

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION IX  
75 Hawthorne Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105

March 26, 2013

Kathryn Hardy, Forest Supervisor  
Eldorado National Forest  
100 Forni Road, Placerville, CA 95667

Subject: Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Eldorado National Forest Public Wheeled Motorized Travel Management Plan, Alpine, Amador, El Dorado and Placer Counties, CA.

Dear Ms. Hardy,

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above referenced document. Our review and comments are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA Implementation Regulations at 40 CFR 1500-1508, and our NEPA review authority under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

We have rated this Draft SEIS as LO – Lack of Objections (see enclosed “Summary of Rating Definitions and Follow-Up Action”). EPA notes that, under the Preferred Alternative, all routes currently closed because they do not meet Standard and Guideline (S&G) 100, as it pertains to meadows, would remain closed to public motorized use until the routes are in compliance with S&G 100. We support this approach, and recommend that the Final SEIS include the following additional information and commitments:

- Specify the criteria that will be used to prioritize route assessments and implementation of corrective actions to bring routes into compliance with S&G 100.
- If, upon further study, the Forest Service determines that corrective actions to bring routes into compliance with S&G 100 are not practicable as a result of funding or other limitations, we recommend that those routes be physically closed to public motorized use (e.g., with locked gates) and that mitigation measures be implemented, to the extent practicable, to minimize continued degradation of the resources at issue.
- If routes may remain closed for several years before assessment and corrective actions will be completed, and if closure postings on those routes have been ineffective in excluding motorized vehicles, we recommend that the Forest Service consider using physical barriers in the interim before the routes are reopened.

EPA also recommends that NEPA documents tiered to this SEIS include the results of comprehensive, up-to-date biological surveys of the Project area. Without such surveys, accurate evaluation of the environmental impacts of the proposed actions would be difficult. The tiered NEPA documents should thoroughly describe and evaluate appropriate corrective action

alternatives; describe best management practices for implementation of corrective actions; identify monitoring measures, including implementation and performance monitoring; and identify follow up measures to be implemented if monitoring indicates that initial efforts were unsuccessful. Moreover, if tiered proposed actions could have significant impacts on the environment, preparation of an environmental impact statement, rather than an environmental assessment, would be appropriate.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this Draft SEIS, and request a copy of the Final SEIS when it is filed with our Washington, D.C. office. If you have any questions, please call me at (415) 972-3843, or have your staff contact Jeanne Geselbracht at (415) 972-3853.

Sincerely,

/s/

Kathleen M. Goforth, Manager  
Environmental Review Office

Enclosure: EPA's Summary of Rating Definitions and Follow-Up Action

## SUMMARY OF EPA RATING DEFINITIONS

This rating system was developed as a means to summarize EPA's level of concern with a proposed action. The ratings are a combination of alphabetical categories for evaluation of the environmental impacts of the proposal and numerical categories for evaluation of the adequacy of the EIS.

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE ACTION

#### ***"LO" (Lack of Objections)***

The EPA review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

#### ***"EC" (Environmental Concerns)***

The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impact. EPA would like to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

#### ***"EO" (Environmental Objections)***

The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that must be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

#### ***"EU" (Environmentally Unsatisfactory)***

The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potentially unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the CEQ.

### ADEQUACY OF THE IMPACT STATEMENT

#### ***Category 1" (Adequate)***

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

#### ***"Category 2" (Insufficient Information)***

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analysed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

#### ***"Category 3" (Inadequate)***

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analysed in the draft EIS, which should be analysed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the NEPA and/or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

\*From EPA Manual 1640, "Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment."