

Pacific Southwest Region Five-Forest Over Snow Vehicle Use Designation Analysis



Pre-NEPA Public Open House
Region 5 - California
Lassen, Eldorado, Stanislaus, and Plumas National Forests
November 3-6, 2014

Open House Meeting Objectives

PROVIDE

- ❖ Project Background
- ❖ National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA Process)
- ❖ Preliminary Purpose and Need for Action
- ❖ Public Input Opportunities

LEARN

- ❖ What is needed to ensure quality public engagement

COLLECT

- ❖ Input on preliminary purpose and need for action

Measures of Success

Purpose & Need

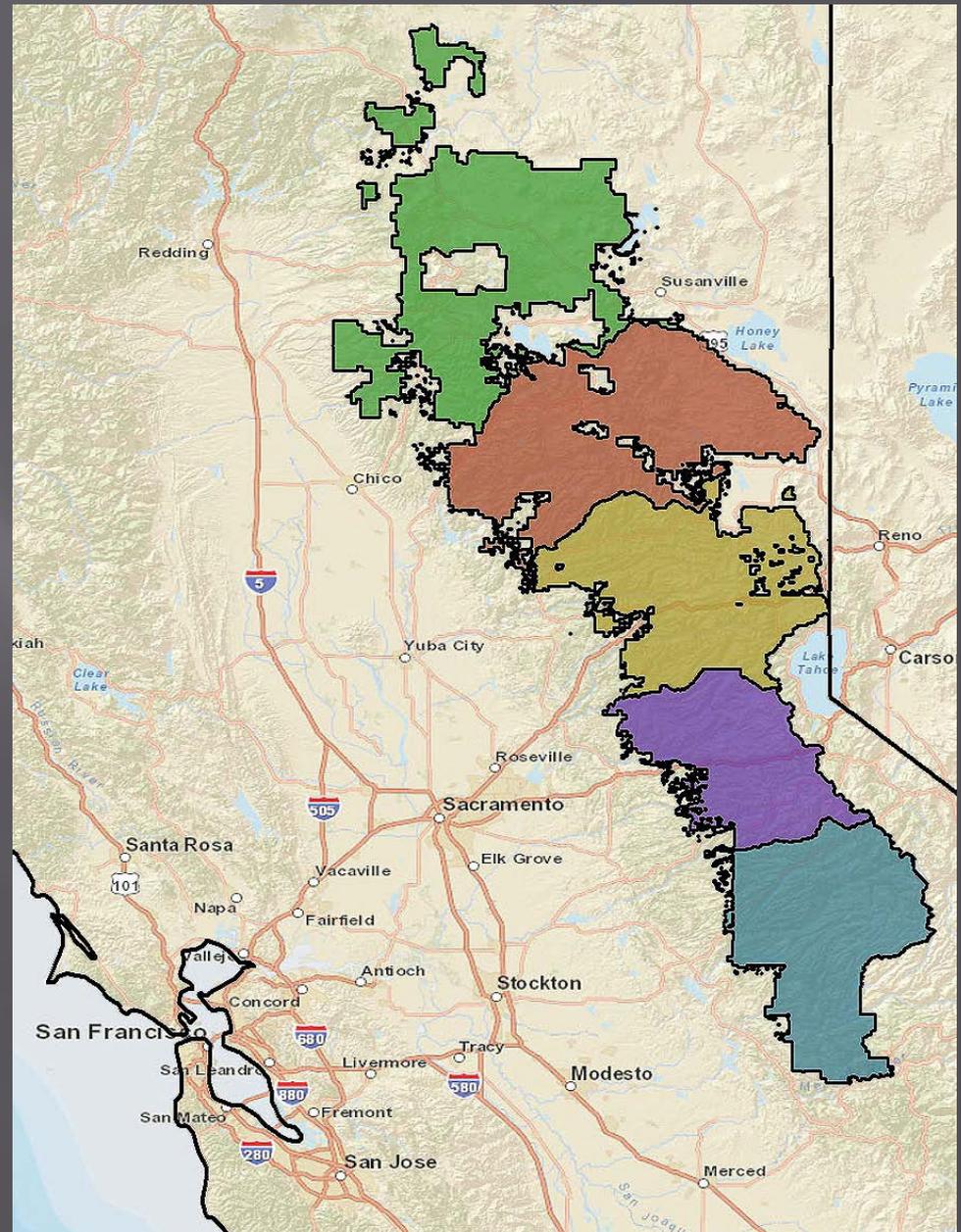
Process

**Public Understanding
and
Public Input**

Objectives & Sideboards

Forests Involved

Lassen
Tahoe
Eldorado
Stanislaus
Plumas



Basis for Analysis

- ▣ **Improve OSV Management**
 - Utilize Final Subpart C of Travel Management Rule - Designation of Over-Snow Vehicle Use on Roads, Trails and Areas on NFS lands)
- ▣ **2013 Settlement Agreement (Snowlands, et al. v. U.S. Forest Service) obligates R5**
 - ▣ Perform Appropriate NEPA to identify trails to be groomed on Lassen, Plumas, Tahoe, Eldorado, Stanislaus

Background

- ▣ 30+ years the Forest Service, in partnership with the California Department of Parks and Recreation, has enhanced over-snow vehicle use by grooming snow trails generally located on underlying NFS roads.



Background

National Forest	Groomed Miles of Over Snow Vehicle (OSV) Trails
Eldorado	51
Lassen	405
Plumas	195
Stanislaus	59
Tahoe	326
Total	1,036

- ❖ Grooming funded by State Off-Highway Vehicle Trust Fund.
- ❖ *Snowlands Network, et al. v. U.S. Forest Service* obligates the Forest Service to complete appropriate NEPA analysis to identify snow trails for grooming on the Plumas, Tahoe, Eldorado, Stanislaus and Lassen National Forests.

Forests also manage OSV use on un-groomed snow trails and areas open to cross country Over-Snow Vehicle use.

Background



As proposed, the Draft new Subpart C - Travel Management Rule states:

“Over-snow vehicle use... shall be designated as **allowed, restricted, or prohibited** by the responsible... where snowfall is adequate for that use to occur.”
(36 CFR §212.80(a)).

Process

NEPA

