



File Code: 1950

Date: July 6, 2011

Dear Interested Parties:

The USDA Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Camp Richardson Resort Campground and Vehicle Circulation BMP Retrofit Project. The EA is available for review at the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe, CA 06150 and can be found on the following website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/ltbmu/CampRichRetrofit>.

The project area is approximately 79 acres in size and is located approximately 2 miles northwest of South Lake Tahoe, California, on Highway 89. The resort is bounded by Pope Beach Road to the east, the Tallac Historic site to the west, Lake Tahoe to the north, and general forest area to the south. The project is proposing to:

1) Reduce the environmental impacts and improve the recreational opportunities and associated infrastructure in the Camp Richardson campground and the resort area by retrofitting the three existing campground areas with water quality protection Best Management Practices (BMPs) and facilities that are responsive to current and projected recreational demands and are compliant with legal requirements for accessibility and by improving vehicular and pedestrian traffic patterns. This action is needed because the existing environmental conditions and trends in the area are resulting in environmental effects and the recreational opportunities are not responsive to current and likely future demands. The proposed BMP retrofit activities fall into four categories:

- a) Install water quality protection BMPs.
- b) Retrofit the campground facilities (circulation routes, improved utilities, upgraded camping facilities, improved emergency access).
- c) Reduce congestion along Highway 89 and within Camp Richardson Resort (improved intersections, improved parking).
- d) Upgrade resort parking (reconfigured and improved day use parking).

2) Amend the Land Resource Management Plan (LRMP) to modify the Persons At One Time (PAOT) day use levels for the Camp Richardson Resort campground area. This action is needed because the current Forest Plan PAOT figures do not accurately reflect the existing use levels, maintenance needs, and long-term management. This amendment does not increase resort use levels.

The infrastructure actions are expected to lead to improved recreation opportunities and experiences for the public, improve safety conditions for pedestrians and vehicles by reducing congestion, and reduce existing environmental effects by reducing sedimentation associated with impervious surfaces and user impacts. The proposed Forest Plan amendment is expected



to improve consistency between the development and management of the Camp Richardson project area and current management direction.

Project Considerations

A Vision Plan for Camp Richardson Resort was completed and is available on the LTBMU's website under "Land and Resources Management", "Projects", "Camp Richardson Resort Campground and Vehicle Circulation BMP Retrofit" heading. The Vision Plan was prepared by the LTBMU in collaboration with the Camp Richardson Resort Permittees and provides a framework for improvements to environmental resources and facilities at the resort and identifies issues facing the resort and strategies for resolving them. The Vision Plan is consistent with the LTBMU Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as well as TRPA environmental thresholds and TRPA Plan Area Statement direction. However, the Vision Plan itself is not a proposal, but provides the foundation for proposals such as the one described in the EA.

The three Camp Richardson Resort campground areas and the highway corridor that connects them comprise one of the most popular use areas within the Lake Tahoe Basin, located in the concentrated south shore recreation complex. These campground areas do not comply with Forest Service standards, which include the need to have water quality protection best management practices (BMPs) in place. Some camp sites and user-created trails are also located within the identified stream environment zone (SEZ) associated with Pope Marsh.

Vehicle circulation and campsite locations are poorly defined, consisting mainly of unpaved surfaces with extensive soil compaction. The existing conditions have the potential to create water-borne and air-borne sediment, which can negatively affect the water clarity and quality of Lake Tahoe. In addition, the campground facility does not provide universal access to amenities and does not meet Forest Service standards for providing opportunities to persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the campground's poorly defined vehicle circulation routes pose a challenge to medical and fire response vehicles in the event of an emergency and could potentially pose a safety risk to recreationists.

Despite the facility's poor condition, the resort campground remains very popular with recreation visitors and is often occupied to full capacity during summer months. The 325-site campground offers a range of amenities including various degrees of campsite utility services from which campers can choose. Campers are not restricted by the type of vehicle they arrive in, and sites are open to all campers. Resort day use and overnight hotel use are also very popular. Existing parking amenities that support these uses do not meet LTBMU standards for resource protection and are in need of improvement. Traffic congestion along Highway 89 and within the resort is also of concern, especially during peak use periods. Measures to address these and other concerns are included in this project.

