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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### **Cleghorn to Cactus Off-Highway Vehicle Trail San Bernardino National Forest, San Bernardino County, California; Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement/ Environmental Impact Report**

**SUMMARY:** The San Bernardino National Forest will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in conjunction with California Department of Parks and Recreation on a proposal to complete sections of the off-highway vehicle (OHV) trail system and address issues related to OHV use which have come forward since the Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) was approved on January 27, 1989. The LRMP Record of Decision (ROD) calls for construction of twelve miles of OHV trail per year with a goal of 387 miles of designated OHV trail.

This proposal will continue to implement the direction from the LRMP to develop an integrated OHV trail system of long distance travel opportunities and loop trails along with associated recreational facilities. It will evaluate a range of alternatives, including no action. This EIS and ROD will amend the LRMP and establish additional direction for the Forest's OHV program. This analysis will tier to the LRMP Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

**DATES:** Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing by October 6, 1995.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Direct questions about the proposed action and preparation of the EIS to John Wambaugh, Off-Highway Vehicle Program Manager, San Bernardino National Forest, 1824 S. Commercenter Circle, San Bernardino, CA 92408-3430 or call (909) 884-6634, ext 3146.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Forest has been assessing the affects of constructing two separate OHV trails since March 1994. These proposals were known as; the Cleghorn Ridge-Hwy 138 Tunnel and Cactus-Rattlesnake OHV Trails. The Forest has previously conducted public meetings and field trips to discuss the nature and scope of the projects when they were being analyzed as separate environmental assessments (EA's). The previous scoping process showed that it would be best to combine the two proposals to better evaluate the cumulative effects. An EIS was determined to be necessary because of the potential of not being able to mitigate all effects to a level of non-significance. In response to public interest in the overall scope of the Forest's OHV program, this proposal will include additional areas of analysis for trail linkages and trail loops on the Arrowhead, Big Bear, and Cajon Ranger Districts. In addition to these proposed trails, development of one staging area is proposed on the Cajon Ranger District.

The completion of these trail segments and staging area will provide the opportunity for longer trail riding by connecting isolated segments of the Forest's OHV trail system. The development of a well planned and designed trail system will improve the Forest's ability to manage OHV use, protect resources, minimize conflicts with other Forest uses, and enhance the recreational opportunity for OHV enthusiasts.

**DECISION TO BE MADE:** To determine if and where additional trail segments should be constructed and additional roads designated for the purpose of providing an integrated OHV trail system for vehicles 50" and under in width. A determination will also be made as to whether and where to construct a staging area and associated recreation facilities.

**SCOPING PROCESS:** Public scoping will be initiated with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**. Letters inviting suggestions or comments will be sent to individuals and groups on the Forest's mailing list that are interested in OHV activities and its relation to Forest management. Additional scoping will be conducted by providing written notice to local newspapers. Open houses are scheduled for September 8, 9, 15, and 16, 1995, to provide more

detailed information about the proposal and to allow the public to ask questions.

**PRELIMINARY ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES:** Preliminary issues that have been identified are:

- effects of OHV use on threatened and endangered animal species, specifically the California spotted owl and the southern bald eagle
- cumulative effects of linking OHV trails together
- effects of OHV use adjacent to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail
- effects of OHV use on other recreational uses of the Forest
- potential impacts to threatened, endangered, and sensitive, plant species
- impacts to archeological resources
- effects of motorized use in riparian areas

Preliminary alternatives that have been developed are:

1. No Action. All OHV trail designations would be retained in their current status. New OHV trails would not be constructed. Opportunities to designate roads for OHV use or to close roads that present resource concerns would not be implemented. Temporary designations would remain temporary. Resource protection measures associated with the designated OHV trail system and closure of unauthorized trails adjacent to the designated system would continue at its present level. There are currently 284 miles of Forest roads and trails designated of OHV use.

2. Establish Designated Routes Without New Construction. This alternative would designate 37 miles of Maintenance Level (ML) II roads, 16 miles of ML III roads, and 10 miles of State Highway or County roads, in addition to the 284 miles currently designated for a total of 347 miles.

