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LAWSUIT AGAINST PLUMAS NATIONAL FOREST

OHV Groups Join to Sue for Access to Public Lands

QUINCY - Sierra Access Coalition (SAC), a public lands multiple-use group based in Quincy, CA, filed a lawsuit in federal court today challenging the U.S. Forest Service's Travel Management Plan which restricts motorized vehicles in the Plumas National Forest in Northern California. Joining SAC in the lawsuit are the California Off-Road Vehicle Association, Butte County, and Plumas County. Amy Granat and Corky Lazzarino are also named as individual plaintiffs. In this lawsuit the public is fighting the federal government, which has been compared to a David and Goliath battle. The litigants are being represented by Pacific Legal Foundation in Sacramento.

The Plumas NF Travel Management Plan was signed in August 2010 and designated forest roads and trails that will remain open for motorized use. Non-designated routes, including many that have been open to motorized travel for decades, are now off-limits to the public including the disabled, firewood cutters, campers, hunters, Christmas tree cutters, hikers, and other recreationists. The federal decision affects everyone who uses unpaved roads and trails for access to the forest using pickups, cars, 4x4s, motorhomes, motorcycles, quads, tow rigs for equestrian trailers, travel trailers, and others. Thousands of recreationists, sportsmen, and many businesses are affected by this ill-conceived plan.

For outdoor enthusiasts who suffered the indignities of the Travel Management Process over the last several years, this lawsuit has twelve claims for relief. Claims include failure to coordinate with local governments, inadequate analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act, failure to provide the public with a scientific basis for the Record of Decision, failure to analyze effects to the human environment and socioeconomic impacts, inadequate response to public comments, and other violations of law and regulation.

“SAC is taking action with this landmark lawsuit to protect the rights of local citizens and to fight against this overly restrictive plan on our National Forest lands”, said Corky Lazzarino, Executive Director of SAC. “Hundreds of citizens are outraged that the Plumas National Forest plan failed to consider local input, which has affected our way of life.”

Amy Granat, Managing Director of CORVA stated, "Accessibility for the disabled and elderly was not considered, nor their needs accommodated. What the Forest Service has done seems like an incredible overreach of what a federal agency can do. We have to bring fairness back. We have to insist that it is part of our right to be able to access public land in an environmentally responsible way. "

In summary, the final decision closed 873 miles of the 1107 miles of routes that were inventoried for the study. Parking for all uses is limited to one vehicle length from a designated route which severely restricts public opportunities for camping, firewood retrieval, horseback riding, fishing, hiking, rockhounding, game retrieval, and other activities. Main gravel roads, which historically were open to all vehicles, are now closed to non-street legal (green sticker) vehicles. Accessibility for the disabled and elderly was not considered, nor their needs accommodated. The Forest Service did not coordinate with the five counties within the Plumas National Forest, as required by law. The entire French Creek drainage is closed pending study of the California red-legged frog.

A copy of the lawsuit is posted on SAC's website at www.sierraaccess.com

and on CORVA's website at www.corva.org

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Sierra Access Coalition is a local, nonprofit organization with more than 1450 members dedicated to protecting environmentally sound roads and trails for access to public lands.

The California Off-Road Vehicle Association is a varied group of outdoor recreationists who are extremely active in promoting the positive aspects of vehicular access on public lands and protecting that right.