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Thinning improves forest health but can impact wildlife, study finds

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

Online

Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Project: <http://snamp.cnr.berkeley.edu>

DAVIS, Calif. — Clearing shrubs and woody debris from forest floors can improve tree growth efficiency and reduce the severity of wildfires, University of California scientists concluded after a 10-year study of forest management.

However, forest managers must also consider a thinning project's impact on wildlife that rely on dense forest areas for habitat, the scientists observed.

For instance, treatments must be done outside protected activity centers for the California spotted owl and away from Pacific fisher dens, but should be close enough to prevent high-severity wildfires

from burning those areas, the scientists wrote.

The recommendations were among 31 points of consensus outlined in a 1,000-page final report from the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Project, which the UC conducted at the request of the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Natural Resources Agency.

The researchers — which included an outreach team that hosted public meetings and field trips in the woods — concluded that enough is now

known about proposed Forest Service landscape management treatments for them to be implemented in Sierra Nevada forests.

"There was very clear evidence that the fuels treatments really did demonstrate the potential to change fire behavior and reduce incidents of catastrophic fire along with the losses affiliated with those fires," said Kimberly Rodrigues, a UC forest resources expert who worked on the project.

"I'm hopeful that the Forest Service is truly committed to engaging with the communities" near forests, she said. "I think there are district rangers in California who are absolutely committed and are doing that kind of collabora-

tive work with the community to integrate local impact."

The Forest Service wanted a comprehensive university study after proposing in 2004 to use fuel reduction treatments — such as prescribed burning, mechanical thinning and harvesting certain trees — in strategically placed areas to slow down wildfires and improve forest health, UC experts said. The project was funded with \$15 million in grants, mainly from the Forest Service.

In their 14-page response to the UC's report, the resource agencies noted that information from the scientists was immediately useful to forest managers. For example, California's Department of Fish and Wildlife stated the research helped them adapt to

changing conditions in the forests.

The report comes amid increasing calls for better forest management after devastating wildfires in recent years throughout the West, including in California, where two major fires last summer caused more than \$1 billion in insured losses and more than \$2 billion in total losses, according to the state's insurance department.

Legislation to protect the Forest Service's forest-management funds from being used to cover firefighting cost overruns was left out of the \$1.1 trillion omnibus federal spending bill approved in December.

Susan Kocher, a UC Cooperative Extension forestry adviser who led the public out-

reach team in the last two years of the project, said the report showed that different objectives in the forest can conflict, even though the experts did their best to provide "win-win recommendations."

Kocher said in an email the team may host an event next fall to check in with resources to see if the science is being incorporated in projects.

"My hope is that the report will be used to inform direction of national forest management throughout the Sierra Nevada region as a whole, but I think for that to happen there would need to be an active process by which regional managers incorporate the recommendations, and I have not heard of any such forum being planned," she said.

305 bulls sell for \$1.49 million at Red Bluff sale

By **TIM HEARDEN**
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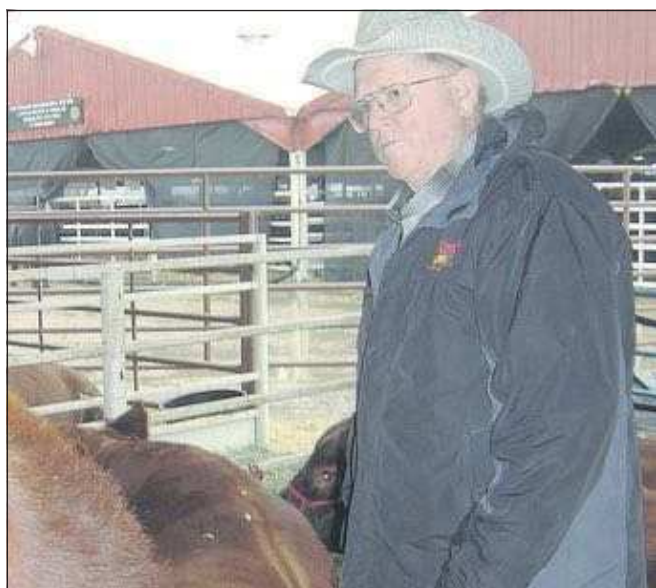
RED BLUFF, Calif. — Consigners at this year's 75th annual Red Bluff Bull and Gelding Sale said they expected this year's prices to come close to matching last year's record receipts.

