

Mr. Tony Tooke
Reviewing Officer for the Chief
United States Forest Service

June 27, 2014

Dear Mr. Tooke,

As per your request in your letter dated June 17th, The Wilderness Committee of the Tahoe Area Sierra Club would like to submit additional information about our proposed revisions for the wilderness topic.

Members of the Wilderness Committee hiked into the Meiss-Dardanelles recently with the express purpose of exploring solutions to conflicts to the proposed wilderness status presented by the existing mountain bike path and the presence of wilderness-urban interface. Here are our findings:

1. The current Mountain-bike path starts at Big Meadows Parking at Highway #89, proceeds along the Tahoe rim Trail almost due south, traverses Big Meadows, and terminates at the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) – a total of 5 miles. This bike path alignment, as it currently exists, is problematic. It passes through sensitive wetlands (Big Meadows), creates conflict with hikers seeking a less frenetic outdoor experience, and ends at the PCT which does not allow bikes. By terminating at the PCT, mountain bikers are tempted, rather than returning on the same path, to take the Pacific Crest Trail in spite of its ban on bikes. One of our members has seen this occur more than once, and we expect it is not an unusual occurrence. One solution might be to reroute the bike trail to avoid passing through Big Meadows, and connecting it to The Lake Valley Trail which terminates near Upper Truckee Road (Christmas Valley) – approximately 5 miles. The mountain bikers would have a “technical” ride down to Lake Valley, reduce conflict with hikers, and reduce their environmental impact in the process. Another solution would be to terminate the bike trail prior to reaching the PCT – perhaps at Round Lake.
2. The north-east boundary of the proposed Meiss Wilderness creates an interface with some structures causing some concern about forest fires. We see a solution by reducing some of the proposed wilderness acreage along that north-west border to allow creation of a fire-safe Wilderness Urban Interface.

We will look forward to the opportunity to elaborate on these proposed solutions, and others if necessary, at the July 1 meeting. We have additional solutions to the above issues if they are not deemed feasible. We feel that there are satisfactory solutions to be found for conflicts which might stand in the way of the Forest Service proposing both Meiss and the Freel Roadless area as Wilderness.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to present our views!

Fred Roberts
Wilderness Committee
Tahoe Area Sierra Club