



California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Environmental Review Report for an Exempt Project

Note: This report form is intended for use by California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) staff to document a limited environmental impact analysis supporting the filing of a Notice of Exemption (NOE) document for a proposed CAL FIRE project. Although the project appears to fit within the descriptions for allowable Categorical Exemptions, this report presents CAL FIRE's review for possible "Exceptions" that would preclude finding the project to be categorically exempt as discussed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. This report will be filed with the CEQA administrative record for this project to document the environmental impact analysis conducted by the Department.

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Project Name:	Las Posadas Demonstration State Forest- Fuel reduction utilizing goats
Project Number:	
Program Type:	
CAL FIRE Unit:	Sonoma-Lake-Napa
County:	Napa
Acres:	570 (See Location Map)
Legal Location:	T. 8 N., R.5 W., SEC 10, 14, 15 and the Rancho La Jota Land Grant (see vicinity map)
Name of USGS	ST. HELENA
7.5' Quad Map(s):	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project Vicinity Map Attached <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project Location Map Attached <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photos Attached	

Other Public Agency Review/Permit Required:		
Would the project result in:	YES	NO
alterations to a watercourse (DFG - Lake and Stream Alteration Agreement)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
conversion of timberland (CAL FIRE - Conversion Permit or Exemption)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
demolition (Local Air District - Demolition Permit)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
soil disturbance over 1 acre (RWQCB - SWPPP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
fill of possible wetlands (404 Permit - USACE)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Discuss any above-listed topic item checked Yes and consultation with agencies:		

Project Description and Environmental Setting (Describe the project activities, project site and its surroundings, its location, and the environmental setting):
<p>Las Posadas Demonstration State Forest (LP) is a 796 acre mixed conifer forest, zoned by Napa County as Agricultural Watershed (AW). A single-engine fire station is co-located on the forest property. LP is unique among the State Forests because it contains the eastern-most stand of coast redwood (<i>sequoia sempervirens</i>). Research and demonstration projects are conducted as part of its mission. LP is not open to the general public for recreation; however the 4-H club maintains a long term lease on a portion of the property for a summer camping area for children.</p> <p>The purpose of this project is to utilize goats for browsing/grazing to accomplish vegetation reduction for fire suppression in the entire forest. By using goats, it is hoped that the environmental impact from fuels reduction will be significantly reduced, as opposed to mechanical means of fuel reduction such as mowing and mastication. This project will also demonstrate grazing as a tool for fire hazard reduction, as well as, compare grazing with other fuel reduction methods that have been used on the forest in the past, specifically, hand removal of vegetation by fire crews and mastication. The contractor supplying the goats will contain them through the placement of temporary fencing, but this fencing will not require and substantial excavation. The areas to be excluded with the use of portable fencing will be 100 to 150 feet along blue ribbon streams and springs, small streams will receive a 50 to 75 feet, A buffer will be established 100 feet away from sensitive plant species and 50 feet away from archeological sites. The goats will stay a minimum of 150 feet away from the Las Posadas 4-H Camp.</p>

Environmental Impact Analysis

Aesthetics

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
- This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:
One goal of this project is to enhance the aesthetics of the forest. This goal shall be accomplished by the thinning of young seedling sized trees, brush and grass which will leave a more open park-like stand structure.

Agriculture and Forest Resources

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
- Yes No Would any trees be felled? If yes, discuss protection of nesting birds and compliance with FPRs.
- Yes No Would the project convert any prime or unique farmland?
- Yes No Would the project result in the conversion of forest land/timberland to non-forest use?
- This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:
This project will thin the understory vegetation in a mature conifer stand. It will not convert timberland and no trees will be felled. Browsing will occur on seedling sized (<2" diameter) conifer, hardwoods, brush, forbs and grass.

Air Quality

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
- Yes No The local Air Quality Management District guidelines for dust abatement and other air quality concerns were reviewed for this project.
- This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Biological Resources

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
- Yes No Will the project potentially effect biological resources?
- Yes No Was a current NDDB review completed? Results discussed below:
- Yes No Was a biological survey of the project area completed? Results discussed below:
- This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:
Plant species considered rare, threatened, endangered or of special concern that may occur within the project area were first identified with a California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB) 9-quad query adjacent to and including the project quad, St. Helena. Public input has been received by a local plant expert regarding a nearby project. Calfire staff (project forester, forest manager) also conducted a department records review. With the compiled information, botanical field surveys were conducted on May 20, June 23, and July 8, 2011, using a comprehensive list of rare, threatened, endangered or plants of special concern that might exist in the project vicinity. The project area has been located to avoid and buffer sensitive plant species with a 100' buffer. Goats will be contained within a fence and not allowed to free range. Fencing will be located at least 100' from sensitive plant species.

