

**PROPOSAL FOR THE
EAST SHORE BEACHES TRAIL ACCESS AND
TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN PROJECT**

USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
Carson City and Washoe Counties, of Nevada

PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION

The East Shore Beaches Trail Access and Travel Management Plan (ATM) covers the area extending from Spooner Summit north to Chimney Beach and from the water's edge to Nevada State Park lands (see attached map). This entire project is in Nevada and is on National Forest System land within the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU). The project is in both the East Shore Beaches and Marlette Management Areas and, while the area surveyed also includes portions of Douglas County, project work will only occur in parts of two counties: Carson City and Washoe.

PURPOSE AND NEED

There is a need as follows:

The LTBMU 2002 water quality risk analysis effort developed a GIS trail data base evaluating each Basin trail for water quality and erosion threat. This data revealed a need to develop an integrated and efficient system of trails and access points to meet user needs while better protecting the East Shore Beach Area's environment. The Area's popularity has continued to increase and so has the need for sustainable trails to access this dispersed recreation area. Currently there is a web of system and user created trails which are eroding and contributing sediment into Lake Tahoe.

Decommissioning (closing and rehabilitation) or rebuild of non-system or unsustainable trails to Forest Service standards would provide important water quality improvements. Additionally, decommissioning trails within sensitive ecosystem areas and constructing new trails in areas of higher capability would minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources. This project would correct many soil erosion, SEZ disturbance, and water quality degradation problems resulting from existing user-created trails and roads. New and redesigned trails would minimize impacts to SEZ and wildlife habitat, while not restricting movement of aquatic species. Stream crossings would be designed to facilitate natural hydrologic function and geomorphic processes. Careful trail design and location would, while accomplishing the above needs, also provide universal access opportunities and accommodate desirable attributes such as scenic vistas. Development of a trail system that is designed and located using the most up to date information and construction standards would improve the quality of the

recreational experience, improve recreation access, reduce impacts to resources, reduce future maintenance requirements, and preserve multiple use trail opportunities.

PROPOSED ACTION

The East Shore Beaches Trail Access and Travel Management Plan (East Shore Beaches ATM) proposes to redevelop the trail system within the project area. Approximately 1.6 miles of trail would be decommissioned (generally involves decompacting soil to 8" and mulching with native material), 2.2 miles of trail would be constructed (20 - 30" width and constructed to Forest Service Standards), and 3.5 miles of trail would be upgraded (generally involves soil stabilization, drainage features, stairs, and trail definition). All project work is on National Forest System Land.

The following is a list of specific actions (each action is marked on the attached map):

1. Realign user created trail 18E22.3 that connects Slaughterhouse Road 14N30 to the Skunk Harbor access road 15N67. Decommission user created trail 18E22.2 and 18E22.4 that cut the corners on the lower portion of the Skunk Harbor access road 15N67. Sign Skunk Harbor Road to encourage users to stay on the road.
2. Construct a new system trail to connect the 2nd parking area/turnout north of the Slaughterhouse Road gate on Hwy 28 to the Skunk Harbor access road 15N67. Decommission the three user created trails which drop straight off Hwy 28 to the Skunk Harbor access road 15N67.
3. Upgrade (adjust, rebuild, or realign to meet current Forest Service standards for gradient, drainage, tread, stability, signage, and sustainability) user created trails off Hwy 28 from Secret Cove to Whale Beach. Realign trail 18E27E. Only 1566 and 1566A will be open to bicycles.
4. Fence environmentally sensitive areas along trail 18E27 from Chimney Beach to Whale Beach. Only 1566 will be open to bicycles.
5. Realign trail 18E27A from the Secret Harbor parking lot down to the lake. Only 1566 will be open to bicycles.
6. Renovate Secret Harbor parking lot and vista to concentrate use and direct foot traffic onto system trails. Only 1566 will be open to bicycles.
7. Realign Chimney Beach Trail 18E27 from Hwy 28 to the beach and eliminate the crossing/bridge over Marlette Creek. Consult with Washoe Tribal representative during tread flagging and construction. Sign Archaeological sites with "Area Closed for Resource Protection", and fence where necessary. This area will be closed to bicycles.

8. Realign trail 18E19 just before the Nevada State Park Boundary. Retain the bicycle closure for this segment.
9. Convert the road from Hwy 28 to the beach at the north Thunderbird Lodge boundary into single track native surface trail. Remove the closed road from the Forest Service System. Decommission the short trail segments which fork out just before the beach.
10. Upgrade the upper section of non-system trail 18E27.4 that leads to Whale Beach. Decommission the lower section of trail which crosses Bliss Creek. Construct a new section of trail away from the creek to the beach. Only 1566 and 1566A will be open to bicycles.

DESIGN FEATURES

The project will include design features to mitigate environmental and resource impacts and to ensure consistency with the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (specific Plan features indicated by asterisk). Design features used will include:

Wildlife

- Trails will be located away from sensitive areas. *
- Trails will be designed to minimize use conflicts. *
- Kiosk signage will encourage pack in/pack out ethics. *
- Limited operating periods (LOP's) will be followed where identified by biological evaluation and biological analysis (BE/BA). *
- Trail in late seral (near to steady evolutionary state) habitats will be designed for minimum or no habitat fragmentation. *
- The Trail ATM will relocate some trail sections farther away from critical wildlife habitat. *
- Where possible, project construction will be coordinated with the Slaughterhouse fuels reduction project to reduce wildlife impacts. *
- Hazard trees will be identified and specialists will be consulted before trees are removed. The project will maintain as many existing large decadent trees and snags as possible during trail construction for use by wildlife.
- Stream crossings will be designed free of barriers for aquatic species. Drafting will be timed and designed to not negatively impact the natural environment. *
- Downed woody material encountered during trail construction will be retained within project areas that do not currently meet desired retention levels. *

