

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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November 6, 2012

Kathryn D. Hardy, Forest Supervisor
Eldorado National Forest
100 Forni Road
Placerville, CA 95667

Subject: Travel Management SEIS

Dear Ms. Hardy:

The Board of Supervisors recognizes that Forest Service roads are integral to the overall road system in the County of El Dorado (County). As can be found from a review of the 1897 U.S. Geologic Survey topographic maps, the area managed by the USFS had many access routes even before the creation of the USFS; many of these were and are probably "Public Roads." As inferred by the connotation of "Public Roads" there is a duty of public agencies such as the USFS and the County to protect the rights of the public to use such roads and to maintain such roads in a usable condition and in such a fashion as to be environmentally sensitive. As such, the Board of Supervisors desires to facilitate cooperation with all agencies and user groups, with the goal of developing and overarching policy for travel management. The Board believes that the routes designations included in the Proposed Action are a good beginning.


The United States Forest Service (USFS) manages approximately 55% of the land in the County. The County has historically relied on these lands for timber production which substantially funded County operations. With the decline of timber production, the County has increasingly relied on the subsidiary benefits of forest roads. These benefits include access to property sold by the U.S. Government sold to create revenue to the government, and perhaps most importantly, the economic stimulus as a result of recreation on forest lands.

As indicated in the 2008 Public Wheeled Motorized Travel Management Final Environmental Impact Statement, tourism and travel expenditures are a vital component of the local economy. It has been estimated that vehicular recreation in the Eldorado National Forest produces a net positive economic benefit in excess of \$2 million per year to the County economy due to ancillary sales related to accommodations, food, retail, and transportation costs. Travel-generated employment represents nearly nine percent of total employment within the County. We encourage the USFS to carefully consider alternatives which appropriately balance the critical linkage between our environment and economy.

Public safety is also a critical priority. Alternatives considered should carefully explore the welfare of users and emergency responders that could potentially be jeopardized from the interruption of the loop system in forest roads. Sound planning includes multiple ingress and egress points, and public safety should remain a preeminent concern. Along these lines we encourage the USFS to directly notify owners of private property in and around the Eldorado National Forest of this opportunity to participate in the route designation process.

We support the Forest Service proceeding with the environmental analysis of the October 11, 2012 document, and we will comment on the environmental analysis. The review being undertaken should examine the characteristics and values described above. Perhaps the parties can work with the designation of these routes included in the revised Proposed Action for the Travel Management SEIS dated October 9, 2012 and apply the above principles to come up with some agreed outcome rather than continuing to battle in court.

Sincerely,
County of El Dorado



John R. Knight, Chair
Board of Supervisors
County of El Dorado