Cultural Resources

- This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
- Yes No Was a current archaeological records check completed? Results discussed below:
- Yes No Was a CAL FIRE Staff or Contract Archaeologist consulted? Results discussed below:
- Yes No Was an archaeological survey of the project area completed? Results discussed below:
- Yes No Will the project effect any historic buildings or archaeological site?
- This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

State Archaeologist, Chuck Whatford, Kathy Thorne, archaeological staff person, and the forest manager (certified archaeological surveyor #113R) surveyed the project area and vicinity. No artifacts were discovered in the project area during the survey. According to the recent, 2011, property-wide records check conducted by Mr. Whatford, there are known archeology sites located in the proposed project site but we will maintain a minimum 50 foot clearance from these known sites with fencing.

An Archaeological survey was conducted by Sonoma State University on the entire state forest and a report was developed. Archaeological sites have been documented within the two volume report titled: Cultural Resources

Inventory of Las Posadas State Forest; prepared by Michael Jablonski, Leigh A. Martin and Tina M. Torillo of the Anthropological Studies Center, Academic Foundation, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA; CDF Archaeological Reports Number 18 Volume 1 June, 1995 Volume 2 March, 1996. Although some new sites have been discovered since the property wide survey was done, none are in the project area. Calfire Archaeologist, Chuck Whatford, is amending the record to include the new sites.

Geology and Soils

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Soil disturbance from livestock grazing will be minimized by moving the fencing to ungrazed areas when the goats are done foraging in a single location.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

Yes No Would the project generate significant greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions?

Yes No Would these GHG emissions result in a significant impact on the environment? Discuss below:

Yes No Would the project conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases? Discuss below:

Unlike other vegetation management techniques, utilizing goats for fuel reduction through grazing will not create significant greenhouse gas emissions. Typical fuel reduction methods using machinery, gasoline, diesel, or other carbon emitting devise are not proposed for this project. Also, vegetation burning is not proposed.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Hydrology and Water Quality

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

Yes No Will the project potentially affect any watercourse or body of water?

This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Watercourse and wetlands will be avoided and buffered from project impacts. Small streams will receive a 50-75' buffer and blueline (larger streams) will receive a 100-150' buffer. Goats will be contained within a fence and not allowed to free range. Fencing will be located outside stream buffers.

Land Use and Planning

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Mineral Resources

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Noise

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Noise from livestock will be minimal. The project is located in a rural agricultural area, zoned AW, agricultural watershed. The project is consistent with adjacent agricultural uses.

Population and Housing

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.

This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Public Services

This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Recreation
 This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:
 There is a 4H camp on Las Posadas State Forest, it is located within the project area and recreation at the camp will not be affected by the livestock grazing. All other recreation is prohibited on the forest.

Transportation/Traffic
 This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:
 The project is located adjacent to Las Posadas Road but will not affect traffic.

Utilities and Service Systems
 This topic does not apply to this project and was not evaluated further.
 This topic could apply to this project, and results of the assessment are provided below:

Changes Made to Avoid Environmental Impacts:
 The Forest Manger confined the project location to areas that avoid cultural and historic sites, watercourses, wetlands and listed plants.

Mandatory Findings of Significance:	YES	NO
(a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probably future projects)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Justification for Use of a Categorical Exemption (discuss why the project is exempt, cite exemption number(s), and describe how the project fits the class):

14 CCR 15304(i) allows minor alterations of vegetation, including fuel management activities to reduce the volume of flammable vegetation. The proposed project will not result in the taking of endangered, rare or threatened plant or animal species or significant erosion or sedimentation of surface waters. Impacts to cultural resources are avoided by providing fencing barriers to isolate the project outside of known sites, conducting surveys, and monitoring by CAL FIRE staff.