Water

- Trails will be constructed to utilize high capability land and to maintain and preserve habitat. *
- Trails will be designed and located to preserve natural hydrologic processes. *
- Trails are being relocated from low capability to high capability land where ever possible. *

- The Trail ATM proposes to reduce potential to adversely affect water temperatures by locating trails away from riparian zones where ever possible and by protecting stream side vegetation. *
- Best Management Practices (BMP's) will be used in all project areas. *
- Trails will be redesigned and relocated to preserve or restore natural hill slope hydrologic process. There are several alternatives to avoid any crossings on Marlette creek. *
- This project will reduce disturbance to SEZs by closing trails in SEZs and relocating trails away from SEZs.
- The trail at Marlette Creek will be rerouted to eliminate upper creek crossing.

Visual and Cultural Resources

- Inspections by forest archaeologists will be conducted during implementation. *
- Signs will be placed in compliance with visual quality objectives (VQOs) and to prevent distraction of views. *
- Consultation will be conducted with the Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada.*

Recreation

- Trails will be constructed to match roadside parking. *
- New signage at existing trailheads will provide more visitor information. *
- Trailhead signage will be incorporated at key trailheads. *
- An interconnected trail system that meets current and future needs which will established.
- Trails will be designed to minimize use conflicts. *

Soils

- Trails will be designed to mitigate impacts to erosive soils and unstable areas. *
- Trails will be designed and constructed to USFS standards. *
- Soil function and organic matter will be restored in trail construction areas.
- Compacted trails that are to be decommissioned will be decompacted to 8" and mulched with native materials. In some areas organic matter will be incorporated into soils to improve soil productivity.

Protection

- A noxious weed risk assessment will be prepared. *
- All required and appropriate noxious weed procedures will be followed.
- Weed free practices will be used during project implementation.
- Follow up inspections for noxious weeds will be completed after construction.
- Trailhead signs will include information about noxious weeds and their spread. *
- Vegetative matter cleared during trail construction will be scattered to avoid fuel build up.

All trail created or adopted under this plan would be 20-30 inch natural surface tread, built to Forest Service standards for sustainable non-motorized multi-user (hiker, biker,

equestrian - although some trails will be closed to specific user types) dispersed recreation. Design and construction will be coordinated and supervised by Forest Service personnel, with construction accomplished by a variety of government and volunteer crews.

IMPLEMENTATION

Project implementation is planned to begin July 2008 with on ground trail layout and feature design. Funded major trail work is scheduled to begin in May 2009, with final completion not later than October 2011.

STATUS OF EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

The primary resource concerns driving this project are:

1. **Water Quality:** Water quality in both the Lake and the feeder streams can be affected through several methods. One is direct input of pollutants: engine products from boats and vehicles, and trash and organic pollutants from humans. A second is airborne pollutants, from inside or outside the basin. But far and away most critical in this area are those produced or transported by surface water runoff. The actions of this project are specifically designed (reduced gradients, grade reversals) and constructed (supported substructures, engineered turns, sustainable drainage crossings, proper outslope, corridor narrowing and shortcut discouragement) with the primary intent of reducing runoff into the feeder streams and the Lake. This will be accomplished through the use of best management practice features and construction techniques to minimize soil erosion through facilitating normal water flow through vegetated areas and into absorbing soils. These same techniques, of course, will also prevent or impede organic nutrients and non-natural pollutants from reaching the streams and the Lake.
2. **Soil Erosion:** Soil erosion has two main effects. First, it strips the soils, impeding proper vegetative growth: as such, it is a self-accelerating process. Second, it both provides and transports pollutants which contaminate the Lake and feeder streams. The principal effect of the measures listed above will be to minimize soil erosion and its subsidiary results.

In both these primary cases, this project will create positive impact. Better routed and built trails will significantly reduce erosion and runoff, and therefore, enhance water quality throughout the system. Since neither the capacity of the trail system nor the parking availability will be increased, additional usage, which might otherwise negate some of the positive effects, should be minimal.

Seven other “extraordinary circumstance” areas are mandated. In all cases, this project either improves the status in those areas, or those circumstances do not exist in this project area.

1. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species: Extensive surveys have been conducted, with some continuing. Sensitive species and habitat are being avoided to provide distance and protection from human affects. Trails reroutes, closures, and barriers have been included in the project to protect critical habitat. This project will reduce species and habitat effects relative to the current situation.
2. Flood plains, wetlands, and municipal watersheds: The trail and bridge through the primary flood plain, Marlette Creek, will be removed, the trail relocated to higher ground and the area rehabilitated. Other drainages will have improved approach routing and more sustainable crossing points where they cannot be avoided.
3. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas: No such areas exist in or near the project area.
4. Inventoried roadless areas: The project is not in or near an inventoried roadless area.
5. Research Natural Areas: There are no RNAs in or near the project area.
6. American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites: Coordination with the Washoe Tribe will continue throughout the project. Trails will be routed to further avoid sites. Barriers and signs will be placed where appropriate.
7. Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas: Surveys have been conducted. Trails are being routed to avoid any sites. Barriers and signs will be placed where appropriate.

DECISION FRAMEWORK

The NEPA document will be a Decision Memo (DM) based on the anticipated scope and complexity of this project. This project is consistent with the categories established by the Chief of the Forest Service in the Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Chapter 30, for categorical exclusions. The applicable category is: Section 31.2, Categories of Actions for which a Project File and Decision Memorandum are required. “1 – Construction and reconstruction of trails.”