



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Cleveland National Forest
Palomar Ranger District
1634 Black Canyon Road
Ramona, CA 92065

(760) 788-0250 (Voice)
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File Code: 1950

Date: April 25, 2018

Dear Interested Party:

The Palomar Ranger District of the Cleveland National Forest (CNF) is initiating a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis for the Orosco Ridge Mountain Bike Trail System. The U.S. Forest Service will partner with the San Diego Mountain Biking Association (SDMBA) to provide a high quality single-track mountain bike trail experience for the growing number of trail users within the Ramona and Southern California areas with an emphasis on mountain bike specific trail design. Trail design, layout, construction, and maintenance will be performed by the SDMBA and will incorporate International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) trail building concepts that emphasize sustainable trails that maximize rider satisfaction. The project is needed because of the lack of current legal, large-scale, organized, expertly designed mountain biking specific trails in the region, much less on the CNF.

The project consists of constructing a professionally designed trail system for all skill levels of mountain bikers from beginner to expert and downhill, and will also include many miles of multi-use trails to be enjoyed by hikers, cyclists, equestrians, trail runners and other user groups.

All interested persons, state and local governments, and tribal governments are encouraged to participate at this time and throughout the public scoping period, which will close May 25, 2018.

The Forest Service would like to receive your input on issues and concerns related to this proposal. The preference for receiving comments is by email. Please send comments to: comments-cleveland@fs.fed.us by May 25, 2018, with the words "Orosco Ridge Mountain Bike Trail System" in the subject line. If you are unable to send comments electronically, you may send them to the following address:

Orosco Ridge Mountain Bike Trail System
Attn: Joey Martin, Project Lead
Palomar Ranger District
1634 Black Canyon Road
Ramona, CA 92065



Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of respondents, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requestor of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requestor that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within 7 days.

If you have questions about this proposal, please write or call Joey Martin, at (760) 788-0250 ext. 3314 or at 1634 Black Canyon Road, Ramona, CA 92065.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "R. Lee Hamm", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

R. Lee Hamm
Acting Palomar District Ranger

Enclosure:
Proposed Action including Project & Location Maps

OROSCO RIDGE MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL SYSTEM PROPOSED ACTION

Purpose and Need

Existing Conditions

The purpose of the project is to partner with the San Diego Mountain Biking Association (SDMBA), to provide a high quality single-track mountain bike trail experience for the growing number of trail users within the Ramona and Southern California areas with an emphasis on mountain bike specific trail design. Trail design, layout, construction, and maintenance will be performed by the SDMBA and will incorporate International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) trail building concepts that emphasize sustainable trails that maximize rider satisfaction. Additionally, this project will comply with the Service-wide Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) 06-SU-11132424-076 between the US Forest Service (USFS) and the IMBA.

The project is needed because of the lack of current legal, large-scale, organized, expertly designed mountain bike specific trails in the region, much less on the Cleveland National Forest (CNF). With a population of almost 20 million people within 50 miles of the CNF, this new trail system could expose new members of the public to the benefits of the National Forest System as well as support local and regional economies and improve resident's quality of life.

