

N1621

March 8, 1999

Bruce Halstead
Project Leader
Coastal California Fish and Wildlife Service Office
1125 16th Street
Arcata, California 95521

Dear Bruce:

As required by provision of several biological opinions issued by your office, the following is a report on the actual amount of incidental take that may have occurred in occupied marbled murrelet and northern spotted owl nesting habitat from operations implemented within Redwood National and State Parks (RNSP) in 1998. Our staff has reviewed their accomplishments for the year and we calculated incidental take to have affected 1,273 acres of marbled murrelet nesting habitat and 843 acres of northern spotted owl nesting habitat (Table 1). We did not implement all of the actions described in the biological assessments for which we consulted. Since the biological opinion for annual maintenance actions was completed on June 24, 1998, some actions were cancelled, curtailed or implemented with hand tools because they needed to be accomplished earlier in the year. Such was also the case with some of our actions described in our Watershed Restoration Assessment and associated Storm Damage assessment. We look forward to increasing our operational efficiency in 1999.

Howland Hill Road

Annual grading and re-profiling

Stephen Fisher sent a letter directly to Robin Hamlin of your staff partially describing the work accomplished along the Howland Hill road this year. Contractors completed an annual grading and patching of the entire length of the road between June 8 and 18. We were informed that your staff made a field trip to observe part of this work. We did not accomplish any road re-profiling during the spring.

In October, a park crew was able to implement some re-profiling along the northeast end. Re-profiling included moving the overcast berm from the outside slope of the road to the inboard ditch on the uphill side. Wet weather precluded us from implementing the test *pine tar* treatments that we agreed to try at the August meeting with your staff.

We do not know the exact length of road where re-profiling work was performed this year. The fall re-profiling was not accomplished in one continuous section but was done in patches where the road acts as a dike to hold water. To date, RNSP has completed two miles of re-profiling from the gate at the top of the hill (southwest end of the road) downhill toward Mill Creek, and a few patches along the northeast section where the road is acting as a dike. We estimate that roughly four miles of road remains to be re-profiled.

Emergency Recovery of Heavy Equipment

On April 14, a front-end loader was traveling along the Howland Hill road when the operator lost control and left the road surface. The equipment ended up perched on the side of the hill overlooking Mill Creek and unable to back up onto the Howland Hill road. RNSP initiated an emergency consultation and completed the recovery of the equipment. (Biological assessment reported 354 acres of unsurveyed suitable marbled murrelet and northern spotted owl nesting habitat is located within ¼ mile of the described activity).

Clearing Downed Trees off Trails

Redwood Creek Trail

On July 14, the trail crew cut a five foot diameter tree off the trail approximately 0.75 miles from the trailhead. This work took three people four hours to complete. Actual use of chainsaws took 45 minutes. The short period of time for chainsaw work at this tree is because the tree shattered upon hitting the ground and the crew only needed to make a few cuts to move pieces out of the way. (55 acres of unsurveyed suitable nesting habitat for marbled murrelets).

Tall Trees Trail

During the second week of August the trail crew cut a 24-inch diameter maple tree off the loop portion of the trail within the Tall Trees Grove. The work was performed by a three-person crew and took 2.5 hours. The chainsaw was used during most of this time period. The tree in this location fell on a switchback and affected both the uphill and downhill leg of the switchback. (61 acres of unsurveyed suitable marbled murrelet and northern spotted owl nesting habitat were affected)

Little Bald Hills Trail

On September 4, 1998, RNSP reported that we needed to clear a tree (four foot in diameter) from along the Little Bald Hills trail. However, when the trail crew went to the field to perform the work there were three trees to clear from the trail. All three were tanoak (8", 14" and 24" in diameter respectively). The actual amount of time the chainsaws were used to limb and buck the trees was 20 minutes. All three trees were upslope of the trail near the ridge top (about 1.1 miles from the trailhead). The crew did not find a 4' diameter redwood anywhere along the entire length of trail, but assumed the reporting visitor had mistaken the latter two trees stacked on top of each other as one tree. (81 acres of marbled murrelet nesting habitat were affected)

Brushing Trails with Power Tools

On July 14, a four person trail crew completed the brushing of the Redwood Creek trail with the power equipment. The work was completed in seven hours. (275 acres of MAMU nesting habitat were affected)

Replace Orick Horse Trail Bridges

We initiated the building of four remaining bridges in the Forty-four Creek drainage shortly after the 10th of July and completed them by the 27th of January 1999. (8 acres of marbled murrelet nesting habitat were affected).

Watershed Restoration Projects

M-Line / M-8 project

We began field operations for this project on August 19. Prior to the 15th of September we were able to complete the removal and slope re-contouring of the M-Spur at the northwest most end of the project and 0.75 miles of road removal work along the two parallel roads at the south end of the project. (107 acres of marbled murrelet nesting habitat were affected). The field work continued into the fall until the operation was closed for the rainy season. Contractors on this project performed a total of 60 days of field work.

