

Rim Fire Habitat Improvement (45860) Proposed Action

Stanislaus National Forest
Groveland and Mi-Wok Ranger Districts
Tuolumne and Mariposa Counties, CA

The Rim Fire Habitat Improvement (Rim Habitat) project would improve habitat for wildlife and sensitive plants as well as protect and improve the function of meadows, streams, and springs affected by the Rim Fire using hand treatments only (Rim Habitat Map Package)¹. Activities include: restoring 10 springs; restoring 32 acres of meadows and streams; installing 30-50 great gray owl nest structures; hand treating 300 acres of weeds; protecting and restoring habitat for mountain lady'slipper in 8 locations; removing encroaching conifers on 412 acres of special aquatic features; reconfiguring a fence near Jawbone station; and, improving western pond turtle habitat on up to 1 acre of upland and 1,600 feet of stream channel. Except where described specifically below, project activities would occur within the Rim Fire perimeter. The Forest Service intends to prepare a Decision Memo for this proposal under the category: Timber stand and/or wildlife improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road construction [36 CFR 220.6(e)(6)].

The Proposed Action includes the following activities.

1. Spring Restoration

Restoration of ten springs may include geomorphic restoration (spreading channelized flow), removal of encroaching conifers, planting of native species, and digging or hand pulling non-native species (Table 1). Minimize cattle disturbance by creating a barrier at one site.

Table 1 Spring Restoration

#	Spring	Proposed Action*	Location	Implement (year)
S1	Mosspool	1-4	T1N, R18E, Sec 27	2016
S2	Nettle Ditch	1-4	T1N, R18E, Sec 26	2016
S3	Cordulegaster	1-4	T1N, R18E, Sec 26	2016
S4	Hopeful	1-4	T1N, R18E, Sec 26	2016
S5	Tecnu	1-4	T1N, R18E, Sec 36	2016
S6	Salvage Meadow	1-5	T1N, R18E, Sec 27	2016
S7	Granite Ditch Seep	1-4	T1N, R18E, Sec 24	2016
S8	Towhee	1-4	T1N, R19E, Sec 8	2016
S9	Spiranthes Seep	1-4	T1N, R19E, Sec 5	2016
S10	Liverwort	1-4	T1N, R19E, Sec 19	2016

*Spring Restoration Treatments:

1. Implement geomorphic restoration, such as spreading channelized flow.
2. Remove encroaching conifers.
3. Plant native species.
4. Dig and/or hand pull non-native species
5. Construct a barrier to exclude cattle from spring

2. Meadow and Stream Restoration

Stabilize 32 acres in seven meadows and associated stream channels by replacing large woody debris (LWD) burned by the fire (Table 2). Hand treat (pull or dig) non-native plants in meadows and stream

¹ Maps and other project information are available at the Stanislaus National Forest; 19777 Greenly Road; Sonora, CA 95370; or, online at http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=45860.

corridors. Remove encroaching conifers to minimize drying of meadows and utilize these trees to provide for LWD. Remove additional conifers not needed for LWD by lop and scatter, lop and pile roadside for fuelwood cutters, chip and haul, or pile burning. Promote expansion of meadow vegetation through collection and spreading of native seeds/plants. Stabilize stream channels and stop minor headcutting with LWD, brush and/or rock. Minimize cattle disturbance with barriers at two sites.

Table 2 Meadow and Stream Restoration

#	Meadow	Size (acres)	Proposed Action*	Location	Implement (year)
M1	Wet Meadow	3	1-4	Adjacent to 1N02; T1N, R16E, Sec 24	2015
M2	Indian Springs Meadow	9	1-5	Adjacent to 1N36; T1N, R17E, Sec 26-27	2015
M3	Lower Femmons Meadow	6	1-4	Adjacent to Corral Creek, west of 2N10Y; T1N, R18E, Sec 17	2015
M4	Upper Femmons Meadow	3	1-4	Near intersection of 2N10Y and 1N84; T1N, R18E, Sec 17	2015
M5	John's Meadow	4	1-4, 6	Adjacent to 2N08Y; T2N, R18E, Sec 26	2017
M6	Boggy Meadow	5	1-4, 6	Adjacent to 2N89; T2N, R18E, Sec 35	2017
M7	Milk Ranch Springs Meadow	2	1-4, 7	South of 2N33; T2N, R17E, Sec 11	2017
		total	32		

*Meadow and Stream Restoration Treatments:

1. Increase LWD on the meadow surface by felling green and/or dead trees.
2. Hand treat non-native plants in meadow by pulling/digging. This may extend outside of meadow boundaries to area within the dispersal range of seeds.
3. Remove encroaching conifers. Utilize as LWD for meadow or lop and scatter outside of meadow, lop and pile roadside of fuelwood cutters, chip and haul, or pile burn.
4. Collect and spread native seeds/plants.
5. Create a barrier around spring emergence to minimize cattle disturbance by felling trees around spring or other similar technique.
6. Stabilize minor headcutting in meadow with wood, brush and/or rock.
7. Stabilize stream channel and trap stream sediment with wood and brush. If needed, protect restoration site by constructing a barrier fence.