Figure 1. Project Location

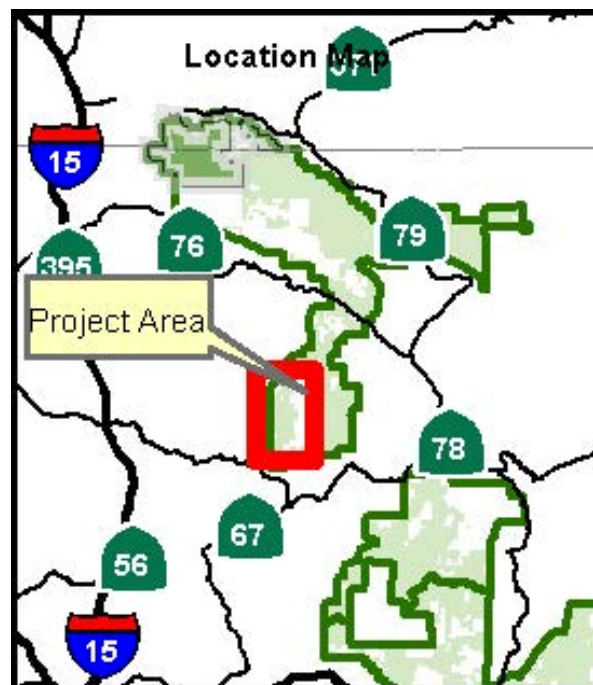
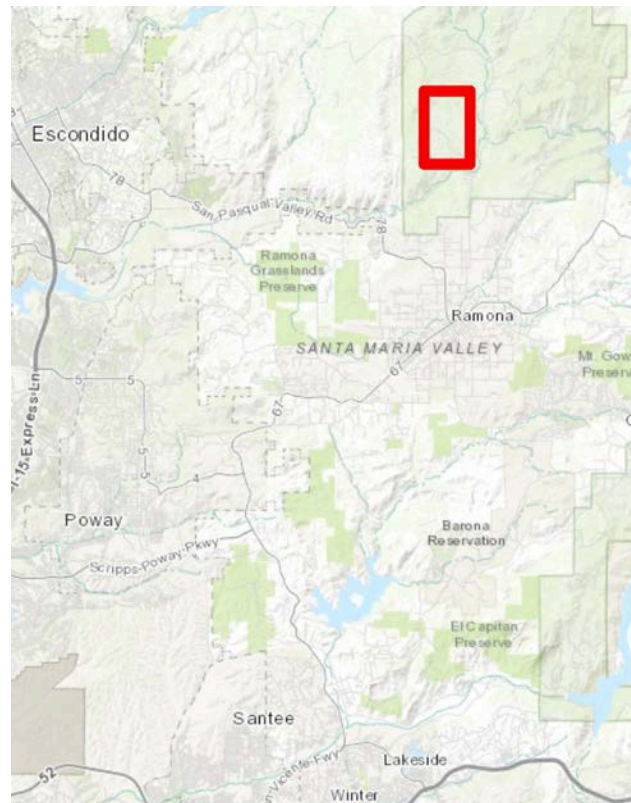


Figure 2. Project Location

Desired Conditions

Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan

The purpose of the project is to implement the CNF Land Management Plan (Forest Plan) (2005). This proposed project will address recreation participation by offering a wide range of high quality, environmentally sustainable developed and dispersed recreation opportunities that do not currently exist in the region, to a rapidly growing and culturally diverse visitor population, with minimal visitor conflicts and effects to other resources. (REC 3 – Recreation Participation, Forest Plan, p. 103)

- Develop new, environmentally sustainable recreation opportunities and infrastructure to relieve concentrated demand within existing high-use areas and to accommodate future growth and new uses elsewhere.

This proposal will also address goals listed directly in the USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan: (FY 2015-2020) by:

Forest Service Strategic Plan, Strategic Objective E.: “Strengthen Communities”

- Develop sustainable recreation settings and opportunities along with programs that complement national, State, and community tourism strategies.

Forest Service Strategic Plan, Strategic Objective F.: “Connect People to the Outdoors”

- Maintain recreational settings, hiking trails, and other sustainable recreational opportunities on the national forests and grasslands for public use; Help meet public needs and expectations for outdoor recreation on the national forests and grasslands through public and private partnerships; and to improve our capacity to engage volunteers through enhanced partnerships and service organizations.

The proposed site is located in the Forest Plan's San Dieguito/Black Mountain Place and in the Back Country (BC), and Back Country, Non-Motorized (BCNM) land use zones. The land use zone descriptions in this section help to paint a picture of the anticipated level or intensity of public use or administrative activities. The existing character of each zone is included, along with the characteristic Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) objective.

