



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF MADERA

MADERA COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER
200 WEST FOURTH STREET / MADERA, CALIFORNIA 93637
(559) 675-7700 / FAX (559) 673-3302 / TDD (559) 675-8970

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June 23, 2009

Ed Cole
Forest Supervisor
Sierra National Forest
1600 Tollhouse Road
Clovis, CA 93611

Re: Sierra National Forest Travel Management DEIS

Dear Mr. Cole:

On behalf of Madera County, I am writing today to respectfully request that the Forest Service extend the public comment period for the Sierra National Forest Motorized Travel Management Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for 90 days. Although Madera County appreciates the 15-day extension the Forest Service previously granted, we believe 90 days is more appropriate and will give the public adequate time to review this very lengthy and complicated document.

As you are aware, on December 14, 1999 and October 9, 2007 our Board adopted Resolutions opposing the USFS Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. Despite our opposition and that of many other counties, the Forest Service released its Travel Management Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on May 1, 2009. The Forest Service has only allowed 60 days to review the DEIS, with a decision anticipated in September 2009. We believe this timeframe is impractical and does not allow for sufficient input from local counties, cities and residents. The Travel Management process is far too complex to be completed in so short a time span.

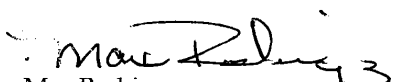
In addition, we have substantial concerns with the severely lacking public collaboration that has occurred during the planning process. It is our understanding that the Council of Environmental Quality rules mandate that a Federal agency consult early with appropriate State and local agencies, Indian Tribes and with interested private persons and organizations when its own involvement is reasonably foreseeable. Since Madera County encompasses 362,049 acres of the Sierra National Forest, we find it troubling that we were not given more opportunity to participate in the process. We find it even further troubling that our letters and Resolutions were not given more consideration.

Moreover, as indicated in both County Resolutions, the DEIS is extremely disconcerting to us as it will have devastating impacts on our local tourist economy and outdoor recreation in general. Although we can certainly understand the need for a manageable transportation system, the closure of approximately 90% of inventoried roads without sufficient rationale is outrageous and does not reflect a proper balance between public access and resource protection. It would make more sense to leave open the approximately 250 miles that the public

requested be added to the official transportation system until the Forest Service has the opportunity to evaluate them. Furthermore, with the closure of these roads comes the closure of many recreational camp and parking sites. Even under the most-friendly Alternative, the majority of these sites will be closed. These closures will stunt outdoor recreation in the Sierra National Forest. They will also essentially deny the public their right to access publicly-owned lands.

In closing, Madera County thanks the Forest Service for its efforts to protect our natural and cultural resources. We only request that we be included more thoroughly in the process and that our residents be granted more time to review the complicated DEIS documents. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to your response.

Respectfully,


Max Rodriguez
Chairman

Cc: Honorable George Radanovich
Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chief Gail Kimbell, USDA Forest Service