M-Line / Redwood Creek Trail

We began field operations for this project on September 10, to complete a portion of a contract that was not finished in 1997. This project lasted 10 days. Prior to the 15th of September, our contractors were working on a short section of road just north of the intersection with the C-12 road. (24 acres of marbled murrelet nesting habitat were affected). A new contract was subsequently issued and work was initiated along this road segment near Tom McDonald Creek. The new contractor spent 12 days in the field prior to closing the operation for the rainy season.

Additional Road Removal Projects

Four additional projects were completed in which we either implemented limited operating periods (L-2-2-1 and A-9-6), or we worked in areas where marbled murrelet nesting habitat was screened by an older second-growth forest.

Erosion Control and Road Repair

We completed the excavation and replacement of one culvert along the A-9-9 road between the 1st and the 15th of September (three acres of marbled murrelet nesting habitat were affected). The culvert replacement along the B-5 took from August 1 until September 10 to complete (16 acres of marbled murrelet nesting habitat were affected). We were able to implement limited operating periods for completing the remainder of our erosion control and road repair work.

Periodic Maintenance

We were able to implement limited operating periods for work accomplished in 1998.

Conservation Recommendations

Each biological opinion requested notification of any conservation recommendations that were implemented. In 1998 we surveyed for abundance and distribution of bald eagles, peregrine falcons, and western snowy plover and northern spotted owls. In addition, we continued surveys to quantify corvid abundance relative to various types of park developments. Enclosed are summary reports for these surveys.

This correspondence should clarify the actual implementation dates of our operations that contributed to noise disturbance of marbled murrelets and northern spotted owls during their respective breeding seasons. If you or your staff have any further questions regarding this information, please contact Rick Wallen at (707) 464-6101, extension 5273. He should be able to answer any questions or gather the necessary information.

Sincerely,

Andrew T. Ringgold
National Park Superintendent

Richard C. Sermon
State Parks Superintendent

cc:
Chief of Resource Management and Science, RNSP, w/o enc.
Chief of Maintenance, RNSP, w/o enc.

Table 1. Compilation of management actions in Redwood National and State Parks, during 1998, for which incidental take has been authorized. (MAMU = marbled murrelet and SPOW = northern spotted owl)

Actions Implemented in 1998	Planning Statistics		Implementation Statistics	
	Proposed implementation (From BA)	Acres of Incidental Take Authorized in BO	Actual implementation	Acres of Incidental Take Incurred
Howland Hill Road – Biological Opinion issued 26 June 1995 (1-1-95-F-78), amended 19 May 98 (1-14-98-112)				
Road Grading and Re-profiling of the Howland Hill road	Two weeks in late May or early June	MAMU =727 SPOW = 727	8-18 June	MAMU =727 SPOW = 727
Howland Hill Road Emergency Extracation of Front-end Loader – No Biological Opinion issued to date				
Emergency rescue of a front-end loader that veered off the road and got stuck	Draft BA submitted in Aug., revised and re-submitted 11Sep98	N/A	14-17 Apr 98	Incidental Take Statement still not completed
Annual Maintenance – Biological Opinion issued 24 June 1998 (1-14-98-24)				
Brushing the Redwood Creek trail with power equipment	June	MAMU =275 SPOW = 275	14 July	MAMU =275
Clearing downed trees from trails	When necessary during the breeding season	MAMU = 625 SPOW = 625	Mid July	MAMU = 197 SPOW = 116 (55 acres also affected by brushing the Redwood Creek trail)
Storm Damage – Biological Opinion issued 18 June 1998 (1-14-98-133)				
Replace 4 Bridges along Orick horse trail in 44 Creek drainage	After 9 Jul	MAMU = 8	13 Jul to 27 Jan 99	MAMU = 8
Watershed Restoration Program – Biological Opinion issued 20 July 1998 (1-14-98-134)				
M-8 / Lower M-Line	After 9 Jul	MAMU =187 SPOW = 412	9 Aug to 10 Nov	MAMU = 107 (23 acres also affected by clearing tree from Tall Trees Grove)
Redwood Creek Trail / M-9	After 9 Jul	MAMU = 61 SPOW = 294	10 Sep to 21 Sep	MAMU =24 (3 acres also affected by clearing tree from Tall Trees Grove)
One culvert replaced along the A-9-9	After 9 Jul	MAMU = 36 acres for the whole road	1 Sep	MAMU = 3 (All 3 acres also affected by bridge replacement work)
Storm Damage – Biological Opinion issued 3 July 1997 (1-14-97-F-10)				
Repair of the B-5 road	15 June to 15 August	MAMU = 16	1 Aug to 10 Sep	MAMU=16
Total for 1998		MAMU = 1935 SPOW = 2333		MAMU = 1273 SPOW = 843