

## Alternative 7 (Preferred Alternative)

### How the Alternative was Developed

Alternative 7, the Preferred Alternative, was developed to more effectively achieve the purpose and address the needs of the project while responding to substantive public comments and issues. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, a single significant Issue was identified and tracked through this EIS. The Issue identified is that the Proposed Action and Alternative 3 would degrade old forest habitats, rendering them unsuitable for old forest dependent wildlife including California spotted owl, northern goshawk habitat, Pacific fisher and American marten. Information gained from public involvement was utilized in the development of Alternative 7. Additional data (e.g. 1883 General Land Office notes) and the best available science was reviewed and used to develop Alternative 7.

Under Alternatives 1 and 3, the DFPZ is up to 1.5 miles in width and impacts late seral forests by removing more structural diversity than is necessary to achieve the purposes of the DFPZ network. Under Alternative 7, the DFPZ would be constructed to an average width of  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile (HFQLG FEIS). In the Manzanita Chutes area where fire history and existing brush indicate a potential for high intensity fire, the DFPZ width would be greater than  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile (See Figure 11). The location of the DFPZ changed somewhat to take advantage of natural barriers and previously thinned areas, and to align the DFPZ perpendicular to prevailing winds while duplicating the aggressive DFPZ fuels treatment of Alternative 1. This would help to decrease wildfire behavior by slowing momentum and providing firefighters with safe areas and opportunities to directly attack oncoming wildfires. The DFPZ treatments in Alternative 7 would not include retention islands, which would more effectively reduce fire behavior than the modified thin from below DFPZ sections treated under Alternative 3.

Realignment of the DFPZ reduces the impacts to suitable late seral habitat in five California spotted owl HRCAs by reducing the number of acres treated as DFPZ. Instead these acres would be treated under the Diversity Thin prescription to maintain a richer and more diverse stand structure. The DFPZ realignment also minimizes impacts to furbearer travel corridors by decreasing the number of acres affected by the more aggressive DFPZ treatment.

Treatments follow the standards and guidelines of the SNFPA FSEIS, while retaining suitable habitat. Rather than using a modified thin from below treatment (as in Alternative 3) this alternative utilizes a Diversity Thin treatment. A Diversity Thin prescription would treat through the diameter classes and leave up to 15 percent in retention islands resulting in improved structural diversity. This alternative would retain late seral wildlife habitat and would increase foraging habitat for American marten and other furbearers.

The Preferred Alternative establishes more group selections than Alternative 3 but less than Alternative 1 (See Table 4). The location, composition and harvest method of each group identified in Alternative 1 was evaluated for inclusion in Alternative 7. The helicopter groups proposed in Alternative 1 were not included in Alternative 7, because they would impact late seral habitat important for American marten and would be economically limiting. In addition, several groups were not included because of concerns they would reduce suitable habitat necessary for the CSO. Lastly, groups located on unsuitable ground and in established research areas were not included. Groups whose composition included a high number of healthy sugar and/or

yellow pine were assigned a Pine Restoration treatment and would be thinned to enhance existing sugar pine and yellow pine which would act as seed trees to promote the regeneration of pine. Alternative 7 includes approximately 70 acres of Pine Restoration treatments.

The North 49 Project area has large old legacy trees and some of these would receive a radial thin of up to 50 feet to reduce competition and mortality. Although Alternatives 1 and 3 contain 38 acres of aspen release treatment, Alternative 7 would release 55 acres of aspen.

Acres thinned would be evaluated by Forest Service Fuels Specialists to determine if fuels treatments are needed to reduce surface fuel loading and disrupt fuel continuity. Fuels treatments may include machine piling and burning, and/or underburning.

Treatments for Alternative 7 include the following:

- 1) Thin from Below in DFPZ – 4,602 acres.
- 2) Diversity Thin – 5,222 acres.
- 3) Group Selection – 484 groups for 978 acres.
- 4) Pine Restoration – 70 acres.
- 5) Aspen Release – 55 acres.
- 6) Release Thin in Pine Plantations – 3,591 acres.
- 7) Underburn Only – 1,131 acres.
- 8) Broadcast Burns – 131 acres.

