

DRAFT NOVEMBER 13, 2014

PACIFIC CREST TRAIL (PCT) BRIEFING PAPER

KEY MESSAGES

Motorized and mechanized trail travel use is an important recreational use on National Forest System (NFS) lands that connects citizens to public lands, provides outstanding outdoor experiences, and provides economic support to local communities:

- Nation-wide, the Forest Service provides more trails for mountain bicycling than any other land-management agency.
- Over 98 percent of the Forest Service's non-wilderness trail miles are open to bicycle use (125,962 miles).
- Similar to the Appalachian Trail, the PCT was designed and constructed for hikers and horseback riders.
- Motorized and mechanized (bicycle) use has never been authorized for the PCT.
- The Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra forest plan revisions will not change these current uses.

The Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) experience is dependent on the benefits of traveling amongst the exceptionally scenic, wild, natural and historic landscapes along the crest of the Pacific ranges of the United States:

In order to protect the trail experience, the PCT Management Area **would allow**:

- Timber harvest, prescribed burning and wildland fire designed to minimize impacts to scenic resources.
- Hiker and horseback riding throughout the management area.
- Foot and horseback riding events currently permitted on the trail to continue as long as they do not negatively impact the environment or substantially interfere with user trail experience. New events may cross the trail at designated crossings.
- Motorized and mechanized (bicycle) trail crossings of the PCT at designated locations.
- In locations where the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is semi-primitive motorized or roaded natural, the ROS class may be retained.

The three forest plan revisions do **not** make travel management decisions.

- Existing Forest Service system roads, county roads within the national forests, and Forest Service system trails will remain in place.
- Uses allowed on the current motor vehicle use maps will continue.

In order to ensure that the outstanding scenic qualities and recreation experience of the trail continue, the PCT Management Area **would prohibit**:

- New roads (permanent or temporary) unless required by law to provide access to private lands or documented as the only prudent and feasible alternative.
- New utility lines unless they represent the only feasible and prudent alternative to meet an overriding public need.
- New communication sites and wind towers.

KEY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. How will the PCT Management Area change use within the Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra National Forests?

The PCT Management Area will not change existing use. Eighty-nine percent of the PCT miles are in designated wilderness. In these places, management will continue to emphasize the wilderness character of the land. Outside of designated wilderness, system trails that are open to bicycling and motorized use will be allowed to continue.

Forest Name	PCT total trail miles	PCT wilderness trail miles (closed to motorized and mechanized use by congressional legislation)
Inyo	86	81
Sequoia	47	34
Sierra	27	27
Total	160	142

2. Will the PCT Management Area remove 21 square miles from multiple use in the Sequoia National Forest?

No. Vegetation management including, timber harvest, fuels treatment, and prescribed burning will be allowed to continue and will be designed to minimize impacts to scenic resources. There are no Forest Service system roads or trails that will be closed in the forest plan revision.

3. Will the management area designation lead to the closure of the existing multiple use trails on the Sequoia National Forest?

No, management area designation for the PCT will not lead to the closure of any multiple use system trails. The three forest plan revisions do **not** make travel management decisions and will **not** change current allowed uses. On the Sequoia National Forest, nine miles of the Pacific Crest Trail goes through the Piutes. There was a decision made during travel management to include the existing trail and road system in the Piutes. There are additional user created routes that were not added at that time because of the fire but an agreement was made to the public to evaluate these for potential inclusion in the future. To become part of the system these trails would need to be evaluated for their recreation opportunities, sustainability, impacts to natural and cultural resources, and found not to be in conflict with the law that created the PCT.

4. Are trail and road crossings limited to a “five miles apart” regulation?

Since the PCT travels from Mexico to Canada, there will be numerous crossings over the length of the trail. The proposed desired condition of the trail is to **minimize** the number of crossings preferably less than one per five miles of trail. In locations where the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum is semi-primitive motorized or roaded natural, a denser crossing may be allowed to continue. Since the Forest Plan revisions do not make travel management decisions, future planning efforts for new roads and trails would evaluate the recreation opportunities for all users, sustainability of the trail system and natural and cultural resource concerns before adding new roads or trails.

5. Will the PCT Management Area allow hiker and horseback riding events?

Since most of the 160 miles of PCT in these three forests is in designated wilderness (89 percent), there are no hiker and horseback riding events currently permitted. New proposed events would be allowed to cross the PCT outside of designated wilderness.

6. Are there currently any motorized trespass issues on the PCT?

Most off highway vehicle and motorcycle riders are responsible and organized groups like the American Motorcyclist Association (AMA), the California Off-Road Vehicle Association (CORVA), and the Friends of Jawbone have been active in promoting responsible motorized recreation and restoration of public lands. Unfortunately, in Kern County and other locations, there has been damage to the Pacific Crest Trail by illegal use and individuals have been cited by law enforcement agencies for riding on the Pacific Crest Trail. Motorized vehicle trespass continues to be a concern.

7. Are bicycles allowed on easements that have been acquired for the Pacific Crest Trail?

Lands and interests, such as easements, acquired for the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail are managed in the same way that the trail is on public lands. Since motorized and mechanized use is prohibited on the trail, it is also prohibited on easements. Private land owners have been compensated for these interests and have agreed to allow the use of the trail by hikers and equestrians.

8. Why are bicycles not allowed on the Pacific Crest Trail?

Bicycle use on the PCT has never been authorized. Similar to the Appalachian Trail, the PCT was designed and constructed for hikers and horseback riders. The Forest Service has recently reviewed the current closure order and determined that in order to continue to provide a safe and unique recreation experience for the primary users, hikers and equestrians, (36 CFR § 212.21) it is needed.

9. How wide will the PCT Management Area be?

The management area (trail corridor) width has not been determined and may vary in the forest plan alternatives. It will be of sufficient width to encompass national trail resources, qualities, values, associated settings and the primary use or uses. This includes vistas (key observation points), campsites, water sources and other important resource values.

TRAIL MILES BY FOREST PLAN REVISION NATIONAL FOREST (PCT)

Forest	Total trail miles Forest(PCT)	Total wilderness trail miles forest (PCT)*	Non-Wilderness				
			Miles of trail forest (PCT)	Miles open to motorized trail use forest(PCT)	%	Miles open to bicycle use forest(PCT)	%
Inyo	1,637 (86)	787(81)	851(5)	340(0)	40 (0)	846(0)	99.9(0)
Sequoia	1,055 (47)	296(34)	759(13)	377(0)	50(0)	746(0)	98(0)
Sierra	1,242 (27)	618 (27)	623 (0)	185(0)	30(0)	623(0)	100(0)
Total	3,934(160)	1,701(142)	2,233(18)	802(0)		2,215(0)	

*Closed to motorized and mechanized use by congressional legislation