

Recreation Outdoor Coalition

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DATE: April 23, 2008

TO: Abigail Kimbell, Chief

CC: Richard Sowa, Director of Engineering
James S. Bedwell, Director of Recreation and Heritage Resources
Randy Moore, Region 5 Regional Forester

RE: Route Designation and Mixed OHV Use.

The enclosed information has been prepared by three retired Forest Service employees, a District Ranger, Forest Public Services Officer, and Forest Engineer, working with the Recreation Outdoor Coalition (ROC) in northern California.

ROC supports the concept of route designation and has been involved in the process from the beginning on several California national forests. We are, however, frustrated by the Region 5 position of requiring a full blown engineering analysis on all Maintenance level 3, 4, and 5 passenger car roads before allowing off-highway vehicle (OHV) mixed use, even though mixed use has occurred on many unpaved NFS passenger car roads for decades and is legal under the State vehicle code. There have been few mixed use accidents.

With a limited budget and workforce, the Forest Service in Region 5 does not have the ability to complete these analyses on all the miles of mixed use passenger car roads currently enjoyed by OHV enthusiasts. ROC has raised this issue for over a year. The attached draft policy letter was sent to Region 5 staff for their consideration in January 2008, but they remain closed minded to any changes in the region's current direction. The "one size fits all" rule is not serving the public well and holds the national forests to a standard that may not fit their circumstances or needs.

ROC is equally concerned about public safety on mixed used roads and the enclosed draft policy letter allows for exceptions on when to conduct engineering analyses. The current R5 process will fail the OHV user community and restrict future access on these roads when the first round of travel planning is completed in Region 5 in 2008. We have used the Lassen National Forest as an example to illustrate our position.

People who recreate on the national forests are becoming frustrated with the Forest Service on OHV issues and the differing interpretations on each forest and between regions. Some California counties are also managing their unpaved road systems through the national forests differently than what the FS is proposing. FS employees are having a difficult time explaining the inconsistencies and what is happening to the

public. More people are threatening legal action if current OHV access on National Forest System roads is significantly reduced due to lack of engineering analysis.

The national directives have yet to be finalized, which would provide more consistent guidance for applying the 2005 Travel Management Regulations. There is unclear direction and guidance in the FSM and FSH for identifying which maintenance level (ML) to assign roads and how the Highway Safety Act vs. mixed use is applied.

Enclosed is our April 2008 Position Paper detailing our findings, particularly Recommendation 5, national level FS policy and guidance. Our recommendations could go a long way in clarifying the ML-Highway Safety Act issue, which seems to be driving the R5 position on mixed use. Please consider these comments as you continue to work on the Agency's revised travel management policy. If we can assist you in reviewing the proposed final policy and suggesting possible edits, please contact H. Richard Tatman at 530-253-3054. We would appreciate a response to the attached position paper. Thank you.

/s/ Robert W. Andrews

/s/ Elizabeth Norton

Robert W. Andrews
District Ranger
(retired)

Elizabeth Norton
Forest Public Services Officer
(retired)

/s/ H. Richard Tatman, Jr.

/s/ Sylvia L. Milligan

H. Richard Tatman, Jr.
Forest Engineer
(retired)

Sylvia L. Milligan
Chair, Recreation Outdoor Coalition

Enclosure: April 2008 ROC Position Paper

cc: Gregg Mumm, BlueRibbon Coalition
Don Amador, BlueRibbon Coalition
Dave Pickett, American Motorcyclist Association
Don Spuhler, Don Klusman, and John Stewart, California Association of 4 Wheel Drive Clubs, Inc.
Lois Silvernail, California Off-road Vehicle Association
Robert Reed, California League of Off Road Voters
Fred Wiley, Off Road Business Association
Paul A. Turcke, Moore Smith Buxton and Turcke, Chartered
Daphne Greene and Phil Jenkins, State of California OHMVR Division
Honorable Wally Herger
Honorable John Doolittle
Honorable George Radanovich
Honorable Dan Lungren