Butte County Federal/State Land Use Coordinating Committee

February 26, 2019 4:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Auditor-Treasurer Conference Room

25 County Center Drive, next to Suite 125, Oroville CA

Minutes

1) Self-Introductions: Dennis Schmidt

Public: Peggy Moak

2) Plumas National Forest Over Snow Vehicle DEIS - Comment Letter

No quorum being present, the remaining available action to meet the comment period timeline is to check with Administration to see if a Board letter echoing their letter of 2015 would be appropriate.

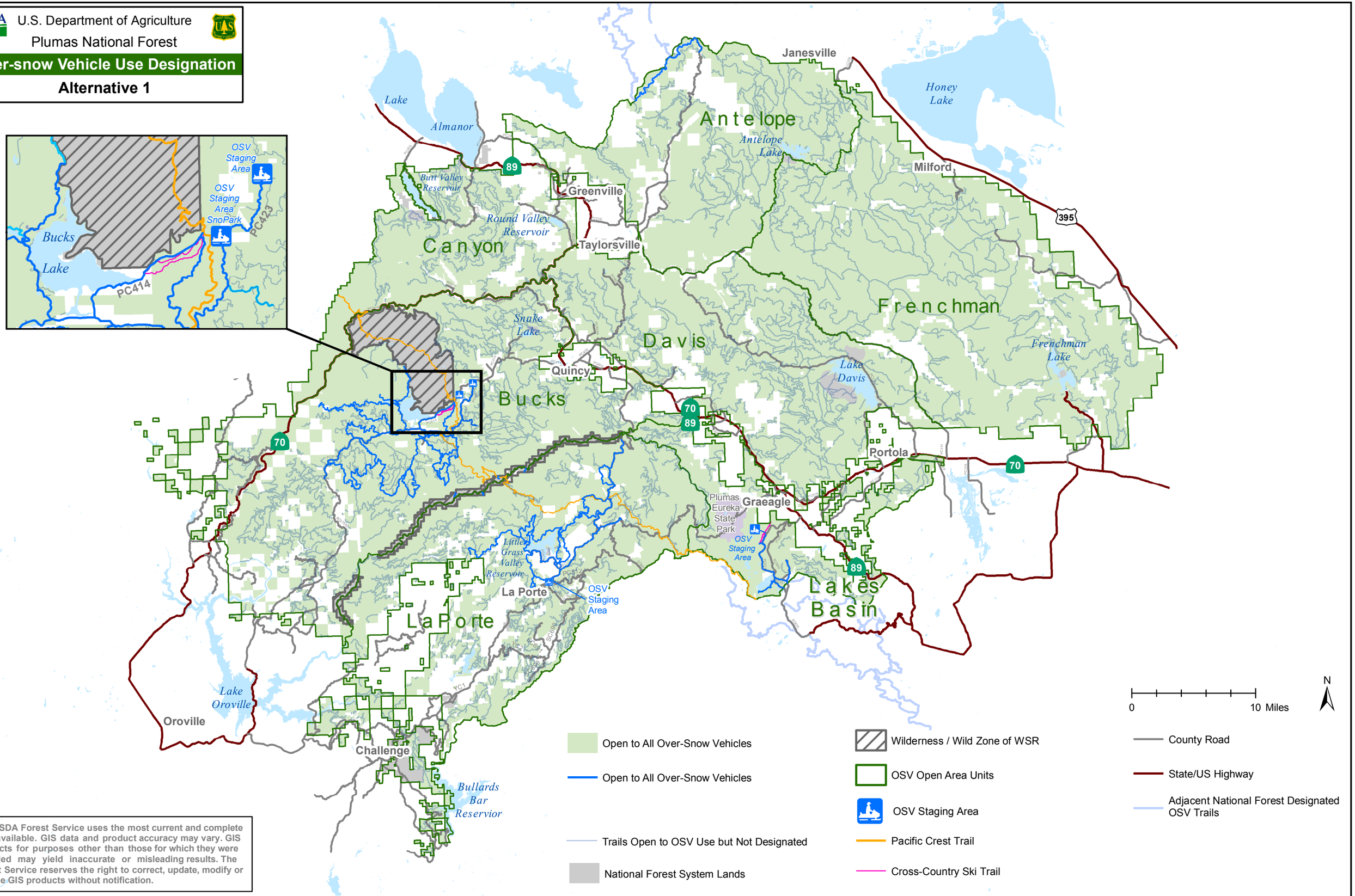
3) Updates:

