

March 23, 2009 – Eureka Times-Standard

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# Federal Agreement Meant to Allow Logging, Benefit Owls

By John Driscoll

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is hoping a recent agreement with the owner of a 2,200-acre forest near Westhaven will serve as a pilot for others in the state looking to manage their land and protect northern spotted owls as well.

The Safe Harbor Agreement gives the Fred M. van Eck Forest Foundation, and the Pacific Forest Trust that manages the property, some endangered species leeway.

Since the trust is looking to grow timber, as part of being the state's first forest carbon emissions reduction project, it may attract more spotted owls than the pair already on the property. The agreement will allow the management of the forest without exposing it to restrictions on spotted owls that move in.

”They're able to continue on with management of the property and can still make some money off the land while encouraging habitat for spotted owls,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Field Supervisor Mike Long.

Specifically, the 90-year agreement draws boundaries for areas that won't be logged when owls are nearby or nesting, according to the Pacific Forest Trust. It also indicates areas

that will remain accessible for cutting if more owls are attracted to the property.

The Safe Harbor Agreement was crafted to help landowners manage their land for endangered species while shielding them from regulations that can come with them.

The agreements have been used to encourage grape growers to improve streamside forests in the San Joaquin Valley for the threatened valley elderberry longhorn beetle, and in the southeast to manage pine forests for the protected red cockaded woodpecker.

Without some kind of operational certainty, landowners may not risk management that might attract threatened species, said Pacific Forest Trust President Laurie Wayburn. But the state is trying to prompt people to manage forests to sequester carbon to offset pollution and stem global warming, she said, and safe harbor agreements could help.

”There is a tremendous synergy between restoring forests for climate benefits and restoring their habitat for the suite of species that are threatened and endangered,” Wayburn said.