Conclusion:

After assessing potential environmental impacts and evaluating the description for the various classes of Categorical Exemptions to CEQA, CAL FIRE has determined that the project fits within one or more of the exemption classes and no exceptions exist at the project site which would preclude the use of this exemption. The Department considered the possibility of (a) sensitive location, (b) cumulative impact, (c) significant impact due to unusual circumstances, (d) impacts to scenic

highways, (e) activities within a hazardous waste site, and (f) significant adverse change to the significance of a historical resource. A Notice of Exemption will be filed at the State Clearinghouse.

After assessing potential environmental impacts and evaluating the description for the various classes of Categorical Exemptions to CEQA, CAL FIRE has determined that the project does not fit within the description for the various exemption classes or has found that exceptions exist at the project site which precludes the use of a Categorical Exemption for this project. Additional environmental review will be conducted and the appropriate CEQA document used may be a Negative Declaration or a Mitigated Negative Declaration.

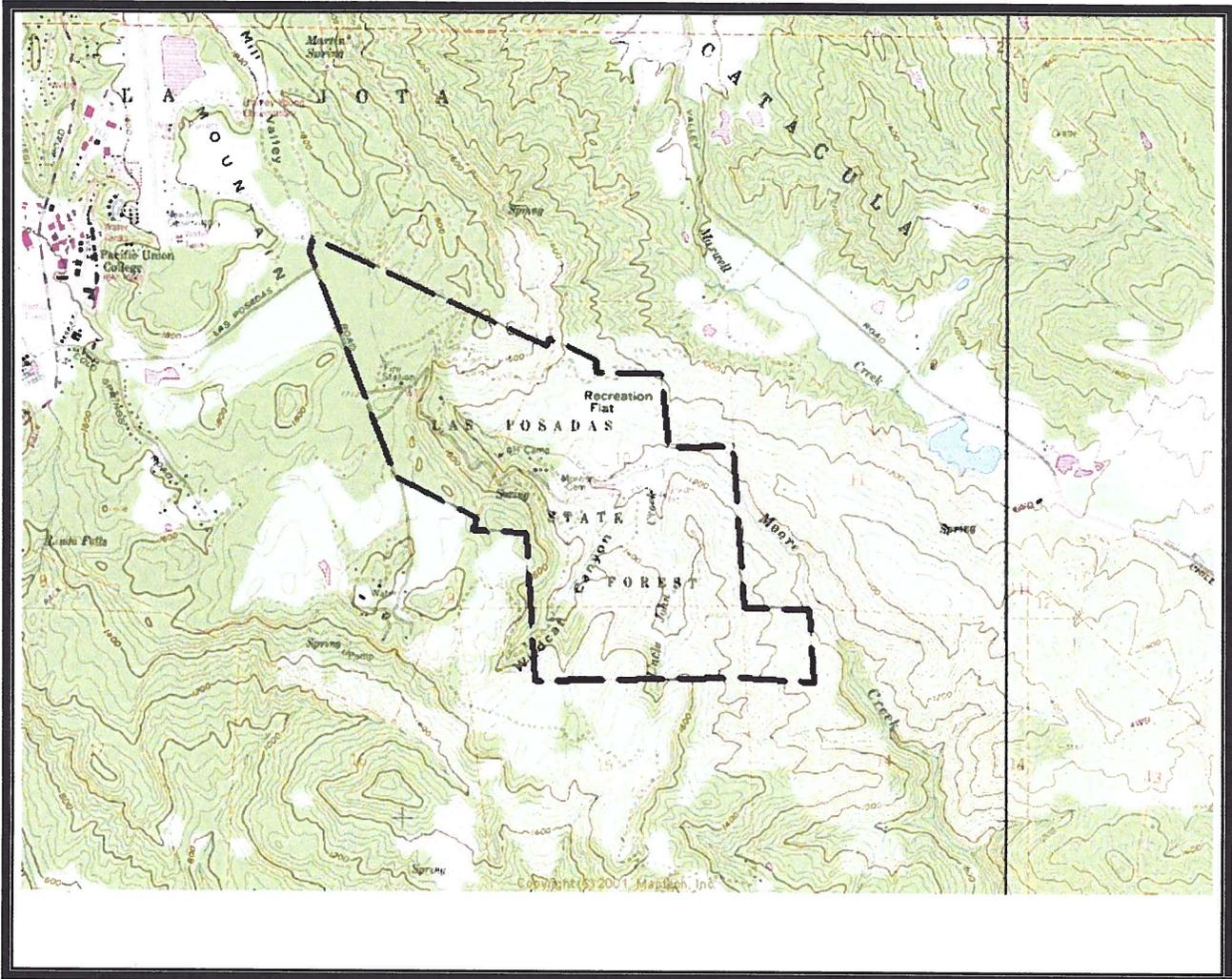


Figure 1. Las Posadas Demonstration State Forest, Napa County.

