

Summary Report

Forest Plan Revision Workshops September 29-30, 2008

Convened by:
U.S. Forest Service, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit

September 29, 2008
North Lake Tahoe, CA

September 30, 2008
South Lake Tahoe, CA

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INTRODUCTION – WORKSHOP PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION

This report summarizes the key outcomes from two public workshops convened by the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (LTBMU) in September 2008. The first workshop was held on September 29th in North Lake Tahoe (Kings Beach), CA, and the second was held on September 30th in South Lake Tahoe, CA.

Workshop Goals and Intended Outcomes

The workshops were identical in structure and had the following main goals:

- Provide an overview of the Forest Plan revision process, including a description of opportunities for public input and the timeline for revising the Forest Plan
- Review the status of preliminary Forest Plan revisions to date
- Invite public input on forest management issues to inform the Forest Plan revision

The input received at the workshops will be used by LTBMU staff to determine the focus of a subsequent round of public workshops, where specific concerns and issues about forest planning in the Lake Tahoe Basin will be discussed more substantively. All of the public input received will be used to inform the development of a Proposed Forest Plan.

Workshop Participation and Organization

Approximately 65 members of the public participated in the two workshops (about 20 in North Lake Tahoe, and 45 in South Lake Tahoe). Participants represented a wide variety of interests, including recreation, homeowners, forest structure and health, ecosystem protection, and land use management. The workshops were facilitated by Eric Poncelet and Briana Mosely of Kearns & West, Inc.

The workshops opened with self-introductions of LTBMU staff and workshop participants. Next, the LTBMU Deputy Forest Supervisor, Eli Ilano, presented an overview of the Forest Plan Revision Process. Bob King, the Forest Plan Revision Team Lead, followed with a presentation of preliminary revisions to the forest plan. Participants were given an opportunity to ask clarifying questions after each presentation. In the second half of the workshops, participants were organized into breakout groups of 8-12 individuals and asked to provide comments on forest management issues of concern, as well as the overall forest planning process. Comments were recorded on flip charts by a note-taker. Each breakout group then reported back to the full group on key issues discussed. The workshop concluded with a recap of upcoming opportunities for public input on the Forest Plan.

The workshop agenda, supporting materials, and PowerPoint presentation can be found on the LTBMU website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/ltbmu/forest-plan/>.

This Summary Report represents our efforts to synthesize the input received by workshop participants during breakout group discussions (captured on flip charts) as well as written comments submitted at the workshops or shortly thereafter via email, phone or posted mail. This report focuses on summarizing the public's input on key forest management and planning issues; it is not intended to serve as a transcript of all issues discussed or points made.

SUMMARY OF LTBMU STAFF PRESENTATIONS

LTBMU staff presented an overview of the Forest Plan Revision Process. Key topics included:

- the status of the current Forest Plan,
- legal constraints and requirements on the Forest Plan Revision process,
- the timeline for completing the Forest Plan,
- work accomplished to date,
- key public input received to date,
- additional information needs, and
- future opportunities for public participation.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT ON FOREST PLANNING

In the breakout session, workshop participants were asked to reflect on the preliminary Forest Plan revision process to date and identify which topics they would like the LTBMU to address in a second round of public workshops. Participants identified a wide variety of topics of interest with regard to forest management and the forest planning process. These are summarized below.

Key forest management issues of concern

Workshop participants raised questions about a broad suite of issues pertaining to forest management. These have been organized under the broader categories of: recreation, fuels management, watershed and ecological management, land use management, noise management, air quality, heritage, stewardship, communication, and general questions about the Forest Plan.

Recreation

Recreation issues were among the most frequently raised in both workshops. Key issues included:

- How will recreation user conflicts be addressed in the Forest Plan?
 - How does the Forest Plan address balancing motorized and non-motorized opportunities?
 - How will restrictions and access for such activities as cross-country skiing, hiking, mountain biking, snowmobiling, motorcycles and off-road vehicles, and boating be addressed?
 - Consider balanced recreation opportunities for motorized vehicles, including motorcycles and snowmobiles. Motorcyclists have helped to create trails and then are not allowed to use the trails. How will this be addressed in the plan?
 - Are snowmobiles treated as appropriate for a roadless area?
 - Snowmobile trespassing in the Mt. Rose Wilderness from staging areas in Tahoe Meadows needs to be addressed.
 - Does the Forest plan address OHV/OSV access and parking?
 - Will the Forest Plan identify preferred uses to address recreation conflicts?
 - Does the Forest Service rate the impacts of different recreation user groups?
- How will the Forest Plan address recreation needs related to development and residences?
 - There is a need to balance recreation facilities (e.g., developed campgrounds, parking, etc.) and increased recreation usage.
 - New recreation opportunities should be established to keep up with the amount of new homes being built.

- Crowding in the summer months is limiting lake access.
- Recreation residences should be identified in the Forest Plan as an appropriate use. Cabin tracts need to be addressed in the Forest Plan in a way that is consistent with past management.
- The Forest Plan needs to be integrated with other recreation plans (e.g., Heavenly Valley).
- How is recreation figured into determinations of economic health in the Forest Plan?
- The Forest Plan needs to balance recreation uses with protection of ecological resources
 - Consider recreation use areas with regard to land management planning and management areas.
 - How will the Forest Plan address the need to protect the land from recreation abuse?
 - Address stresses and impacts of recreation uses on the ecosystem.
 - How will management of sensitive species be balanced with recreation?
- There is a desire for new non-motorized recreation opportunities.
 - Provide facilities on the East Shore for the Tahoe Water Trail kayakers: restrooms/outhouses/composting toilets, a fresh water source, campsites.
- The outfitter guide process needs serious review and has created a monopoly. Consider having regular reviews.
- The Forest Plan should standardize beach access in California and Nevada (public vs. private access).
- The Forest Plan should clarify whether dogs are allowed at the lake's public access areas. There is a concern that access for people to bring their dogs is being reduced.
- The Forest Plan should review use of motor vehicles for search and rescue operations in restricted areas (i.e. wilderness areas).

Fuels Management

The issue of fuels management was a major topic in the South Lake Tahoe workshop. Key issues raised included:

- What strategies will be used to manage fuels reduction, forest condition, and forest health? What standards are guiding fuels management? Is the Forest Service held to a national standard?
- How will the Forest Plan balance fuels management with habitat needs? With forest health and water quality?
- How does the Forest Service evaluate the impact of a wildfire on the environment?
- The Forest Plan should allow for increased use of fire for restoration purposes.
- The Forest Plan should consider wood chipping and biomass as alternatives to burning fuel piles.
- Fuels treatment in Wildland Urban Interface should focus on non-stream environment zones.
- The Forest Plan should consider that cost efficient areas can be implemented fastest.
- How will wildfire management at the urban interface be addressed in the Forest Plan?
- What is the plan for removing the fuel and timber now that it has been cut?
- Is there a restoration plan for Angora?

Watershed and ecological management

Key issues related to watershed and ecological management included the following:

- How will particular water quality issues be addressed in the Forest Plan?
 - What is the Forest Service’s responsibility/jurisdiction over management of water pollution sources?
 - Parking along certain roads (e.g., Rim Road?) can affect water quality. How will this be addressed?
 - How will warm water issues be addressed in the Forest Plan?
 - Is fine sediment from dirt roads being addressed?
- How will invasive species management (both plant and animal) be addressed in the Forest Plan?
 - How are aquatic invasive species addressed?
 - Will preventing invasive species introduction at lake recreation access areas be addressed in the Forest Plan?
- How will fuels management affect watershed management?
- Move trails that are currently *in* meadows to upland areas of meadows.
- How will issues affecting Tahoe Draba and Yellow Cress be addressed in the Forest Plan?
- How will the Forest Plan address marsh land restoration? Consider a partnership with Ducks Unlimited.
- Have wolverines been found in the basin? They will need to be managed.
- Grazing should be used as tool for forest management.
- Incorporate a strategy to manage biodiversity to the historic standard into the Forest Plan.
- How will management of erosion control and disturbed areas be addressed in the Forest Plan?
- Some participants expressed concern about changes to protection of old growth trees (greater than 30” diameter) and the effect this would have on wildlife.

