



Request for Bids
Elder Creek/Upper Thomes Northern Spotted Owl & Goshawk Surveys
March 4th, 2026

Project Proponent: California Deer Association (CDA)

Location: Mendocino National Forest, 6 miles (~30-minute drive) from Paskenta, California

The Elder Creek/Upper Thomes survey area boundary is approximately 48,000 acres within the Grindstone Ranger District on the Mendocino National Forest (MNF). The survey area begins near Whitlock Campground, approximately 6 miles west of Paskenta, CA in portions of T25N R7W Sec. 31-33, T25N R8W 32, 33, 34, 35, 35; ; T24N R8 W Sec.1 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25-30, 31-36 T24N R7W Sec. 4-6, 7-9, 16-18, 19-21, 27-30, 31-33; ; T23N R7W Sec. 4-6, 7-9, 16-18, 19-21; T23N 8W Sec. 1-6, 7-12, 13-17, 23, 24, MBD. See attached vicinity and survey area map.

The survey area may be reached primarily by Forest roads and are accessible by 2WD, 4WD, or walking, as determined by pre-survey reconnaissance and maps. The CONTRACTOR may need the use of chainsaws, saws, or hand tools to cut woody debris out of roadway to allow for vehicle access.

Project Deliverables

- 6 Complete Visit Surveys (with additional visits if applicable) for the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) –69 call points and 9 activity centers
 - NSO Surveys shall follow the 2012 FWS protocol (See Appendix A)
- 1 Visit Survey for American goshawk (AMGO) (with follow ups as needed) – 69 call points
 - AMGO Survey shall follow a modified protocol followed by MNF
- Weekly Reports and associated GIS shapefiles
- End-of-Season Summary Report

Project Timeline

The timeline for this work would begin upon execution of the contract to August 31st, 2026. Per the protocol, activity center searches must be completed before nighttime calling begins, and 3 NSO complete visits must be completed by June 30, 2026.

Description of Work

The scope of this contract is to secure services for protocol level surveys for NSO and a modified assessment of AMGO within the 48,000 acres survey boundary in 2026.

Basic request pertaining to NSO and following the 2012 FWS protocol:

- Pre-survey work and reconnaissance of survey call points and survey plan delivered before surveys begin.

- Activity center searches conducted before night calling begins.
- 6 NSO complete visit surveys completed shall follow the 2012 FWS protocol.
- The survey summary report will be discussed in collaboration with CDA and the landowner.

Basic request pertaining to modified AMGO assessments:

- Pre-survey work and reconnaissance of survey call points and survey plan delivered before surveys begin.
- Calling NSO survey points during the day (1 visit per call point).
- The survey summary report will be discussed in collaboration with CDA and the landowner.

Item 1 includes the CONTRACTOR conducting 6 protocol-level NSO surveys (with additional visits if applicable), including pre-survey work/reconnaissance, surveys, coordination, and document preparation. The survey area consists of 69 survey call points and 13 NSO activity centers (4 of which do not need searching). These surveys must meet the requirements of Complete Visits as described in the 2012 FWS protocol.

Item 2 includes the CONTRACTOR conducting 1 modified AMGO assessment, including pre-survey work/reconnaissance, surveys, coordination, and document preparation. The survey area consists of 69 survey call points.

In addition to the inherently hazardous conditions associated with working in the woods, e.g. sharing the road with log trucks, vehicles; ticks, snakes, and bees; navigating steep, rugged terrain; much of the survey area is severely burned and contains standing dead trees that are susceptible to wind throw that could lead to serious injury or loss of life. It is expected that the CONTRACTOR shall consider this situation in the development of a Safety Plan for this project. The CONTRACTOR's safety plan shall incorporate the hazards identified for work within wildfire prepped areas and shall be communicated to all employees.

Maps will be provided as paper copies and digital versions to be used with Avenza map programs can be provided.

Quality Assurance

I. CONTRACTOR Quality Control:

The CONTRACTOR shall maintain an inspection system acceptable to CDA. The intended purpose of the CONTRACTOR performing self-inspection is to monitor quality while work is being performed, thereby allowing the CONTRACTOR to identify and correct any quality deficiencies in their work while the work is in progress. The CONTRACTOR shall inspect their work on an ongoing basis.

