

### 3 RESPONSES TO COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIR

This chapter contains the comment letters received on the DEIR and responses to environmental issues raised in those comments. Each letter has been given a designation and each individual comment within a letter has been given a number designation for cross-referencing. Responses are numbered so that they correspond to the appropriate comment. Each letter is followed by the responses to the comments in that letter.

As noted previously, a public hearing on the DEIR was held on August 23, 2007, and public comments were received at that meeting. A summary of the oral comments received at the hearing, and the corresponding responses is included following the comment letters and responses. The comments presented during the public hearing are paraphrased.

Table 3-1 lists all parties who submitted comments on the DEIR during the public review period.

<b>Table 3-1 Commenter Letters and Oral Comments Received</b>		
<b>Commenter</b>	<b>Date of Letter</b>	<b>Letter Designation</b>
<b>Organizations</b>		
Law Offices of J. William Yeates on behalf of Friends of the North Fork	September 21, 2007	Yeates
Protect American River Canyons	September 23, 2007	PARC
Ashley Memorial Dog Park Foundation	September 7, 2007	Ashley
North Fork American River Alliance	September 22, 2007	NFARA
Friends of the North Fork	September 24, 2007	Friends 1
Friends of the North Fork	September 24, 2007	Friends 2
International Mountain Bicycling Association	September 24, 2007	IMBA
<b>Individuals</b>		
Sherry G. Turner	September 11, 2007	Turner
Bert Pierroz	August 14, 2007	Pierroz
Craig Wilson	August 15, 2007	Wilson
Randy Martin	August 15, 2007	Martin
Bill Haley	August 20, 2007	Haley
Bruce Sayre	August 24, 2007	Sayre
Richard Goodwin	August 23, 2007	Goodwin
Cheryl and Richard Herms	August 23, 2007	Herms
Helen Crawford	August 26, 2007	Crawford
George Palma	August 28, 2007	Palma
Steve Trythall	August 27, 2007	Trythall
Michael E. Reese	August 23, 2007	Reese
Kurt Sorensen	September 6, 2007	Sorensen
William M. Wauters	September 13, 2007	Wauters 1
William M. Wauters	September 20, 2007	Wauters 2
Jay Shuttleworth	September 21, 2007	Shuttleworth

**Table 3-1  
Commenter Letters and Oral Comments Received**

Commenter	Date of Letter	Letter Designation
Arianne R. Danforth	September 21, 2007	Danforth
Kathy Dombrowski	September 21, 2007	Dombrowski
Donna Furlow	September 21, 2007	Furlow
Janet and Larry Glenn	September 21, 2007	Glenn
Debbie Murphy	September 21, 2007	Murphy
P. Will	September 21, 2007	Will
Stephanie Williams	September 21, 2007	S. Williams
James Yee	September 21, 2007	Yee
Pat Miller	September 22, 2007	Miller
Catherine M. O'Riley	September 22, 2007	O'Riley
Susan Parry	September 22, 2007	Parry
Alice Tenscher Dunbar	September 24, 2007	Dunbar
Barbara Heyward	September 23, 2007	Heyward
Roberta Raymond	September 23, 2007	Raymond
Jeanne Bonner	September 24, 2007	Bonner
Patricia Gibbs	September 24, 2007	Gibbs
Randy Hackbarth	September 24, 2007	Hackbarth
Julie Hahn	September 24, 2007	Hahn
Patricia Keller	September 24, 2007	Keller
Sarah Konst	September 24, 2007	Konst
William A. Newsom	September 24, 2007	Newsom
Sharon Talley	September 24, 2007	Talley
Linda Silva	September 24, 2007	Silva
Laurie Sweeney	September 24, 2007	Sweeney
Donna Williams	September 24, 2007	D. Williams
Jo Ann Kita	September 16, 2007	Kita
<b>Public Hearing</b>		
Randy Martin	August 23, 2007	Martin 2
William Wauters	August 23, 2007	Wauters 3
Andrew Gerhard	August 23, 2007	Gerhard
Ruth Sorensen	August 23, 2007	Sorensen 2
Richard Goodwin	August 23, 2007	Goodwin 2
Franki Terrazos	August 23, 2007	Terrazos
Michael Garabedian	August 23, 2007	Garabedian
Janet Peterson	August 23, 2007	Peterson
Eric Peach	August 23, 2007	Peach 2
Toby Covich	August 23, 2007	Covich



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE of PLANNING AND RESEARCH  
STATE CLEARINGHOUSE AND PLANNING UNIT



CYNTHIA BRYANT  
DIRECTOR

September 26, 2007

Andy Fisher  
Placer County, Department of Facility Services  
11476 C Avenue  
Auburn, CA 95603

Subject: North Fork American River Trail Project  
SCH#: 2005112042

Dear Andy Fisher:

The enclosed comment (s) on your Draft EIR was (were) received by the State Clearinghouse after the end of the state review period, which closed on September 24, 2007. We are forwarding these comments to you because they provide information or raise issues that should be addressed in your final environmental document.

The California Environmental Quality Act does not require Lead Agencies to respond to late comments. However, we encourage you to incorporate these additional comments into your final environmental document and to consider them prior to taking final action on the proposed project.

Please contact the State Clearinghouse at (916) 445-0613 if you have any questions concerning the environmental review process. If you have a question regarding the above-named project, please refer to the ten-digit State Clearinghouse number (2005112042) when contacting this office.

Sincerely,

Terry Roberts  
Senior Planner, State Clearinghouse

Enclosures  
cc: Resources Agency

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FACILITY SERVICES  
2007 SEP 27 PM 3:19

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J. WILLIAM YEATES

KEITH G. WAGNER  
JASON R. FLANDERS

September 21, 2007

Sent via Overnight Mail

Andrew Fisher  
Placer County Department of Facility Services  
Parks and Grounds Division  
11476 C Ave.  
Auburn, CA 95603  
[afisher@placer.ca.gov](mailto:afisher@placer.ca.gov)

Re: North Fork American River Trail Draft Environmental Impact Report  
(SCH No. 2005112042)

Dear Mr. Fisher:

On behalf of our clients, Friends of the North Fork, we submit the following comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report ("DEIR") for the above-mentioned project:

**A. SOIL IMPACTS**

The DEIR fails to quantify the amount of soil and rock that will be disturbed or relocated by the project. Nor does the DEIR specify where the disturbed soils and rocks will be placed other than to say that best management practices will be used. What specific best management practices will be employed? How, specifically, will these best management practices secure the removed soil and rock to prevent erosion? While the DEIR does state that impacts resulting in "significant disruptions, displacements, compaction, or overcrowding of the soil" would be considered to be significant, the DEIR fails to analyze whether the project would create any of these impacts.<sup>1</sup> Won't the large amounts of dirt required to be removed from the trail tread and hillsides result in "disruptions" and "displacements" of the soil? Moreover, the DEIR's threshold of significance is circular and impossible to understand, since it states that an impact is significant "if it would cause . . . significant disruptions," but does not describe what a "significant disruption" is. Because the DEIR fails to quantify the impacts on the existing environment, the public has no information to evaluate the magnitude of soil related changes caused by the proposed trail construction and future maintenance.

The DEIR fails to fully describe and mitigate the project's impact to soils resulting from construction and operation on steep slopes. The DEIR states, "[w]herever feasible, the trail surface has a grade of less than 10%."<sup>2</sup> Where on the trail will it be infeasible to have a grade less than 10%? What impacts to soil will construction and operation of the trail have on slopes with grades greater than 10%? Will creating trails with greater than 10% slopes result in

<sup>1</sup> DEIR 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> DEIR 3-3.

**Andrew Fisher**  
North Fork American River Trail DEIR  
September 21, 2007  
Page 2 of 5

substantial erosion, the loss of topsoil, or unstable soils? Could these impacts be avoided by an alternative trail alignment?

The DEIR only evaluates the slope of the trail moving along the proposed trail path, but fails to evaluate the impacts associated with the slope of the land moving horizontally across, perpendicular to, the proposed trail. What about the environmental consequences of cutting the trail along or into the slopes of the steep canyon? How will the proposed project prevent substantial erosion along or from the canyon slopes where the trail has been cut along or into a steep slope?

#### **B. WATER QUALITY**

The proposed project is required to obtain a new section 401 certification from the Regional Water Quality Control Board ("RWQCB"). The existing certification relies on a mitigated negative declaration for a previous trail proposal that has been vacated. The project has been amended to include new stream crossings, new trail segments, and new slopes on the trail, and the RWQCB must evaluate the impacts of these changes when considering the project's new application for a water quality certification. The previous RWQCB's section 401 certification required that, "Except for activities permitted by USACE under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, soil, silt, or other organic materials shall not be placed where such materials could pass into surface water or surface water drainage courses."<sup>3</sup> How is this feasible? What specific amounts of rock and dirt will be removed, and what specific best management practices will feasibly prevent any of the rock and dirt from reaching the River? The DEIR states that impacts to water quality would be significant if the project "would result in . . . discharge into surface waters or other alterations of surface water quality."<sup>4</sup> The DEIR fails to provide substantial evidence by describing how large amounts of dirt and rock that have been removed to construct the trail will be kept from eroding into the river.

The DEIR states, "five of the stream crossings would require the construction of bridges because of the size of the streams in these locations."<sup>5</sup> What specific criteria were used to determine which streams would require bridges, and which would not? What impacts will occur to stream crossings without bridges, which will be avoided on streams with bridges?

#### **C. ALTERNATIVES**

The DEIR fails to consider a reasonable range of feasible alternatives that would reduce or avoid the project's significant environmental impacts. CEQA requires that

An EIR for any project subject to CEQA review must consider a reasonable range of alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which (1) offer substantial environmental advantages over the project proposal . . . ; and (2) may

<sup>3</sup> DEIR 3-12.

<sup>4</sup> DEIR 12-9.

