

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service
Eldorado National Forest
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Eldorado National Forest Route Designation Project Starts

Placerville, CA.... Traveling the back roads and trails in the Eldorado National Forest on an Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) has been a part of forest recreation for years. By the year 2008, the USDA Forest Service, with the assistance of interested publics, intends to have a mapped designated route system in place so visitors will know where to go to have an enjoyable time on their OHVs and other motorized vehicles in the Eldorado National Forest.

This week, the Forest Service is starting the three-year public process which will lead to a designated route system. The system will be created out of routes that currently exist in the national forest. Proposed new route construction will not be considered during this process.

“We have a special opportunity to work as a community of interested people to propose a designated route system for the years ahead,” said Eldorado National Forest Supervisor John Berry. “Over the years, some of the existing routes have appeared on official maps, but a significant number of routes have been created by visitors. Once you look at the recently completed draft inventory maps you’ll see what I mean.”

Berry says that a five step planning process will be followed to arrive at a system of designated routes. The first step is to inventory all of the routes that currently exist in the Forest. Next, the routes that are not causing environmental damage will continue to be open to travel; however, travel off these routes will be prohibited. In step three, the numerous remaining routes will then be reviewed and discussed by interested publics and the Forest Service. A proposed designated route system will be developed in the third step, through various public involvement activities. The Forest Service will then initiate an environmental analysis to examine environmental impacts of the proposed system. A decision will be made, and in the final step, a legal order will be signed in 2008, and the system will be in place.

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For the past two years, Forest Service crews have mapped routes throughout the Eldorado National Forest. Draft inventory maps are now available for public review on the Internet at www.fs.fed.us/r5/eldorado/projects/route/. These maps, instructions on how to review and comment on the inventory, and other route designation information are posted on the website.

“The route inventory is the starting point,” said Berry. “We want to begin with a complete inventory. Visitors who travel the Forest are encouraged to review the maps and make sure their favorite routes are included in the inventory. It would be helpful if people take what’s left of spring and into the summer to look at the maps, visit the Forest, and let us know if we included your routes.”

Only routes on Eldorado National Forest land where the Forest Service has right-of-ways will be considered for future designation, says Berry. Routes that are already designated will not need to be re-designated.

The Forest Service is hosting an open house in Folsom on May 14 at the Folsom Community Center, 52 Natomas Street, from 9AM to 3 PM. The purpose of the open house is to meet interested publics, introduce the planning process, answer questions, and to view maps of the entire Forest inventory. People are invited to drop-in at any time during the meeting hours. The first presentation about the designation process will start at 9 AM and will be repeated at 11 AM and 1 PM. Participants are encouraged to review information on the website before the coming to the open house.

Open houses are also planned in Jackson for people primarily interested in routes on the Amador Ranger District (north and south of Highway 88) and in Georgetown for routes on the Georgetown Ranger District (in the vicinity of Georgetown). The locations and dates will be announced soon.

Anyone who desires to be on a route designation mailing list should contact the Route Designation Coordinator; Eldorado National Forest; 100 Forni Road, Placerville, California 95667. Include your name, mailing address, and e-mail.