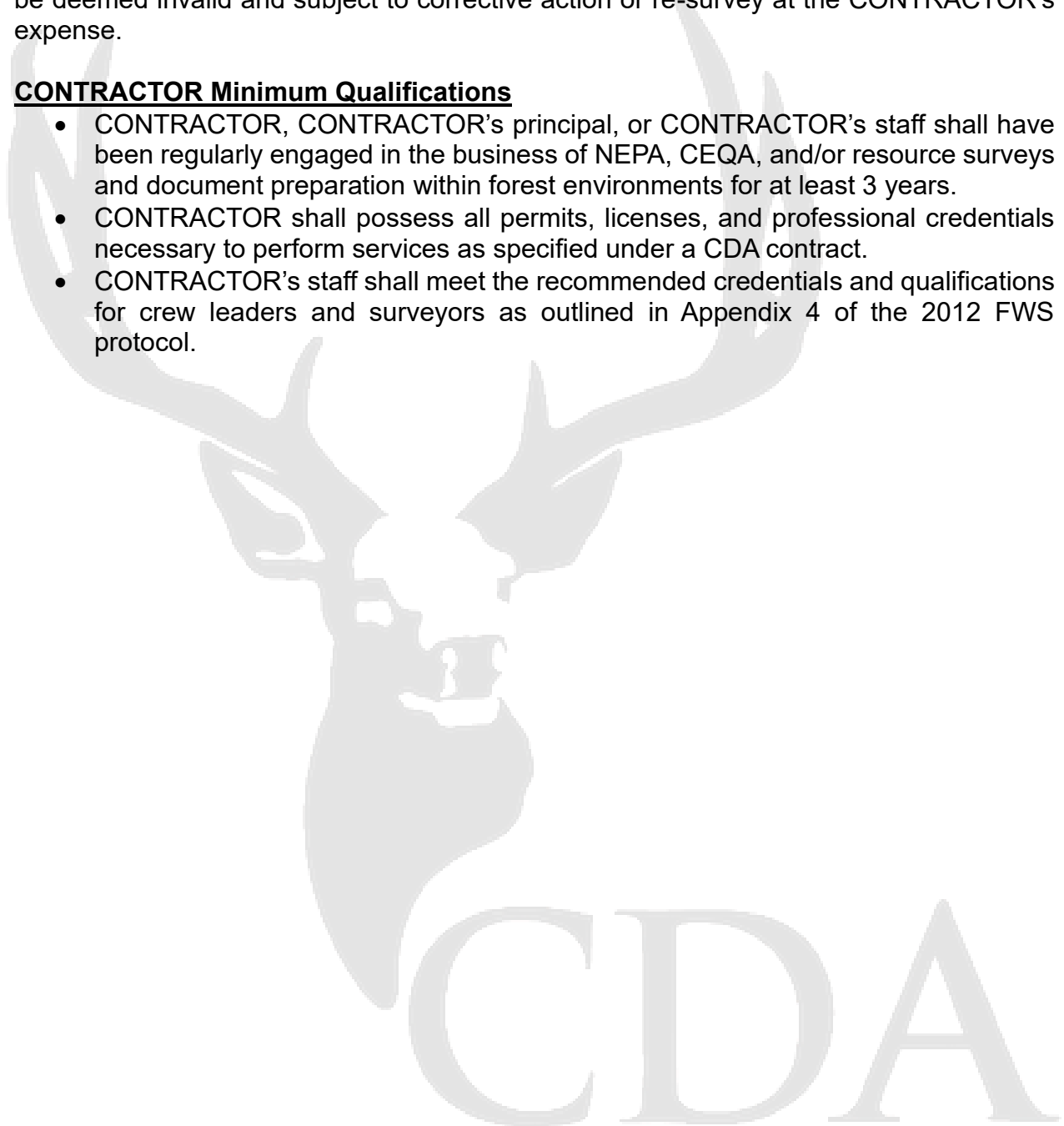
II. CDA Quality Control:

CDA staff will coordinate with the CONTRACTOR on an ongoing basis to support implementation of required NSO and AMGO surveys. CDA verification will consist of field observation of survey methods, adherence to approved survey protocols, documentation

practices, and review of survey coverage to ensure all designated treatment areas are properly assessed. Inspections may include spot checks of survey locations, confirmation of required call-playback procedures (when applicable), timing compliance, and examination of data collected for accuracy and completeness. Surveys conducted in a manner inconsistent with established the 2012 FWS protocol or project requirements may be deemed invalid and subject to corrective action or re-survey at the CONTRACTOR's expense.