- ▣ The project will undergo analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- ▣ NEPA provides opportunities for input from local communities, local government, and all interested parties.

PUBLIC INPUT

- ▣ Each of the five forests is currently in the “Pre-NEPA” stage
- ▣ Are considering their current OSV use and management, and examining any need for changes.
- ▣ Each forest will develop a proposed action for analysis based on those considerations.

Process

SEPARATE EISs

- ▣ The **Lassen** will begin their analysis first, followed by the Tahoe, Eldorado, Stanislaus, and Plumas
- ▣ Each Forest will prepare a separate Environmental Impact Statement.

STAGGERED TIMEFRAMES

- ▣ The start of the NEPA process for each of the five forests is separated by several months.
- ▣ The Regional Office, with the help from Forest Service employees from an “enterprise team,” will conduct the analysis in close coordination with staff from each of the five national forests.

Project Goals

- To formalize management of over-snow vehicle use as required by the proposed Subpart C.
- To designate over-snow vehicle use as **allowed, restricted, or prohibited** on National Forest System roads, trails, and areas in the Lassen, Tahoe, Eldorado, Stanislaus, and Plumas National Forests.

Purpose for Action

- ▣ To designate OSV use to protect forest resources, promote safety, and minimize conflicts among the various uses.
- ▣ To fulfill and implement the anticipated requirements of Subpart C requirements.

Purpose for Action, cont'd

- ▣ **To respond to the requirements of Settlement Agreement., we must:**
 - Complete an appropriate NEPA analysis to identify snow trails for grooming;
 - Analyze activities such as the plowing of related parking lots and trailheads as part of the effects analysis;
 - Consider a range of alternative actions that would result in varying levels of snowmobile use; and
 - Consider an alternative submitted by Plaintiffs and/or Interveners in the NEPA analysis

Current Management

- The Stanislaus National Forest currently grooms approximately 59 miles of snowmobile trails
- OSV travel is allowed on about 45% of the forest that has adequate snowfall
- OSV travel is not allowed in wilderness and other areas of minimal management influence (55% is closed or restricted).

