

Proposals to Improve Connectivity for Non-Street-Legal Vehicles and Drivers

During public involvement, OHV users expressed a desire for improved connectivity for OHV travel (non-street-legal vehicles or drivers). More specifically the need is for improved connectivity between existing, OHV-legal roads and/or OHV trails that are currently connected only by roads that are not currently legal for use by OHV. Within our existing OHV recreation management areas, the need for improved connectivity is primarily for the purpose of enhancing OHV riding quality and opportunity. In other areas of the Forest, the need is primarily for OHV hunter convenience and quality of experience.

In all, stakeholders and FS managers identified 12 possible opportunities to address the identified needs and desires for improved OHV connectivity. In November 2006, we presented seven of those as tentatively feasible and ready for consideration. They were presented at public workshops and posted on the Mendocino National Forest web site. Based upon public comments and further consideration of management concerns, two of the tentative proposals have been withdrawn from active consideration (Hammerhorn Lake to Pacific Crest OHV Hunting Connectivity and Pacific Crest OHV Hunting Connectivity). We are now proceeding with public scoping for the environmental analysis of the remaining five proposals, which are described below.

In each of the proposals that follow, the Forest Service is proposing to revise the current road management objectives for one or more forest roads. In each of the proposals, the road management objective for at least one road would be revised from maintenance level 3 (open to the public, maintained suitable for passenger cars) to level 2 (open to the public, roughly graded, suitable for high clearance vehicles, unsuitable for passenger cars). One proposal would also add a user-created trail to the Forest's OHV trail system.

Changing of the road management objective would not in itself authorize OHV use on these roads. A mixed-use designation would also be required in order to allow use by both street-legal and non-street-legal vehicles and drivers. So, the Forest Service is also proposing to designate these roads for mixed-use.

Mixed-use designation would occur at some future point, after 1) the actual condition of the road becomes consistent with the definition of a maintenance level 2 road; 2) a qualified engineer conducts a mixed-use analysis; and 3) the Forest Supervisor designates the route for mixed use. All of the proposals would allow the maintenance level 3 roads to 'evolve' into a level 2 condition under the lower maintenance regime. That is, no investment would be made to immediately convert a road's condition from level 3 to level 2. This means that designation to allow mixed-use would be delayed for one, two or more years after the road management objective is changed. The time lag would depend on each road's existing condition and other design and location factors.

In addition to improving connectivity, these actions would also reduce the maintenance workload on the maintenance level 3 roads. A road that is managed under a maintenance level 2 objective is maintained primarily for safety and resource protection. This is less costly than maintaining for passenger car use. There would be no change in maintenance workload on the one road that is proposed to be changed from maintenance level 1 to level 2 – it has been open to public use and maintained at level 2 since the mid-1980's. Addition of the user-created trail would add to the OHV trail maintenance workload on Upper Lake Ranger District.

1. Wolf-Trough-Letts OHV Riding Connectivity

Grindstone Ranger District, Mendocino National Forest

Colusa County, California

Proposed Action

The Forest Service is proposing to revise the current road management objectives for three forest roads. The road management objective would be revised from maintenance level 3 to level 2 for segments of M5 and M10 in the Letts / Trough Springs Ridge area. This would include about 11.6 miles of M5 from the junction with trail 85330 to about 0.5 mile west of the junction with 16N17, and about 9.1 miles of M10 from the junction with 17N02 to the junction with 17N87 (see connectivity map package). We are also proposing to designate these roads for mixed use.

This proposal no longer includes revising the road management objective on 16N25 from maintenance level 1 (closed to public use) to level 2, as was described in the tentative November proposal. This is because further investigation determined the road management objective to be maintenance level 2. The mistake was due to an error in the database that resulted in the GIS map depicting the road as closed.

Purpose and Need for Action

This area encompasses the greater part of the Stonyford OHV Area. M5 is key to providing OHV connectivity between the Wolf Creek and Fouts Springs staging areas and the bulk of the OHV trail system. M5 is also a part of the Statewide OHV Corridor. M10 is needed to provide OHV connectivity for this area westward toward the Upper Lake OHV Area trail system.

The proposed action would improve connectivity and loop opportunities for non-street-legal vehicles and drivers by making it legal for them to travel on M5 and M10 between the several OHV trails and maintenance level 2 roads that connect with them in this area.

