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## **CORVA – California Off-Road News and Updates** fighting for your right to access public land

It's been a long time between updates and there is a lot of news to pass on, so let's get right down to the issues of the day. *No matter how you choose to live, no matter how you choose to recreate, no one has the right to pass judgment on that choice.*

### **Forest Service**

**Prescribed Burns:** A number of the forests have planned prescribed burns this time of year to control underbrush etc. Before going to your favorite trail, check on the forest website to see if these burns will be in an area you are likely to visit. Sometime signs will be placed to let the public know these burns are occurring, but seeing smoke causes alarm in many people and many unnecessary calls to emergency numbers.

**Tahoe National Forest:** \* *The Tahoe goofed!* \* They issued a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) with so many mistakes in the map that they were forced to stop distribution of the maps while they reconsider their options. At this time I've been told that they may resume distribution or just go straight to a reprint. Cost is a factor in this decision, but it is inconceivable that they can have any enforcement on a map that is so absolutely flawed. I have a set of maps which I will keep just in case they become a collector's item, but until an accurate map is released there can be no enforcement of the Travel Management Plan.



Many of the other forests have been able to produce somewhat more accurate maps, please check at the following website to download maps before your next trip to one of the national forests in California.

[http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/ohv\\_maps.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/ohv_maps.shtml)

**Eldorado National Forest:** The Eldorado National Forest has a new Forest Supervisor. Kathy Hardy. Thanks to John Arenz, Scott Johnston and Jerry Reffner for coming to one of the first meetings held by Kathy Hardy after she started in the Eldorado. We had a very productive 2 hour meeting where we laid out our expectations, wants and needs for the Rubicon. We also talked about the over-the-snow travel in regards to the Mormon Emigrant Trail, hoping to avoid all the problems and issues we faced last year. I have since been told that Supervisor Hardy traveled to the Rubicon the week after we met with her to experience the 'con for herself, and was amazed at the good conditions on the trail. Kudos to all the volunteers who have worked long and hard making this happen. Weather will determine if an earlier closure date is needed in the Eldorado this year, as it has been for past two years.

***What can you do?:*** Stay aware of all activities on your favorite trails and areas. At CORVA we will do our best to keep you aware of ongoing negotiations, but there is no replacement for a good relationship with your District Rangers and Forest Supervisors.

## Lassen National Forest:

There are 2011 MVUM's available on the forest website, and the Lassen has announced the following: They are working on areas that had been designated in the Travel Management Plan (TMP) that could not be immediately implemented. Mitigation and signage, barriers to sensitive areas and obtaining necessary permits for roadwork are all being done by the forest, with specific plans to sign the road segments approved for green sticker/street legal travel. Until those signs are placed, mixed use of these roads cannot commence, but the work is expected to be finished in time to add the routes to the 2012 MVUM. Jerry Bird, Lassen Forest Supervisor, is looking for help with two areas he hopes to add to the designated system; *"Hat Creek Ranger District has been pursuing a collaborative planning process for developing an open OHV riding area at Potato Buttes near Old Station. A similar planning process is envisioned for the Front Country area just north of the Ishi Wilderness in the southwest corner of the LNF. This area has been traditionally used by hunters using a variety of vehicles to access dispersed camping sites."* Please contact the Lassen National Forest if you want to help with the planning and work required to open these two areas, they are depending on members of the off-road public, including hunters, to help them along with this process. Please contact Chris O'Brien for more information: <mailto:cjobrien@fs.fed.us>

Plumas National Forest: Sierra Access Coalition (SAC), a multiple-use group based in Quincy, CA and CORVA, along with Butte County Board of Supervisors and the support of Plumas County, are filing suit against the Plumas National Forest. This is a landmark lawsuit citing violations of NEPA during the Travel Management Process. For all those outdoor recreation enthusiasts who suffered through the indignities of Travel Management, this is your chance to make a difference. SAC, CORVA and the Counties are taking a stand against the Forest Service, and asking you to help. Every dollar and every letter of support makes a big difference. For all those that asked over and over again during Travel Management when we would strike back – well, this is it. CORVA is taking a stand for you, and we need your help. Email me at: [amy.granat@corva.org](mailto:amy.granat@corva.org) for more information.

The Plumas has just announced the appointment of a new forest supervisor, Earl Ford. Mr. Ford comes to California from Southern Washington, where he served as a recreation planner. The Plumas has also just announced the availability of their Motor Vehicle Use Map indicating the start of Travel Management enforcement and ticketing.

Stanislaus National Forest: We are still awaiting a decision from the Judge in the case of the Wilderness Society vs Forest Service, where an off-road coalition served as interveners to repel the call for road and trail closure.



Sierra Cascades Dialog Sessions: Thanks to Chris Horgan, John Arenz and Hugh Brady for attending the last meeting of the Sierra Cascades Dialog. The meeting itself was interesting because a large part of the session was dedicated to questions about how to restart timber harvesting in the rural counties of California. There's no question that rural counties need help, and the timber itself is available. It's the myriad of environmental lawsuits that have stopped timber harvests and created a very dangerous situation in California.

