

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

December 5, 2010

Pete Hochrein
Interdisciplinary Team Leader
Plumas National Forest
PO Box 11500
Quincy, CA 95971

Subject: Final Environmental Impact Statement for Plumas National Forest
Public Motorized Travel Management, Plumas County, CA (CEQ#
20100433)

Dear Mr. Hochrein:

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

EPA provided comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on March 13, 2009. We rated the DEIS as Environmental Concerns – Insufficient Information (EC-2) due to our concerns regarding the scope of the travel management planning process and the designation of the Sly Creek motorized vehicle open area or routes located in Critical Aquatic Refuges or serpentine soils. Additional information was requested to fully describe seasonal closures, monitoring, and enforcement commitments.

EPA commends the Forest Service for its efforts to address the many challenges inherent in developing a balanced Public Motorized Travel Management Plan that responds to recreational and resource management demands. We acknowledge that the Travel Management Plan process is a positive step in addressing resource impacts from motorized uses. The permanent prohibition of cross country travel off designated routes and the switch from unmanaged to managed motorized recreational use will result in significant environmental benefits.

We appreciate the efforts of the Forest Service and its consultants to respond to our comments on the DEIS. We support the decision to exclude 55 miles of routes requiring mitigation from the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) until the mitigation measures are successfully completed. EPA also commends the Forest Service for excluding routes in the Sly Creek open area and in California red-legged frog critical aquatic refuge areas to protect threatened, endangered, and sensitive aquatic species. EPA notes that the Forest Service tested all routes in serpentine soils and detected asbestos in route 8M11. We support the

decision to drop sections of that route based on the asbestos test results (Record of Decision, p. 2). Based on all of the above, EPA has no objections to the proposed project.

As we have noted in previous correspondence, route designations are only part of what is needed to reduce the ongoing adverse impacts to water quality and other resources from the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS). The Travel Management Rule directs the Forest Service to identify the minimum road system needed to “meet resource and other management objectives” and regulatory requirements, “reflect long-term funding expectations”, and minimize environmental impacts associated with roads (36 CFR Part 212 Subpart A). We recommend the Forest Service implement Subpart A as soon as possible.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this FEIS. If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 972-3521, or contact Stephanie Skophammer, the lead reviewer for this project. Stephanie can be reached at (415) 972-3098 or skophammer.stephanie@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/ Karen Vitulano for

Kathleen M. Goforth, Manager
Environmental Review Office
Communities and Ecosystems Division