- PNF Collaborators Meeting – Feb. 12, 5:00: Discussion of the OHV access issue was briefly mentioned and highlighted as a continuing focus. Granite Basin grant project presentation by Thad Walker

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Plumas National Forest

Over-snow Vehicle Use Designation

Alternative 1

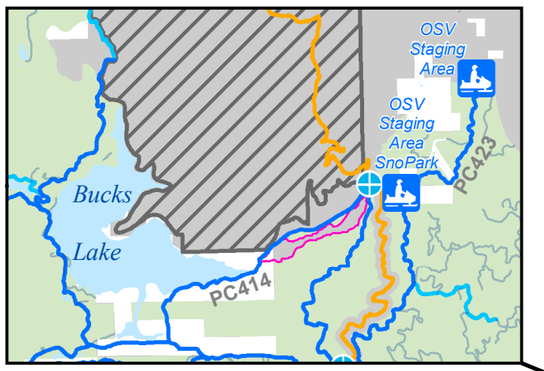


The USDA Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were intended may yield inaccurate or misleading results. The Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify or replace GIS products without notification.

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Plumas National Forest

Over-snow Vehicle Use Designation

Alternative 2



Antelope
Canyon
Davis
Bucks
Frenchman
La Porte
Lakes Basin

Janesville
Honey Lake
Lake Almanor
Antelope Lake
Milford
Butt Valley Reservoir
Greenville
Round Valley Reservoir
Taylorsville
Snake Lake
Quincy
Lake Davis
Frenchman Lake
Portola
Plumas Eureka State Park
Graeagle
OSV Staging Area
Little Grass Valley Reservoir
La Porte
OSV Staging Area
Lake Oroville
Oroville
Challenge
Bullards Bar Reservior

89 70 395

0 10 Miles

N

Open to All Over-Snow Vehicles 50 inches or less
Open to All Over-Snow Vehicles
Open to All Over-Snow Vehicles 50 inches or less
UnGroomed OSV Route (Potential)
Trails Open to OSV Use but Not Designated
Designated OSV Crossing of PCT (Point)
Designated OSV Crossing of PCT (Linear)
National Forest System Lands
Wilderness / Wild Zone of WSR
OSV Open Area Units
OSV Staging Area
Pacific Crest Trail
Cross-Country Ski Trail
County Road
State/US Highway
Adjacent National Forest Designated OSV Trails

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February 28, 2019

Katherine Carpenter, Forest Environmental Coordinator
Plumas National Forest
159 Lawrence St.
Quincy, CA 95971

RE: Plumas National Forest OSV Use Designation Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Modified Proposed Action (Alternative 2)

Dear Ms. Carpenter:

The Butte County Board of Supervisors (Board) has reviewed the Plumas National Forest Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for use by Over-Snow Vehicles (OSV), and has actively solicited feedback from recreationists and other stakeholders via the Butte County Forest Advisory Committee. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this DEIS, and recognize that this is part of the process required for compliance with Subpart C of the Forest Service Travel Management Rule as part of the Settlement Agreement between the Forest Service and Snowlands Network, et al.

