

Travel Management Subpart C Meetings

The Forest Service Travel Management has 3 phases:

Subpart A – Main roads

Subpart B – Less traveled roads and trails

Subpart C – Over Snow Vehicles

On the Plumas NF, Subpart B closed 893 miles of roads and trails. Subpart A recommends closure of 722 miles of main roads. That's a total of 1595 miles of roads and trails, which is approx. **one third** of the roads on the Plumas NF so far.

Currently the Forest Service is beginning work on Subpart C.

On Nov. 5 and 6, SAC attended Subpart C meetings for the Lassen and Plumas NFs, held in Susanville and Quincy.

Lassen NF

The Lassen meeting in Susanville was attended by approx. 25 members of the public. The meeting was carefully controlled by the Forest Service, allowing only a few opportunities for people to speak. They did accept some written comments. Lassen NF Staff Officer Chris O'Brien stated that the Lassen isn't planning to propose any restrictions on OSVs. We hope this ends up being the case, but based on past history with the Forest Service during Travel Management, we remain skeptical until the final decision is signed because we have seen local forests are often over-ruled by the Regional Office in Vallejo. While we trust Chris, we don't trust his bosses.

Our impression of the Lassen meeting was that some information was shared, but it was mostly a one way street. We didn't feel that the Forest Service heard us and we were cut short when we tried to speak.

Plumas NF

The Plumas meeting in Quincy was attended by over 100 people squeezed into the Mineral Building at the Fairgrounds. This group was very angry and very vocal. The FS attempted to control the audience by rushing through the meeting, cutting off people when they tried to speak, and limiting their time to a fraction of what they needed to make their point. Overall, the public was very frustrated by the process, which only served to make people angrier.

The Enterprise Team ran the meeting for the most part. This same team will do the environmental analysis for each of the five forests. We are told that is because there are not enough personnel locally to handle the work, plus they want consistency between all five forests. We are concerned that this team has no local knowledge, we have no history or working relationship with them, and they have no stake in the outcome of the process like the local people do.

Throughout the meeting, the facilitator kept calling the meeting a "game". When the meeting started, "the game rules" were explained to us. When it was time to write comments on special color-coded

paper and put them up on the wall, she told us the rules for “the game”. The public was not allowed to submit a concern unless they also submitted a solution to their concern.

During the question and answer period, the public felt they weren’t being heard. We hope future meetings will allow more public comment.

Background Information

Snowlands Network, Winter Wildlands Alliance and the Center for Biological Diversity took the Forest Service to court, claiming the Forest Service did inadequate environmental analysis for their groomed snowmobile trails on the Plumas, Lassen, Tahoe, Stanislaus and Eldorado NFs. The judge agreed, and a settlement was reached where the five forests would be required to do the environmental analysis’s over. As part of the settlement, Snowlands was paid \$15,000 and the Forest Service is required to consider an alternative written by Snowlands in the environmental document.

In a separate lawsuit in Idaho, Winter Wildlands claimed that the Forest Service Subpart C is mandatory. The Forest Service claimed Subpart C was optional. The judge disagreed and ruled that all forests nationwide must do Subpart C analysis for OSVs.

The Forest Service has no choice and must abide by the court orders.

On the five forests involved in the Snowlands et al lawsuit, the FS decided to combine the two court ordered environmental analysis’s and do them at the same time. This is a partial schedule we were given for the Notice of Intent (NOI) which starts the formal process, and for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS):

<u>Lassen</u>	<u>Eldorado</u>	<u>Tahoe</u>	<u>Stanislaus</u>	<u>Plumas</u>
NOI Winter 2014	NOI Spring 2015			NOI Summer 2015
DEIS Fall 2015	DEIS Spring 2016	DEIS Winter 2015	DEIS Summer 2016	DEIS Spring 2017

Community Alternative

By court order, Snowlands is allowed to submit their own alternative for the Subpart C environmental analysis. That is curious, because **anyone** is allowed to submit an alternative for the Forest Service to consider during the NEPA process.

For that reason, SAC and the California Off-Road Vehicle Assoc. (CORVA) will be writing an alternative for the OSV community. We will work on writing an alternative and make it available to our partners and interested public for their input and support. If you would like to provide input, please send your ideas to <mailto:info@sierraaccess.com> We are working on this now, so please send your input asap.

SAC will keep you informed of the future public meetings regarding OSV use on our public lands.