

***Designation of Alternate Loop 3B to
the Lassen National Forest Backcountry Discovery Trail
5/16/06***

Proposal: For the past several years, the Lassen National Forest has been working with the Recreation Outdoors Coalition (ROC) on their proposal to designate approximately 115 miles of existing road as an alternate loop for the Lassen Backcountry Discovery Trail (BCDT).

The proposed route on the Lassen National Forest is located on existing roads. These roads are currently maintained for travel by sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and passenger cars. Road signs will also direct travelers to interesting “discovery points” off the loop. Discovery points include scenic overlooks, interpretive, heritage and geologic sites, and recreation sites for camping, fishing, hunting, and hiking.

Designation is consistent with management direction in the 1993 *Lassen National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (p. 4-25) as amended, and the 1996 *Trail Strategy* (State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation).

Background of the Discovery Trail Concept: In September 1996, the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Division, prepared a *Trail Strategy* for the California Backcountry Discovery Trails as an element of the California statewide motorized trail system. The strategy describes a conceptual plan for a motorized trail running from the Mexican border to Oregon and from the Pacific Ocean to Nevada. The Backcountry Discovery Trail system will provide a network of long distance, interconnected, off-highway vehicle trails. This network “will be a shared-use trail system that will provide significant recreational opportunities for all persons, including those who use highway-legal and non-highway-legal (Green Sticker) vehicles, hikers, bicyclists and equestrians” (*California Department of Parks and Recreation, 1996*).

Portions of the trail have already been designated in Oregon and in California, including a 187 mile north/south route on the Lassen National Forest. The proposed trail on the Lassen National Forest is an alternate route around Lassen Volcanic National Park.

As proposed, the route starts on the FR 17 (FR 31N17) at BCDT 3 milepost 102.8 at the intersection with FR 30N16 and terminates at BCDT 3 milepost 132.6 on FR 33N16 in Bunchgrass Valley, using existing public roads. The proposed loop is approximately 115 miles. Of this, 3.1 miles are Tehama County roads, 14.9 miles are Plumas County roads, 15.1 miles are CalTrans, and 76.7 miles are Forest Service roads. The route includes 35.2 miles of paved roads.

Current Planning Status: The Forest Service is conducting a “roads analysis” of ROC’s proposal, especially their desire to allow mixed use with Green Sticker and highway-legal vehicles on Forest Service roads. The issues of driver safety and road maintenance will be addressed. This analysis will be completed in July 2006. In 2005, 60 ROC volunteers counted traffic at nine stations along the loop from June 5 to Labor Day. Retired Forest Engineer Dick Tatman, and his wife Bobby, used this data to prepare an Engineering Report using the draft “Guidelines for Engineering Analysis of Motorized Mixed Use on National Forest System Roads.”