



File Code: 2670
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Subject: Red Tree Vole Protocol Revision

To: Forest Supervisors, Mt. Hood, Rogue River Siskiyou, Siuslaw, Umpqua,
Willamette National Forests and Columbia River National Scenic Area

Red Tree Vole (RTV) are a category C survey and manage species under the Northwest Forest Plan.” Pre-disturbance surveys are required for this species if all three of the following criteria are met: 1) proposed project is within the Northern Mesic, Mesic, or Xeric Survey Zones, 2) there is suitable habitat within the project boundary that may potentially contribute to a reasonable assurance of red tree vole persistence, and 3) project disturbance is likely to have a significant negative impact on the species’ habitat, life cycle, microclimate, or life support requirements that affects red tree vole persistence at the site (USDA/USDI 2001: S&G 22).

The RTV survey method is being revised to address new information documenting low detection rates from ground-based surveys (Marks-Fife 2016). Surveys conducted using the current protocol (Huff et al. 2012) in some instances produced false negative detections, leaving habitat restoration projects vulnerable to legal challenges from groups that successfully documented RTV in cleared areas. The revised protocol has been shown to improve overall detection and survey results. Improved detection does, however, come with slightly higher costs (estimated \$68/acre based on surveyors targeting the largest trees within 10-acre cell) since the Modified Line Transect and Targeted Tree Climbing both require climbing. Adopting this revised method will decrease false negative surveys, lower legal fees, and decrease the need to redo project NEPA and layout from finding new RTV occurrences.

Regional staff will evaluate climbing costs and detection efficiencies within 1-2 years of implementing this protocol. Regional staff will also hold several webinars this fall so forests have a better understanding of changes being made.



Attached is the revised protocol and briefing paper. We are also attaching maps showing RTV habitat within vegetative five-year planning areas for the Umpqua, Willamette, and Mt. Hood NFs as an example of where climbing may be needed. Please contact John Chatel, Region 6 Regional Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species Program Leader at john.chatel@usda.gov or 503-808-2972 if you have questions.

GLENN P. CASAMASSA
Regional Forester

Enclosure: (5)
cc: Dan Shively, Jackie Groce, John Chatel, Diana Craig