3. Great Gray Owl Nest Structures

Install 30-50 nest structures for great gray owls in both occupied and suitable habitat by topping or partially topping trees and carving a bowl into the trunk of the tree (Table 3). Created slash will either be lopped and scattered or piled and burned. Due to the loss of suitable habitat within the fire perimeter, some nest structures are planned outside of the fire perimeter to help promote future nesting at suitable locations.

Table 3 Great Gray Owl Nest Structures

#	Meadow	Proposed Action	Inside Fire Perimeter?	Location
N1-4	Ackerson	Install 6-13 nest structures	Yes	T1S, R19E, Sec 23-26
N5	Anderson Flat	Install 2-4 nest structures	No	T2S, R19E, Sec 19, 30
N6	Crocker	Install 3-6 nest structures	Yes	T1S, R19E, Sec 33
N7-8	Deer Flat North and South	Install 2-4 nest structures	No	T2S, R18E, Sec 24-25
N9	Drew	Install 1-3 nest structures	Yes	T1S, R18E, Sec 16
N10-11	Femmons Lower and Upper	Install 2-4 nest structures	Yes	T1N, R18E, Sec 17
N12	Jordan	Install 1-3 nest structures	No	T2S, R17E, Sec 13-14, 23-24
N13-14	Mather North and South	Install 2-5 nest structures	Yes	T1S, R19E, Sec 2
N15-16	Spinning Wheel East and West	Install 1-3 nest structures	Yes	T1S, R18E, Sec 23
N17	Stone	Install 4-9 nest structures	Yes	T1S, R19E, Sec 14-15, 22-23
N18	Thompson	Install 2-4 nest structures	Yes	T2N, R17E, Sec 27, 34
N19	Weed	Install 2 nest structures	No	T3N, R19E, Sec 17-18
N20-23	Wilson and Adjacent Meadows	Install 3-7 nest structures	Yes	T1N, R19E, Sec 4, 9
N24	Wolfen	Install 1-2 nest structures	Yes	T2N, R18E, Sec 19-20, 29-30

4. Hand Treat Weeds

Hand dig and hand pull spotted knapweed (0.03 acres), tumble mustard (295 acres), and ox-eye daisy (2.9 acres).

5. Mountain Ladyslipper Restoration

Protect surviving occurrences of mountain ladyslipper, a Forest Service sensitive species, by fencing from grazing, and provide needed shade lost in the fire by draping shade cloth over fenced areas. While fencing will primarily use T posts and barbed wire or small 4'x4'x4' cattle exclusion cages, in some case hog fencing panels, snags, and trees may be utilized. Occurrences that are less accessible will only be fenced if observations show that cattle may reach them. Total area fenced is estimated at 1 acre. Mountain ladyslipper needs a mycorrhizal connection with a tree to grow and occurs about 98% of the time with Douglas fir. Promote Douglas fir at both existing and previous mountain ladyslipper locations by planting about 5 trees at sites where it is not regenerating naturally post-fire. Thin or remove weeds, shrubs, or small tree seedlings within 15 feet of Douglas fir seedlings by pulling or lopping.

6. Encroaching Conifers

Hand fell trees in and around identified special aquatic features, such as meadows and springs. Most trees would be left on meadow surfaces, floodplains, and/or in stream channels. However, if fuel loading is too high, lop and pile roadside for fuelwood cutters, chip and haul, or pile burning may occur.

7. Jawbone Station Fence Reconfiguration

Reconfigure fence near Jawbone station to increase the size of the enclosure, thereby increasing the protection of blue oaks in the enclosure. This enclosure is used about two weeks/year for mothering up and gathering of cattle. This action would also facilitate movement of cattle between private property and National Forest System Lands.

8. Western Pond Turtle Habitat Enhancement

Hand thin and pile burn on up to 1 acre on the north side of the Middle Fork Tuolumne to provide more open, herbaceous habitat for nesting and overwintering. Burning would occur between April and September to reduce risk to overwintering turtles. Brush removal and burning would occur every 3 years for up to 9 years after initial treatment. Follow-up maintenance would occur between April and June. Up to 16 trees would be felled on the south side of the Middle Fork Tuolumne River and placed strategically along a 1,800-foot reach for turtle basking sites. Trees may be felled in place or moved short distances, using existing roads. Trimmed tree trunks would be anchored to prevent movement during high river flows.

Information Contact

For additional information regarding this project, contact Tracy Weddle at the Stanislaus National Forest; 19777 Greenley Road; Sonora, CA 95370; or, call (209) 532-3671 ext. 360.