The North 49 Project area is approximately 42,400 acres in size. The Preferred Alternative would treat 16,093 acres (including 383 acres of lodgepole pine thinning), approximately 38 percent of the project area (Figure 12).

### **Defensible Fuel Profile Zone Layout for Alternative 7**

A DFPZ would be developed adjacent to National Forest System Roads 32N17, 32N31 and 32N24 from Highway 44 north to Big Lake. In addition, a DFPZ would be developed adjacent to Highway 44/89 and continue down Highway 44 to the Lassen National Forest Boundary. The last DFPZ would be developed adjacent to National Forest System Road 33N16 (See Figure 11).

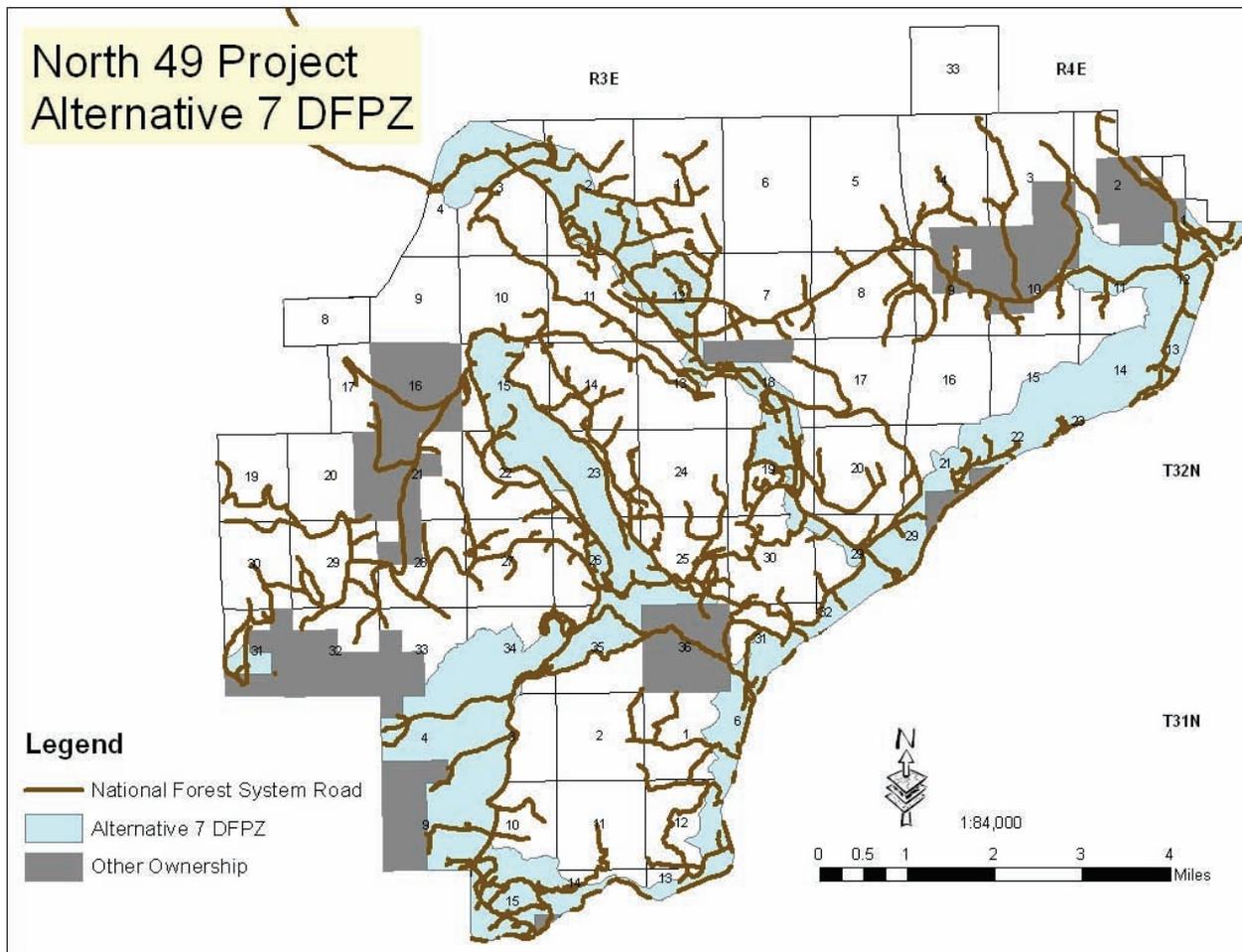


Figure 11. Map showing DFPZs under Alternative 7

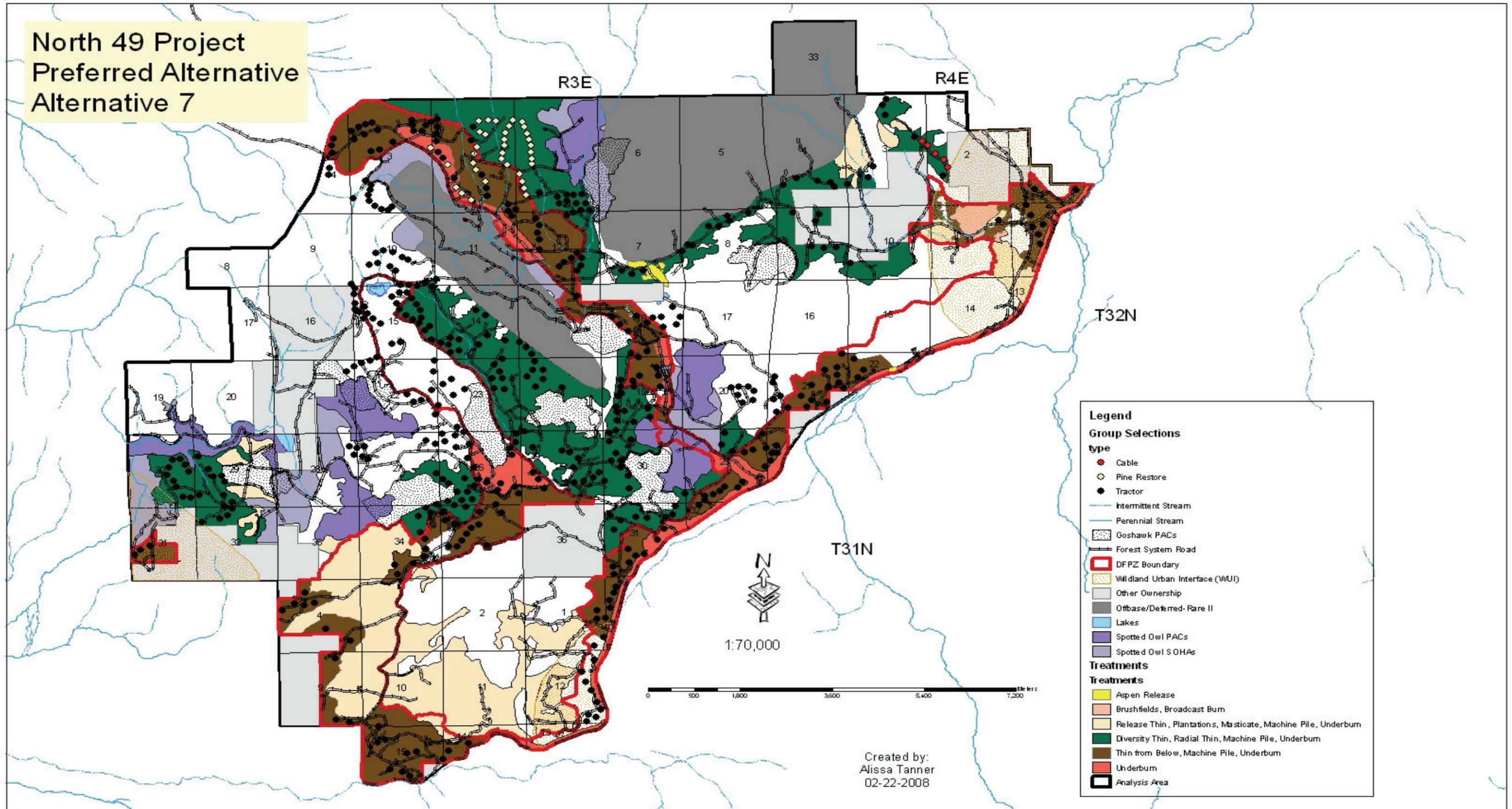


Figure 12. Alternative 7