The BC land use zone includes areas of the national forest that are generally undeveloped with few roads. The characteristic ROS objectives are Semi-Primitive Motorized with limited areas of Roaded Natural. The level of human use and infrastructure is generally low to moderate. A network of low standard Back Country roads provide access for a wide variety of dispersed recreation opportunities in remote areas such as camping and access to trailhead facilities for hiking or biking. Some new trails may be constructed to improve opportunities between trails on the existing system. Although this zone generally allows a broad range of uses, the management intent is to retain the natural character inherent in this zone and limit the level and type of development. National Forest staff expect to manage the zone for no increase or a very low level of increase in the national forest road system. Managers expect to limit development to a slow increase of carefully designed facilities to help direct use into the most suitable areas and remove temporary facilities when they are no longer needed.

The BCNM land use zone generally includes areas of the national forest that are undeveloped with few, if any roads. The characteristic ROS objective is Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized. Developed facilities supporting dispersed recreation activities are minimal and generally limited to trails and signage. The level of human use and infrastructure is low. The zone is managed for a range of non-motorized uses that include mechanized, equestrian and pedestrian public access. A network of low standard Back Country trails provide public access for a wide variety of non-motorized dispersed recreation opportunities including remote area camping, hiking, mountain biking, hunting and fishing. While a range of non-motorized public uses are generally allowed, the management intent is to typically retain the undeveloped character and natural appearance (fuelbreaks that contrast with the natural character may be present) of this zone and to limit the level of development to a low level of increase. Facility construction (except trails) is generally not allowed, but may occur in remote locations where roaded access is not needed for maintenance. Managers are expected to remove temporary facilities when they are no longer needed.

There is a need to meet the current, growing desire for mountain bike specific trails in the Southern California geographic area, to increase public access to the national forest system for the American public, and to support the surrounding community. The desired future condition would be to provide a trail network system that is professionally designed, meets trail building guidelines, best management practices (BMPs), trail management objectives (TMOs), and has minimal infrastructure.

Issues

In order to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements, the Forest Service will be mailing out a public scoping letter in April, 2018 to a targeted mailing list of area stakeholders, including local, state, federal, and private entities. The forest will review the public comments received and will organize the material into a series of questions, statements and issues. Issues are defined as a point of disagreement, debate or dispute about the environmental effects caused by the specific proposed action. Issues serve to highlight effects or unintended consequences that may occur from the proposed action and alternatives, giving opportunities during the analysis to reduce adverse effects and compare trade-offs for the decision maker and public to understand. These comments will be responded to by forest staff. Additionally, a forest interdisciplinary team (IDT) will review the natural resource issues brought up in these comments as well.

Proposed Action

The U.S. Forest Service proposes to partner with the San Diego Mountain Biking Association (SDMBA) to provide a high quality single-track mountain bike trail experience for the growing number of trail users within the Ramona and Southern California areas with an emphasis on mountain bike specific trail design. Trail design, layout, construction, and maintenance will be performed by the SDMBA and will incorporate International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) trail building concepts that emphasize sustainable trails that maximize rider satisfaction. The project is needed because of the lack of current legal, large-scale, organized, expertly designed mountain bike specific trails in the region, much less on the CNF.

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Figure 3. Proposed Action Overview

