

February 2007

Alpine Winter Recreation Project

Scoping Document

Comments Welcome

The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Carson Ranger District welcomes your comments on its proposal to improve recreation opportunities by developing two dispersed recreation trailheads, a rest stop, two pullouts and designating motorized and non-motorized use areas in Alpine County, California (see map). Additional parking, restroom facilities and trailhead information would improve the overall recreation experience for all users.

Please email or mail your comments on this scoping document by close of business on March 6, 2007 to: alpine_winter_recreation@fs.fed.us, subject line Alpine Winter Recreation Project.

Written comments can be sent to:

Marnie Bonesteel
Carson Ranger District
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
1536 So. Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to improve the motorized and non-motorized winter recreation experience and opportunities in Alpine County, California.

This action is needed because of a court order requiring the Forest Service to re-analyze a portion of a district-wide travel management decision issued in 1992 (Forestdale Road area of Alpine County). In addition there has been considerable interest expressed by user groups as well as Alpine County in addressing winter recreation concerns and opportunities throughout the County. Hence, this effort addresses the Forestdale Road area as well as the broader opportunities and issues of winter recreation throughout the County.

Forest Service staff has worked closely with a winter recreation strategy group which included individuals representing various interests. Based on these and other discussions, the District has concluded that there is a growing demand for expanded and improved parking, restroom facilities, overnight camping, day use, and in some cases, separated motorized and non-motorized areas in Alpine County.

All opportunities identified would be open to both motorized and non-motorized users, unless noted otherwise. This document would authorize construction **if and/or when** funding is available. The land and roads are under the management of several different

agencies. The Forest Service, through this document, is making **recommendations** to other state and local agencies based on discussions at staff level. We are proposing the following opportunities to enhance the winter recreation experience in Alpine County.

Blue Lakes

Current Situation: The Blue Lakes Area has limited parking and facilities. It is difficult to find a space to park if arriving after mid-morning and there is no overnight camping opportunity. As a result there is a safety challenge with parking along Highway 88, complaints by those who want to overnight camp with their families and additional snowmobile parking and use in the Forestdale area which is a concern to many non-motorized users.

Proposal: The Blue Lakes gravel pit would be improved to accommodate day use parking including trailer space and overnight RV camping, including a dumping station. Additional vault toilets may be needed. Parking design would maximize available space. Currently, parking in the gravel pit area is prohibitive in the winter due to inadequate surfacing for snow clearing. Meadow restoration would be completed adjacent to the gravel pit to enhance wildlife habitat and water storage. **One summer related proposal is as follows:** Dispersed camping would be eliminated on the south side of Blue Lakes road and across from Hope Valley campground. Trailhead bulletin boards would display rules and a map of the recreation area. The Forest Service would make a request to Alpine County for a year-round 15 mph speed limit at the parking area and a 45 mph speed limit from the parking area to the sliding locked gate on Blue Lakes road. Blue Lakes Sno-park provides for motorized and non-motorized recreation activities.

Centerville Flat

Current Situation: Centerville Flat is an area that could serve as a parking/staging area for winter use in the Highway 4 corridor. However it has a deteriorating vault toilet and no site hardening. Proposal: Centerville Flat rest stop would be improved to provide year-round additional parking for day and overnight use. Parking design would be maximized to accommodate trailer and RV access. The deteriorating vault toilet would be replaced. The Forest Service recommends this site for a future Sno-park. Centerville Flat provides for motorized and non-motorized recreation activities.

Hwy 4

Current Situation: Highway 4 is groomed from the Bear Valley side to Ebbets Pass. On the Markleeville side there is no activity as it is an area prone to avalanche activity in the vicinity of "the Flintstones." A winter route via snowmobile, between Bear Valley and Markleeville, would be highly desirable as it would provide for destination travel and connect communities within the County during the winter.

Proposal: In order to avoid the avalanche area at "the Flintstones," Forest Service Road 112 would be needed in lieu of use of the Highway 4 corridor for a short stretch. Maintenance and culvert repair would be completed on Forest Service road 112 to improve the creek crossing. The Forest Service would recommend and support grooming from Centerville Flat, on Forest Road 112 to Hwy 4.

Red Corral

Current Situation: There is no parking and hence, no opportunity for use of this area. It has potential to be an excellent location for beginner snow shoeing and cross-country skiing.

Proposal: Red Corral trailhead would be improved to provide for additional parking on the east side of Hwy 88. Parking design would accommodate single vehicles. A portable toilet could be placed on site with appropriate screening from the highway. The Red Corral area would provide for non-motorized recreation activities only.

