



**DECISION NOTICE AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
CAMP SILVERADO RECREATION SITE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
ELDORADO NATIONAL FOREST
AMADOR RANGER DISTRICT
AMADOR COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

DECISION

Based upon my review of the Camp Silverado Recreation Site Development Project Environmental Assessment (EA), the supporting documentation and a review of public comments, I have decided to implement Alternative 2, the Proposed Action, which will restore and maintain this existing Forest Service recreation facility through the reconstruction or improvement of buildings, roads, parking areas, trails, and utilities in order to help satisfy an increasing public demand for recreation opportunities. Alternative 2 amends the 1989 Eldorado National Forest LRMP to change the designation of the Camp Silverado facility from Management Area #13, emphasizing that the facility be managed as a developed recreation site authorized under a Special Use Permit, to Management Area #9, an existing USDA-FS developed recreation site.

DECISION RATIONALE

Alternative 2, the Proposed Action, best meets the purpose and need of the project, which are to restore and maintain an existing Forest Service facility and help satisfy an increasing public demand for recreation visitation.

The proposed action will manage and repair the deteriorating facilities at Camp Silverado. The proposed action includes plans to construct group campsites, improve the access road (10N20) and parking area surfaces, replace restroom facilities, restore the water distribution system, repair the existing structures, improve trail conditions and signage, provide electrical power, and provide year-round site availability.

The restored Camp Silverado facility will provide additional recreation opportunities in the Silver Lake area. The area has experienced an increase in usage and offers limited group camping facilities (Bear River Campground is approximately 20 miles away and Plasse's Resort, a private campground, is located on the south end of Silver Lake). The campground will allow users to recreate on nearby Silver Lake and improve access to an adjacent pond. The restoration of the facility will generate revenue, eventually recovering costs for this project.

Analyses of cultural, environmental, and natural resources concluded that the proposed action would not significantly impact the resources in the project area. Public involvement and collaboration has occurred at multiple steps in the development and review of this project.

Since the Camp Silverado project was initiated prior to May 9, 2015 (the date the 2012 Planning Rule went into effect), the provisions of the 1982 Planning Rule applies to the decision to amend the 1989 Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LMRP) [36 CFR 219.17 (b) (2)]. My decision to amend the 1989 LRMP to change the designation of the Camp Silverado area is consistent with the provisions of the 1982 planning rule. Based on my analysis of the objectives, guidelines, and content of the 1989 LMRP, I have determined that the amendment would not result in a significant change to the LRMP. As a group campground designated as an existing USDA-FS developed recreation site, the Camp Silverado facility would continue to provide recreation opportunities, as in the original land allocation, but the use of the facility will not be restricted to the private concessionaire, organization, or individual holding a special use permit. As a result of the change, the new designation will help meet the future demand for camping facilities on the Eldorado National Forest, and meet the purpose and need of the project.

Alternative 1 (no action) would not meet either need of the Camp Silverado facility.

The Camp Silverado Recreation Site Development Project Environmental Assessment (EA) documents the environmental analysis and conclusions upon which this decision is based. The EA is hereby incorporated by reference.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action has been listed as a proposal on the Eldorado National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions each quarter since October, 2014. On November 24, 2014, a scoping letter and description of the proposed action was sent to approximately 15 potentially interested and affected parties, including federal, state and local agencies, professional organizations, and local special interest groups. The EA lists agencies and people consulted on pages 3-4. One letter was received with comments on the proposed action. No issues were raised that resulted in the development of an additional alternative, however the proposed action was slightly modified to address concerns (EA, page 4).

The legal notice for the opportunity to comment on the EA was published in the Mountain Democrat, as well as the Amador Ledger Dispatch on May 29, 2015 and initiated a 30-day public comment period which ended June 30, 2015. In response to the Forest Service request for comments, five letters were received from organizations and individuals. The summary of comments received during the 30-day comment period and how they were considered is included in Appendix B of EA.

Issues identified during the public scoping and comments periods were incorporated into the analysis and decision. Issues that were within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and included supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider, fell into three topics: hydrology, recreation, and site operations.

