the BLM to approve community-generated management suggestions unless those decisions fall outside existing federal laws or regulations, or BLM policy.

Parcel Descriptions

The Round Mountain Management Plan is intended to apply to public land areas north of Nevada City and south of the canyon of the South Fork Yuba River. None of the lands within the river canyon will be covered by the plan.

T17N, R8E, M.D.B. & M.

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Section 24

S°S°NW°

S°SE°NE°

SE°NE°NW°

S°N°SW°NW°

Section 26

NE°NE°

T17N, R9E, M.D.B. & M.

Section 19

All public lands above the 2800 foot
contour

Section 20

All public lands above the 2900 foot
contour

Section 22

All public lands above the 2600 foot
contour

Section 28

S°SE°NE°

Section 29

All public lands within the section

Section 30

All public lands within the section

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