

## California Condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) 10(j) Experimental Population in Humboldt County April 9, 2021

### CALIFORNIA CONDOR EXPERIMENTAL POPULATION

#### Background

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has completed the Final 10(j) Rule in the translocation of California Condor to their historic range in Humboldt County. A minimum of two breeding pairs are proposed for repatriation in the Bald Hills of Redwood National Park and in prairie habitat on Yurok tribal land in the fall of 2021. Up to six new cohorts are proposed to be introduced in these locations annually.

#### Key points to the USFWS Final Rule:

Under the federal Endangered Species Act, the USFWS has identified the translocation population as a non-essential experimental population.

*"By adopting the 10(j) rule, most incidental take of California condors within the experimental population area is allowed, provided that the take is unintentional and not due to negligent conduct."*

*"We expect few restrictions on [commercial timber production] because most incidental take . . . is not prohibited"*

*". . . unlikely that a condor would nest within areas with ongoing timber harvest operations, as only about 0.5 percent of harvestable timber on private lands within the study area are likely to contain suitable nesting trees."*

*"Habitat alteration (e.g., removing trees, . . . altering the nest structure or perches near the nest) or significant visual or noise disturbance (e.g., tree felling, chainsaws, helicopter overflight) within 656-ft (200 m) of an occupied nest are prohibited. Excluded from this prohibition are emergency fuels treatment activities by Federal, State, and local agencies and Tribes to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and emergency response services. Activities such as ranching and use of existing roads and trails within the 656-ft (200 m) buffer area around an occupied nest would not be considered a significant visual or noise disturbance. For the purposes of this rule, an occupied California condor nest is defined as a nest that is: (1) attended by a breeding pair of condors, (2) occupied by a condor egg, or (3) occupied or attended by a <1-year-old condor."*

### KEY BIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### Status

The California Condor is listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act and the California Endangered Species Act, as well as a California Board of Forestry Sensitive Species and Fully Protected under the California Fish and Game Code.

#### Range

Historically, the range of California Condor ran from British Columbia to Baja California. Their main population rings the southern mountain boundary of the Central Valley, from the Los Padres National Forest to Sequoia National Forest. A stable population has been established in the Ventana Wilderness and Pinnacles National Park.

One of the purposes of the translocation is to ensure that if any of these populations is destroyed by a catastrophic event, such as wildfire, then there are other locations to ensure the persistence of the species.

### **Habitat**

Nesting habitat is generally characterized by steep, rugged terrain with nests in rock crevices with overhanging ledges or broken-topped large trees, like sequoia or coast redwood. They are known to roost on rocky outcrops, tall trees, or snags near foraging, nesting, and water. Condors need large areas to allow for take-off and landing, where winds provide thermals for flight. Foraging habitat needs to have high productivity for obligate scavenging. Sparse vegetation provides higher visibility of carrion and thermals keep them in the air long enough to find carrion, without expending large amounts of energy. Condors can cover large distances in the course of a day as they forage; sometimes flying up to 150 miles for food.

### **CALIFORNIA CONDOR IN TIMBER HARVESTING PLANS**

The language of the final rule states that take of condor is allowed, provided the “take is not intentional . . . or due to negligent conduct.” Given that, as well as the prohibition for operations with 200-meters of an occupied nest; timber harvesting plans in a reasonable proximity (in consideration of their home range) to the experimental population should provide a discussion of the species; including information on the presence and protection of any known key habitat or individuals. The Board’s Rules include specific provisions for addressing Sensitive Species in a THP, NTMP, WFMP and SYP; and these should be reviewed during plan preparation and additional information included in a plan as appropriate.

More information about the California Condor can be found at this [LINK](#).