Forestdale Creek Road

Current Situation: There is a long history of concern by non-motorized users for motorized use in this corridor resulting in administrative appeals and litigation. There are also other agencies that have jurisdiction in this area. Our attorneys have advised us that the road would likely come under the jurisdiction of Alpine County if contested. In addition the California Department of Fish and Game owns some of the land surrounding the road. Caltrans owns the right of way and there is also a need to provide access for private landowners. Snowmobile use is more prevalent early and late season when there is insufficient snow at Blue Lakes.

Proposal: Per discussions with Alpine County, Forestdale Creek Road would be open for motorized use during the early and late months of winter. This would provide snowmobile access to the area when there is insufficient snow at the nearby Blue Lakes Sno-park. A mid-winter motorized closure on Forestdale Creek road would be implemented when sufficient snow is available at Blue Lakes Sno-park. The timing of the closure would be determined, on an

annual basis, by the Carson District Ranger based on on-the-ground-conditions. Alpine County in cooperation with the Forest Service would implement the closure. Motorized access during the early and late months, to upper Forestdale Divide would be permitted within the Forestdale Creek road corridor only. Private property owners would not be limited to the seasonal closure, but would have snowmobile access on the Forestdale Road throughout the year. The entrance to Forestdale Creek Road along Hwy 88 would be evaluated to provide for additional parking. The Forest Service would recommend to the California Department of Fish & Game and Caltrans that parking at Red Lakes to accommodate recreation activities be improved. Forestdale Creek Road would provide for motorized and non-motorized winter recreation early and late season and non-motorized recreation when there is sufficient snow at the Blue Lakes staging area.

Burnside Lake Road

Current Situation: This trailhead has provided parking for non-motorized recreation. It is heavily used but has no facilities. (A motorized travel crossing across Burnside Lake road at 90 degrees is permissible.)

Proposal: The Forest Service would recommend to California Department of Fish & Game that parking at the entrance to Burnside Lake Road be improved. This trailhead serves non-motorized activities and the Forest Service would recommend this site for a future Sno-park.

Armstrong Pass

Current Situation: This area is used by various users but is not well signed nor delineated in regards to where different activities are permitted or the location of the travel route. Proposal: The Forest Service would recommend that Armstrong Pass south, crossing Hwy 89, traveling southwest to Hwy 88 onto Blue Lakes road be appropriately groomed and signed for motorized travel. Trailhead parking for motorized access to this current travel route would be at Oneidas Street in South Lake Tahoe and at Blue Lakes Sno-park. The area north of Hwy 88 would be limited to non-motorized use including the route to Scotts Lake.

Bear Valley/Deer Valley Connection

Current Situation: In designating the Mokelumne Wilderness, a route was left open for motorized travel. It is currently used by some more adventurous snowmobilers, but the route is difficult to follow. Proposal: This existing motorized route is located on the Amador Ranger District. Motorized winter recreation could be enhanced to provide for destination riding. Under the direction of the Amador District some minimal tree trimming and trail marking would be allowed to improve this opportunity for adventurous riders and orient them so they do not inadvertently enter the Wilderness. The intent is to maintain the same level of experience and no grooming would be permitted.

Highway 88 Parking

Current Situation: Winter parking along Highway 88 is occurring from Pickett's Junction to Carson Pass. This appears to be a dangerous situation as some of the parking is on or over the fog line.

Our intent is to provide more off-highway parking opportunities through this planning effort. Proposal: The Forest Service would coordinate with California Department of Transportation to reduce shoulder parking along Hwy 88 from mile marker 10-14. The Forest Service would recommend that plowed pullouts between Pickett's Junction and Red Corral would be retained for parking.

Monitor Pass

Current Situation: Some portions of Monitor Pass area are open to snowmobiling and other portions are closed. There is a wintering deer herd that utilizes the closed portion during low snow winter periods. Access to the area is limited, as Highway 89/4 intersection is gated once Monitor pass is closed. Snow melts quickly to expose the asphalt near the intersection most of the time. Proposal: Access to motorized winter recreation activities could be improved by providing access on Highway 89 to Loope Canyon road gate. The Forest Service would support and recommend this be accomplished. The existing pull-out at Loope Canyon would be improved to provide for additional parking, including trailers. The Forest Service would coordinate with Alpine County and Caltrans. The wildlife closure area would be lifted in coordination with California Fish & Game, at their discretion, **when** sufficient snow accumulates in the closure area and the deer herd has migrated. (The Forest Service will provide on the ground information to Cal Fish and Game as requested.) Motorized riding area boundaries would be located on both sides of Monitor Pass based upon topographic features and enforceability.