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3820 Cypress Drive, #11  
Petaluma, CA 94954  
707-781-2555  
www.prbo.org



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Noreen Doyas  
TCRCD Grants Manager  
P.O. Box 1450  
Weaverville, CA 96093  
(530) 623-6004  
[ndoyas@tcrd.net](mailto:ndoyas@tcrd.net)

4 April 2011.

Dear Ms. Doyas,

The draft restoration grant proposal submitted by the Trinity County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD) to the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division as part of the Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program outlines restoration activities in association with 20.21 miles of USFS road decommissioning along the South Fork of the Trinity River and Middle Fork of Cottonwood Creek. PRBO Conservation Science applauds the proposed efforts to restore effected vegetation and reduce the risk posed to anadromous fish due to sedimentation issues. However, we feel that proposal could benefit from a more stringent monitoring effort involving avian monitoring. Avian monitoring could provide quantitative data to measure the positive effects of the restoration plan and provide adaptive feedback to more effectively meet the project's goal of providing long term ecological restoration to these critical watersheds.

The monitoring plan outlined by TCRCD includes: photo points taken before, during and after implementation; and monitoring of authorized route use and protection of resources by USFS law enforcement staff. Although these techniques may prove adequate to monitor erosion control effectiveness of the project and unauthorized use of the roads, they do not address the project's effectiveness on restoring the ecological functions of the project areas to a "natural state" as outlined by the TCRCD restoration proposal.

We suggest that songbird monitoring of the project areas be included in the project implementation and effectiveness monitoring methods. Because birds occupy an extremely diverse range of niches within an ecosystem and relatively high position in the food chain they are ideal indicators of environmental conditions. Along with the relative ease of study (e.g., nationally standardized protocols and relative abundance of songbirds) and the cost effectiveness of a monitoring program, songbird monitoring would provide TCRCD managers with feedback from a whole community

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of organisms with which to better assess the long term ecological success of the restoration project.

With a biological monitoring component added to the TCRCD restoration plan, the restoration managers will have functional targets to measure when they are successful at reaching their restoration goals. Results from monitoring the avian population would also provide valid feedback to TCRCD managers and biologists about whether the TCRCD is consistent with its mission of conserving and restoring the natural resources of Trinity County and with the OHMVR Division's commitment to sustaining viable species populations while sustaining OHV recreation opportunity.

Thank you for your review and consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Alicia Young  
PRBO Conservation Science  
(415) 734-6458  
ayoung@prbo.org