



ASSOCIATED CALIFORNIA LOGGERS

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Associated California Loggers: Timber Specialist Consultant Activities Update

Project Activity Level (PAL) Pilot Project 2025

Regional Fire Management has released temporary guidelines to relax the Project Activity Level (PAL). After extended negotiations between the Associated California Loggers (ACL), the mill industry, and the US Forest Service (USFS), a memo was released to Forest Supervisors detailing the new approach.

Beginning this operating season, the Pacific Southwest Region is launching a pilot to more effectively manage PAL for 2025. The process centers on structured discussions between timber contractors and decision makers, using supporting documentation to assess and document site-specific conditions that affect fire risk. This approach will be applied across all units in the region.

Forest and unit-level Line Officers, along with Forest Fire Management Officers, will work with FAM Deputy Director Jay Kurth and Fire Planner Wyatt Palin to review the process and resulting documentation. Timber industry partners are actively participating to help manage PAL outputs for timber sales, stewardship contracts, service contracts, and special use permits.

Each Line Officer has the discretion to manage daily PAL outputs for their unit, aided by information collected from Contract and Special Use Administration Teams and Forest Fire Management Staff. Tools like the “How to PAL” and “PAL Level Change Decision” documents support identifying and addressing anomalies in predicted PAL values, especially during early spring, late fall, or periods of unusual weather.

The goal is to balance operational needs with the risk of unwanted ignitions. Decisions about PAL levels should be made with as much lead time and duration as possible, with the flexibility to adjust when conditions change. Early development and use of the Variance process are encouraged, supported by decision documentation.

Additional tips and resources are available in the FAQs and the R5 PAL Toolkit on the PAL Webpage. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r05/fire/project-activity-level>

For questions about PAL contractual aspects, contact Bradford Seaberg, Timber Sale Administration Program Leader, at 530-648-6883 or bradford.seaberg@usda.gov. For fire danger or daily management questions, contact Wyatt Palin, Regional Fire Planner, at 707-980-5369 or wyatt.palin@usda.gov.

Overtime Authorization for Timber Sale Administration

ACL members have reported a shortage of Timber Sale Administration field staff, making it difficult for loggers and contractors to meet Forest Service requirements and objectives. When

this issue was raised with Tahoe National Forest Supervisor Chris Feutrier, he confirmed that overtime authorization had been granted for sale administration on timber sale and stewardship contracts. The Plumas National Forest has also authorized overtime. The issue was brought up in June, and although USFS cited adjustments due to attrition and shifting priorities, steps have been taken to address the concern.

Program of Work Monitoring

Program of work monitoring was conducted on the El Dorado, Stanislaus, and Tahoe National Forests. Each forest is now preparing for green sale programs after years focused on fire salvage.

- Eldorado NF:
- 2025 – 22.2 million (includes Krozier Fire Salvage)
- 2026 – 12.0 million
- 2027 – 20.8 million
- 2028 – 10.0 million

Stanislaus NF:

2025 – 37.8 million

2026 – 32.0 million

2027 – 20.0 million

2028 – 16.0 million

Tahoe NF:

2025 – 5.0 million

2026 – 59.2 million

2027 – 123.7 million

Tahoe National Forest expects particularly robust programs in 2026 and 2027. There is hope these projections will remain accurate, and that Eldorado and Stanislaus may see increases as new information emerges.

Trends and Policy Updates

Ongoing attention is being paid to Canadian tariffs and policy changes. The rescission of the Roadless Rule by Secretary Rollins and recent changes to the National Environmental Policy Act are being monitored for their potential to increase timber outputs. The current outlook is cautiously optimistic, and ACL will continue discussions about PAL reform and implementation of IFPAL.

Summary

Projected timber volumes for the Stanislaus and Tahoe National Forests vary greatly between 2025 and 2028, with Tahoe projected to see significant increases in 2026 and 2027. While there

is optimism about these volumes, updates from Eldorado and Stanislaus could alter plans. Policy changes, including the Roadless Rule recission and updates to the National Environmental Policy Act, are viewed positively for potential timber output increases. Discussion and reform efforts around PAL and IFPAL continue.

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