

County of Lassen
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

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MEMORANDUM

October 31, 2017

TO: Board of Supervisors
Agenda Date: November 14, 2017

FROM: Richard Egan, County Administrative Officer *ME*

RE: Lassen National Forest Over-Snow Vehicle Use

RECOMMENDED ACTION: That the Board: Approve letter and authorize the Chairman to sign

PRIOR BOARD ACTION: By a letter of March 10, 2015, the Board had submitted comments requesting the Lassen National Forest to fully consider the Board's comments supporting of Over-Snow Vehicle Use on public lands managed by the Lassen National Forest. The Board's comments were:

- Preserving and improving public access to federally managed land is an essential component of the Lassen County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.
- Ensure that the draft Environmental Impact Statement considers management decisions that are permissive of Over-Snow Vehicle users gaining access to federally managed land OSV trails and off-trail areas under all conditions, including when no or limited snow-conditions exist at staging areas and trailheads.
- Fully incorporating technical guidance and operational expertise from OSV users and OSV user groups into the OSV Travel Management rule is essential and appropriate for developing practical and manageable policy.

DISCUSSION: The Lassen National Forest has prepared and released a revised draft environmental impact statement (RDEIS) for public comment. The RDEIS supports OSV

use on public lands managed by the LNF. The RDEIS contains a range of project actions/alternatives. RDEIS project Alternative 4 is believed to be the Alternative that is most consistent with the Board's comments of March 10, 2015. A letter in support of Alternative 4 is attached to this memorandum and for the Board's consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT: Unknown potential revenue impact to the General Fund. Please know that the RDEIS discussion for economic contributions, page 242, states that "Snowmobilers spend more than most other recreation visitors (White and Stynes 2010)... Snow mobiles spend nearly twice what an average recreation user spends on their trip."

ALTERNATIVES: The deadline to submit comments is November 19, 2017.

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November 14, 2017

Christopher O'Brien
Econosystems Staff Officer
on behalf of David Hays, Forest Supervisor
Lassen National Forest
2550 Riverside Drive
Susanville, CA 96130

Dear Mr. O'Brien:

On behalf of the Lassen County Board of Supervisors, the purpose of this letter is to submit our recommendation and comments for your immediate action on the Lassen National Forest (LNF) Over-Snow Vehicle (OSV) Use Designation Revised Environmental Impact Study (RDEIS).

We are satisfied with the information and comparative analysis contained in the REIS for each alternative considered in detail. We are also satisfied with the amount of public engagement and involvement.

We respectfully request that the Lassen National Forest Supervisor select Alternative 4 to be the LNF's final decision and action to designate national forest snow trails and areas on national forest land for public over-snow vehicle use.

We do not support Alternatives 2, 3, and 5 because the RDEIS analysis indicates that those alternatives will each greatly lessen and limit public OSV access.

We support Alternative 4 primarily because we believe that it provides policy direction that is consistent with our local policy and plans, the Lassen County Comprehensive Economic Strategy and Lassen County General Plan. Alternative 4 is the best action for the Lassen National Forest to take to support the tourism-based portions of the local economy.

We believe that Alternative 4 can best accomplish the purpose and need of the proposed action to designate national forest snow trails and areas on national forest land for public over-snow vehicle (OSV) use – for the benefit and enjoyment for all visitors to this public resource.

As you are well aware, Alternative 4 retains the federal government's enforcement authority to manage effectively and safely public OSV use in balance with other users while protecting the landscape and public resources. It also continues to not limit on-the-ground and local management of the resource by the Lassen National Forest – including applying federal policy allowing for or prohibiting wheeled motorized vehicle crossings and access, where and when appropriate and feasible, on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

We believe that Alternatives 2, 3, and 5 are not consistent with local plans, the Lassen County Economic Development Strategy and the Lassen County General Plan. The RDEIR should identify that fact and that those plans provide policy direction in support of our rural communities and the tourism-based part of the local economy.

Please highlight in the final EIS that one of the County's greatest asset is public access to outdoor recreation and trails on public lands. The County's General Plan asks for the multiple use of public lands in ways that provide for the effective management and protection of natural resources for the public while optimizing the continuing contribution and support of public resources to the economy, lifestyle, and traditions of County residents. We believe that Alternative 4 is consistent with that statement. In addition, unlike Alternatives 2, 3 and 5, we believe that Alternative 4 will not lessen the county's principal economic strategy to make Lassen County one of our Nation's top destinations for community living and outdoor recreation.

In closing, in support of Alternative 4, we quote the REIS, page 123:

"There are no other known conflicts between OSV use and other uses on National Forest System land or neighboring Federal land, no known conflicts among classes of OSVs, and no known areas where [OSV] use is adversely affecting cultural, tribal, or historic resources [emphasis added] (USDA Forest Service 2014)."

Sincerely,

AARON ALBAUGH, Chairman
Lassen County Board of Supervisors

CC: Representative Doug LaMalfa
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Kamala D. Harris