Land Use Management

- How will management of access suitability be addressed in the Forest Plan?
- Does the Forest Plan consider impacts of forest management activities on urban lots?
 - What are the potential impacts of forest management on private homes?
 - Does the Forest Plan recognize that property boundaries are not the end of an ecosystem?
 - The Forest Service should explain how the community will be impacted by land management.
- The Forest Plan needs to address the expansion of wilderness areas.
 - Reconsider designating Meiss Country as a wilderness area.
- The Forest Service should consider expanding roadless areas
- The Forest Service should consider expanding the wildlife bear care facility.
- How will legacy road issues be addressed in the Forest Plan? Is there a decommissioning standard? How will associated water quality and erosion issues be addressed?
- The Washoe Tribe has been issued a Special Use Permit to operate the recreational facilities at Meeks Bay. How will the Forest Plan address the management of the Meeks area?
- The Forest Service should consider using pictometry or high-resolution aerial photography as a way to measure changes in the landscape.

Noise Management

- How will urban and wilderness noise issues be addressed in the Forest Plan?

- Is it the Forest Service's responsibility to address and enforce noise issues? Clarify the jurisdictional responsibilities here.
- Is the Forest Service in compliance with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) ordinance on this issue?
- There is a big push in the motorcycle industry to address the noise issue.

Air quality

- What is the Forest Service's responsibility and jurisdiction over management of air pollution sources?
- Will the Forest Plan address use of 2-stroke snowmobiles vs. 4-stroke snowmobiles? If so, does the Forest Service have the ability to enforce this?
- More information is needed about smoke management. Pathway documents are incomplete.

Cultural Heritage

- The Forest Plan needs to address issues of cultural heritage.

Stewardship and education

- How is stewardship being addressed in the Forest Plan? How will LTBMU involve the community in stewardship actions?
- Additional conservation education opportunities and partnerships with LTBMU are desired and should be incorporated into the forest planning effort.

Communication

- How does the Forest Service plan to inform the public of its activities, specifically those members of the public who will be directly impacted by these activities? The Forest Service needs to better communicate how implementation of its projects will impact neighboring communities.
- Signs providing information on suitable recreation use should be posted at access areas.
- Seasonal recreation-use signs should be posted earlier.
- Provide higher resolution and more detailed maps on the LTBMU website with regard to motorized and non-motorized access.
- There should be more interagency communication and collaboration in policy development.

General questions about the Forest Plan

Workshop participants asked additional clarifying questions on the Forest Plan more generally, including:

- What assurances can the Forest Service provide for implementation of the Forest Plan?
- Is enforceability taken into account when making rules and guidelines?
- What are the Forest Service's funding constraints?
- How will conflicts between desired conditions be resolved? Ensure public involvement in the creation of possible scenarios.
- What are the "guidelines" and how are they used within the Forest Plan? Are the national guidelines tailored to Tahoe specifically?

- What public involvement will take place for specific forest management projects to comply with the law?
- Can the Forest Service be more specific about how management will be built into the plan? How will adaptive management be implemented?

Comments on the Forest Plan process

Several workshop participants provided suggestions for convening and organizing future public workshops. Key input included:

- To help plan future public workshops, it is important to identify what input is needed from the public and what input is needed from specialists. Don't have the public weighing in on topics that specialist should address.
- Future workshops should be designed to enable greater input from outside the basin.

NEXT STEPS IN THE FOREST PLANNING PROCESS

LTBMU staff outlined the following key next steps in the Forest Plan revision process:

1. LTBMU staff will use the outcomes of the September 29-30, 2008 public workshops to determine the topics of a second, follow-up round of public workshops. This next round will focus on particular substantive topics of interest to the public and LTBMU staff.
2. The next round of forest planning public workshops will take place on:
 - a. Monday, November 3, 2008
 - b. Wednesday, November 12, 2008
 - c. Monday, December 1, 2008Topics and locations of the three workshops are still to be determined. Input received from these workshops will be used to inform the preparation of a Draft Forest Plan Revision.
3. The workshop facilitators will prepare a Summary Report of these workshops. The Summary Report will summarize key outcomes from the workshop and will be posted on the LTBMU website. LTBMU staff will notify workshop participants who signed in when the Summary Report is posted on the LTBMU website.
4. LTBMU staff is aiming to complete preparation of a "Proposed Forest Plan" for public review in early 2009 (February or March). At that point, there will be a formal 90-day comment period for the public to review and comment on the entire Plan, as stipulated in the 2008 Planning Rule.
5. LTBMU staff will incorporate and address public comments received on the Proposed Forest Plan into a pre-decisional Forest Plan, which is expected to be released in October 2009. At this point, members of the public who have participated earlier in the process and are not satisfied with the revisions to the Proposed Forest Plan will have a 30-day period to file formal "objections" for consideration by the Regional Forester for the Pacific Southwest Region.