<sup>5</sup> DEIR 3-5.

be 'feasibly accomplished in a successful manner' considering the economic, environmental, social and technological factors involved.<sup>6</sup>

Instead of looking at a reasonable range of alternatives, the DEIR only considered the proposed project, and the "original alignment alternative," for which the County originally prepared a mitigated negative declaration, but later set aside. The DEIR asserts that the original alignment alternative would have greater environmental impacts than the proposed project.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the DEIR has not evaluated alternatives which "offer substantial environmental advantages over the project proposal."<sup>8</sup> The DEIR should consider using existing trails to avoid new impacts. Also, the DEIR should consider moving some trail segments farther away from the River, to avoid erosion entering the River; and, the DEIR should consider locating the trail in areas where slopes do not exceed 10%, and/or where cuts into the steep canyon slope would not be required to construct the proposed trail.

Because the DEIR failed to evaluate a reasonable range of feasible alternatives to the proposed project, the DEIR further violates CEQA by designating the proposed project as the environmentally superior alternative. As the DEIR notes, CEQA requires that "[i]f the environmentally superior alternative is the 'no project' alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives."<sup>9</sup> The DEIR states that, other than the no project alternative, the environmentally superior alternative is the proposed project.<sup>10</sup> This designation obviously fails to satisfy CEQA requirements. The proposed project cannot be both the project and a feasible alternative to the project.

#### D. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The DEIR states that "[v]egetation removal would be minimized within the trail corridor to the extent possible; however, up to 15 feet may be cleared where needed to promote safe lines of sight."<sup>11</sup> Under what circumstances would this wide swath need to be cleared? Could alternative trail alignments avoid the need to clear this wide path? By what means would the vegetation be cleared? How would the cleared area be maintained? Have surveys for rare or endangered plant species along the trail alignment, including the clearance area, been completed?

The DEIR fails to state the rate at which removed Oak trees with diameter at breast height ("DBH") greater than six inches will be replaced.<sup>12</sup> The DEIR states that the County shall take measures to compensate for the loss of trees, as provided in the Placer County Tree Ordinance. Despite this claim, the DEIR does not require that destroyed trees be mitigated by re-planted, because the Placer County Tree Ordinance does not require replacement. The determination to replace trees is within the county's discretion. Therefore, if the County decides not to replace destroyed trees, the DEIR has failed to mitigate this impact to a less-than-significant level.

<sup>6</sup> *Citizens of Goleta Valley v. Board of Supervisors* (1990) 52 Cal.3d 553, 556.

<sup>7</sup> DEIR 16-7 to 16-9, 16-12.

<sup>8</sup> *Citizens of Goleta Valley v. Board of Supervisors* (1990) 52 Cal.3d 553, 556.

<sup>9</sup> CEQA Guidelines, § 151126.6, subd. (e)(2).

<sup>10</sup> DEIR 16-13.

<sup>11</sup> DEIR 3-5.

<sup>12</sup> DEIR 5-18, 5-11.

The DEIR admits that foothill yellow-legged frogs may develop eggs and larva in stream crossings along the trail during the summer, but the DEIR fails to fully mitigate the project's impacts to the foothill yellow-legged frog. First, the proposed mitigation measure applies only to construction operations, and does nothing to avoid impacts that trail users will have on foothill yellow-legged frog egg deposition and development in small pools and terraces occurring along the drainages and streams that cross the trail. The project will only create bridges over a small number of these stream crossings, and the remainder of stream crossings will be directly impacted by foot, horse, and bicycle traffic. Second, the DEIR's mitigation of construction impacts actually admits that construction may take place when water is present in these streams during the breeding and larval development season, yet the only mitigation measure the DEIR proposes for impacts to such water is that rocks will not be removed from these areas. Won't other physical impacts to the stream crossings during construction adversely affect developing eggs or larva, such as foot and tractor traffic across and through the stream, bridge construction, or placing new rocks for the trail crossings in the waterway?

The DEIR fails to fully mitigate impacts to migratory birds. The DEIR admits that impacts to, or removal of, small trees and shrubs "could also result in the loss of migratory bird nests, which is also considered a potentially significant impact."<sup>13</sup> However, the DEIR only provides that "[i]f woody vegetation [small trees and shrubs] must be removed during the nesting season, the amount and extent to be removed shall be minimized to the extent feasible."<sup>14</sup> Thus, the DEIR explicitly allows small trees and shrubs to be removed, even if they contain nests for migratory birds, and even during the nesting season. The DEIR proposes much more stringent mitigation measures for nests occurring in trees greater than six inches, DBH. Why does the DEIR not provide the same mitigation measures for nests occurring in trees less than six inches, DBH, or for nests occurring in shrubs?

#### E. CULTURAL RESOURCES

The DEIR admits that significant cultural resources may exist along the proposed trail location, but the DEIR fails to mitigate potential impacts to those cultural resources to less-than-significant levels. Mitigation measure 6-2 states that if cultural resources are encountered during project construction, an expert will be consulted to recommend mitigation measures. This deferral of mitigation is inadequate because it fails to include specific performance standards or standards of significance that would go to ensuring that impacts would be reduced to less-than-significant. Moreover, this mitigation measure should require construction crews to be trained in identification of cultural resources, so that if such resources are encountered during construction, construction crews will recognize the relevant artifact as significant, and cease construction appropriately, before destroying, or ignoring, significant cultural resources.

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<sup>13</sup> DEIR 5-12.

<sup>14</sup> DEIR 5-16.

**F. AESTHETIC IMPACTS**

The Placer County General Plan requires that that "new development in scenic areas (e.g., river canyons, lake watersheds, scenic highway corridors, ridgelines and steep slopes) [be] planned and designed in a manner which . . . avoids locating structures along . . . steep slopes."<sup>15</sup> Yet, the DEIR admits that "[t]he proposed trail alignment is located on steep slopes."<sup>16</sup> The DEIR needs to evaluate the environmental consequences of ignoring existing County policy regarding development along steep slopes.

**G. JOINT STATE/FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

CEQA requires that a state lead agency, preparing environmental review for a project that will also require review under the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA"), should approach the responsible federal agencies to prepare a joint EIR/EIS, "to avoid the need for the federal agency to prepare a separate document for the same project."<sup>17</sup> Has the County approached the Bureau of Reclamation about preparing a joint EIR/EIS? Because of substantial revisions to the proposed project (the old project is in fact the only alternative to the proposed project) since the Bureau's adoption of the August 2, 2004, Finding of No Significant Impact, the responsible federal agencies must determine anew whether the proposed project will have significant impacts on the environment. If the environmental impacts resulting from the design change are significant or uncertain, as compared with the original design's impacts, a supplemental Environmental Assessment is required before the federal agencies may issue any permits for the proposed trail.<sup>18</sup> The state lead and responsible agencies should take this opportunity to work with federal permitting agencies in performing a full environmental review of the proposed project.

**H. CONCLUSION**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this DEIR. We look forward to your responses.

Sincerely,

  
Jason Flanders

<sup>15</sup> DEIR 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> DEIR 12-10.

<sup>17</sup> CEQA Guidelines, § 15222.

<sup>18</sup> *Price Rd. Neighborhood Ass'n v. United States DOT*, 113 F.3d 1505, 1508-1509.

Yeates-1

As described on page 5 of Appendix B to the DEIR, prior to trail construction, all surficial vegetation and debris should be stripped and removed to approximately 2 feet beyond the limits of grading. The estimated depth of this vegetation removal is approximately 2-4 inches below ground surface. These materials should not be used within fills along the trail, but may be used as topsoil over finished slopes, if debris is removed. The cut material would be distributed uniformly onto the subadjacent slope and would “adjust” to the slope and settle over time.

As described on page 6 of Appendix B to the DEIR, to mitigate potential erosion and subsequent surficial slumping, topical areas of high erosion potential (e.g., ephemeral crossings, grade dips, etc.) would be vegetated as soon as possible, and surface drainage would be directed away from the top slopes. The uppermost 2 feet of new cuts would be “rounded”. Measures would also be provided to reduce concentration of runoff where the trail gradient exceeds 5%. These measures may include grade dips, grade reversals, and energy dissipaters at discharge points. The amount of soil and rock material that would be disturbed during construction would be minimized. The exact amounts of soil and rock material would not be known until the final design phase of the project. Based on the project description, the trail construction involves cuts and fills less than 5 feet in height. It is the opinion of Blackburn Consulting, based on the study and recommendations contained in the Geotechnical Input Report, included in Appendix B of the DEIR, that the resulting earthwork volume would be minor, and the project would not result in significant disruption, displacements, compaction, overcrowding of the soil if it is constructed in accordance with the Project Description and recommendations included in the Geotechnical Input Report. Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be consistent with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activity (General Permit) Water Quality Order 99-08-DWQ and the Section 401 Water Quality Certification.

Yeates-2

As described on page 1 of Appendix B to the DEIR, most of the slopes along the trail alignment average about 70% gradient (35°, about 1.4H:1V), or flatter. Some segments, however, traverse slopes approaching 100% gradient (45°, 1H:1V). Section A of Appendix B to the DEIR also shows a typical cross section that illustrates the steepness of the canyon slopes. See response Yeates-1.

Yeates-3

As described on page 11-15 of the DEIR, the County shall comply with the terms and conditions set forth in the Section 401 water quality certification obtained from the Central Valley RWQCB. Because of alignment changes and new drainages affected since the issuance of the Section 401 certification, this permit will be resubmitted and any new conditions attached to that permit will be incorporated into the project. The County shall notify the Central Valley RWQCB in writing of the start of any in-water activities. The following is a list of terms and conditions of the Section 401 certification:

- ▶ Except for activities permitted by USACE under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, soil, silt, or other organic materials shall not be placed where such materials could pass into surface water or surface water drainage courses.

- ▶ The discharge of petroleum products or other excavated materials to surface waters is prohibited.
- ▶ Activities shall not cause turbidity increases in surface waters to exceed:
  - where natural turbidity is between 0 and 5 Nephelometric Turbidity Units (NTUs), increases shall not exceed 1 NTU;
  - where natural turbidity is between 5 and 50 NTUs, increases shall not exceed 20 percent;
  - where natural turbidity is between 50 and 100 NTUs, increases shall not exceed 10 percent;
  - where natural turbidity is greater than 100 NTUs, increases shall not exceed 10 percent.

Except that these limits will be eased during in-water working periods to allow a turbidity increase of 15 NTU over background turbidity as measured in surface waters 300 feet downstream from the working area. In determining compliance with the above limits, appropriate averaging periods may be applied provided that beneficial uses will be fully protected.

- ▶ Activities shall not cause settleable matter to exceed 0.1 milliliters/liter in surface waters as measured in surface waters 300 feet downstream from the project.
- ▶ Activities shall not cause visible oil, grease, or foam in the work area or downstream.
- ▶ All areas disturbed by project activities shall be protected from washout or erosion.
- ▶ In the event that project activities result in the deposition of soil materials or creation of a visible plume in surface waters, monitoring shall be conducted immediately upstream and 300 feet downstream of the work site and the results reported to the Board within two weeks.
- ▶ Placer County Department of Facility Services shall notify the Board immediately if the above criteria for turbidity, settleable matter, oil/grease, or foam are exceeded.
- ▶ Placer County Department of Facility Services shall notify the Board immediately of any spill of petroleum products or other organic or earthen materials.

Yeates-4

The width and steepness of the defined streambanks were used to determine which stream crossings would require bridges. Bridges would be required at crossings that were determined to have banks that were too steep or too wide to allow for safe crossing without a bridge. Bridges were proposed to allow for safe crossing and not as a means of avoiding significant stream impacts. Impacts to streams are discussed in Impacts 5-4 and 12-1 and 12-2 of the DEIR.

Yeates-5

Please see Master Response 1.

Yeates-6

There would be no clear-cutting along the trail for safe lines of sight. Status oaks, as defined by the Placer County Tree Ordinance, would not be removed when clearing for safe lines of sight. As described on page 3-5 of the DEIR, vegetation clearing along the

trail corridor before construction would be performed by hand. Clearing would be maintained by the County as necessary. As described on page 5-3 of the DEIR, a preliminary delineation of waters of the United States, including wetlands, was conducted by EDAW wetland ecologists in February 2004. Special-status plant surveys were conducted in the project area in May and June 2004 by EDAW botanists. Because there have been minor adjustments to the proposed trail alignment since 2004, additional surveys were conducted in 2006 and 2007. Prior to construction, an additional 2.3 mile segment of the trail will be surveyed for *Brandegee's clarkia*.

Yeates-7

Pursuant to the Placer County Tree Ordinance, the County would purchase oak woodland mitigation credits for all oak trees greater than 6 inches dbh that are removed as a result of the project.

Yeates-8

CEQA establishes a duty for public agencies to avoid or minimize environmental damage where feasible. The mitigation measures to protect foothill yellow-legged frog are established to minimize impacts to foothill yellow-legged frogs during construction, if they are present in the construction area. Impacts to foothill yellow-legged frog populations from foot, horse, and bicycle traffic once the trail is operational are expected to be minimal, because the proposed trail does not cross any perennial streams; the ephemeral and intermittent streams are not likely to provide consistently suitable aquatic habitat for the duration of the breeding and metamorphosis period. In addition, the gradient of most of these streams is not suitable to support foothill yellow-legged frogs. If foothill yellow-legged frogs were to be present at one or more of the stream crossings, potential trampling of egg masses, tadpoles, or adults is not likely to eliminate the regional population or reduce the population below self-sustaining levels. As described on page 5-15 of the DEIR, the County and its primary construction contractor shall implement the following measures to reduce impacts on foothill yellow-legged frogs:

- ▶ Construction of the trail across drainages and streams shall occur when the drainages are dry, to the extent feasible.
- ▶ Guidelines shall be implemented to protect water quality and prevent erosion, as outlined in the BMPs in Chapter 3.0, "Project Description," and Mitigation Measure 11-2, "Obtain Authorization for Construction Activities with the Central Valley RWQCB and Implement Erosion and Sediment Control Measures as Required."
- ▶ If water is present during construction, disturbance to pools and slow runs with cobble-sized substrate shall be minimized. In particular, rocks shall not be collected from in-water environments from late March to early September to avoid disturbing foothill yellow-legged frog egg masses and tadpoles.

Implementation of this mitigation would reduce impacts to yellow-legged frogs to a less-than significant level.

Yeates-9

CEQA establishes a duty for public agencies to avoid or minimize environmental damage where feasible. Mitigation Measure 5-2 includes measures to avoid loss of active raptor nests and to minimize impacts to migratory bird nests through limiting removal of vegetation during the nesting season that could be used as nesting substrate.

Yeates-10

As described on page 6-15 of the DEIR, appropriate measures may include no action, avoidance of the resource through trail realignment, subsurface testing, and potentially data recovery. The "no action" scenario is only applicable if the archaeologist determines the find is not significant according to CEQA and Section 106 criteria. The County will

conduct training for all construction crews for all sensitive resources including cultural and biological resources.

Yeates-11

The proposed project is a recreational trail that would follow the contours of the North Fork American River canyon and is not considered a structure.

Yeates-12

The County has coordinated closely with U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) throughout the environmental review process and Reclamation has reviewed and provided comments on the EIR.

After review of the DEIR and FEIR, Reclamation has prepared a revised FONSI for the proposed project (see Appendix A).

23 September, 2007

Andy Fisher, Senior Planner  
Placer County Parks and Grounds Division  
11476 C Avenue  
Auburn Ca 95603  
889-6819

Dear Mr. Fisher,

Please accept these comments on behalf of Protect American River Canyons regarding the Draft EIR on the proposed American River North Fork Trail. The PARC Board of Directors is in agreement that it is **extremely important** to protect the remarkable wilderness, scenic and cultural values of the North Fork American River Canyon. While the Draft EIR in part reflects the delicate balance between the conservation of the canyon lands and development of a new trail in the American River, we have **significant design and management comments**. The PARC Board of Directors is supportive of the North Fork Trail with the following suggested modifications.

**The trail width jumped from 4 feet to 6 feet.** Andy Fisher suggested we look at the trails in the Hidden Falls County Park. The Seven Pools Trail that **incorporates the shoulder slope as part of the overall trail width configuration** fits most closely with our concept of how the trail should be built. We are in agreement that the cut should be no wider than the Seven Pools Trail. **The trail machine blade width should not exceed 4 feet.** Several of the other trails in Hidden Falls were too wide and the Hidden Falls Trail itself has design problems that make it undesirable also.

**The Ponderosa Road Staging Area should be eliminated.** Expand the staging area at upper Clementine to accommodate NFT use. The proposed staging area located on Ponderosa Road is unsafe for trucks and horse trailers. It would also create an ugly scar in the canyon. Consider minimum requirements for staging area parking. Linking the staging area on Auburn-Forest Hill Road across from Drivers Flat Road to the proposed NFT is a poor option also. Encouraging use of the Long Point firebreak would encourage downhill mtn. bike use, which is already out of control in some areas of ASRA.

We recommend an **odd-even day trail use on the section of trail from upper Clementine to Ponderosa Way**. This would reduce user conflicts and erosion from horses and mtn bikes. This system has

proven effective at Mammoth Bar, on the Tahoe Rim Trail, and on other Sierra trails. We also recommend soliciting the mtn bike patrol and horse rider patrol groups to help with the friendly enforcement of the management goals pertinent to NFT use.

**Install trail barriers prohibiting motorized use of the trail.**

Unauthorized motorcycle use is a chronic problem in the Auburn State Recreation Area. Motorcycle riders cause an enormous amount of trail damage and often go off trail causing even more resource damage.

**Establish thresholds for trail closure in the event of conflicts with canyon wildlife.** No wildlife should be displaced or destroyed as a result of opening the proposed North Fork Trail.

**User friendly interpretive signs and an educational brochure** should be developed to enhance the quality of the proposed North Fork Trail experience. Install information kiosks at trailheads.

We remain committed to the support of a North Fork Trail that is primitive in nature and that does not result in excessive damage to the wilderness and scenic values and natural resources of this unique American River wilderness area. We are hopeful that these issues can be resolved soon so that we do not lose this trail building opportunity.

Sincerely,

Eric Peach  
for Protect American River Canyons  
530-885-8878

Cc: John Ramirez, Placer County Parks and Grounds Division  
Jay Galloway ASRA Superintendent

- PARC-1 Comment noted. No further response required.
- PARC-2 The 6-foot trail for the proposed project would be constructed in similar geometric manner to the Seven Pools Trail in Hidden Falls Regional Park including the shoulder slope. The design criteria, construction methods, and equipment used for the proposed project would be similar to those used for the Seven Pools Trail and the Connector Trail.
- PARC-3 There are no plans to expand the upper Clementine staging area as part of the proposed project. The upper Clementine staging area would provide parking in its current state. The use of Long Point Fuel Break Trail is not endorsed as part of this project, nor is the use of the Driver's Flat Road. See Master Response 2.
- PARC-4 See Master Response 3.
- PARC-5 As described on page 3-6 of the DEIR, a deterrent to motorized vehicles is required. This would be addressed by the installation of walk-throughs or turnstiles, at trail entrances and intersections with roads. Steppers or other measures approved by U.S. Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) may also be used. In addition, State Parks patrols the Auburn State Recreation Area (ASRA) with a full time ranger program
- PARC-6 The proposed project would not substantially diminish habitat for wildlife species, or cause any populations to drop below self-sustaining levels. The proposed project would become part of the ASRA trail system managed by State Parks. Wildlife will continue to be managed in accordance with the policies of the ASRA. Both impacts to wildlife as a result of the proposed project and public safety related to wildlife attacks are addressed in the DEIR (see Chapters 5.0 and 14.0 of the DEIR)
- PARC-7 As described on page 3-6 of the DEIR, the proposed trail would include an interpretive program. As part of this program, self-guided informational signage would be provided to inform area visitors of natural, cultural, and physical features encountered along the proposed trail alignment. An informational kiosk would be installed at the Foresthill Bridge and Ponderosa Bridge Staging Termini to provide information about the trail, such as trail etiquette, safety, and educational information. The County welcomes additional input on the comprehensive interpretive program.
- PARC-8 Comment noted. No further response required.



Ashley Memorial  
Dog Park Foundation

565 Riverview Drive, Auburn, CA 95603

September 5, 2007

Placer County  
Facility Services Dept.  
% Andy Fisher  
11476 C Avenue  
Auburn, CA 95603

RECEIVED  
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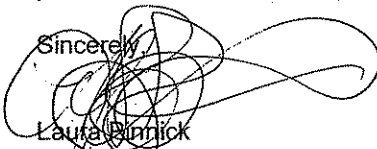
Dear Andy,

As a dog owner and a Director of the Ashley Memorial Dog Park Foundation, I would like Placer County to consider a section of your new 14 mile natural surface Trail for off leash dog use.

Since the trails are already used by wild life and equestrian activities, an area for our canine friends to run free of leash would be great. Dog leash free areas are a great form of people recreation. With our ageing demographics more households have dogs than kids and seek a healthy lifestyle with our four legged friends.

I would be very interested in being part of the dog friendly off leash committee. Please add me to your user list of interested parties for future meetings.

Sincerely,

  
Laura Pinnick  
Director  
Ashley Memorial Dog Park  
530-889-1202  
r.pinnick@sbcglobal.net

Letter  
**ASHLEY**  
Response

---

Ashley Memorial Dog Park Foundation  
Laura Pinnick, Director  
September 7, 2007

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Ashley-1

It is not consistent with the goals and objectives of the proposed project to provide off-leash dog use.

Ashley-2

No off leash committee currently exists. Commenter will be added to the mailing list for the proposed project.



North Fork American River Alliance  
(NFARA)

P.O. Box 292  
Gold Run, CA 95717

Mission Statement

*To preserve the wild, scenic and cultural heritage within the watershed of the North Fork American River*

Officers 2007

*President: Jim Ricker Vice President: Ron Gould Treasure: Judy Suter  
Secretary: Catherine O'Riley At Large: Bob Suter, Heidi Johnson  
Honorary Member: Rena Ferreira*

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September 22, 2007

Andy Fisher  
Placer County Department of Facility Services, Parks Division  
11476 C Avenue  
Auburn, CA 95603  
afisher@placer.ca.gov

Re: North Fork American River Trail Draft Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2005112042)

Dear Mr. Fisher:

North Fork River Alliance is submitting the following comments on the Public Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the North Fork American River Trail Project (NFARTP).

We were disappointed with the the lack of alternatives for the NFARTP. We find them inadequate and incomplete.

To reduce the project impact on the undeveloped North Fork American River canyon above Upper Clementine other alternatives should be included in the DEIR process. There should be an alternative that does not have the project enter the NF canyon above

Upper Clementine. Another alternative could be a multi-use trail to upper Clementine followed by a narrower less intrusive hiking trail to the Ponderosa Bridge.

In December 2005 NFARA submitted a letter to Andy Fisher, Placer County Department of Facility Services, Parks Division. Among our recommendations for alternatives to the proposed project was the suggestion that the proposed trail could connect to the Upper Clementine Road and from there connect with the Forest Divide Loop Trail (#12 on the Auburn State Recreation Area Map). It could then continue on to connect with any number of existing trails. Another possibility would be to connect the NFARTP to the Long Point Fuel Break Trail (#19 on the ASRA Map) which would then give access to the extensive preexisting trail system. We pointed out that an added advantage to these suggestions would be a substantial cost savings and would eliminate the need for a staging area at the Ponderosa Bridge. Both the Upper Clementine Road and the Long Point Fuel Break trails have existing staging areas where they junction with Forest Hill Road. These alternatives were not included in the DEIR.

It could be argued that increasing demands for recreation within Placer County would require a multi-use trail to accommodate these demands but this trail need not be constructed in the North Fork Canyon in a remote and pristine setting.

Under the circumstances, we have no choice but to choose the "No Project Alternative".

Our many concerns are listed below.

Multi-use trails have multiple user problems. Most hikers do not want to hike along a six foot wide or greater "road" and endure fast moving bicycles. Equestrians are concerned about their horses being spooked by bicycles and hikers with the possibility of a horse and its rider being forced off the trail and down a steep embankment. Mountain bikers want to cruise unencumbered by slow moving hikers and spooky horses. In the end, multi-use could easily come down to primarily bicycles. The DEIR states that there is potential for conflict, but the impact is considered to be Less Than Significant (LTS). Any time you put mountain bikes on the same trail with other user groups you have a potentially significant chance of conflict.

The Impact Analysis for transportation circulation is considered to be LTS. This is based upon LOS C or better classification and the premise that the proposed trail would not create its own demand and would not significantly increase traffic in the project area. Yet, CEQA guidelines stipulate that the proposed project would result in a potentially significant impact on traffic or circulation if it would result in "increased vehicle trips or traffic congestion, hazards to safety from design features (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or insufficient parking capacity onsite or offsite.

Ponderosa Way is a very steep, windy and narrow dirt road. It is illogical to place a staging area for equestrians at the Ponderosa terminus. Neither the Weimar nor Foresthill side of Ponderosa Way is suitable for trailer traffic. If a large truck with a horse trailer was to meet another such vehicle coming in the opposite direction there would not

be enough room to pass. There are many places where the line of sight does not allow one to see very far ahead which further hinders passing. Assuming heavy use of the Ponderosa staging area, how will the horse trailers be able to park and turn around on the narrow road and within a relatively small staging area? This safety issue could impact emergency access if the road became blocked or if there was a fire. Beyond safety, damage to the road will occur due to increased use by large vehicles pulling trailers. It is stated in the document that there is parking capacity for 18 trucks with trailers at the Ponderosa staging area. The Ponderosa Bridge area already suffers from a lack of parking. Other users who would park in the staging area include river rafters/kayakers, hikers going to Codfish Falls, fishermen, ORV enthusiasts, swimmers and others that just want access to the river.

The dirt portion of Ponderosa Way is predominantly 12-14 feet wide. The width of the proposed trail would be up to 15 feet where needed to promote safe lines of sight. Apparently, bicycles and horses need 15 feet in places along the proposed trail to be safe while large trucks with trailers need only 12-14 feet to maneuver blind curves along a very steep road with a horrendous drop-off on one side.

According to the DEIR document, State Parks would increase maintenance of Ponderosa Way to ensure the safety of vehicles using the roadway. What exactly is meant by this? The roadway would need to be widened and possibly paved to accommodate large trucks pulling horse trailers.

The document does not address the poor condition of the 11 foot 6 inch wide Ponderosa Bridge. Although the bridge has a metal frame, the bed of the bridge is made from wooden cross beams. Overall, the wood visible on the tread is in very bad condition. The wood is rotting and, where it has rotted through, 2X4 foot plywood patches have been screwed over the rotted wood. Some raised tread boards are missing creating an uneven driving surface. Nails and bolts are sticking up from the boards. In order to park in the proposed Ponderosa staging area this safety hazard must be crossed and then recrossed to exit the area. Rapid deterioration of a bridge in such poor condition is inevitable considering the increased use by trucks and trailers. This is a disaster waiting to happen.

The location of the Ponderosa staging area will necessitate a huge amount of earth moving. What are the mitigation measures for the construction impacts of this staging area, which will ultimately carve an ugly scar into the hillside?

Why is there no habitat conservation or natural community conservation plan currently in effect for the project area?? This is outrageous and allows the proposed project to disregard conservation and create the potential for destruction of habitat.

The streams along the proposed trail are beautiful delicate riparian areas. The excavation of a trail and building of bridges in these streams will disrupt their natural beauty and potentially harm a species of special concern, the Foothill Yellow-Legged Frog.

Raptors of special concern such as the bald eagle, osprey, sharp-shinned hawk and

Cooper's hawk and migratory birds will all be disrupted, despite the mitigation, during the three years it takes to construct the proposed trail.

According to the Impact Analysis, the construction-generated noise levels could reach between 80 and 93 dBA at 50 feet. Apparently this does not pose a problem for humans due to the remote location of the proposed project. However, no mention is made concerning the impact to the fauna who live in these remote locations. It is projected that the project will take three years to complete. This is a significant amount of time to subject the wildlife to noise levels considered to degrade the hearing of most people under the conditions of "continuous exposure". (A time frame was not given to define continuous exposure).

It remains unclear whether or not the new trail alignment contains the CNPS List 1B species *Clarkia biloba*.

There seems to be some concern about human-wildlife interactions. Imagine a remote canyon where people rarely visit. Suddenly there is a three year construction project involving multiple people and noisy trail construction equipment. This is followed by an influx of multi-use recreational enthusiasts who are not necessarily thinking about their invasion of the animals' habitat. Are you worried about the people being attacked by animals or the animals losing their once peaceful existence to humans?

Mitigation measures set forth to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive weeds does not seem feasible. Eradication of invasive weeds plus preventing vegetation from overgrowing the tread would be accomplished with, among other things, herbicides. This would lead to contamination of water courses and poisoning of animals with toxic chemicals. Release of hazardous materials during construction or maintenance is probably inevitable. Who will oversee and be responsible for preventing the contamination of soil and water sources?

The argument that there would be no increase in demand for police or fire services seems unrealistic. The Ponderosa Bridge is already the destination for some disreputable people. The area adjacent to the bridge is littered with beer cans, cigarette butts and other various types of trash. Increased use would only make matters worse. There will also certainly be an increase in the threat of fire, accidents, vandalism, illegal camping, use of the trail for motorized vehicles and altercations between user groups.

The DEIR statement that the number of users in the Auburn State Recreation Area would remain the same but be dispersed differently is questionable. According to Table 2-1 "Increase in Unauthorized Activities in the Project" there may be an increase in the number of visitors to the Auburn SRA. State Park rangers can't possibly be available to patrol the proposed trail at all times, especially given that the trail is 14.2 miles long and partially in a remote section of the canyon.

No matter how good the intentions of the proposed trail alignment, users of the proposed trail will find informal connections to the river. What is the point of a trail along a river if

one cannot go to the river?

How will the motorized dirt bikes be prevented from using the proposed trail? State Park rangers spread over a huge jurisdiction will certainly not be able to prevent this from happening. If a bicycle or horse can fit through the turn stiles, so can a dirt bike. There is already illegal OHV use occurring on ASRA managed lands off Ponderosa Way above Sore Finger Point. This trail connects to Ponderosa Way, a road that passes through rural residential areas on both sides of the canyon. Many OHV users can often be seen in the canyon from Ponderosa Way. The trail itself will likely become a source of illegal use. It will serve as a corridor for OHVs going up and down the canyon connecting with Upper Clementine where there already is illegal OHV use occurring due to easy entry from Boole Road in Applegate. This is a not a LTS impact as stated.

A proposed trail that initially started out to be four feet wide has now been increased to six feet but may vary up to fifteen feet where needed. The wheel base of a Toyota 4X4 truck is less than six feet wide. A fifteen foot trail bed could accommodate two Toyota 4X4s passing in opposite directions! And this would be dug out of a steep slope with no visual impacts? This is a road, not a trail.

The Auburn State Recreation Area Interim Resource Management Plan is currently under revision. It would be appropriate to wait until the plan is finalized before implementing the NFARTP. As it stands now, the project is not consistent with the ASRA interim management plan which calls for the area above Upper Clementine to have only a hiking trail, if that. The dichotomy is if this project will conflict with the Management Plan or will it unjustly influence the future Management Plan?

CEQA for this proposed trail project should be part of the ASRA RMP.

Since the original NFARTP proposal was reviewed by the Bureau of Reclamation and determined to be a project of "No Significant Impact" the new proposal should require a review under NEPA and a joint EIR/EIS should be prepared.

Expansion of the trail network in this area is a priority for the county partially due to growth demands for recreational facilities. Multi-use trails are only one type of recreational facility. We should provide for other recreational opportunities in the NF canyon. Any trail in the NF canyon should be considered in light of an overall management plan that addresses all the recreation opportunities, including recreational wilderness. Additional demand for recreation facilities could come from other trail users wanting equal access for the type of trail experience that they desire. Adding a multi-use trail could create a demand for non-multi use trails based on equal recreational access. The impacts to other recreational uses (unspoiled wilderness recreation) in the project area are not considered. This should be addressed in the ASRAGP. Because the project area is currently surrounded by open space and undeveloped land, the proposed trail alignment WOULD conflict with adjacent land uses. Constructing a 6-15 foot "road" in a pristine undeveloped area is in conflict with the rest of the area.

We feel that the county, through a nonpublic process, has pressured State Parks to change its land use management policy in this part of the canyon. These types of decisions would be best left to the more public process being used in developing the ASRAGP and associated trail management plan. One would hope the ASRAGP would address recreational opportunities and make sure that pure wilderness recreation is recognized. Wilderness recreation would be appropriate above Upper Clementine considering a multi-use trail would be intrusive and have a huge impact on a remote and pristine area.

Mitigation would be to eliminate the proposed trail above Upper Clementine in order to wait for the new ASRAGP and trail management plan; especially considering that the interim plan recognizes the value of the undeveloped area above Upper Clementine.

The Weimar-Applegate-Clipper Gap General Plan states:

Goal A.2: Preserve outstanding areas of natural vegetation or fish and wildlife habitat.

Policy A.2.1. Preserve the natural condition of all stream influences, including flood plains and riparian vegetation areas.

The Foresthill Divide Community Plan has these policies:

Policy 4.A.1-1, Policy 4.A.1-10, Policy 4.A.1-15, Policy 4.A.2-3, and Policy 4.A.6-1 which would seem to be counter to the proposed project. Does the county supersede the local General Plans?

The Impact Analysis and Mitigation Measures go into great detail on the impacts and how they will be mitigated. Who will oversee the project at every step to guarantee that the mitigation measures are followed?

The proposed trail is not a necessary development. The argument that a 6-15' wide "trail" is needed to accommodate the immediate needs of hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers when they have many other options from which to choose is ridiculous. This does not even include the future needs of the area. What remote and pristine areas will be developed next? Instead, we should be rejuvenating old Forest Service and historic mining trails rather than building new ones. New multi-use trails should be constructed closer to areas within the county with the greatest population density.

Given the many sites documented during prior surveys, even if not found during this survey, it would seem unavoidable that some cultural resources would be overlooked and destroyed during the construction process.

The soil types in the proposed project have been characterized as having moderate to very high erosion hazards. There exist along proposed alignment areas slope instability and/or small landslides. This is a forewarning of problems during construction as well as maintenance issues in subsequent years. Substantial measures will need to be implemented to control erosion and sediment due the steep slopes along the proposed trail. In addition, winter weather events as well as user activities will create ongoing degradation of the trail.

The question remains how the huge volume of dirt, rock and duff will be dealt with.

The DEIR addresses significant irreversible environmental changes such as the potential for contamination by fuels and other building materials. Contaminating soils and watercourses so a relatively small number of outdoor enthusiasts can recreate in a new location is unjustifiable.

The statement that the project is a relatively small scale trail that could be restored to a natural condition in the future if desired is preposterous. Even if it was left to the elements and not maintained it would remain a blight on the landscape for a very long time. This is based on the observations of historic trails constructed by the gold miners in the mid to late 1800s. Even though they are now overgrown and were originally constructed with less than a six foot tread they remain quite noticeable as trails. It seems evident that changes in visual resources are very long lasting and do not disappear within a year as stated by the DEIR.

This is not to mention the four bridges that will be constructed over watercourses. Would these be torn down if the area was "restored"?

Since the North Fork Trail Project originally started as the "Phase I" segment of the proposed Capital to Capital Trail, allowing it to be constructed is essentially a step toward an ill-conceived trail through the wild and beautiful North Fork American River.

At that time the Cap-to-Cap was being considered, a glossy brochure was produced promoting the project. Alarmed concerned citizens who love the North Fork Canyons gathered together to stop the project. The Cap-to-Cap, in its entirety, was tabled and the "stand alone" North Fork American River Trail concept was born. Many people believe the Cap-to-Cap will be resurrected at a later date and that the NFARTP is "Phase I" in disguise. According to the DEIR document State Parks will not consider planning or defining any potential sections of trail in the North Fork American River Canyon above Ponderosa Bridge until the update for the Auburn SRA GP/IRMP has been completed. That statement has some interesting implications.

ASRA, in its planned operation of the new river access at the dam site, has severely restricted use due to fire concerns. The river access will only be open for use when the entry road is staffed. How is there any significant difference between the project area and the river access area at the dam site? Why does the proposed project not require similar mitigation? Obviously, with the way the river access at the dam site is managed with respect to fire, this issue is not a LTS impact for the proposed trail.

Some of the funding for the proposed trail comes from a Proposition 40 grant. Since Placer County apparently needs more recreational use areas perhaps Proposition 40 grant money would be better spent building parks and multi-use trails near the ever growing Roseville housing developments.

In July 2003 the Trail Advisory Group developed recommendations for the proposed alignment of the NFARTP. Among the recommendations that have not been addressed

in the Proposed Plan are:

- 1) The trail should be primitive in character. It should be hand-constructed; the SWECO trail cat should not be used.
- 2) Trail bed width should be no greater than four feet. The width of the proposed trail is now six feet increasing up to fifteen feet where needed. At the time of the agreement why was there no mention that a four foot tread did not conform to State Parks' standards for multiple-use trails?
- 3) Mountain bikers and horseback riders should be encouraged to dismount and walk in fragile trail areas.
- 4) Where user safety or resource values are at risk due to simultaneous multiple use, an odd/even trail use program should be considered. Most conflicts are not reported, thus the lack of data. Almost any conflict should be considered a safety issue.

In conclusion, the Public Draft Environmental Impact Report for the North Fork American River Trail Project presents a myriad of concerns and is unacceptable due to, among other issues, the lack of viable alternatives to the proposed project. Because of the blatant disregard for alternatives and unacceptable mitigation measures for the proposed project we must recommend the "No Project Alternative".

Sincerely,  
Board of Directors, North Fork American River Alliance

Submitted by:



Catherine M. O'Riley  
Secretary, North Fork American River Alliance

Printed on 100% recycled paper.

- NFARA-1 See Master Response 1.
- NFARA-2 See Master Response 3. As described on pages 14-8 and 14-9 of the DEIR, because user conflicts do not constitute an effect on the physical environment, this is not a significant impact under CEQA.
- NFARA-3 As described on page 8-6 of the DEIR, because the staging termini would be designed to include measures for safe ingress and egress of trucks and trailers, the project would have a less-than-significant impact on hazards to safety from design features. In addition, as described on page 8-6 of the DEIR, because existing parking and additional parking spaces created by the proposed project are expected to be adequate for trail users, this impact is considered less than significant. Both the Placer County CEQA Checklist and Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines (Appendix G) were used to determine the significance of project-related impacts. The Placer County CEQA Checklist is used by the County to determine if an EIR should be prepared for a project, whereas thresholds in Appendix G are used to determine the significance of a project's impacts once the decision to prepare and EIR has already been made. Therefore, in some cases the County's Checklist has lower thresholds of significance than Appendix G. The DEIR text has been changed to reflect the Appendix G threshold that was used to determine the significance of traffic-related impacts. See Chapter 4, "Revisions to the Draft EIR," of this document for a revision of this text.
- NFARA-4 See Master Response 2.
- NFARA-5 The area surrounding the Ponderosa Staging Terminus would be revegetated following construction. See response Yeates-4.
- NFARA-6 This topic is outside the scope of the proposed project and DEIR.
- NFARA-7 See response Yeates-8.
- NFARA-8 Potential loss of active raptor nests will be avoided by Mitigation Measure 5-2 as described on pages 5-15 and 5-16 of the DEIR, including avoiding removal of potential nest trees if feasible, pre-construction surveys prior to tree removal or other construction activities, and establishment of protective buffers around any active nests. With implementation of these measures, loss of eggs, young, or adult raptors is not expected to occur. Disruption of birds during the construction period will be minimized by limiting the amount of woody vegetation to be removed during the nesting season in areas near raptor nests. Implementation of the proposed project is not expected to substantially diminish habitat for wildlife species, or cause any populations to drop below self-sustaining levels.
- NFARA-9 The construction-generated noise could range from 80-93 dBA at 50 feet. For comparison, automobile noise can range up to 90 dBA at 50 feet (EPA 1978). While noise levels within this range may elicit a noticeable response in wildlife (Larkin et al. 1996), the construction-generated noise associated with the proposed project is not expected to substantially diminish habitat for wildlife species, or cause any populations to drop below self-sustaining levels.

- NFARA-10 As described in Appendix C to the DEIR, Brandegee's clarkia (*Clarkia biloba* spp. *brandegeae*) was encountered along the original trail alignment during the 2004 surveys. No occurrences of Brandegee's clarkia were encountered along the proposed trail alignment during the 2007 survey; however, this survey was conducted during the non-blooming season and additional surveys of this alignment would need to be conducted during the blooming season. As described on page 5-13 of the DEIR, if Brandegee's clarkia is encountered during pre-construction surveys, implementation of Mitigation Measure 5-3 would reduce impacts to special-status plants to a less-than-significant level.
- NFARA-11 Both impacts to wildlife as a result of the proposed project and public safety related to wildlife attacks are addressed in the DEIR (see Chapters 5.0 and 14.0 of the DEIR).
- NFARA-12 The County is committed to implementing Mitigation Measure 5-6 as described in the DEIR and Chapter 5 of this FEIR, to reduce impacts related to invasive weeds.
- As described on page 15-9 of the DEIR, before the commencement of trail construction, the County shall implement the following measures.
- ▶ An accidental-spill prevention and response plan shall be prepared and implemented for storage and use of hazardous materials during trail construction and maintenance. This plan shall identify measures to prevent accidental spills from leaving the site and methods for responding to and cleaning up spills before neighboring properties are exposed to hazardous materials.
  - ▶ The County shall ensure that any employee handling hazardous materials are trained in the safe handling and storage of hazardous materials and trained to follow all applicable regulations with regard to such hazardous materials.
  - ▶ The primary construction contractor shall identify a staging area where hazardous materials will be stored during construction in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations.
- As described on page 3-9 of the DEIR, the County would be responsible for long-term maintenance of the proposed trail and staging termini. Herbicide application in conjunction with County projects and facilities is performed by staff that are certified in herbicide/pesticide application.
- NFARA-13 Current use at the Ponderosa Bridge is primarily related to water oriented recreation and is not the subject of this project, nor can a behavioral corollary be assumed between trail users and water users. The Foresthill Staging Terminus would be locked at night to deter unauthorized uses. As described on page 3-6 of the DEIR, a deterrent to motorized vehicles would be used. This would be addressed by the installation of walk-throughs or turnstiles, at trail entrances and intersections with roads. In addition, stepovers or other measures approved by State Parks would be used. State Parks is under contract to manage and patrol the trail, and CalFire is contracted to provide fire risk management and suppression.
- NFARA-14 The goal of the proposed project is to discourage informal trails, which is accomplished by the distance of the trail from the river, steep topography, and dense intervening vegetation. However, it is not feasible to completely eliminate the possibility of informal connections to the river. Because of the measures incorporated into the project, the potential for informal trails to form would be minimal and would not cause significant

disturbance to vegetation or wildlife. Therefore, despite the risk that some informal trails could be formed, this would not have a significant impact on the environment.

- NFARA-15 The use of signage, turnstiles, and stepovers has been shown as an effective deterrent to motorized use and would be used to deter motorized use of the proposed trail. Ongoing unauthorized OHV use within the ASRA is not within the scope of the proposed project or DEIR and is not within the County's jurisdiction.
- NFARA-16 As described on page 3-5 of the DEIR, the tread width of the proposed trail alignment (i.e., the actual surface on which trail users actively place feet, hooves, wheels, etc.) would generally be 6 feet, but may vary as needed based on geologic and safety considerations. Vegetation removal would be minimized within the trail corridor to the extent possible; however, up to 15 feet may be cleared where needed to promote safe lines of sight. Although clearing of vegetation could be up to 15 feet, this would not be the width of the trail tread. As described on page 7-13 of the DEIR, the proposed trail alignment would be more visible immediately following construction until the surrounding vegetation is able to grow back. Exhibits 7-8 through 7-17 show existing conditions compared to the worst-case scenario of what the trail and staging termini would look like immediately following construction. These exhibits show what the proposed trail would look like with a 15-foot-wide vegetation removal corridor in which all vegetation has been removed.
- NFARA-17 The proposed project would be included in the updated ASRA General Plan. As described on page 108 of the ASRA Interim Resources Management Plan (IRMP), trails within the ASRA are not necessarily limited to those proposed on the trails map (Plate 4). New trails may be permitted with the approval of the administrative agency. The County has coordinated closely with State Parks and Reclamation to ensure the proposed project would be consistent with the existing IRMP.
- NFARA-18 See response NFARA-17.
- NFARA-19 The County has coordinated closely with Reclamation throughout the environmental review process, and Reclamation has reviewed and given input on the EIR. After review of the DEIR and FEIR, Reclamation is expected to adopt a revised FONSI for the proposed project (Appendix A).
- NFARA-20 Other types of recreational opportunities already exist in the ASRA. See response NFARA-17 above. The proposed trail would be consistent with State Parks' mission for managing the ASRA and would be consistent with the IRMP for the ASRA. The proposed trail would not preclude other recreational uses in the ASRA. See response NFARA-16 above for discussion of trail width.
- NFARA-21 The proposed project has followed the public involvement process according to CEQA and NEPA. See response NFARA-17 above. The upper North Fork has never been designated as a wilderness area and though it has many wilderness qualities there is nothing in Wilderness Designation that precludes development of trails or multi-use trails in wilderness areas. Many Wilderness areas within the United States allow non motorized multiple-use on trails. Additionally, the trail would be far above the river throughout most of its course which would help retain the wilderness like qualities of the North Fork corridor.
- NFARA-22 See response NFARA-17.

- NFARA-23 As described on page 4-6 of the DEIR, implementation of the proposed project would be consistent with relevant policies in the adopted planning documents pertinent to the project area.
- NFARA-24 The County is responsible for implementation of all mitigation measures included in the DEIR. Please refer to Chapter 5, “Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program,” of this FEIR.
- NFARA-25 The comment does not pertain to the adequacy of the DEIR. No further response is required.
- NFARA-26 As described on pages 6-15 and 6-16 of the DEIR, Mitigation Measures 6-1, 6-2, and 6-3 would reduce impacts to known and yet-to-be-discovered cultural resources to a less-than-significant level.
- NFARA-27 As described on pages 11-15 and 11-16 of the DEIR, Mitigation Measures 11-1 and 11-2 would be implemented to reduce impact to soils, geology, and seismicity to a less-than-significant level. In addition, all measures recommended in Appendix B to the DEIR, would be implemented. See response Yeates-1.
- NFARA-28 See response Yeates-1. As described on page 15-9 of the DEIR, Mitigation Measure 15-1 would reduce impacts from hazards and hazardous materials to a less-than-significant level.
- NFARA-29 Chapter 7.0 of the DEIR provides an analysis of the impacts of the proposed project on visual resources. Visual simulations on pages 7-19 and 7-20 of the DEIR simulate how the actively maintained trail would look 1 year following construction under the proposed project. The discussion of significant and irreversible effects on page 16-14 of the DEIR describes the conditions that could occur in the future if the County and State Parks chose to discontinue use of the trail and return the project area to its natural condition. The project area could be returned to its natural state through passive and/or active restoration and bridge removal if desired by the County and State Parks. Returning the project area to its natural condition is not being proposed as part of the project.
- NFARA-30 If at some point in the future, the County and State Parks decided to discontinue use of the trail, the project area could be restored to its natural condition and bridges could be removed.
- NFARA-31 As described on pages 16-16 and 16-17 of the DEIR, the Cap-to-Cap Trail remains a concept and not a reasonably foreseeable, probable future project. The County agreed to design the trail section from the confluence to the Ponderosa Bridge to function as a stand-alone trail with its own independent utility, adequate staging area parking, and logical termini that would connect to existing trails.
- NFARA-32 The County, Reclamation, and State Parks have found no information to substantiate the comment that access to the new river access at the dam site has been restricted.
- NFARA-33 The comment does not pertain to the adequacy of the DEIR. No further response is required.
- NFARA-34 None of these recommendations reflected consensus of the Trail Advisory Group (TAG).
- NFARA-35 Comment noted. No further response required.

**Friends of the North Fork**  
7143 Gardenvine Avenue  
Citrus Heights, California 95621-1966

September 24, 2007

Andy Fisher, Project Manager  
Placer County Parks Division, Facility Services Department  
11476 C Avenue  
Auburn, California 95603

Re: North Fork American River "Trail" DEIR  
SCH #2005112042

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FACILITY SERVICES  
2007 SEP 24 PM 4:47

Dear Mr. Fisher:

The miles of changed and proposed new routing for the North Fork American River "Trail" project ("project") will require several months to assess in the field and to evaluate for input to Placer County. This estimate is based on the time it took us to walk the initial proposed route (except a small gap) and alternative routes, and, on the difficulty of following the flagged line. Is there a GPS or other electronic description of any kind of the proposed route and alternative routes? If so, please provide it to us as soon as possible and in the Final EIR. Friends of the North Fork recommends that the period for written comments on the DEIR continue through December 31, 2007.

Project definition

At the outset, we seek clarification about whether the DEIR is intended for use for the North Fork American River Trail Plan. If so, the proposed plan should be issued along with a revised DEIR. If not, when will the plan CEQA process for the plan, which was previously vacated by the Board of Supervisors in May 2005, commence? The DEIR repeatedly refers to the "proposed September 2003" Trail Plan, but the DEIR doesn't say that the DEIR is a CEQA document for this trail plan. This is also confusing because we have a copy of both the September 2003 plan and the June 2004 Revised trail plan. The Revised 2004 plan was approved by the supervisors and then this approval was voided. The 2003 plan did not go before the board, and there was no separate EQA process for the plans.

Regarding the multiple use routing, it cannot be ascertained from the DEIR where and in how many places and for what length the route's base tread may be more than six feet wide, where rock walls will be, how high the cut slopes will be, the thickness of the cut material that will be pushed over the edge of the cut,

and so forth. What the project is not ascertainable. I worked on U.S. Forest Service compass line route surveys, and features that may require other that cut that are encountered must be noted. The existing ASRA plan, indeed, requires that the US Forest Service trail standards be used, so the trail standards identified in the DEIR appear to be in violation of this plan requirement.

A separate cross-Sierra Nevada vanity route for bikes

The Sacramento to Carson City ("Capitol to Capitol") bikeway project that generated the 14.2-mile segment advanced in the DEIR is a vanity project for bikes and a public boondoggle. It is a project to sacrifice and destroy a remote canyon in order to create the fifth Sierra Nevada crossing after the Transcontinental Railroad/I-80, I-50, I-88 and Tioga Pass corridors in a canyon never before used and not suitable for cross-Sierra transportation. Bikers seek the project as recognition of their growing numbers and influence. They advance an anti-environmental project trying to use the good will generated by the perception that biking is an environmentally sound endeavor. Some equestrians want the route to keep bikes off the existing Western States Trail, which has already been designated as the Capitol to Capitol trail by California Governor Ronald Reagan and Nevada Governor Paul Laxalt.

The DEIR does not convey what the canyon and the project are and their environmental incompatibility

The project is not a mere "trail." The route is a major, historically precedent-setting proposal to use a remote and very deep canyon with steep rock and erodable soil walls for a bicycle highway project misleadingly referred to as a trail.

The DEIR reflects an attempt by Placer County to misuse both the CEQA and NEPA processes. The DEIR makes it evident that the county has little idea what the North Fork American River canyon is. The DEIR also does not inform the public either about what the canyon resource is and what the project is. No idea of the magnitude of the project and its massive negative environmental consequences is to be found in the document.

The DEIR content demonstrates a framework of thinking and an attitude by project proponents and DEIR authors that as a trail and like all trails, the project is inherently beneficial. That all trails, anywhere are beneficial. The corollary false attitude and assumption is that newer, wider, flatter routes are superior to any existing routes or to upgrades or changes in existing routes, that newer is better, and that the public purse is virtually infinite.

This is reminiscent of the government's attitude in the 1950's and 1960's that all freeways are good. Like that era and in spite of CEQA and NEPA which came to be in the 1970's, project proponents are not setting forth an accurate picture of

what the project and its impacts are. Also, like first freeways that were stopped, this project is proposed through a public park. Unlike the early freeway fights, though, the destruction of a park here is proposed by a parks department, the Placer County Parks and Grounds Division.

The project is misplaced, the project DEIR is misguided, and both are superficial and a waste of taxpayer's money.

#### The first historical threat to the North Fork Canyon

The North Fork American River canyon is the river directly south of Interstate 80 from Auburn to Donner Summit. With the exception of houses on and below the canyon rim, the canyon has survived the Gold Rush and Placer County's radical population growth pressures, and it has been significantly restored. This is due to two main reasons.

First, in the Auburn Area up to Colfax and the Stevens Trail, the federal government bought up the land for a reservoir. As Jordan Fisher Smith points out in his book, Nature Noir, when the federal government assembled the land for the Auburn Dam Reservoir, it began the process that has created a large wild area near large populations of people.

Second, upriver from where the Stevens Trail crosses the river, access to the canyon is on hiking trails from the rim down and back up that range from an elevation change of 1,000 feet, and typically 2,000 feet, to over 3,200 feet (Beacroft Trail), each way. In other words, to get into the canyon, hikers typically have to hike down 2,000 feet to get to the river and have to hike back up 2,000 feet to get out. Another contributing factor is that the river upstream from this point is designated as a Wild River under state and federal law.

Placer County now proposes the first historical threat to the canyon, a six-foot wide mostly level bicycle route along the proposed Auburn Dam shoreline. This would frequently place a mountain bike highway about halfway up the side canyon walls on the steepest side slopes. It would open up remote areas that are now only accessible year-round to hikers. Even the Upper Lake Clementine road terminus at the river that is heavily used in summer (see Smith's Nature Noir book) is now closed seven months from October – May. The project would open up areas above the Clementine Reservoir downstream of the road and areas upstream of it that are nearly as remote as the reservoir's canyon slopes.

This threat results in significant because Placer County has no vision for the future of the North Fork canyon other than to send the thousands of people who concentrate at the confluence by Auburn up and into the canyon

The DEIR documents the county has not recognized that the North Fork Canyon as a watershed worthy of a planning effort in its own right. For example, county

general and community plans are based on using the river as a boundary between different planning efforts.

The DEIR should address the question of what plans, policies, ordinances and recognition of any kind that the county has that address the North Fork watershed as a whole.

The DEIR should define exactly what vision or absence of vision the county has for the North Fork Canyon.

Is it accurate to say that Placer County as reflected by its Department of Facility Services and its Parks and Grounds Division has no vision for the future of the North Fork American River Canyon? If there is a vision for the canyon in any part of the county government, what is it?

The proposed bike highway and its CEQA process are an attempt by the County to usurp and to make an end-run around the process to revise the Auburn Recreation Area General Plan and Resource management Plan.

Each of our June 15, 2006 comments submitted to State Parks and the Bureau of Reclamation on ASRA planning and CEQA/NEPA scoping are applicable to this project and its DEIR. These comments are attached and we incorporate them by reference herein in their entirety.

#### Dramatic increase in recreation population and other users

From, the first to the last page, the DEIR ignores and understates major significant environmental impact issues. No omission is more basic than population.

There is no meaningful survey or documentation of current human population use of the canyon and how many people the project would add at different points along the route. Other efforts of this nature have been done in the canyon that the DEIR fails to reference. What are they and what are their results?

No such survey and study effort has been made in relation to the project or anything like it. Why not? Where is it? The EIR can not overlook this.

The project would be a radical change in the nature and number of users of the canyon and fails to address river-dependent uses and users from non-river-dependent uses and users

Present river-dependent users are anglers, spring river-rafters and kayakers, swimmers and inner-tube floaters, gold panners, and Clementine Reservoir boaters and boat campers. These people come on foot, by horse, and by car,

and, rarely, by bicycle. These are our observations over many years of hiking using the canyon.

Given the scarce nature of the river canyon resource, competition among different users to access the scarce resources, and the conflict between the methods of using the resources found on and off trails, isn't the project inconsistent with giving priority to river-dependent uses and users?

Present people who come to see and be by the river include hikers, equestrians, drivers, bikers, picnickers and campers. They park vehicles at the confluence, Ponderosa Road, Iowa Hill Road and Yankee Jim's Road.

Many people engage in activities that are not river-dependent, including portions of the biking, jogging, and others.

The project would radically change the numbers of people and nature of the canyon uses and users.

What surveys of existing users has the county done and what studies of future users who would use the project has the county done? How often and at what intervals on their trips do bikers get off their bikes or park and stow their bikes to walk into nature or the river?

What surveys have been done of the kind of bike paths bikers want? What is the identified need for bikers to have trails built into a very remote area?

The culture of different canyon users and user groups are not addressed

The different user groups identified above have strikingly different cultures of use, attitude and facility need to and for the canyon and river. The project proposed to radically alter the culture of the canyon. The project would be a seismic cultural change from all past and present users and uses. At no time in the millions of years of geologic and the thousands of years of pre-history and human history has access like that of the proposed project taken place. The gold rush brought various trails and roads, including toll roads. But nothing of the proposed east of access of the project.

What are the historic methods of access into the canyon, where were they and what happened to them?

What are the cultures of users from pre-history to the present? What changes in canyon user culture would the project bring about? What are the different demands on canyon resources of the different groups and cultures? How will the cultures introduced and enhanced by the project affect present, past, and remnants of past cultures? Shouldn't the time capsule that the canyon is be valued for its cultural heritage values?

One user group that has gone unchanged is the gold panners and rock-nook, cranny and crevice miners. Shouldn't this be historically described? The trail would open up the canyon for easy entry of suction dredging equipment, an illegal practice that now occurs virtually unregulated in the canyon. This should be addressed. The large number of unvandalized Gold Rush era mining and processing sites should be identified and protected in relation to the project.

The cultural survey don only addressed a four-foot wide trail. The survey must be re-done using the six-foot-wide roadbed plus cut zones, passing zones and vegetation clearance. The survey needs review all land between the project path and the river since people will go from the trail to the river and will encounter whatever cultural and historic resources are there. The survey needs to continue above and below the trail outside of the vegetation clearance zone for significant cultural and Native American religious resources that the trail could open up.

The survey that has been done shortsightedly and erroneously only values sites that may be important to living Native Americans. This is an inadequate criterion. The DEIR appears to justify not making adequate inquiry into culturally valued sites because someone it contacted did not volunteer to join the survey effort that was made. This is an inadequate effort by and erroneous attempt to justify an inadequate cultural survey.

No meaningful natural and human history analysis has been applied for and to the whole-canyon impact that the project would have, including cultural, historic, biological and other analysis

The first failure is the need to look at the biology of the North Fork American River as a watershed, a bioregion and an ecosystem.

The second failure is to not look at the watershed and its role in the Sierra Nevada Mountain region.

The third failure is to look at the watershed and its role in the Sacramento Valley region. The North Fork American River canyon connects Sacramento to the crest of the Sierra Nevada biologically and also in terms of water, a river, recreation and history.

The fourth failure is to look at the river as a corridor used by wildlife and human settlement and physical and biological resource use moving up and down the biological zones from valley to crest, the plant communities and vegetation zones along the river transect, and the human communities and users thorough time related to these factors.

The wildlife populations in the canyon are virtually ignored by the DIER. Most side-canyon areas, including those above Clementine Reservoir, are traversed

only by wildlife. What are the mammals and other animals that range in the canyon? What are their use and migration patterns? What impact would the project have on these animals? What animals use the river corridor from Sierra Crest to Central Valley or between parts of the watershed of shorter distance?

What are the categories of public (e.g., State Recreation Area) and private (e.g., conservation easement) land, water, and biological resource designation for which the canyon is eligible? What would the impact of the project be on the possibility of the application of these to the canyon?

Cumulative and growth inducing impacts are ignored and the project is improperly segmented

The project is the result of the Placer County proposal for a Capitol to Capitol project and the county's efforts to drum up support for the project. See the attached Regional Trail brochure and the Memorandum of Understanding regarding the project.

Many, including the signer of this letter, learned about the project for the first time in the July 29, 2002 newspaper article in the Sacramento Bee that is attached. The article described a capitol to capitol project, which the presently defined project up to Ponderosa Bridge is called the "first phase."

A recent item regarding the Dreisbach Parcel Map #PMLD 20050257 proposal documents the county's intention to build a trail upriver from Ponderosa Road. A condition in the proposed approval is the requirement of dedication to the county of a 50-foot wide "blanket trail easement" on the property that could be more than a mile long along the side slope of the canyon below, along the bottom of and around Sorefinger Point. A copy of the proposed condition as approved by the County Parcel Review Committee is attached, as is a map of the parcel map proposal that has been appealed by Friends to the Planning Commission. The "remainder" parcel designated on the map with heavy dashed boundary lines marked, goes from one mile above Ponderosa Bridge to a place on the river two miles above the bridge. This is upriver from the proposed project Ponderosa Way staging area.

The May 5, 2004, MND/EA states that the trail could be extended beyond Ponderosa Road as part of a Cap-To-Cap trail.

The record shows that the 14-mile project is a segment of a larger cross-Sierra route. The Dreisbach parcel map condition discredits any efforts by the county to disown the project above Ponderosa Way. The DEIR erroneously fails to address the entire cross-Sierra route, and should be revised to do so with subsequent recirculation as a DEIR.

Regardless, the construction of the 14-mile segment would invite and induce continuation of the route up-canyon. The construction of the route would bring weight and incentive to use the North Fork American River Canyon as a cross-Sierra route ahead of and when compared to alternative routes. This has up-river and down-river environmental impact issues.

Independent of the segmentation issue, the cross-Sierra route is a potential future project that requires cumulative impact analysis in the DEIR. The description of the baseline conditions, the project, project impacts, analysis thereof, and all other necessary CEQA cumulative impact tasks are absent from the DEIR.

Similarly, the project's growth-including aspects up and down-river require CEQA treatment.

Prejudice shown by county by the absence of essential federal agency consultation and the failure of the DEIR to describe the new BLM plan for the river and the existing US Forest Service plans and policies affecting the river.

The Bureau of Land Management has lands and a management plan in and above the 14-mile project area. The Forest Service has lands above the 14-mile project area. They are not mentioned on pages 1-9 to 1-10 of the DEIR.

It is inexcusable that the agency review process does not describe consultation with the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service who have plans and policies affecting the canyon, including the Wild River designation. It is an absurd CEQA/NEPA dereliction for the DEIR to fail describe the May 2007 BLM Folsom Field Office, Sierra Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final EIS canyon policies. E.g., see Map 4b, "Recreation Opportunity Spectrum North Fork of the American River." The failure to consult with the BLM is incomprehensible in light of the BLM ownership of lands in and along the North Fork and its canyon.

Friends understands that when the county approaches organizations to sign onto its memorandum of understanding on the trail, if the county does not get the positive response it wants, it ceases all further consultation with the group or agency. Is this county policy? Whether policy or not, has this practice been followed by the county or is this practice being followed by the county for this project? What explains the absence of BLM and USFS consultation?

Property ownerships

In order to adequately consider and determine cumulative impacts, project alternatives and other CEQA/NEPA-mandated issues, the project area ownerships need to be shown on a map including alternative area property. For

example, the county at the CEQA hearing referred private property ownerships as a factor in trail relocation.

Route and alternate route zoning

The DEIR describes zoning along the routes verbally, but must show the zones on a map of the proposed and alternate project routes.

Prejudice shown by county in who it invited to be on the Trail Advisory Group

Though our president notified the Facilities Division about his interest in project, he was not invited to be on the TAG, nor was he informed about its meetings.

- Copy of e-mail to county after the 2002 newspaper article.

The alternatives analysis has no credibility (and no alternatives)

Alternative North Fork Canyon visions. Most critical in the long run are the alternative cultural/historic uses and designations that the canyon could have including the vision of the type of use and mixes that could be alternatives to the bike road culture envisioned by the project.

Troy Scott Parker trail alternative. The single-best trail alternative would be to design and build a project using the criteria in Troy Scott Parker's book, *Natural Trails by Design: Physical and Human Design Essentials of Sustainable, Enjoyable Trails* (2004). The old alignment follows none of these principles, so the county has no understanding of them.

Cross-Sierra alternatives analysis. A category of alternatives missing from the DEIR is alternative cross-Sierra routes. For example, the DEIR fails to describe (it doesn't mention at all) the Final June 2004 California Cross State Bicycle Trail, which project development had core participant Linda Aeschliman of the Placer County Transportation Planning Agency, support staff of Ed McCarthy of the county Dept. of Public Works and Christopher Schmidt of the County Planning Department as well as two county residents. Use of the I-80, transcontinental rail corridor, I-50, I-88 corridors for cross-Sierra bike paths should be considered. What are the existing and proposed cross-Sierra transportation and trail corridors already approved or under consideration or construction? For example, the BLM has approved a bike path and trail on the South Fork American River. How are all cross-Sierra routes in existence now classified for bike use? Separation of routes of different uses must be part of this analysis. Of similar importance to the future of the canyon is alternative analysis based on the river dependency of uses.

14-mile project area alternatives. Also missing is an alternatives analysis for routes in the area of the 14-mile project. All existing trails and roads and their

use limitation must be first set forth in the DEIR followed by analysis. Examples are:

- Friends supports the concept of a multiple-use trail similar to the project that ends where the project route meets the existing loop trail near and at Upper Clementine Road. The could serve the heave use demand from the confluence, but by ending at the loop trail and/or Upper Clementine road, would not leave pressure to continue up the canyon by ending at Ponderosa Way. Instead, bikes, for instance, could loop back on other routes. The route could be considered for being limited to uphill biking, which would end the present serious hazard of bikes speeding down the old wagon road below Lower Clementine Road. It is an important improvement in concept that the proposed project would no longer cross the area above the last bend in the reservoir that we call "the wall" with 60-80% slopes. However, we need to look at the new alignment in the field in order to see the proposed implementation of this concept.
- Separating uses. For example, there is an existing hiking trail that is usually not on maps that is close to and along the western north shore of Clementine Reservoir. This narrow path and thick vegetation area right by the lake is not suitable for bikes, and may not be suitable for horses. Of similar importance to the future of the canyon is alternative analysis based on the river dependency of uses.
- Use of existing roads along much of the Middle Fork American River.

#### DEIR visual has blinders on

The DEIR does not recognize the decades-old and well-proven methods of route corridor visual analysis in which Ekbo, Dean, Austin and Williams likely personally and professionally contributed to developing and implementing. These analyses study what's seen from the corridor as well as the visibility of the corridor from other routes and places. Instead, the DEIR used several pinpricks of locations. The serious limitations the procedure used are not identified, nor are the sources of the professional practices touted. It is a simple process to analyze the proposed trail from the entire stretch of river, from all existing trails, from all existing routes. The criteria used to select places from analysis are inappropriate.

It is a gross error that the DEIR pictures Robber's Roost rock without showing the house by the same location that is visible along long stretched of the flagged route. It is inadequate that the visual chapter does not identify, photograph and deal with the issue of existing and proposed houses visible from project routes and alternative routes.

#### Noise: animals can't hear?

It's peculiar the project does not give a similar level of analysis to noise impacts of a 14-mile long route on wildlife as it does for humans. Humans don't occupy the area now. Why isn't this wildlife impact adequately covered?

Geology and soils: problem places omitted

The report fails to describe how the Soil Survey of Placer County, California: Western Part (USDA SCS, July 1980) identifies that the soils in question are unsuitable for the proposed project, that there are extensive areas that would have to be blasted, and so forth.

Critical for public understanding is to identify the large number of places where roads and trail now in use along and near the route and of the same soil types in other areas have experienced major slumping, slope failure, erosion, and so forth. The best the DEIR could do in this regard is to say, "that consultants "noted several areas of shallow instability and small landslides along the proposed trail alignment." Page 11-7. Where are they? They are not identified. There are major failures such as on the Clementine access road. There are areas above Clementine Reservoir of mass failure of old roads. The old road the DEIR describes among its cultural numbered strips that once went down to the lake level has completely disappeared. Many major old trails have disappeared and stop short at wash outs. The DEIR has a near total failure to adequately identify already existing ground failures in a manner that could assist anyone in locating a trail. Since the shallow and short problems are not located, there is no way to comment or supplement the list with known problem areas.

Provide as part of the DEIR the reports and data from the consultants in these areas.

Water quality analysis: missing

There's no analysis of the relationship of the project to potential water quality problems that may result from it and from alternatives, including no project alternative. There's virtually nothing addressing the CEQA needs of the Regional Water Quality Control Board 401 certification. The DEIR fails here and the regional board has failed to act to assure that its CEQA needs are addressed in the DEIR.

The nearly 50 section 404 crossings and other locations are not addressed in the DEIR.

The Resources Agency has yet to carry out its CEQA responsible agency duties.

On October 4, 2004, the California Resources Agency approved a \$1.5 million grant for the former 4-foot wide, 12-mile project. That project's May 5, 2004 Mitigated Negative Declaration and the North Fork Trail Plan were vacated by the