Stanislaus OSV Management	Approximate Miles or Acres
Groomed OSV Routes	59 miles
Un-groomed OSV Routes	undetermined
National Forest System (NFS) Lands OSV Project Boundary	540,180 acres
NFS Lands Closed To OSV Use Within Project Boundary	296,494 acres
NFS Lands Restricted OSV Use Within Project Boundary	undetermined
NFS Lands Open To OSV Use Within Project Boundary	195, 154 acres
NFS Lands Within Administrative Boundary	900,371 acres

Need for Action

The differences between existing conditions and desired conditions and the Forest Service's responsibility to reduce those differences through management practices.



Need for Action

We are currently assessing current OSV management to determine if there are any site-specific issues that need to be addressed:

- Forest Plan consistency
- Resource protection
- Laws and regulations
- Other uses



Need for Action

Considering these examples and others is not yet complete and we are continuing to work with the project interdisciplinary team on this step.

We encourage you to provide input on site-specific issues with the Stanislaus National Forest's current OSV management to assist us in further developing the purpose and need for action.

Objectives and Sideboards

OBJECTIVES

- ▣ Designating OSV use on roads, trails, and in areas on the Forest as allowed, restricted, or prohibited
- ▣ Identifying snow trails where grooming would be conducted

SIDEBOARDS

- ▣ Analyze effects of designating OSV use and effects of grooming
- ▣ Consider a range of alternative actions that would result in varying levels of snowmobile use
- ▣ Close coordination and collaboration with stakeholders

Consideration of Effects

Minimization Criteria



- ▣ Natural and cultural resources, public safety, recreational opportunities, access needs, conflicts among uses, the need for and availability of maintenance [36 CFR §212.55(a)]
- ▣ Rights of access, wilderness areas and primitive areas [36 CFR §212.55(d) and (e)]

