DEPARTMENT: Board of Supervisors  BY: Doug Balmain  PHONE: 966-4744

RECOMMENDED ACTION AND JUSTIFICATION: (Policy Item: Yes  No x)
Resolution authorizing Chair to send letter to Regional Forester joining with other Sierra Range counties to voice concern over adoption of proposed interim guidelines for management of the California Spotted Owl.

The Forest Service Regional Forester plans to adopt an interim management guideline to be in effect for a two to five year period to provide even greater protection for the California spotted owl. This action is in response to pressure to increase protection over the present management plan. These guidelines could have a devastating effect on timber sales from the Stanislaus and Sierra national forests, decreasing the timber sales even further than the one-third reduction in 1990.

The agency's plan would not permit harvesting of trees (dead or live) greater than 30 inches in diameter. This recommendation was based on an analysis done on the Tahoe National Forest, which has an average diameter of 27 inches. The Sierra National Forest, in contrast, has an average diameter of 31 inches. This can be a 40% difference in volume per tree.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:
This action is consistent with previous Board actions. Fresno, Madera and Tulare counties letters are attached.

LIST ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:
1. Do not approve the letter. Mariposa County will not voice a concern that could produce economic consequences to the County.

COSTS:
(A) Budgeted current FY $  
(B) Total anticipated costs $  
(C) Required additional funding $  
(D) Internal transfers $  

SOURCE:
(A) Unanticipated revenues $  
(B) Reserve for contingencies $  
(C) Source description: Balance in Reserve for Contingencies, if approved: $  

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:
List the attachments and number the pages consecutively:

Proposed Letter:
Memo re Proposed Interim Plan
Letters from Fresno, Madera, Tulare Counties

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION:
This item on agenda as:
Recommended  Not Recommended  For Policy Determination  Submitted with Comment  Returned for Further Action

Comment:  

A.O. Initials:  

The foregoing instrument is a correct copy of the original on file in this office.

Date:  

ATTEST:  
MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board  
County of Mariposa, State of California  
Deputy  

12-15DSA  
Action Form Revised 5/92
Mr. Ronald E. Stewart
Regional Forester
Pacific Southwest Region
USDA -- Forest Service
630 Sansome Street
San Francisco, CA 94111

Dear Mr. Stewart:

We join with other counties throughout the Sierra Range who have voiced their concern over the California Region’s proposed adoption of interim guidelines for management of the California spotted owl. As we understand it, the Region plans to implement the approach suggested in the May, 1992 California spotted owl technical report (CASPO) on an interim basis while an environmental impact statement is being done for long term management.

The Forest Service has an agreement with the California Board of Forestry that calls for the development of alternative approaches for spotted owl management that will be evaluated by a steering committee made up of federal, state, and other officials before any firm direction is taken. In our view, the adoption of interim guidelines runs counter to that agreement. Although you may feel that the Forest Service must have a plan in place sooner than this process will permit, we believe that adoption of the CASPO guidelines would be a major federal action requiring an environmental impact statement.

We are concerned that the adoption of a "blanket" rule across all of the national forests of the Sierra Range would result in an uneven impact on the timber sale program. It is our understanding that the CASPO recommendations are based on data from the Tahoe National Forest. Considering the inherent differences among the forests' tree sizes and other characteristics, it seems to us that the forests should have the ability to take a localized adaptive approach to spotted owl management.

We hope that the Forest Service will continue to study the habitat needs of the California spotted owl and develop a management approach that would not impact local communities or counties economically. We have already experienced significant impacts from past reductions in the national forest timber sale program. The approach that you appear to be taking would likely result in the closure of one or more sawmills in our area and greater economic and social upheaval. We urge that you complete an environmental impact statement before proceeding with interim direction. In the meantime, the forests should be directed to meet their assigned timber targets for Fiscal Year 1993.
Thank you for considering our views on this issue. We hope that you will keep us advised of any action that you plan to take in this respect.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Erickson, Chair

P.S. Since this letter was written, the Board of Supervisors has received the Forest Service News of January 13, 1993 which indicates that the interim guidelines have been adopted. We sincerely hope that you will reconsider this decision based upon the concerns of the various counties adversely affected by these guidelines in their present form.