3. Establish Designated Routes Within "Potential Tie" Planning Areas as identified in the LRMP. This alternative proposes utilizing the current system mileage of 284 miles, plus construction of 11 miles of new 50" wide trail, designation of 14 miles of ML II roads, designation of 10 miles of ML III roads, designate one-half mile of State Highway or County road, designate 14 miles of roads that are not recognized as part of the Forest's road inventory, and designate 7 miles of trails that are currently not recognized as part of the Forest's trail inventory for a total of 340.5 miles. An OHV staging area site

will be analyzed for development on the Cajon Ranger District.

4. Establish Designated Routes outside of the "Potential Tie" planning areas identified in the LRMP. Linkages are within areas designated for motorized use in the LRMP. Use of lands other than Federal ownership is considered to complete trail linkages. This alternative proposes utilizing the current system mileage of 284 miles, plus construction of 2 miles of new 50" wide trail, designation of 11 miles of ML II roads, designation of 12 miles of ML III roads, designate 18 miles of roads that are not recognized as part of the Forest's road inventory, designate 7 miles of trails that are currently not recognized as part of the Forest's trail inventory, incorporates 3 miles of trail that are under other ownership, and remove 13 miles of OHV road from the designated trail system. This alternative proposes a total of 324 miles. An OHV staging area site will be analyzed for development on the Cajon Ranger District.

5. Establish Designated Routes by using areas within and outside of the "Potential Tie" planning areas identified in the LRMP to form trail loops. Linkages are within areas designated for motorized use in LRMP. Use of lands other than Federal ownership is considered to complete trail linkages. This alternative proposes utilizing the current system mileage of 284 miles, plus construction of 12 miles of new 50" wide trail, designation of 28 miles of ML II roads, designation of 10 miles of ML III roads, designate 18 miles of roads that are not recognized as part of the Forest's road inventory, designate 7 miles of trails that are currently not recognized as part of the Forest's trail inventory, and incorporate 3 miles of trail that are on non-Federal ownership for a total of 362 miles. An OHV staging area site will be analyzed for development on the Cajon Ranger District.

**LEAD AGENCY:** The lead agency for this proposal is the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.

**PERMITS OR LICENSES REQUIRED FOR IMPLEMENTATION:** Encroachment permits from the California Department of Transportation will need to be obtained to cross State Highway 18 near Cactus Flats and to construct two tunnel underpasses on State Highway 138 if these proposals are implemented.

If an alternative with trail linkage across state or private lands in or adjacent to the Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area is selected, additional agreements, easements, and right-of-

ways will be needed from these agencies.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F. 2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings it is important those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 45 day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the final environmental impact statement. To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft supplemental environmental impact statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the draft environmental impact statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3.

The Draft EIS is expected to be available for public review by January 1996. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of its availability in the **Federal Register**. The final environmental impact statement is expected to be available about March 1996.

**COMMENT PERIOD CONCERNING THIS NOTICE:** Comments concerning the scope of analysis of the draft EIS/EIR must be received by October 6, 1995. Submit written comments and suggestions

concerning the scope of the analysis for the Cleghorn to Cactus OHV Trail proposal to Gene Zimmerman, Forest Supervisor, San Bernardino National Forest, 1824 S. Commercercircle Circle, San Bernardino, CA 92408-3430.

Dated: August 23, 1995.

**Gene Zimmerman,**

*Forest Supervisor.*

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## Rural Utilities Service

### Meeting on Proposed Electric Distribution Loan Contract

**AGENCY:** Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) will be meeting with representatives of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), at their request, to answer questions and discuss comments by them on the proposed model form of loan contract published in the **Federal Register** on July 18, 1995 at 60 FR 36904.

**DATES:** The meeting will be held on September 21, 1995, starting at 9 a.m. eastern time, and will end no later than 1 p.m.

**ADDRESSES:** The meeting will be held in Room 1255, South Building, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 14th and Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Charles R. Miller, Assistant to the Administrator for Policy Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, 14th and Independence Ave., SW., Ag Box 1560, Washington, DC 20250-1500. Telephone: (202) 720-0424.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The meeting will be an informal work session to discuss questions and comments from NRECA representatives regarding the overall structure and specific provisions of the proposed electric distribution loan contract and related regulations. Emphasis will be mainly on technical discussions of individual issues. In addition to the NRECA and government representatives, the meeting room will accommodate 15 observers, who will be allowed entry to the room on a first-come first-served basis.

**Authority:** 7 U.S.C. 901 *et seq.*