Having motorized recreation enthusiasts in the audience enabled us to make the very real point that OHV recreation, including hunting and rock hounding and snowmobiling, is a very real economic driver for rural communities. As John reminded me on the way out of the session; "Government is ruled by those that show up", and showing up to these meetings makes all the difference.

After the meeting Chris, John and I were able to meet with Joe Stringer, chief planner for the Forest Service out of the Regional Office. He got more than he bargained for with input from all 3 of us on how the motorized community feels ignored and in large part left out of the planning process. He has vowed to meet with us as Forest Plan Revisions are starting analysis in the Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra forests.

Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit: This past week I spent 2 days at a "Winter Recreation Use Collaborative Workshop". This was a workshop sponsored by the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit that brought in a Cadre of facilitators to teach the local communities how to work together to develop a plan for winter recreational use around the basin. I was really impressed with the dedication of the local community, the professionalism and dedication shown during the meeting. Not only did they make their position clear, they didn't back down from the fight. I was happy to help with information and give them CORVA's backing to help the community keep all the over-the-snow access currently available. My particular thanks to Byron Baker and Wayne Fischer for generosity of spirit, time and assistance.

At the preliminary meetings leading up to this workshop that was held in August, we found out that we were able to save access to the Mount Rose area, or Tahoe Meadows, an area already slated for closure due to complaints from environmental organizations. Now we are asking for more over-the-snow access. Snowmobile use is growing exponentially in and around Lake Tahoe, and the Forest Service must understand that growth in a certain recreational use must equate to more opportunity!

Four Southern California Forests: Because of a settlement of a recent lawsuit, the Forest Service was forced to conduct negotiations with various stakeholders regarding the inclusion of both user-created and designated trails into Inventoried Roadless Areas that could preclude maintenance or question the continued viability of those trails. The negotiations included some of the better known recreation trails in the Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres and San Bernardino National Forests. This information has been relayed to the judge, along with some recommendations for the Forest Service. Land use planning by legal mandate has not always served the motorized communities very well, it is only with your attention and input that we can help change this paradigm.

Each of the four Southern California forests hold forest meeting approximately every quarter with enthusiast groups, law enforcement, local and state representatives. Angeles, Cleveland San Bernardino and Los Padres are looking for on-the-ground stewards to help their forest. For more information, please contact me. We need to keep these meeting going and bring more people from the communities to help.

Forest Plan Revisions: Even though the new forest planning rule has not been finalized and is still in the NEPA process, the Forest Service has announced that the very preliminary work will be starting in the Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra National Forests. Our mistake in Travel Management, in some cases, was not being involved in the early stages. Let's not make this mistake again, get involved.

***What can you do? Get to know your Forest Supervisors, District Rangers and other Forest Service personnel. It's the same old advice, but more important now than ever.***

**Forest Service figures out that recreation brings money to local communities!** National Forests in California provide benefit to local economies: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/news/2011/NVUMreport.shtml>

## **Bureau Of Land Management**

The BLM has announced that Jim Kenna, the current Arizona State Director, has been named the new California State Director. I got the opportunity to meet Mr. Kenna at the last California Biodiversity Council meeting in Sacramento, and emphasized the need for close communication with the motorized recreation community. I talked with him on his 4<sup>th</sup> day in his new job as California State Director, and although he was meeting and experiencing many new faces, I have already heard positive feedback that Mr. Kenna remembered me and my comments. After listening to Mr. Kenna speak, I do however have some concerns about his approach to motorized recreation.

**BLM Bakersfield:** The Bakersfield Field Office has released planning documents for their Resource Management Plan Revision. Sharpen your pencils and get ready to comment on these plans, the comment period ends December 9<sup>th</sup>. This area should be of great interest to dirt bikers, it contains plans for an area dedicated to some good single-track, but we need locals and visitors who will care for this area. Please contact me if you are willing to help.:

[http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/bakersfield/Programs/planning/caliente\\_rmp\\_revision.html](http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/bakersfield/Programs/planning/caliente_rmp_revision.html)

**Desert Advisory Council Seeking Help with Fee Structure:** On November 3<sup>rd</sup> in El Centro California, the BLM will hold a meeting of the Imperial Sand Dunes subgroup of the Desert Advisory Council to seek input from members of the public regarding the fee structure for the Dunes. Please attend the meeting to give your input, the BLM is relying on the public to make meaningful comments. The meeting will start at 9am at the BLM El Centro Field Office.

**Special Recreation Permit Process:** There has been a committee made up of concerned members of the public from all different forms of recreation that has been tasked to redefine the Special Recreation Permit process. They've been given a difficult job, and we encourage them as they start tackling their tasks.

**Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan:** Probably one of the most important ongoing process is dedicated to mapping for renewable energy projects in Southern California. This remapping of desert lands , serves to accommodate an executive order issued by Governor Brown in April of 2011. The process, like many other governmental procedures, was designed from the beginning to treat motorized access as less important than other uses. Check out this link for more information: <http://www.drecp.org/about/index.html>

**Western Mojave Off-Road Vehicle Designation Process (WEMO):** CORVA submitted comments on the Notice of Intent relaying our concerns over the scope of this project. Forced to redo this process due to a lawsuit, the BLM is under the gun to redo the bulk of the analysis that lead to off-road route designation under a previous plan. The judge has given the agency until March of 2014 to conduct the analysis, and CORVA is involved to make sure that off-road routes are not lost due to this process. Just because the environmental analysis was ruled deficient does not mean that the routes cannot be designated, the agency needs to do a better job but still designate these roads, trails and open areas to off-road use. CORVA's comments can be found on the website, and this is just the first step in this long process. The next step will be the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, when it will be imperative for all enthusiasts to make substantive comments.

**Clear Creek Management Area:** While we are awaiting the release of the Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement there have been some interesting issues. Hats off to Kenny Deeg for an interesting and insightful segment on KABC – good job! San Benito County has also passed a resolution to ask members of Congress to create a National Recreation Area designation for CCMA, a step that will hopefully lead to the reopening of Clear Creek.

## **HR 1581**

This bill introduced by Congressman Kevin McCarthy of Bakersfield calls for the release of all land found **unsuitable** for wilderness or Roadless designation by a federal agency. It does not change any legitimate designation for either of those protections, but the bill has been badly characterized by environmental groups and distorted beyond recognition. Please support HR 1581, and thank Congressman McCarthy for supporting the public who enjoys using public land.

## **Inyo County**

We applaud the signing of AB628 by Governor Brown. This bill allows Inyo County to analyze, along with the CHP, the designation of mixed use segments up to 8 miles in length to connect OHV roads and trails in Inyo County. A number of changes were made in the bill from the original proposal, but not that seriously changed the intent of the bill or harmed the chances of success. With this model, we may be able to see more roads designated open to green sticker use in the future, but first we have to wait for a successful role model from Inyo County.

## **Rubicon**

Many know that El Dorado County applied to the Forest Service for an easement for areas of the trail not previously granted an easement by the agency. The agency released a Notice of Intent, and CORVA filed comments with the Forest Service objecting to many misstatement of facts in the document. After a meeting with the team lead on the project, we feel more confident that a better draft statement will be released. The Rubicon Trail Foundation did a great job with their attorney commenting on every objectionable statement and sentence in the plan.

## **State Water Resources Control Board**

CORVA formed a coalition of off-road, hunting, equestrian and interested individuals to comment on the proposed plan for forested roads and trails. Thanks to our attorney, Jesse Barton, for attending a workshop on this plan last month in Sacramento, where we were amazed to see environmental groups persisting to distribute material to members of the board, after the comment period was officially ended! After it was observed that this violated CEQA, members of the State Water Resources Control Board announced that they will be reopening the comment period for this plan in November, and holding the proposed adoption meeting for the plan in December. The reopening of the comment period is a tactic being used by environmental groups to bombard the board with material to show the harm that OHV use and grazing do to water quality, and prey on the emotions of the board. CORVA will also meet with members of the board to object to this tactic, and continue to defend our rightful use of public land.

## **Roadless Rule**

Unfortunately, this Clinton Roadless Rule has been upheld in the courts, striking a serious blow to many off-road groups that opposed the rule. This battle has been fought for a long time, but there are still politicians with a goal to topple the rule that limits access, timber harvesting and mineral extraction from vast areas of the forest.

## **CORVA Accomplishments - October 2011**

- ✓ CORVA Comments Project: pioneering educational program for off-road enthusiasts
- ✓ Special Recreation Permit Process: 2 board members on subcommittee
- ✓ Recreational Access Coalition Council: mapping desert uses, CORVA BOD member chair of committee
- ✓ Forest Service LEO Task Force: eliminating bias against OHV enthusiast in national forests
- ✓ Vote Smart! Voter Education Guide: geared towards off-road enthusiasts
- ✓ OHV Advocate Day in Sacramento: "Information and Access 411" for politicians
- ✓ Leadership meetings throughout California joining on-the-ground enthusiasts and politicians
- ✓ Pursuing legal action with the Sierra Access Coalition and Butte County against the Forest Service
- ✓ Organized Off-Road Coalition working together to counter efforts by the State Water Resources Control Board to restrict access in the 17 forests in California to OHV access
- ✓ Working to protect access to Rubicon, snowmobile and important OHV areas in WEMO
- ✓ Working with other groups to Save Johnson Valley
- ✓ Participation in snowmobile access group to working to form collaborative group to retain access to Lake Tahoe Basin area