One comment received was concerned about effects to an ephemeral stream channel. The proposed action includes design measures to minimize effects on the local hydrology, and the EA found no adverse impacts to the local watershed (EA, page 17). Concerns raised due to increased or new recreation activities were addressed using a combination of signage, public

notices, or operations planning (EA, pages 8-9 and 14-15). Comments related to the site operations (availability, fees) were addressed directly in the EA (pages 8-9, 14-15), or will be addressed during the operation planning stages (e.g. determining fees).

This project was subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR §218, Subparts A and B. A legal notice announcing the 45-day objection period on the draft decision was published in the Mountain Democrat, the newspaper of record, on April 11, 2016, and in the Amador Ledger-Dispatch, on April 8, 2016. The Forest mailed notice of availability of the draft decision to those who submitted project-specific written comments during scoping or the 30-day comment period on the Preliminary Environmental Assessment. Objections were received from Amador County, East Silver Lake Improvement Association, and South Silver Lake Cabin Owners Association.

All objections were reviewed. Objection points were related to issues arising from the projected increase in visitors to the area: the increase in traffic and traffic flow on Kit Carson Road; emergency evacuation with the increase in traffic and recreation use; the parking and recreation use at the lakefront access point; and specific aspects of site operations and management, fire risk, and site security.

An objection resolution meeting was held with the objectors, interested public members, Eldorado National Forest, and the Regional Office on July 6, 2016. The Reviewing Officer responded in writing to objections in a letter dated November 4, 2016, instructing the Eldorado National Forest to update the Decision Notice and FONSI to clarify issues relating to the objection points. Those changes are reflected in this final decision document. In addition, the Forest plans to meet again with the objectors to discuss implementation and operation plans. Overall, the Reviewing Officer found that the rationale for this project is clear and the reasons for the project logical and responsive to direction contained in the Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

The significance of environmental impacts must be considered in terms of context and intensity. This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human and national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. In the case of a site-specific action, significance usually depends upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Intensity refers to the severity or degree of impact. (40 CFR 1508.27)

Context

The Camp Silverado Recreation Site Development project is a site-specific action that does not have international, national, region-wide, or statewide importance environmentally. The intended decision is within the context of local importance in the area associated with Silver Lake on the Eldorado National Forest. Any effects would be limited to the local area, including other public and private recreational users near the project area, and have been addressed through mitigation measures implemented as design criteria (see EA pages 9-10). The local area includes the camp facility, and the access road (10N20), totaling approximately 30 acres.

Intensity

The intensity of effects was considered in terms of the following:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that, on balance, the effect will be beneficial.**

Consideration of the intensity of environmental effects is not biased by beneficial effects of the action. In the absence of beneficial effects, no adverse effects will be significant even when considered all by themselves. Mitigations and management requirements designed to reduce the potential for adverse impacts were incorporated into the proposed action, including standards and guidelines outlined in the Eldorado National Forest LRMP (USDA Forest Service 1989), as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (USDA Forest Service 2004), Best Management Practices, and project specific design criteria based on resource specialist knowledge and experience. These design criteria and management requirements would minimize or eliminate the potential for adverse impacts caused by the proposed project. (EA pages 11-23)

2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.** The proposed action is not anticipated to have an adverse effect on public health or safety of the recreating public. Part of the purpose and need of this project is to manage the deteriorating, vacant facilities in recognition that the Camp Silverado facility infrastructure has not been updated to meet health, safety, and accessibility standards over the years (EA, page 2). One issue identified during public scoping was potential public safety issues arising from the likely increase in traffic on Kit Carson Road. Analysis of the potential changes in traffic due to the proposed action did not find the changes to be significant according to the NEPA standard. The context of the changes in traffic levels is site-specific and restricted to a portion of Kit Carson Road, which is a paved road on the northeast side of Silver Lake for which Amador County holds an easement. The intensity would be expected to vary throughout an average week, with most days experiencing a low-level increase in traffic (EA page 14). Concerns raised about public health or safety have been incorporated into the design of the project. For example, traffic will be mitigated through efforts to encourage carpooling, varying check-in and check-out times, and by restricting large motorhomes and RV's. An on-site campground host will discourage criminal activity. The resurfacing of the only access road to the site and development of the unauthorized trail system will reduce potential hazards associated with unmaintained access. Additional concerns, such as those relating to emergency access plans, are outside the scope of the NEPA process and are more appropriately addressed during project implementation. These issues will be addressed in the Site Operation Plan, which will be drafted prior to the site opening. Site operations and maintenance will adhere to public health and safety standards. Additional responses to public comments can be found in the EA (pages 29-36).
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** The project is not within Wilderness or in proximity to park lands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or wetlands. Two proximate historical and cultural resources will be avoided and monitored during project implementation (EA

pages 16-17). The project area is proximate to Hidden Pond and Silver Lake, and these hydrologic resources will not be affected by the proposed action (EA pages 17-18). No ecologically critical areas or critical wildlife habitat were located within the project area (EA pages 17-23).