They were right.

Bidders shelled out nearly \$1.49 million for 305 bulls on Jan. 30, capping five days of livestock auctions and other activities at the Tehama District Fairgrounds. The top-priced bull was a Simmental named My Broker, which sold for \$16,000 to Ken and Artis Faulkmer of Powell Butte, Ore.

The haul nearly matched last year's all-time high total of \$1.56 million for 238 bulls that passed through the Don Smith Pavilion. Winning bids averaged \$4,816 this year compared to an average of \$6,594 per bull in 2015.

Merle Eakin, owner of Lazy J Red Angus in Prineville, Ore., was selling 10 bulls in the auction and expected prices to be fairly strong.



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Merle Eakin, owner of Lazy J Red Angus in Prineville, Ore., looks over his bulls at the 75th annual Red Bluff Bull and Gelding Sale on Jan. 29 in Red Bluff, Calif.

"They're an awfully good set of bulls and they graded extremely well," said Eakin, whose 1,980-pound bull Horace was a grand champion in its class.

Robby Harfst, owner of Harfst Herefords in Jacksonville, Ore., also expected prices

to approach last year's totals.

"Prices have been steady," he said before this year's sale. "In general, cow prices are down a little bit from a year ago, but they're still pretty strong ... People still need bulls to breed their cows."

This was the sixth straight year the bull sale topped the \$1 million mark. This year's total was the second-highest ever, beating the \$1.2 million collected for 378 bulls in 2014.

The bull sale was the last of four auctions last week in Red Bluff. The bidding began with the eighth annual online feeder and replacement heifer sale on Jan. 28, in which about 80 lots were sold.

Lots in the Western Video Market-hosted sale went for as much as \$234 per hundredweight for weaned heifers and \$252 per hundredweight for weaned steers — well below last year's high prices per hundredweight of \$287 and \$299, respectively.

The 104 geldings auctioned off Jan. 29 generated \$755,250 in combined sales, besting last year's total of \$638,600 for 67 horses. This year's average of \$10,070 per horse topped last year's \$9,531. The high-selling horse was bought for \$35,000 by Trenton McCuen of Loomis, Calif., and four other geldings sold for more than \$20,000.

Sierra Pacific Industries to close California sawmill

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

ARCATA, Calif. — Reduced timber harvests and a difficult lumber market will force Sierra Pacific Industries to close its 55-year-old sawmill, affecting 123 jobs, the company announced.

The largest factor in the closure was that the type and size of logs that the mill cuts weren't available in adequate supply from the region, SPI spokesman Mark Pawlicki said.

The company tried to keep the Arcata mill running by bringing in logs from the interior of California and barging them from British Columbia and Washington state, but those efforts proved to be uneconomical, company officials said.

"This is a particularly sad day for Sierra Pacific and for my family," SPI Chairman and President

Emeritus A.A. "Red" Emerson said in a statement. "Our company started in the Arcata area when my farther and I leased our first mill there in 1949 near Jacoby Creek.

"We went on to build the Arcata mill on the Samoa Peninsula, which we've run steady since 1951," he said.

Crew members are being offered jobs elsewhere in the company as well as relocation assistance, a news release said. SPI has 13 other sawmills in California and Washington, including a new one being built in Shelton, Wash., and has window, renewable power, sales and lumber remanufacturing facilities in multiple states, the release said.

In all, the Anderson, Calif.-based company employs more than 4,500 crew members and owns and manages 1.9 million acres of timberland in California and Washington.

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