CONTRACTOR Minimum Qualifications

- CONTRACTOR, CONTRACTOR's principal, or CONTRACTOR's staff shall have been regularly engaged in the business of NEPA, CEQA, and/or resource surveys and document preparation within forest environments for at least 3 years.
- CONTRACTOR shall possess all permits, licenses, and professional credentials necessary to perform services as specified under a CDA contract.
- CONTRACTOR's staff shall meet the recommended credentials and qualifications for crew leaders and surveyors as outlined in Appendix 4 of the 2012 FWS protocol.



Appendix A – Specifications

APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS

The *Protocol for Surveying Proposed Management Activities that May Impact Northern Spotted Owls*, February 2, 2011, Revised January 9, 2012, shall be used to conduct surveys, determine owl locations, and determine reproductive status (i.e., non-nesting, nesting confirmed, etc.). The document can be found at the following website: <https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2012RevisedNSOprotocol.2.15.12.pdf>

For AMGO modified assessments, use the *Northern Goshawk Inventory and Monitoring Technical Guide* for guidance. The document can be found at the following website: https://www.fs.usda.gov/rm/pubs_series/wo/wo_gtr071.pdf The AMGO assessments are expected to be modified and not follow the protocol exactly—Call points for AMGO will not be in a grid transect system, but the established NSO call points will be used for AMGO as well.

OTHER STANDARDS

Flagging

Use any of the following or combinations thereof. Red flagging normally marks property boundaries but it can be used if it is in combination with the flagging below to provide better visibility. All flagged shall be provided by the CONTRACTOR.

Resource Area	Flagging Colors
Universal (Notes)	White
Wildlife Exclusion	Pink with Black Stripes
Wildlife nest and Call points	White with Red Dots

Surveyor Qualifications

Crew leaders and surveyors shall meet the recommended qualifications in Appendix 4 of the 2012 FWS protocol. Prior to contract execution, the CONTRACTOR must provide a copy of credential of all CONTRACTOR staff conducting surveys to be kept on record by CDA and the landowner.

Pre-Survey Literature Survey

CDA, via the landowner, may supply any literature or historical knowledge of the survey area, detection history, and survey data deemed necessary or requested by the CONTRACTOR. Literature supplied may include: (1) known locations of survey objectives, (2) typed vegetation maps, (3) aerial photographs, and (4) final reports/data for adjacent surveys as available.

Pre-Survey Reconnaissance

Prior to the start of survey visits, the CONTRACTOR shall conduct a daytime field reconnaissance (pre-surveys) of the survey area to familiarize themselves with the area, determine safety hazards, remove any woody debris blocking roadway access, and determine whether the call points provided are sufficient or in need of revision and/or additions. All call point locations will be recorded as a point feature with GPS by the CONTRACTOR. All call points will be flagged with the associated number written in permanent weatherproof ink on the flagged with reflective tape (provided by the CONTRACTOR). Impassable roads, locked gates, etc. shall be noted and discussed with CDA prior to the start of surveys.

The pre-survey reconnaissance shall utilize information obtained during the literature review to aid in a field review of the significant terrain features, access, known territories, and special habitat components. During the pre-operation meeting, strategies for locked gates and downed trees blocking roads shall be discussed with the CDA and the landowner prior to conducting the pre-survey reconnaissance. Knowledge gained from the pre-survey reconnaissance will be helpful in planning routes and survey plan.

NSO Activity Center Searches

The CONTRACTOR shall follow the methods in the 2012 FWS protocol at *8.0 Activity Center Searches within Survey Area*. This survey area consists of 13 NSO activity centers; however, 5 activity centers do not need to be searched (no associated call points or no remaining habitat). Therefore, activity center searches are not deemed necessary. 8 activity centers will need to be searched following the 2012 FWS protocol.

Visits shall be to protocol. Visits shall be recorded in the provided field data collection form (or similar forms approved by CDA and the landowner). Completed forms for daytime stand searches of known activity centers shall be supplemented with a map and GIS shapefiles shall be provided as one of the deliverables, showing the area surveyed (recorded as a track feature with GPS) as well as any visual or aural observation which need to be recorded as a point feature with a GPS.

