

# Interagency Forest Working Group

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Department of Fish and Game  
Forest Management for  
Sustainable Biomass Production

June 22, 2010

# DFG's Role

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- Responsible Agency review of impacts to biological resources
  - *Timber Harvesting Plans*
  - *CalFire funded forest and rangeland vegetation reduction projects*
  - *Harvest of submerchantable woody material for commercial biofuels*
- Provide recommendations
  - *reduce impacts to less than significant*
  - *mitigation measures*

# DFG's Role

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- Authority = CEQA, Forest Practice Act, Fish & Game Code (FGC) §1600, CESA (FGC § 2081(b))
- Provide project permits (Lake & Streambed Alteration Agreements, CESA incidental take permits)

# Sustainability Concerns

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- *Ensuring resource protection in biomass harvest & fuel reduction projects*
  - *Gaps in DFG Regulatory Oversight*
  - *Types of Project Impacts*

# Gaps in DFG Regulatory Oversight

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- *Not all projects subject to environmental impact review*
  - Size exemptions or CEQA Categorical Exemptions
  - Federally funded projects not subject to CEQA and DFG review
  - DFG resources inadequate to review majority of projects for which it has authority

# Gaps in DFG Regulatory Oversight

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- *Inadequate CEQA Compliance*

- DFG resources are limited

- One staff for Sierra Nevada funded year-by-year
- Non-forest staff review projects in other areas as time allows
- Number of projects will grow if economic barriers eliminated

- Project applicants lack CEQA expertise

- Projects submitted under CEQA exemptions or programmatic documents

- Cumulative impacts not adequately addressed

# Project Impacts

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- *Projects can have significant impacts*
  - Timing of vegetation treatments
    - Spring = bad timing for plant and wildlife reproduction
  - Limited scoping and surveying
    - Inadequate protection measures & CEQA disclosure
  - Removal of small trees and chaparral
    - Eliminate food and cover for sensitive wildlife
    - Eliminate late seral, edge habitat, vertical forest diversity = fewer niches
  - Modification of forest and chaparral structure
    - Limit effectiveness of listed species conservation plans

# Project Impacts

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- Invasive plant species
  - Introduction by equipment
  - Chopping & spreading seed materials
  - Soil disturbance creates favorable conditions

# Example

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- *Shaded fuel breaks*
  - Eliminate protective cover for a variety of species from rodents to birds
    - Loss of rodents disrupts prey base of raptors
  - Need a broad portfolio of vegetation reduction techniques and strategies
    - Apply in different settings and to maintain different habitat and species requirements

# Two Kinds of Gaps

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## ■ Technical

- DFG needs tools - data, modeling, guidelines
  - *For example, to evaluate fuel reduction/biomass projects relative to future predicted forest type distributions and changed species ranges*
- 2009 California Climate Adaptation Strategy

## ■ Regulations

- Broaden application of environmental review
- Species scoping
- Resource protection requirements
- Monitoring impacts and mitigation

# Take Home Points

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- *DFG agrees – high severity wild fires destroy timber, damage watershed values, release carbon.*
- *DFG supports biomass development and fuel reduction with resource protection.*
- *DFG expertise in wildlife impact assessment is necessary.*