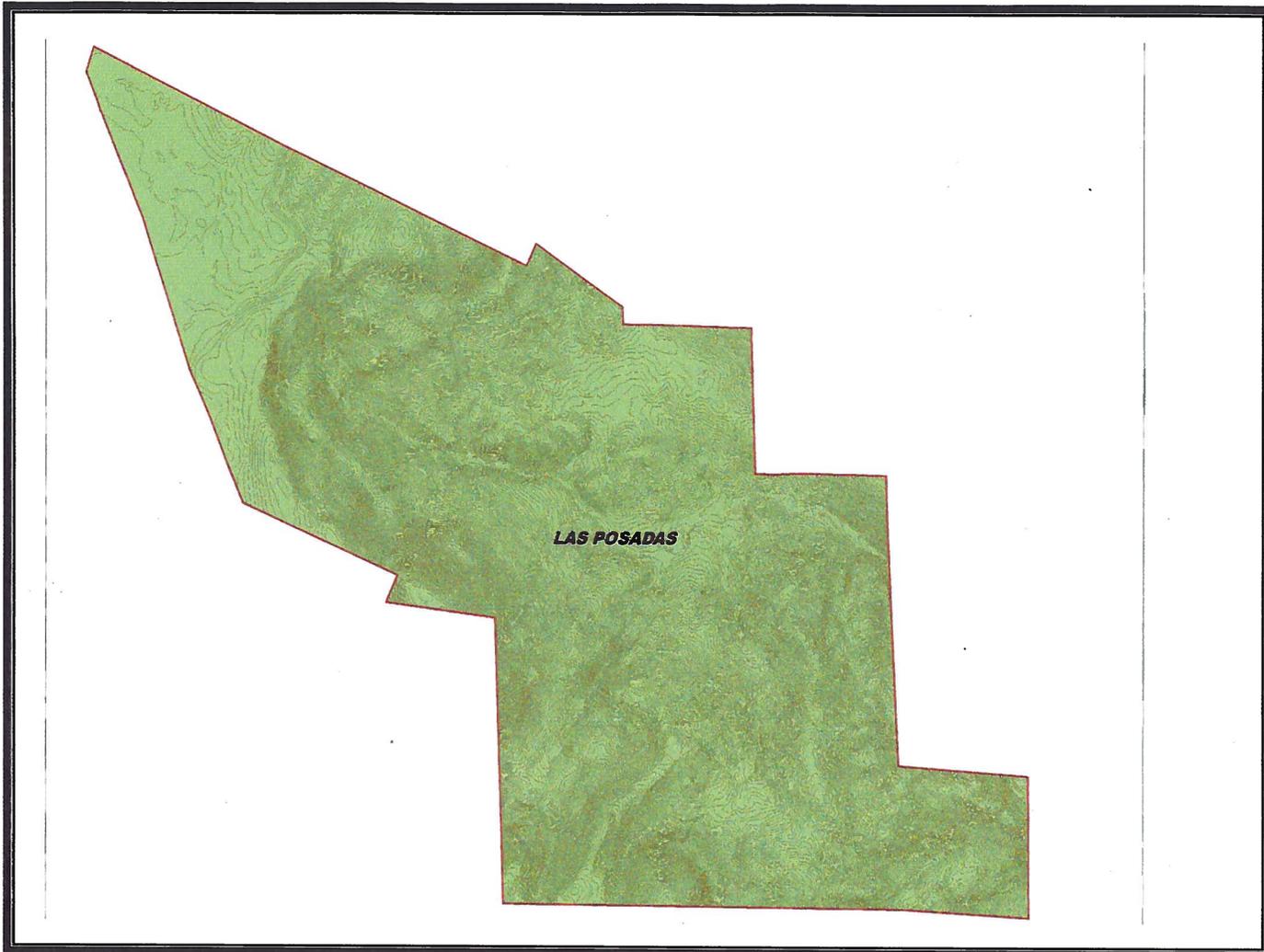


Figure 2. Las Posadas Demonstration State Forest Boundary.

