

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



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

January 30, 2012

Kathryn D. Hardy
Forest Supervisor
El Dorado Forest
100 Forni Road
Placerville, California 95667

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Rubicon Trail Easement, El Dorado County, California (CEQ# 20110417)

Dear Ms. Hardy:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the above project. Our review and comments are 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.

The Draft EIS evaluates the impacts of issuing a right-of-way easement to El Dorado County for improvements along the Rubicon Trail within Eldorado National Forest, Pacific Ranger District. The project includes constructing a bridge at Ellis Creek and hardening the crossing at Buck Island to reduce sediment delivery, constructing vault toilets to address sanitation issues along the trail, and implementing various erosion control measures. EPA supports the project's goals of reducing erosion and runoff from the historic Rubicon Trail into nearby creeks and wetlands. Overall, the Draft EIS contains valuable information useful to both the public and decision maker(s) and we have rated the Draft EIS as Lack of Objections (LO) (see enclosed "*Summary of Rating Definitions*").

While we have no objections to the project, EPA recommends that the Forest Service elaborate on the Best Management Practices (BMPs) that will be used on a site-specific basis along the 6.7 miles of the Rubicon Trail. Appendix C contains descriptions of BMPs that will be used to reduce sediment and contaminant delivery to hydrologic features in the project area but does not identify which measures will be used to address specific erosion and sediment problems identified in the Draft EIS. One example is the Winter Camp Wetland, which is noted as a problem area because of severely incised and exposed banks, high disturbance, and sanitation issues. The Draft EIS states that the installation and maintenance of erosion control features will reduce sediment and contaminant delivery to these wetland features. We recommend that the Final EIS identify the specific features that will be employed at Winter Camp Wetland, as well as the other areas listed on page 42, and discuss their effectiveness for reducing erosion and sediment delivery to streams.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this Draft EIS. When the Final EIS is released for public review, please send one hard copy and one CD to the address above (mail code: CED-2). Should you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact me at (415) 972-3521, or contact Stephanie Skophammer, the lead reviewer for the project. Stephanie can be reached at (415) 972-3098 or skophammer.stephanie@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Kathleen Martyn Goforth, Manager
Environmental Review Office

Enclosures: Summary of EPA Rating Definitions