NSO Call Point Surveys

The CONTRACTOR shall survey all call points according to the methods in the 2012 FWS protocol. This survey area consists of 69 survey call points, and 6 complete visits (plus any additional visits as applicable per the 2012 FWS protocol) are required.

Start the surveys as soon as possible within the parameters of the protocol; and dependent on weather and road conditions. A minimum of seven days are required between visits to any particular station (see 2012 FWS protocol Example 5.5 at *#3 Temporal Spacing of Visits*). Surveys shall be conducted between sunset and sunrise. The CONTRACTOR shall conduct follow-ups to protocol for all detections. Call points shall not be dropped without CDA and landowner approval, but their locations may be adjusted (with agreement) to improve their effectiveness—location adjustments shall be discussed with CDA.

Modified AMGO Assessment

The CONTRACTOR shall follow the 2006 protocol as far as calling at each survey point; however, this will be a modified assessment. The 69 NSO call points will be used for the AMGO call points.

Detections, Follow-ups, and Activity Center Discoveries (for NSOs)

Detections, Follow-ups, and Activity Center Discoveries shall be recorded on the Nest Location Form (or similar forms approved by CDA) and shall be recorded with GPS and mapped. Azimuth and horizontal distance of all aural detections will be recorded on the survey form and oriented from a GPS verified reference point. All detections shall be followed up to protocol to determine pair status, nesting status, and reproductive status.

1. **Follow-Up at the Survey Area Boundary:** For follow-up procedures, refer to the 2012 FWS protocol. Follow-ups that start inside the survey area shall continue outside the project boundary on to Forest Service land. Follow-ups prescribed by the protocol may be conducted on private land after obtaining permission of the landowner. When the protocol

requires a follow-up on private land, CDA shall document the situation (including the proof of permission obtained by the landowner) and report to CDA within 24 hours. Discussion can be had if follow-ups need to be made on private lands.

2. **Follow-Up Timing:** Follow-ups should be completed the next morning or next evenings after an owl is detected, but with good cause, no later than 48 hours after detection. Follow-ups on detections shall be initiated at sunrise or dusk and completed within 4 hours after sunrise or initiated no earlier than 4 hours before sunset and completed by sunset.
3. **Follow-Up Mousing:** The CONTRACTOR will make every effort to retain control of all mice used for follow-ups and will remove all live mice from the forest after the follow-up is completed. With the exception of attempting to illicit an owl response, mice will not be intentionally set free under any circumstances. Every effort will be made to maintain visual or aural contact with any spotted owl that flies off with a mouse. Mice will be provided by and kept by the CONTRACTOR.
4. **Roost Discovery:** The CONTRACTOR shall GPS, flag, and label the locations of daytime roosting sites discovered during a follow-up. This flagging will be removed once surveys and reports have been completed.
5. **Nest Discovery:** The CONTRACTOR shall contact CDA (who, in turn, will notify the landowner) within 24 hours when a nest is discovered. The CONTRACTOR shall GPS, flag, and label the location of the nest, for relocation during follow-up surveys and/or inspections.
6. **Simultaneous Detections:** When several detections are made and it is not possible to discern the number or association of owls in an area, at least two surveyors shall simultaneously follow-up each potential activity center to determine the number of owls and their status.
7. **Tour with CDA:** When the CONTRACTOR is in the field and with a 48-hour notice from CDA, the CONTRACTOR shall accompany the CDA project manager to an Activity Center or detection site if requested.
8. **Photos:** Daytime digital images of the nest, nest tree, and surrounding habitat shall be submitted with the data and summary report.
9. **No-Call Buffer:** The CONTRACTOR shall recommend a “no-call” buffer for all Activity Centers that will be reviewed by CDA/landowner prior to installing no-call buffer. “No-call buffers” shall be adjusted by the CONTRACTOR to include call points that fall within the sound shadows of ridges and other topographic or vegetation features. CDA must approve all no-call buffers before installation.
10. **Forms:** All field forms shall be legible and complete, including Maps, shapefiles, GPS, and UTM Coordinates.
 - a. Forms for follow-up surveys shall include a map and GPS shapefiles showing the area surveyed as well as any visual or aural observations that were detected which need to be recorded as point features. Follow-up surveyors should record/discuss habitat conditions encountered during the survey.