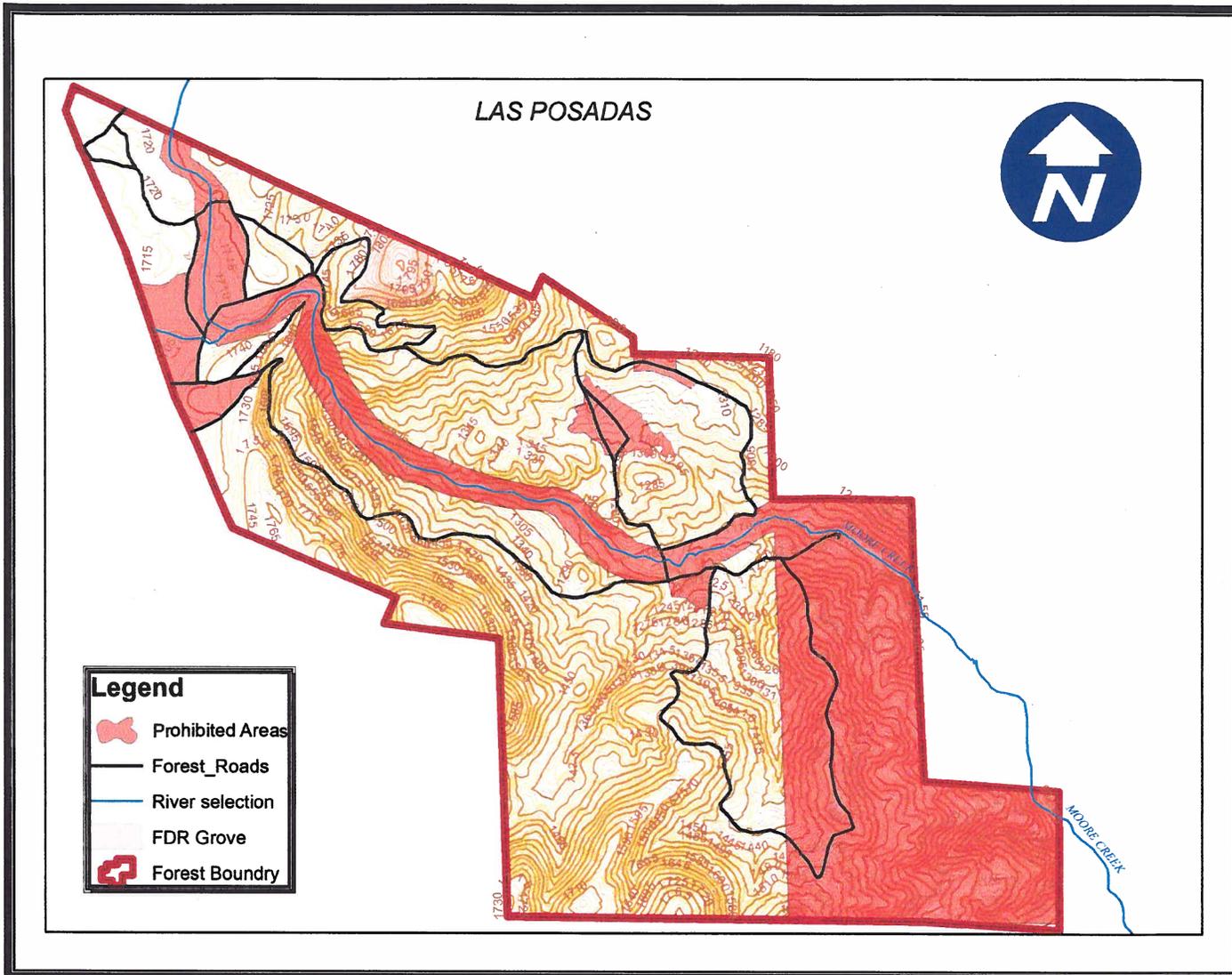


Figure 3. Las Posadas Demonstration State Forest Project Area.



Figure 4. Vegetation in treatment area.



Figure 5. Vegetation in treatment area.



Figure 6. Vegetation in treatment area.