The Board makes the following comments regarding the Modified Proposed Action (referenced below) and the DEIS:

Alternative 2: Preferred Alternative, Modified Proposed Action (2018)

Alternative 2 strives to balance the availability of motorized and non-motorized over-snow recreational opportunities and minimization of impacts to natural and cultural resources. Alternative 2 includes the designation of seven cross-country OSV-use areas (864, 826 acres); 2,335 miles of unmarked, ungroomed, underlying roads and trails; and 304 miles of trails for OSV use where 203 miles would be groomed and 101 miles would be ungroomed. Alternative 2 proposes a minimum snow depth requirement of 12 inches within the designated cross-country OSV-use areas; 6 inches along designated OSV trails; and 12 to 18 inches along designated groomed trails (consistent with California Snowmobile Grooming Standards). Specific to the PCT, alternative 2 would designate 20 OSV trails where motorized routes on the Plumas Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) cross the PCT and 6 OSV trails along the shared Plumas and Tahoe National Forests administrative boundary that are not existing motorized routes and their width would range up to 0.25 mile.

Designated (Allowed) OHV Use

The Board agrees that it makes sense to align the OSV Areas with existing Ranger Districts, less any portion of a District where OSV use is prohibited.

The Board acknowledges the research on snow depth included in the DEIS and the resultant conclusion that a minimum of 12" provides a measure of protection against resource damage and is consistent with the California State Department of Parks and Recreation Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Division snow depth grooming guidelines.

Trail Grooming for OSV Use

1. The need for agreements between the United States Forest Service (USFS) and counties or private parties to allow use and grooming of OSV trails upon County or private roads is a new practice **The Board would like to know when the USFS will initiate contact**, expectedly in an expeditious manner, to provide a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other authorization for counties and private individuals to agree to that is straightforward and reasonable for all parties.

2. The Board reiterates its request that a provision for future additional groomed trails, when funding becomes available, is required in all alternatives. The Smith Peak/Lake Davis Trail System is one such new area for groomed trails that should be considered.

Restricted OSV Use

The use of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines and a review of other available scientific studies supports the proposed restricted areas around known nesting eagle sites for both motorized and non-motorized recreationists; however, the Board requests a response as to how the nesting areas are marked so that recreationists will know what areas to avoid, and how law enforcement will be able to monitor and enforce compliance.

Prohibited OSV Use

Alternative 2 proposes only 20 "road" crossings of the PCT, and only 6 broader, non-trail crossings. The Board's understanding from OSV user feedback makes it clear that most of the open cross country areas around the PCT are not conducive to even knowing where the PCT is located, much less readily locating any specific "crossings". The Board reiterates its request for an explanation of how such crossings will be made visible and enforced.

1. It is the Board's contention that any proposed closure should be based on extensive surveys of a broad spectrum of user groups and/or science based reasoning. It appears that the basis for closure of popular OSV area was largely based on a compromise position between various interested parties. The Board requires an explanation of the compelling basis for any closure of an area currently being heavily used by OSV riders, particularly when it cuts off OSV travel from one part of the National Forest to another part. Lacking a compelling basis, these proposed closures shall be removed from the alternatives.

   The Board is strongly opposed to any closure of existing OSV cross country or OSV trail areas in the Western portion of Lakes Basin Recreation Area. The area in the Lakes Basin proposed for closure is part of a heavily used OSV "loop" for cross country OSV recreating. The USFS built a staging area on the Lakes Basin Road approximately six years ago. The funds they used to do so

were from State Parks OHV monies. If the closure were to go through, the staging area could still be used by snowmobilers; however, the area of riding would be reduced, and therefore less attractive to OSV users. We infer that the number of riders will more than likely also be reduced, affecting the local area tourism and recreation dollars, and diminishing overall enjoyment of the OSV cross country experience by those who ride in the area.
The Board believes that the large Bucks Lake Wilderness Area is already well established for non-motorized recreation, with lakes and mountainous terrain similar to the proposed Lakes Basin closure area, and is more than sufficient to provide non-motorized recreationist opportunities for quiet enjoyment, and animals a haven for a more natural and undisturbed habitat.

2. The Plumas County Sheriff's Department communicated to us their strong opposition (through a public Forest Advisory Committee meeting) to the proposed closure of the 4,020 acres in the Lakes Basin area. The Board supports the Sheriff's position, as follows:

   - There is already a large area (34,850 acres) designated as wilderness in Plumas NF that is closed to motorized travel of any sort, including OSV. The Bucks Lake Wilderness Area has several lakes and scenic areas similar in experience to the Lakes Basin area being proposed for closure.
   - It is the Board's understanding that the proposed closure effectively cuts off a popular cross country OSV "loop" from the Gold Lake Road staging area through the proposed closure area to the next valley to the west and back around to return to the staging area.
   - The Sheriff believes that there will be more user conflicts if the area is closed, due to non-compliance issues, whereas they have experienced no OSV issues in that area in the past.
   - Since funding for OSV enforcement is provided by the State Parks, the funding would likely be reduced on a pro-rata basis for any reduction in OSV available acreage, which would negatively impact the Sheriff's ability to fund effective patrol of the entire area.
   - Any reduced activity in one area will undoubtedly result in increased activity, and possibly more impact, on other OSV areas in the locale.
   - OSV activities have a measurable economic impact on the local area, and the sport is embraced and supported by the local towns and general population. People come to this area from Reno, from the Valley and from other areas outside of Plumas County. Tourism is key to the economic well-being of that area, and the Lakes Basin is the premier attraction.

Socioeconomic Considerations – Butte County

The Board appreciates inclusion of economic and social analysis within the DEIS. The section addressing socio-economics supports the Board's contention that Butte County's snowmobile owners have a vested interest in retaining as much recreational opportunity as possible, as the numbers in the table below demonstrate that snowmobile ownership within Butte has remained fairly level as opposed to other areas in the state. (see chart, next page)

Table 83. Annual OSV registration 2009 to 2014

Population	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	6 Year Change
Butte	1,093	1,054	1,057	991	1,014	955	0.25%
Lassen	394	364	352	322	315	279	-12.63%
Nevada	1,037	1,066	1,023	1,020	1,041	1,030	-29.19%
Plumas	1,236	1,180	1,111	1,025	1,022	920	-0.68%
Sierra	223	220	205	208	207	192	-25.57%
Analysis Area	5,992	5,894	5,759	5,578	5,612	5,390	
Annual Change		**-1.64%**	**-2.29%**	**-3.14%**	**0.61%**	**-3.96%**	**-10.05%**
California Residents	18,542	17,982	17,776	16,956	16,929	16,189	
Annual Change		**-3.02%**	**-1.15%**	**-4.61%**	**-0.16%**	**-4.37%**	**-12.69%**
Out of State Residents	260	242	235	244	215	197	
Annual Change		**-6.92%**	**-2.89%**	**3.83%**	**-11.89%**	**-8.37%**	**-24.23%**
Total	18,802	18,224	18,011	17,200	17,144	16,386	
Annual Change		**-3.07%**	**-1.17%**	**-4.50%**	**-0.33%**	**-4.42%**	**-12.85%**

Conclusion

In summary, the Butte County Board of Supervisors believes that OSV opportunities in the Plumas National Forest are very important to winter outdoor recreation, the industries and business supported by recreationists, and the economy of the local areas where OSV travel is a popular winter sport. The Board strongly disagrees with proposed closure of areas currently open to OSV travel unless such closure is necessary for compelling safety or environmental reasons, or based on a broad survey of those individuals and communities affected by such a decision.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the OSV Revised DEIS and Modified Proposed Action, and look forward to your response and the opportunity to work more closely with you on developing alternatives as requested in this letter.

Respectfully,

Steve Lambert

Steve Lambert
Chair

CC: Board of Supervisors
Shari McCracken, Chief Administrative Officer
Casey Hatcher, Economic & Community Develop Manager
Butte County Forest Advisory Committee
Butte County Federal/State Land Use Coordinating Committee