

Briefing Statement FY 2021

Bureau: National Park Service

Issue: North Fork Feather River Headwaters Restoration Project

Member:

Park: Lassen Volcanic NP

Key Points:

- Reintroduction of low to moderate severity fire regimes to 4,000 acres of wilderness after 100+ year absence to reduce fuel loadings and make ecological system more resilient.
- Utilization of crosscut saws and manual methods to prepare strategic wilderness locations in the park for future prescribed fire.
- Reintroduction of fire in strategic areas can prevent the propagation of large damaging fires and provide fire managers with more decision space.

Background:

- Forests in California are overly dense and increasingly prone to high-severity wildfire because of a 150+ year history of fire suppression and exclusion.
- Forest structure has become less resilient to fire in its absence.
- Wilderness areas have seen no active management but have negative changes in their wilderness character as a result of fire's absence; including greater density and susceptibility to drought and pathogens, increasing mortality.
- Active human manipulation and management can be done under the Wilderness Act in some instances and traditional tools like crosscut saws provide the means to restore wilderness character by not violating the prohibition on mechanized tools in Section 3(c).
- Ecological intervention is not designed to be done everywhere in the wilderness, but strategically implemented it allows fire managers to reintroduce fire to improve long-term ecosystem health and reduce the potential for large-scale fire propagation.
- Project entirely funded by California Proposition 1 (watershed restoration) funds through the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (upwards of \$1.4 million).
- External project partner awarded the 2019 Wes Henry Award for Excellence in Wilderness Stewardship award.

Current Status:

- Collaborative work have prepared upwards of 12 miles of the Lassen Volcanic NP **trail system for prescribed fire**.
- Crosscut work will continue to prep control lines in 2021 on 9 miles of trail.
- Pile burning of excess fuels along control lines completed in 2020, allowing for 1,400 acres to be ready for underburn in 2021.

Contact Person:

Last Updated: