

**PLACER COUNTY
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: Thomas M. Miller, County Executive Officer
by Brett Storey, Senior Management Analyst 

DATE: October 21, 2008

SUBJECT: Informational USFS presentation regarding Tahoe National Forest
US Forest Service/Route Designation Process.

ACTION REQUESTED

The USFS is presenting information regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for travel management/route designation within the Tahoe National Forest to the Placer County Board of Supervisors. This is part of an outreach process they are providing to local jurisdictions. The presenter will be David Arrasmith, USFS, Team Leader, Route Designation.

BACKGROUND

Off highway vehicle use in the National Forests has increased substantially in the past 30 years, especially in California. With the growing number of users and types of vehicles, there is a need to better manage motorized use. The purpose of this travel management process is to protect forest resources while providing a challenging and diverse motorized trail and road system that accesses the forest for a variety of recreation opportunities.

This travel management/route designation process began in 2003. For the Tahoe National Forest, the process started with the mapping and inventorying of all routes including both system and unauthorized routes. In 2004 and 2005, many public meetings were held to share this process with the public, review the maps and add any trails that had been missed during the inventory. In a series of workshops in 2006, the public outlined an initial starting point proposal listing a variety of unauthorized trails to include or exclude in the Transportation System.

This proposed action was released for formal public comment in the spring, 2007. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was developed based on those public comments. The DEIS has been completed and is now available for about a 2-month public review.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no impact to Placer County as this is informational only.

Attachment

USFS Tahoe National Forest Travel Management Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Tahoe National Forest
Travel Management Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Fall, 2008

Overview: Off highway vehicle use in the National Forests has increased substantially in the past 30 years, especially in California. With the growing number of users and types of vehicles, there is a need to better manage motorized use. The purpose of this travel management process is to protect forest resources while providing a challenging and diverse motorized trail and road system that accesses the forest for a variety of recreation opportunities.

Background: This travel management/route designation process began in 2003. For the Tahoe National Forest, the process started with the mapping and inventorying of all routes including both system and unauthorized routes. In 2004 and 2005, many public meetings were held to share this process with the public, review the maps and add any trails that had been missed during the inventory. In a series of workshops in 2006, the public outlined an initial starting point proposal listing a variety of unauthorized trails to include or exclude in the Transportation System.

This proposed action was released for formal public comment in the spring, 2007. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was developed based on those public comments. The DEIS has been completed and is now available for about a 2-month public review.

The DEIS will address the following:

- Cross Country Travel: Cross country travel is currently not prohibited on 700,000+ acres in the Tahoe National Forest. This DEIS looks at prohibiting cross country travel throughout the forest, except for designated areas, roads and trails.

- Addition of Trails: In the Tahoe National Forest, there are approximately 2800 miles of System roads and motorized trails that are already included in the National Forest Transportation System. In addition, there are 1400 miles of unauthorized trails including old logging roads, historic mining trails, and user created trails. The DEIS looks at adding some of these unauthorized routes to the established motorized trail system.

- Seasons of Use: The DEIS looks at a variety of seasonal restrictions on National Forest Transportation System roads and trails due to:

- § The needs of winter deer range and holding areas as identified in the Forest Plan;
- § Wet weather erosion and water quality concerns;
- § Existing forest orders for site specific needs.

- Class of Vehicles: In general, National Forest System smoother surface roads (graded dirt, paved or chip sealed) would be "Open to Highway Legal Vehicles Only," while rough dirt or rocky roads would be "Open to All Vehicles." Some of the alternatives would allow specific smoother surface roads to be "Open to All Vehicles".

Alternatives: The draft environmental impact statement discusses 7 different alternatives for managing motorized use in the National Forest.

Briefly, the alternatives are:

1) No Action - This alternative is required by the National Environmental Policy Act and provides a baseline for comparing other alternatives. Under this alternative no changes would be made to the current Transportation System of roads and trails. Motorized cross country travel would not be prohibited.

2) Motorized Recreation and Access Opportunities - All site specific routes that were recommended for addition during the earlier public scoping process were added to this alternative totaling 72 miles in addition to 2 "open areas". The reservoirs east of Truckee would also be designated as "open" below high water line. Cross country travel would be prohibited. a modified deer closure would be incorporated, however no wet weather closures would be included. 481 miles of smoother surface roads would be changed to "Open to all Vehicles".

3) Cross-Country Travel Prohibited with No Changes to Existing National Forest Transportation System - The only change in this alternative would be to prohibit cross country travel.

4) Modified Proposal by Environmental Group Coalition - This would prohibit motorized travel off system roads and trails, would add wet weather closures, and would add 31 miles of new trails to the system. None of the trail additions would be in Roadless Areas or in spotted owl or goshawk protected activity centers.

5) Modified Proposal by Blue Ribbon Coalition - This would prohibit motorized travel off system roads and trails, would establish seasons of use to incorporate modified deer and wet weather closures, would maintain most of the roads open to both street legal and off road vehicles; and would add 238 miles of trail to the system. 481 miles of smoother surface roads would be changed to "Open to All Vehicles".

6) Preferred Alternative - This would prohibit cross country travel, would establish seasons of use to incorporate a modified deer and wet weather closures, and would add 70 miles to the trail system. None of the trail additions would significantly impact Roadless Area character or spotted owl/goshawk protected activity centers. Considering public need and public safety, 276 miles of smoother surface roads would be changed to "Open to All Vehicles".

7) Notice of Intent - This was the proposal released in the spring of 2007, and would prohibit cross country travel and add 45 miles to the trail system.

Effects of Alternatives: The DEIS discloses the various effects of alternatives for each of the different resources including: air quality, archeology, watershed resources, wildlife species, plant communities, recreation, transportation, Roadless Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, fire, adjacent ownerships, and socio-economic impacts.

Public Meetings: Both an open house and an orientation-style public meeting will be held at the following locations/dates. Open houses will be held in the afternoon from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm and will provide opportunities for one-on-one discussions and questions. The public meetings will be held in the evenings from 6:30 pm -8:30 pm and will include presentations by the Forest Service and a limited opportunity to ask questions. The purpose of both types of meetings will be to share information about the document to make it easier for the public to review.

October 1 - Nevada City - Nevada City Elks Lodge - 518 Hwy 49 North
October 3 - Sierraville - Sierraville Ranger Station, 317 So Lincoln Hwy, (Hwy 89)
October 7 - Truckee/Olympic Valley - Resort at Squaw Creek, 400 Squaw Creek Road
October 9 - Auburn - The Ridge Golf Course, 2020 Golf Course Way

Public Review and Comment Period - September 26 - November 26, 2008:
Comments should be postmarked by November 26 and can be sent to: Tahoe National Forest, Attn: Travel Management Team, 631 Coyote St, Nevada City, CA 95959 or email to: tnf_rte_desig@fs.fed.us. This is a DRAFT document and changes are expected between the draft and the Final EIS.

What is Next? After the comments are analyzed, a Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision will be completed. From this decision, a motor vehicle use map will be developed to show which trails and areas are available for motorized use, the seasons of use, and the class of vehicle designation. This motor vehicle use map will also prohibit motorized vehicles off designated roads, trails, and areas and is expected to be updated annually.

More Information? The full DEIS is available on the Forest website at www.fs.fed./r5/tahoe For additional information, contact the Forest Headquarters (530) 265-4531 or refer to the above website.

Ann Westling
Tahoe National Forest
Public Affairs Officer
(530) 478-6205