Legal Notice for Opportunity to Object
Plumas National Forest Over-snow Vehicle Use Designation Project

The Forest Service is proposing to designate trails and areas in the Plumas National Forest for public over-snow vehicle (OSV) use. Discrete National Forest System (NFS) lands within the Plumas National Forest were analyzed and considered for OSV use designations within Butte, Lassen, Plumas, Sierra, and Yuba Counties, California.

The Responsible Official for this decision is Forest Supervisor Christopher Carlton. A Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Draft Record of Decision (draft ROD) were prepared. The Forest Supervisor's draft decision would implement alternative 2—modified. The FEIS and draft ROD can be found at the projects website at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/textarea/textarea_project.exe.php?project=47124

Notice of the document's availability was sent to those who submitted project specific written comments during the scoping or comment periods. For more information or to request project specific materials, please contact Katherine Carpenter, Environmental Coordinator and Project Leader, at (530) 283-7742 or katherine.carpenter@fs.fed.us.

Approximately 74 percent of NFS lands within the Plumas National Forest administrative boundary are designated for cross-country OSV use in alternative 2—modified. The existing condition allows OSV use on 1,147,825 acres of NFS land; alternative 2—modified reduces available NFS lands by 25 percent. Alternative 2—modified retains 100 percent of current groomed OSV trails and increases ungroomed OSV trails by approximately 370 percent.

Alternative 2—modified includes the following activities: approximately 854,400 acres of NFS lands designated for public cross-country OSV use, generally above 3,500 feet elevation. There are 2,753 miles of designated, unmarked, ungroomed, underlaying roads and trails within designated OSV-use areas in this alternative.

Forest-wide snow depth requirements for public OSV use will be implemented by:

Public, cross-country OSV use in designated OSV-use areas would be allowed when there are 12 or more inches of snow or ice covering the landscape, to avoid damage to surface and subsurface resources and comply with 36 CFR §261.15.

Public OSV use on designated, ungroomed OSV trails would be allowed when there is adequate snow depth to avoid damage to natural and cultural resources. To avoid damaging resources on designated, ungroomed OSV trails with undriving roads, a minimum of 6 inches of snow or ice is typically needed. Groomed and ungroomed OSV trails to be designated for public OSV use in all alternatives would overlap existing paved; gravel; or native surface travel routes with the exception of four trail segments with a total length of 0.74 mile.

The minimum snow depth for trail snow grooming to occur would be for 12 to 18 inches consistent with California Snowmobile Grooming Standards.

Class 1 OSVs are allowed on all designated OSV trails and areas. Class 2 OSVs are only allowed on designated OSV trails available for grooming. Class 1 OSVs are over-snow vehicles that typically exert lower ground pressure and include the following OSV types: snowmobiles, tracked motorized, snowcats, tracked all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and tracked utility terrain vehicles (UTVs). Class 2 OSVs are over-snow vehicles that typically exert higher ground pressure and include the following OSV types: tracked four-wheel drive sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and tracked four-wheel drive trucks.

A total of approximately 225.9 miles of OSV trails will be designated as follows:

Approximately 142.9 miles of designated OSV trails available for grooming.

Approximately 82.9 miles of designated OSV trails not available for grooming.

Approximately 67 miles of undesignated OSV trails will be groomed or ungroomed under the jurisdiction of Plumas and Sierra Counties, as follows:

Approximately 60.1 miles of undesignated OSV trails under other jurisdiction available for grooming (County roads).

Approximately 5.9 miles of undesignated OSV trails under other jurisdiction not available for grooming (County roads).

Approximately 1.4 miles of OSV trails that cross private lands, are under Forest Service jurisdiction, and available for grooming.

Sixteen OSV crossings of the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) are designated. These crossings are located in areas where OSV use is designated on either side of the PCT. In all cases, OSVs crossing the PCT are required to do so at 90 degrees, as close to 90 degrees as is safe, to minimize the time and distance traveled to cross the trail. OSV users are to make crossings at, or as near as possible, to the designated crossing locations.

Twelve designated crossings utilize roads identified on the Plumas National Forest's Motor Vehicle Use Map and are the width of the road (approximately 14 feet).

In coordination with the Tahoe National Forest, four proposed OSV crossings of the PCT at the shared forest boundary in the Lakes Basin open area would not use roads and would range in width up to 0.25 mile. Some of these proposed OSV crossings are wider than the width of a road because they are located in areas where snow conditions are highly variable during the course of a winter, for example, areas prone to wind loadings of snow and formation of cornices. These wider crossings give OSV users options to select a safe crossing of the trail under constantly changing, variable snow loading conditions.

Administrative Review of Objection Opportunities - The proposed project is an activity implementing a land management plan and not authorized under HFRA, there for it is subject to 36 CFR §216, Subparts A and B only. Who May File an Objection - Objections will only be accepted from those who have previously submitted written comments regarding the proposed project during scoping or other designated opportunities for public comment. In accordance with 36 CFR §218.5(a), issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted, timely project specific written comments unless the issue is based on new information arising after the designated comment opportunities.

Required Content for an Objection - The objection must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR §218.6(b), and include the following information: (1) the objector's name and address, with a telephone number or email address, if available; (2) a signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for email may be used with objection); (3) when multiple names are listed on an objection, identification of the lead objector as defined in 36 CFR §218.2 (verification of the identity of the lead objector shall be provided upon request); (4) the name of the project being objected to, the name and title of the responsible official, and the name of the national forest on which the project will be implemented; (5) a description of those aspects of the project addressed by the objection, including specific issues related to the project and, if applicable, how the objector believes the environmental analysis or draft decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy; suggested remedies that would resolve the objection; and supporting reasons for the reviewing officer to consider; and (6) a statement that demonstrates the connection between prior specific written comments on the particular project or activity and the content of the objection, unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the designated opportunity for formal comment. With certain exception (36 CFR §218.6(b)), all documents referenced in the objection must be included with the objection.

When to File an Objection - Any objections, including attachments, must be filed with the appropriate reviewing officer within 45 calendar days following publication of this legal notice. The date of publication is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Objectors should not rely upon dates or timeframes information provided by any other source. It is the objector's responsibility to ensure timely filing of a written objection with the reviewing officer pursuant to 36 CFR §218.9. All objections are available for public inspection during and after the objection process. Responses that do not adhere to these requirements make review of an objection difficult and are conditions
under which the reviewing officer may set aside an objection pursuant to 36 CFR §218.10.

Where to File an Objection - The Regional Forester is the reviewing officer for objections for this project filed under the 36 CFR §218 regulations. Objections must be submitted to: Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service; Pacific Southwest Region; Attn: Plumas OSV Objection; 1323 Club Drive, Vallejo, California 94592. Objections may be submitted via mail, FAX (707-562-9229), or delivered during business hours (M-F 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.). Electronic objections, in common formats (.doc, .pdf, .rtf, .txt), may be submitted to: objections-pacificsouthwest-regional-office@fs.usda.gov with the subject “Plumas OSV Objection”. An automated response should confirm your electronic objection was received.

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