This proposal implements the following Forest Plan direction:

- It contributes to the following Forest Goal:
 - Recreation – Provide a full range of developed and dispersed recreation opportunities at levels meeting projected demand and within the physical limits and resource capabilities of the Forest. [Forest Plan, p. IV- 3]
- It contributes to the following Desired Condition:
 - Recreation – ...Off-highway-vehicle use will be on designated routes with the major concentration of use in the southern portions of the Forest... [Forest Plan, p. IV- 6]

2. Upper Deer Valley Road OHV Riding Connectivity

Upper Lake Ranger District, Mendocino National Forest

Lake County, California

Proposed Action

The Forest Service is proposing to revise the current road management objective from maintenance level 3 to level 2 for 16N01 southeast of Deer Valley Campground. The road management objective would be revised from maintenance level 3 to level 2 for the segment from its junction with 16N20 to about .75 mile north of its junction with 16N30 (see connectivity map package). We are also proposing to designate this segment for mixed use. Total length of the segment is about 6.1 miles, which is shorter than the length of the tentative proposal. The reasons for the change are explained below.

This proposal omits a segment of 16N01 between 16N20 and the junction with M1 that was included in the tentative proposal. This change was made because of a need to maintain this segment of 16N01 at level 3 for visitor access to Deer Valley Campground from M1.

This proposal also includes an additional ~0.8 mile segment at the southeast end that was not included in the tentative proposal. This addition was made because this short segment would have been left as an isolated stretch of maintenance level 3 that would connect only to maintenance level 2 roads. It does not make sense to maintain a piece of road for passenger cars that does not connect to other roads that are suitable for them.

We are also proposing to designate about 1.3 mile of connecting trail between trail 85417 and 85412 at its junction with road 17N43/trail 85413. This part of the proposal was added in response to a stakeholder's suggestion.

Purpose and Need for Action

This segment of 16N01 would enhance connectivity within the southeastern portion of the Upper Lake OHV Area, and between the Upper Lake and Stonyford OHV Areas. The trail addition would increase loop opportunities.

This proposal implements the following Forest Plan direction:

- It contributes to the following Forest Goal:
 - Recreation – Provide a full range of developed and dispersed recreation opportunities at levels meeting projected demand and within the physical limits and resource capabilities of the Forest.
- It contributes to the following Desired Condition:
 - Recreation – ...Off-highway-vehicle use will be on designated routes with the major concentration of use in the southern portions of the Forest... [Forest Plan, p. IV- 6]

3. Hull Mt. to Bald Mt OHV Hunting Connectivity

**Upper Lake Ranger District, Mendocino National Forest
Lake & Mendocino Counties, California**

Proposed Action

The Forest Service is proposing to revise the current road management objective from maintenance level 3 to level 2 for a segment of M1 from its junction with M61 at Bald Mt to its junction with M6 at Cabbage Patch (see connectivity map package). We are also proposing to designate this segment for mixed use. Total length of the segment is about 15.3 miles.

Purpose and Need for Action

Currently hunters that use OHVs cannot legally use this segment of M1 to drive between the maintenance level 2 roads that connect to it. This imposes the inconvenience of having to transport their OHVs between the level 2 roads with a street-legal vehicle in order to comply with traffic law. This proposal would improve OHV connectivity and rider convenience within and between popular deer hunting areas in this vicinity.

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 - Recreation – ...Off-highway-vehicle use will be on designated routes with the major concentration of use in the southern portions of the Forest... [Forest Plan, p. IV- 6]

4. Ivory Mill Saddle to Snow Mt OHV Hunting Connectivity

**Grindstone Ranger District, Mendocino National Forest
Glenn County, California**

Proposed Action

The Forest Service is proposing to revise the current road management objective from maintenance level 3 to level 2 for a segment of M3 from Ivory Mill Saddle to near West Crockett trailhead (see connectivity map package). We are also proposing to designate this segment for mixed use. Total length of the segment is about 17.5 miles.

Purpose and Need for Action

Currently hunters that use OHVs cannot legally use this segment of M3 to drive between the maintenance level 2 roads that connect to it. This imposes the inconvenience of having to transport their OHVs between the level 2 roads with a street-legal vehicle in order to comply with traffic law. This proposal would improve OHV connectivity and rider convenience within and between popular hunting areas in this vicinity.

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 - Recreation – ...Off-highway-vehicle use will be on designated routes with the major concentration of use in the southern portions of the Forest... [Forest Plan, p. IV- 6]

5. Long Ridge OHV Corridor Connector

**Upper Lake Ranger District, Mendocino National Forest
Lake County, California**

Proposed Action

The Forest Service is proposing to revise the current road management objective from maintenance level 3 to level 2 for 17N16, along its entire length, about 5.5 miles. We are also proposing to designate it for mixed use.

Purpose and Need for Action

17N16 is already operated as a maintenance level 2 road with mixed use, and has been since the mid-1980's. This road provides a key connection between Upper Lake and Stonyford OHV Management Areas, and is part of the Statewide OHV Corridor. Additionally, revising the road management objective for would reflect more accurately how it has been operated for the past 20+ years.

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 - Recreation – ...Off-highway-vehicle use will be on designated routes with the major concentration of use in the southern portions of the Forest... [Forest Plan, p. IV- 6]