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Forest Service proposes travel management improvements

Submitted Story

The U.S. Forest Service is proposing to improve its motor vehicle management on the Bridgeport Ranger District and plans several drop-in open houses, including one next Wednesday, Dec. 10, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the Smith Valley High School multipurpose room.

The Ranger District manages about 1.2 million acres of lands in Mono County, California and Douglas, Lyon, and Mineral Counties in Nevada. It currently manages about 1,500 miles of motor vehicle routes in its travel management system. Most of the Ranger District is currently open to cross country motor vehicle travel.

Public comments are encouraged on the proposal to add about 300 miles of existing motor vehicle routes to the system and restrict travel to designated routes. Under the proposal, motor vehicle travelers would be welcome to enjoy the National Forest on the current network of 1,500 route miles and the additional 300 miles. The proposal is in its early stages and the Forest Service would like comments on it by Dec. 31, 2008.

"The Bridgeport Ranger District is a great place to explore by motor vehicle," said Cheryl Probert, Bridgeport District Ranger. "This project will help us sustain motor vehicle travel on the District into the future."

The current system of open cross-country travel has led to a proliferation of new user-created routes. These routes can, in the wrong places and at the wrong times, cause environmental impacts. Streams, wildlife, vegetation, soil and archaeological sites can all be damaged by unmanaged motor-vehicle use. The experience of other forest visitors can be affected by noise. A well-managed system of designated routes and trails is expected to limit these impacts and ensure sustainable use of motor vehicles.

"This proposal is in its early stages," said David Loomis, Forest Service Project Manager. "Nothing is written in stone at this point and we are open to ideas about how we can improve travel management on the Bridgeport Ranger District." Maps describing the proposed action can found at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/htnf/projects/#bridgeport>. They are also available on request on CDs. Email comments on the project are preferred and should be sent to: comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-bridgeport@fs.fed.us. Written comments can be sent to: Travel Management Team, Bridgeport Ranger District, HC62, Box 1000, Bridgeport, CA 93517.

The Forest Service will also host drop-in open houses at the Mineral County Library, 1st and A St., Hawthorne, on Dec. 8 from 4:00-6:00 p.m.; and at Memorial Hall, 100 Sinclair St., Bridgeport, CA, on Dec. 9 from 4:00-6:00 p.m.