Consideration of Effects Minimization Criteria

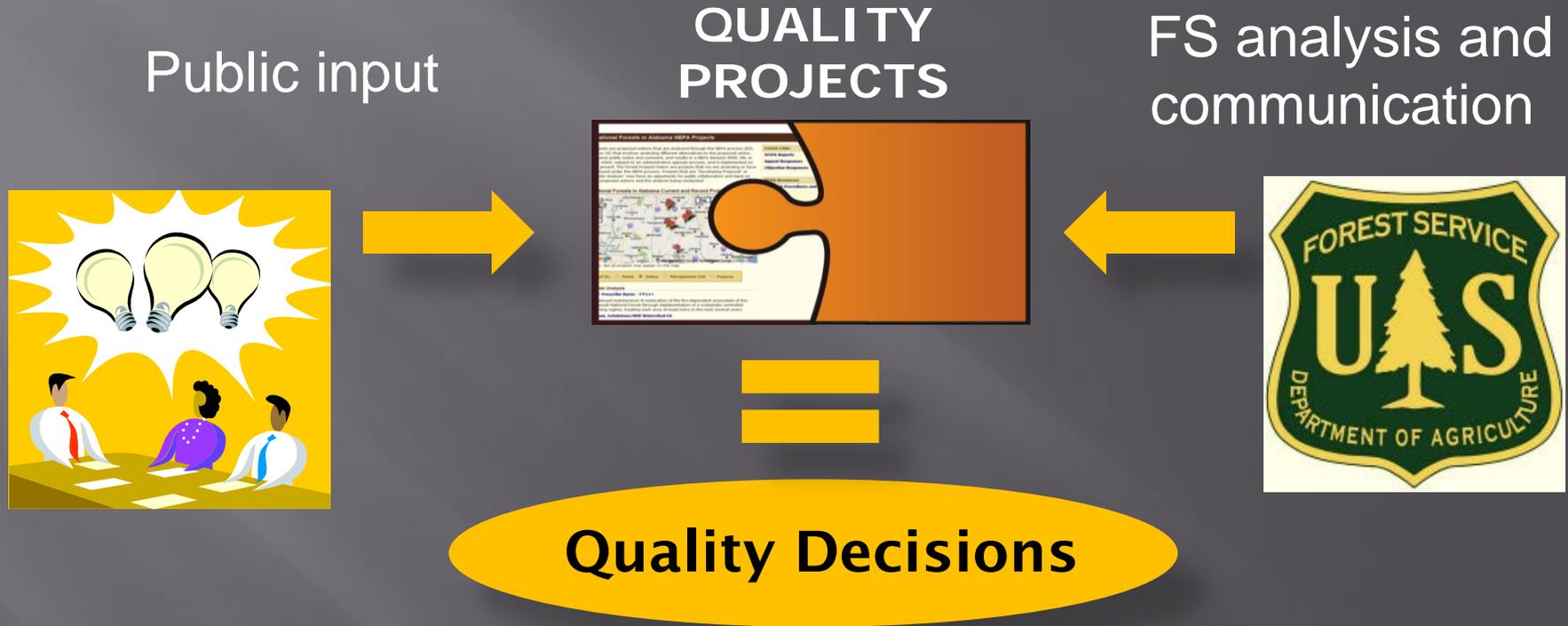
Minimize

- Damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, and other forest resources
- Harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats
- Conflicts between motor vehicle use and existing or proposed recreational uses of National Forest System lands or neighboring Federal lands
- Conflicts among different classes of motor vehicle uses of National Forest System lands or neighboring Federal lands

[36 CFR §212.55(b)]

Why Public Involvement?

To **ADD VALUE** to our work



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION, COORDINATION & PLANNING **NOW** =
Efficient & Valuable Public Engagement & High Quality Projects **LATER**

What's Next?

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

Presentation content – 5 min.

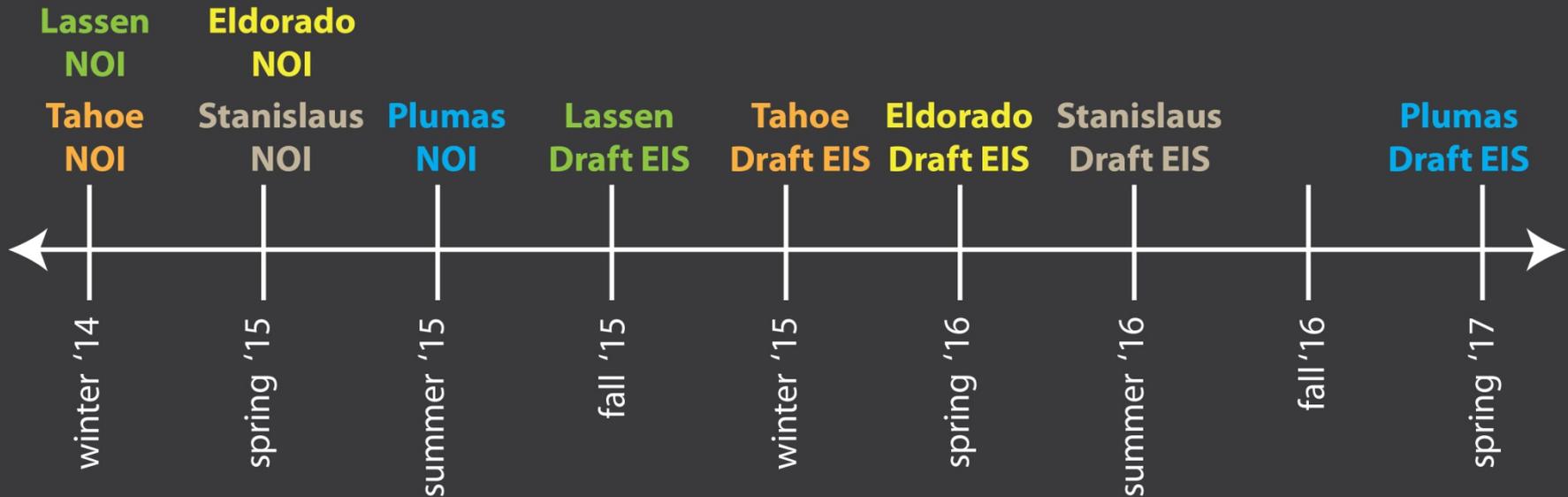
GATHER INPUT – 30 min.

- Preliminary purpose and need and how it was developed
- Identify & discuss potential issues and solutions to issues

SHARING

Next Steps

Additional Opportunities for Public Input



Thank You for Joining Us Today!



Stanislaus National Forest
“Caring for the land and serving people”