

SIERRA ACCESS COALITION: PURSUING LITIGATION AGAINST THE FOREST SERVICE

The Plumas National Forest recently finalized their Motorized Travel Management Plan and released the Record of Decision. Through the Motorized Travel Management Plan, the Forest Service designated off-highway roads and trails that will remain open for public motorized use, from now into the future. Non-designated routes, including many that were open for decades to motorized travel, will be off-limits for woodcutters, campers, hunters, hikers, and off-highway vehicles, as well as all others who use native-surface roads and trails for access to the forest. Since the Forest Service definition of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) includes pickups, cars, 4x4s, motorhomes, motorcycles, quads or ATV's, and tow rigs for equestrian trailers and 5th wheels, thousands of recreationists will be affected. A decision on snowmobile use will be made in the future, but does not look promising. The many restrictions to access made on motorized travel will serve as a precursor to restricting snowmobile access. Sierra Access Coalition has to take action to protect the rights of local citizens, and is raising money for our Legal Defense Fund to fight against this overly restrictive plan for our National Forest lands.

The following is a summary of the new Plumas NF decision:

- 1107 miles of routes were inventoried, out of those 873 miles of those routes are now closed to public use.
- Only 234 miles were added forest-wide through the route designation process.
- Parking is now limited to one vehicle length from a **designated route**, which severely restricts camping opportunities and makes many historic family campsites inaccessible with vehicles.
- Firewood cutters are limited to taking their truck one vehicle length off a **designated route** to retrieve their firewood. Many dead-end spurs are now effectively closed to woodcutting.
- Hunters can only drive one vehicle length from a **designated route** to retrieve their game. (Even though State of California rules require the removal of game, the Forest Service makes this virtually impossible)
- Main gravel roads (maintenance level 3 and 4 roads) are now closed to non-street legal vehicles.
- Accessibility for the disabled and elderly was not considered, nor their needs accommodated.
- The entire French Creek drainage is closed pending study of the California red-legged frog.
- The Forest Service did not coordinate with the five counties within the Plumas National Forest, as required by law. The counties have many significant issues that the FS refused to address throughout the process.
- The Plumas National Forest did not cooperate with Plumas County during the development of the county ordinance allowing OHV vehicles on unpaved county roads. This resulted in the loss of many miles of routes for the public.
- The Plumas NF had a chance to designate routes that would have encouraged tourism (OHVs, hunting, camping, hiking, fishing, etc) but they chose not to consider those beneficial uses of public land.
- County economies are impacted including Plumas, Lassen, Butte, Sierra, and Yuba Counties.

Sierra Access Coalition (SAC) is a non-profit public group, consisting of local businesses, user groups, and individuals working primarily on the Plumas NF. SAC is run 100% by unpaid volunteers. SAC is concerned about the USFS Motorized Travel Management decision and is working to protect forest access for the public. We are currently raising funds for our Legal Defense Fund to fight the Plumas National Forest Motorized Travel Management Plan described above. SAC's mission is to preserve environmentally-sound routes for public use.

Tax deductible donations can be made directly to Sierra Access Coalition at <http://www.sierraaccess.com>

or by mail to Sierra Access Coalition, PO Box 944, Quincy CA 95971.