The desired conditions for the project area are as follows:

1. The developed recreation amenities would comply with established water quality protection BMPs while providing high-quality, year-round, family-oriented recreation opportunities.
2. All developed amenities would meet current construction standards and provide universal access for persons with disabilities, consistent with Forest Service Outdoor Recreation

Accessibility Guidelines and the Architectural Barriers Act/Americans with Disabilities Act.

3. There would be a reduction in traffic congestion within the portion of Highway 89 passing through the resort core.
4. There would be adequate and safe emergency vehicle access to the developed recreation amenities.
5. There would be access for the public via the existing public transit system.
6. The Forest Plan day use PAOT for Camp Richardson would accurately reflect current use levels associated with the facilities to support forest-wide recreation planning.

Summary of Alternatives

In addition to the Proposed Action (Alternative 2), the Forest Service also evaluated the following alternatives:

- Alternative 1 – No Action. Under this alternative, no improvements would be made and the existing campground and Forest Plan would remain unchanged.
- Alternative 3 – This alternative is designed to meet the purpose and need and to respond to public concerns about the removal of trees larger than 30 inches in diameter and the continued safety concerns related to congested vehicle and pedestrian traffic (particularly along Jameson Beach Road). Under this alternative, day use parking and pedestrian walkways would be improved as compared to the Proposed Action, and approximately 9 trees over 30 inches in diameter at breast height would be removed as compared to 40 trees in the Proposed Action. The project design features and BMPs that are prescribed for the Proposed Action would apply to this alternative as well. The proposal to amend the Forest Plan is also included.
- Alternative 4 – This alternative is designed to respond to recommendations submitted in the scoping period while still meeting the purpose and need. This alternative reduced the removal of large trees (approximately 4 trees over 30 inches in diameter at breast height proposed for removal). This alternative also includes a reduced number of campsites proposed for year-round operation and reduces the development footprint in the area between the “RV” camp and the “Eagle's Nest” camp. The project design features and best management practices that are prescribed for the Proposed Action would apply to this alternative as well. The proposal to amend the Forest Plan is also included.

How to Comment and Timeframe:

Taking into account the above information, we request that reviewers read the Environmental Assessment and focus comments on the following:

- 1) How well do the proposed action and action alternatives (defined in Chapter 2) meet the purpose and need (as defined in Chapter 1 and analyzed in Chapter 3)?
- 2) How well do the proposed action and action alternatives address the identified significant issues?

- 3) Were there any other projects that should be considered for cumulative effects?
- 4) Were the appropriate resource effects and resource measures considered in the environmental analysis?

The comment period is intended to provide those interested in or potentially affected by this project an opportunity to make their concerns known prior to a decision being made by the Responsible Official. Those who provide comments or otherwise express interest in the project by the close of the comment period will be eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR 215 regulations.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this project will be accepted for thirty (30) calendar days following this publication of the legal notice in the Tahoe Daily Tribune. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. The regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period.

Written comments must be submitted to: Nancy Gibson, Forest Supervisor, LTBMU, 35 College Drive, Re: Camp Richardson Resort Project, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business hours via telephone (530-553-2600) or in person. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text file (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), portable document format (.pdf), or Word file (.doc) to comments-pacificsouthwest-ltbmu@fs.fed.us, using the subject Camp Richardson Resort Project. In cases where no identifiable name is attached to a comment, a verification of identity will be required for appeal eligibility. If using an electronic message, a scanned signature is one way to provide verification. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will become part of the public record for this project. It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.6.

The EA is available for review at the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, 35 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe, CA 06150 and can be found on the following website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/ltbmu/CampRichRetrofit>. Additional information regarding this proposal can be obtained from Daniel Cressy or Matt Dickinson at (530) 543-2600.

Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,



NANCY J. GIBSON
Forest Supervisor