

Cherry Borrow Toilet (14417) Environmental Assessment

Stanislaus National Forest
Groveland Ranger District
Tuolumne County, CA

Introduction

The Forest Service prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This EA discloses the direct, indirect and cumulative environmental impacts that would result from the proposed action and alternatives. Additional documentation, including more detailed analyses of project-area resources, may be found in the project planning record located at the Groveland Ranger District Office.

Purpose and Need for Action

The Cherry Borrow camping area is immediately below the Cherry Reservoir Dam, adjacent to Cherry Creek. This area is a very popular camping spot for users of Cherry Reservoir. The area provides an overflow camping location from the Cherry Valley Campground. Some users of the area prefer to camp at this location seeking a different recreational experience that is not offered at the Cherry Valley Campground. Since there are no toilets within this area human waste and toilet paper is often found along the stream bank and within the camping area. Users of this area are digging shallow “cat” holes to deposit human waste and toilet paper; some of these holes are less than 100 feet from Cherry Creek. This has the possibility of severally degrading the water quality of Cherry Creek and is a public health concern.

The purpose of this project is to install a single vault Sweet Smelling Toilet (SST) at this location. The action is needed, because of the human waste that is being deposited along the banks of Cherry Creek possible degrading the quality of that stream. The goal of this project is to provide the public with a SST facility to prevent deposit of human waste within the Cherry Borrow site and near Cherry Creek. This action helps move the project area towards desired conditions described in the Forest Plan.

Proposed Action

The Forest Service proposes to construct one double vault Sweet Smelling Toilet (SST) at the Cherry Borrow camping area approximately 230 feet from Cherry Creek (see Figure 1). Construction of the SST includes clearing a small area of existing light vegetation along with a limited amount of excavation to install the SST and prepare the area for the SST foundation.

Decision Framework

The Groveland District Ranger is the Responsible Official for this project. Given the purpose and need, the Responsible Official reviews the proposed action and the other alternatives in order to decide whether or not the SST will be installed as described in the Proposed Action.

Public Involvement

The Forest Service first listed the Cherry Borrow Toilet in the January 2006 issue of the Stanislaus National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA). The Forest distributes the SOPA to about 160 parties and it is available on the internet [<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/stanislaus/projects/sopa>]. On June 5, 2008 the Forest Service sent a scoping letter to individuals interested in this project.

Alternatives

This section describes the alternatives considered for the Cherry Borrow Toilet project. It presents the alternatives in comparative form, sharply defining the differences between each alternative and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decision maker and the public.

Alternative 1 (No Action)

Under Alternative 1 (No Action), current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area and the SST would not be installed.

Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)

Under Alternative 2 (Proposed Action) the Forest Service would construct a double vault SST at the Cherry Borrow camping area approximately 230 feet from Cherry Creek. Construction of the SST includes clearing a small area of existing light vegetation along with a limited amount of excavation to install the SST and prepare the area for the SST foundation.

The SST structure would be built out of a single concrete mold. This design reduces the effects of vandalism and creates an easier structure to clean. The structure is also fire resistant, and therefore will reduce the risk of losing this SST in a fire. This structure would be “forest” colored and would blend in with the surrounding environment.

Mitigation Measures

In response to public comments on this proposal, the Forest Service developed the following management requirement to reduce the likelihood of introducing new infestations of noxious weeds into the project area.

1. All off-road heavy equipment, clothing, particularly footwear, and other equipment, including the transport vehicle should be free of soil, mud (wet or dried), seeds, vegetative matter or other debris that could contain seeds in order to prevent new infestations of noxious weeds in the project area. Dust or very light dirt which would not contain weed seed is not a concern. This management requirement addresses FSM 2081.2(1): Prevent the introduction of new invaders.

Environmental Consequences

This section summarizes the physical, biological, social and economic environments of the affected project area and the potential changes to those environments due to implementation of the alternatives.

Alternative 1 (No Action)

Under this alternative the existing conditions of improperly disposed of human waste would continue. Campers would continue to dispose of human waste near Cherry Creek with the possibility of severely degrading the water quality of Cherry Creek.

Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)

Under this alternative the environmental consequences would be limited to removal of some light vegetation and excavation to install the SST. However, this alternative greatly reduces the risk of water quality degradation in Cherry Creek. This alternative also reduces the public health and safety concern of campers improperly disposing human waste.

Consultation and Coordination

The Forest Service consulted the following individuals, Federal, State, and local agencies, tribes and non-Forest Service persons during the development of this EA.

ID Team Members

Spencer Bleadorn, Recreation Specialist
 Roy Bridgman, Groveland District Biologist
 Jennie Hass, Groveland District Botanist
 Michael Keown, Groveland District Archaeologist
 Tracy Weddle, Groveland District Hydrologist
 Jason Jimenez, Groveland District Soil Scientist

Federal, State and Local Agencies

City and County of San Francisco

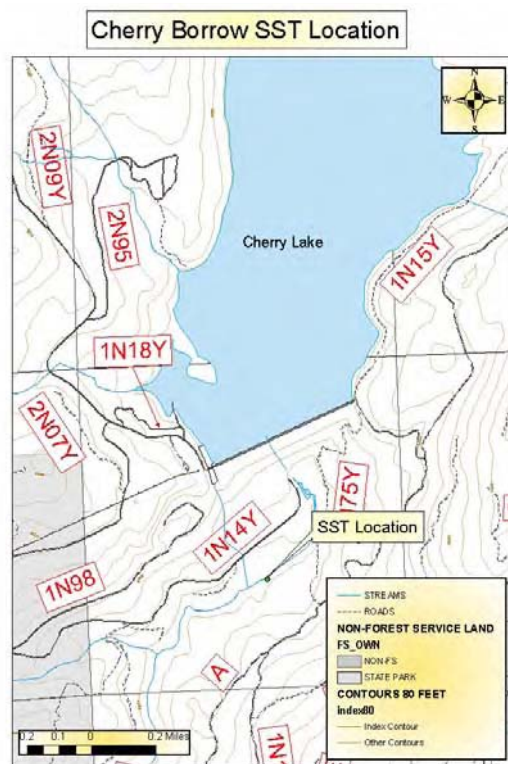


Figure 1 Location Map

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