4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** Controversy in this context refers to cases where there is substantial dispute as to the effects, rather than opposition to its adoption. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial as they are similar to previous uses of the facility (EA page 1). There is no known credible scientific controversy over the impacts of the proposed action. The proposed action is no larger or more complex than other camp renovation projects undertaken by the Forest Service, and will follow established planning measures and Best Management Practices (BMP's).
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The Forest Service has considerable experience with actions like the one proposed. The analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk. The proposed action is similar in type and scope to many projects on the Eldorado National Forest, and the effects from this type of project are well known to the interdisciplinary team members. (See EA pages 10-23). In regards to the issues raised related to increased traffic on Kit Carson Road, a Traffic Impact Assessment was completed to analyze the potential traffic changes. The projected changes in traffic were estimated using established methods applying the most recent traffic data for the area and visitor rates from another group camp facility, and the results were compared to the previous traffic levels at the site (before the Boy Scout camp closed; EA pages 13-15).
6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The Camp Silverado Recreation Site Development Project represents a site specific project that does not establish precedent for future actions. Any future decisions will require a site-specific analysis to consider all relevant scientific and site-specific information available at that time.
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The cumulative impacts are not significant. Analysis of effects to recreation, hydrology, botanical, and terrestrial and aquatic wildlife resources identified no cumulative effects due to the proposed action (EA pages 16, 18-23). Several measures were included in the proposed action to reduce the effects of the increase in traffic expected from the proposed action. When compared to the previous traffic generated by the Boy Scouts camp and considering the design features meant to minimize the effects of vehicle traffic, the proposed action would not cause a significant change to the environment (EA pages 14-15).
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed , or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites,

highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, as the project complies with historic preservation regulations (EA pages 16-17). The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources because appropriate design criteria will be used to avoid the cultural resources (EA pages 16-17).

9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** There will be no affect to federally listed species or critical habitat. No federally listed threatened or endangered plant or terrestrial wildlife species are known to occur in the project area (EA pages 18 and 20). No critical habitat occurs in the project area. One federally listed endangered amphibian species, the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, may have habitat in a part of the project area, but it was considered to be unlikely to be occupied after field visits (EA page 20). The biological analysis determined that the proposed action would result in no direct or indirect effect on the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog (EA page 21).
10. **Whether the action threatens to violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations (such as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the Endangered Species Act of 1970) were considered in the EA (pages 16-21). The action includes an amendment to the Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (EA page 9), which is a non-significant change and is consistent with the provisions under the 1982 Planning Rule. Approval from the Amador County Health Department and all permits required by the California Health and Safety Code will be obtained prior to work on and operation of the water system (EA page 7). In addition, traffic mitigation measures and potential signage will be coordinated with the county, and emergency access and response plans will be available prior to site operation.

After considering the effects of the actions analyzed, in terms of context and intensity, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1989) and the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (2004). The Biological Evaluation completed for the proposed action indicates that no species protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 will be affected by the activity. The archaeological assessment indicates that no cultural or historic resources will be affected by the proposed action, consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. I have determined that in accordance with Executive Order 12898 this project does not have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations.

An EA was prepared and resulted in the Finding of No Significant Impact described in this Decision Notice. I determined these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

After this Decision Notice is signed, implementation may begin immediately. Improvements to the group camp sites and trails are anticipated to begin in 2017, with full implementation occurring over several years. Operation and emergency evacuation plans will be completed and all required permits will be obtained prior to opening for public reservation and use.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Richard Hopson, District Ranger, Eldorado National Forest, Amador Ranger District, 26820 Silver Drive, Pioneer, CA 95666; Phone 209-295-59110.

SIGNATURE AND DATE



LAURENCE CRABTREE

Forest Supervisor

4/20/2017

Date

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