Mapping and GPS Requirements

The CONTRACTOR shall take GPS points for moved or added call points, tracks of follow-up surveys, roosting sites, nest sites, detections, and species of interest (especially barred owl detections). All of these shall be recorded by GPS. Mapped locations of owl detections and call points shall be labeled in accordance with the data dictionary:

- **GPS Standard:** A resource-grade GPS unit capable of the use of Avenza program or another approved GPS software (i.e.,FieldMaps) will be provided and used by the CONTRACTOR.

The mapped locations shall be recorded in UTM Zone 10 North projections, American Datum (NAD) 1983, Units in meters or marked/pinned in Avenza. Where GPS data cannot be obtained directly for a location, the CONTRACTOR shall obtain verification of the location by measuring the azimuth and horizontal distance of the field location from a GPS verified reference point.

The GPS mapped locations (call points, night detections, roost locations, nest locations, species of interest, etc.) are to be delivered to CDA alongside the weekly and season summary reports as a project deliverable.

Housing Accommodations

Camping is the most efficient method of accommodation. There are several developed and dispersed campgrounds with access to water near the survey area. Should the CONTRACTOR choose to camp in/near the survey area, the CONTRACTOR will comply with the Forest Service and local fire and sanitary requirements and sign a contract agreement for camping on government land.

DELIVERABLES

Survey Plan

Discussion with the CONTRACTOR, CDA, and the landowner will occur with a mandatory pre-operational meeting to coordinate when pre-survey and survey work will begin. Planning accordingly based on accessibility, weather conditions, and availability will be discussed. During this meeting, the CONTRACTOR will present, and modify per the discussion, a Survey Plan. At minimum, the Survey Plan should contain:

1. **Schedule:** The CONTRACTOR's anticipated work schedule.
2. **Survey Map:** The survey map area with numbered stations, Activity Centers, and any other information surveyors will need to conduct surveys (the CONTRACTOR will have been provided an initial map, call points may change after reconnaissance).
3. **Order of Work:** The approximate order the survey area will be surveyed (this will likely be flexible based on access and conditions).
4. **Crew:** A discussion of crew structure and training/qualifications.
5. **Emergency Measures:** A discussion of emergency planning and communications between the landowner, CDA, and the CONTRACTOR.

Weekly Reports

Between the initiation of pre-survey work and the end of protocol-level surveys, weekly updates shall be provided to CDA detailing field work performed, any major issues encountered, and other relevant information. This should be presented in the form of a written report, but discussion of progress and any issues that need to be addressed can also be discussed informally. The weekly report should include but not be limited to:

1. Discussion of the work completed.

2. Discussion of the planned work the next week.
3. Discussion of detections, follow-ups, Activity Centers, and no-call buffers.

End-of-Season Summary Report (NSO and AMGO)

CDA requires a final summary report for surveyed completed with complied data forms, detection maps, and detection tables for NSO and AMGO (if needed). The CONTRACTOR should include, at minimum, the following:

1. A discussion of the methodology and findings of the surveys.
2. A copy of the Survey Map showing stations, detections, and activity centers with buffers.
3. Original field data sheets and forms.
4. A detailed discussion of the habitat for detections that do not result in an activity center and for all Activity Cents.

The report should follow a similar format the example end-of-season summary report provided to the CONTRACTOR by CDA.

BOUNDARY DESIGNATION

- **Virtual Boundaries:** All survey area, activity center, and call point boundaries are identified virtually, and georeferenced, Avenza-compatible map will be provided.
 - All CONTRACTOR surveyors on site shall be required to utilize georeferencing software such as Avenza Maps or Esri Field Maps and to have a Smart Phone, tablet, dedicated GPS unit, or other device capable of showing their location on the provided georeferenced electronic map as needed.
- **Private Property:** Private properties are present throughout the project area. CONTRACTOR crew leader will communicate with the CDA project manager if they determine private property access is necessary to complete activity center searches or follow-up surveys.
 - Surveys prescribed by the 2012 FWS protocol may be conducted on private land after obtaining permission of the landowner.
 - When the protocol requires a follow-up on private land, the CONTRACTOR shall document the situation (including the proof of permission obtained from the landowner) and report it to CDA (and the landowner) within 24 hours.