Orosco Ridge Final Proposal

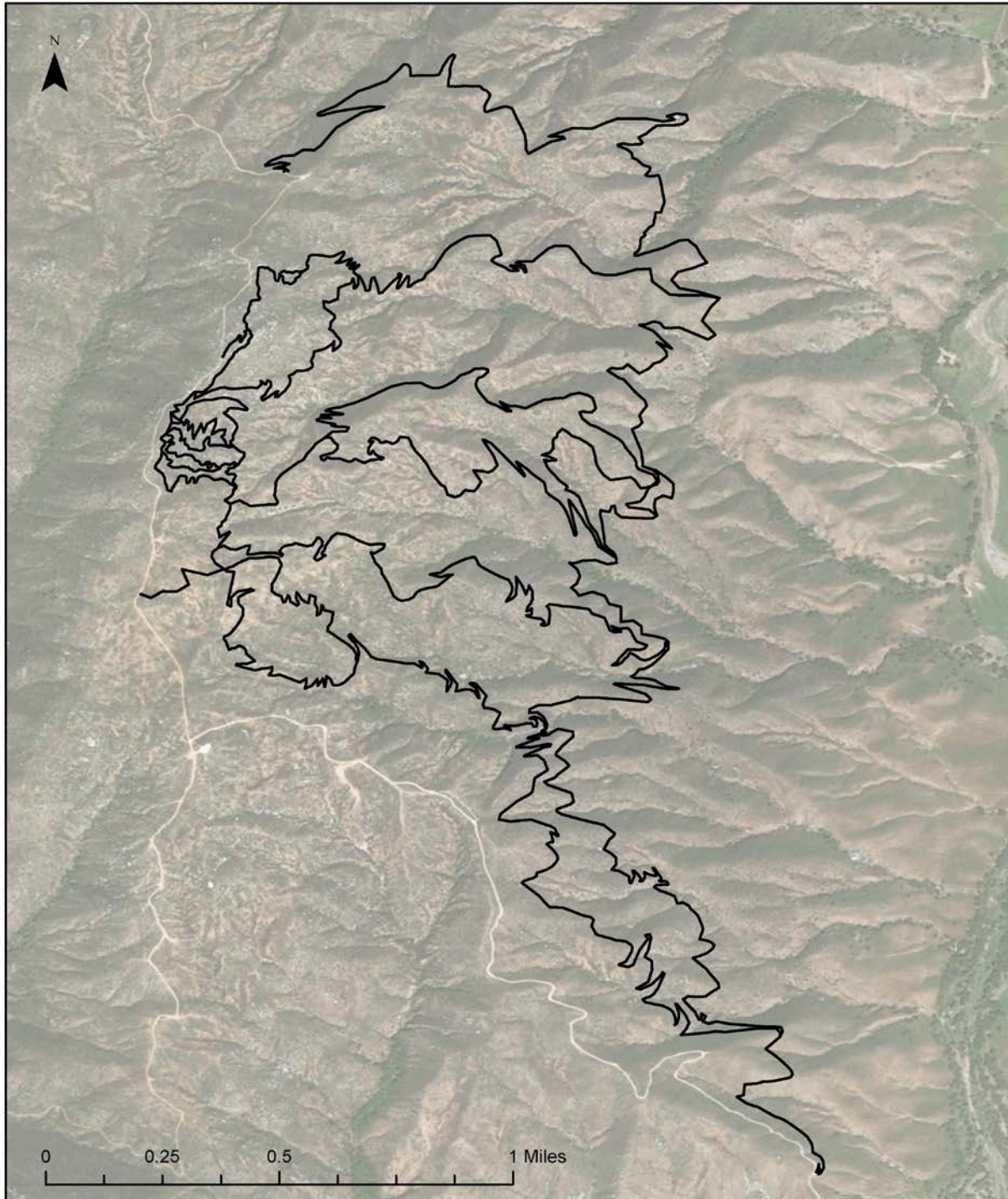
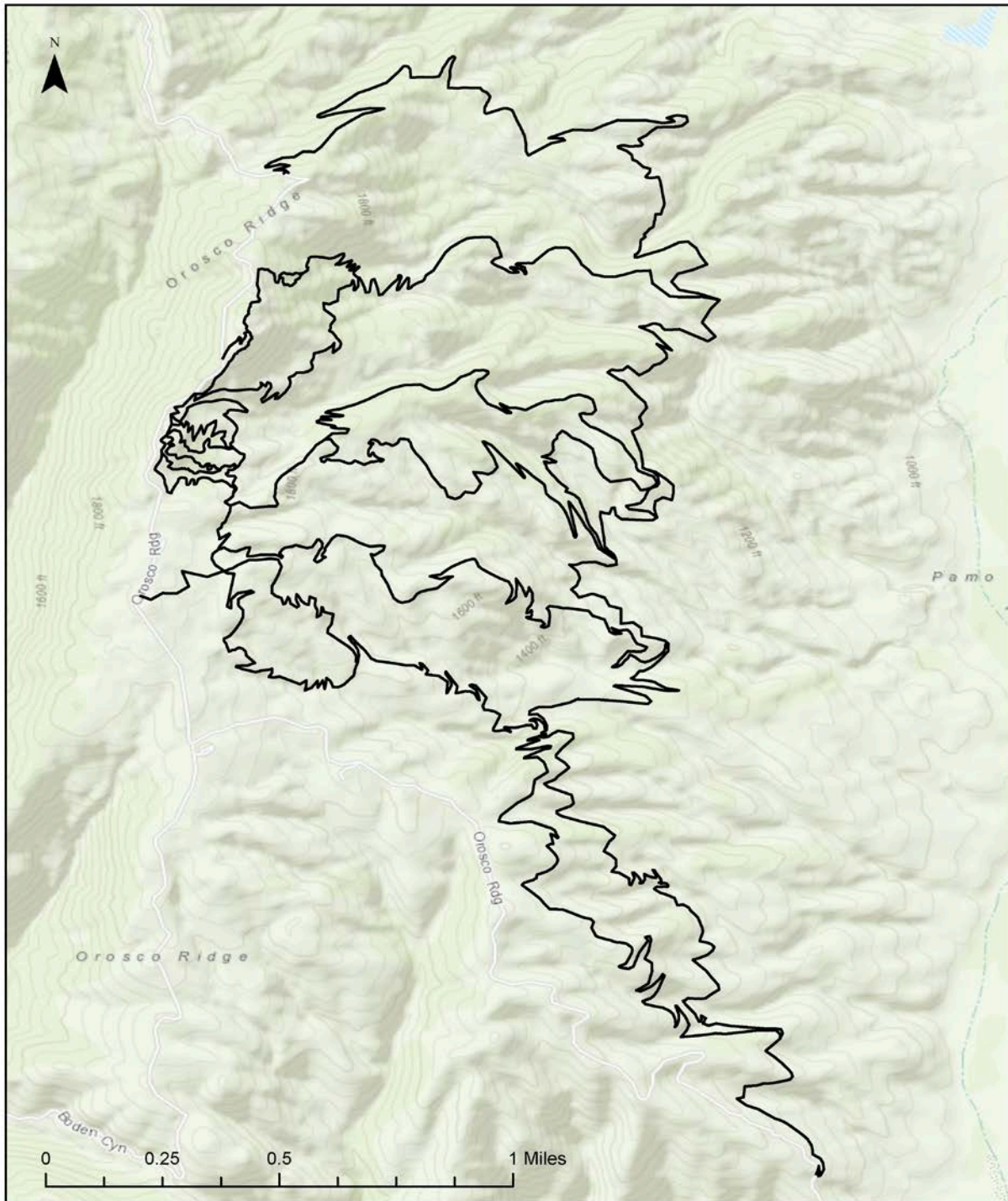


Figure 4. Proposed Action Overview

Orosco Ridge Final Proposal



Design Criteria

Field visits will be conducted later in fiscal year 2018 and design criteria will be incorporated to respond to resource protection so that potential conflicts are avoided or minimized. Resources such as cultural sites, wildlife, plants, landscape aesthetics and character, soil, and hydrology will be protected as directed in the Forest Plan, according to Best Management Practices (BMPs) and recommended in applicable specialist reports that will be found in the project record.

Forest-Specific Design Criteria

- CNF S1 - Consider and mitigate the impacts of proposed management activities and uses of National Forest System lands on dark night skies.

Forest Program Strategies and Tactics

Tribal 2 - Government to Government Relations

Establish effective relationships with federally recognized tribes:

- Develop and maintain government-to-government protocols, according to the National Tribal Relations Strategy, with all recognized tribes and organized groups of local Native Americans.
- Develop protocols to promote collaborative partnerships for managing heritage resources, ecosystem restoration, comprehensive fire planning and recognizing historic Native American access rights to land areas and resources.

AM 1 - Land Management Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

Report the results of forest plan monitoring and evaluation questions including the actions taken to respond to new information learned through the adaptive management cycle:

- Manage recreation opportunities to respond to the changing visitor demographic profiles.

WL 1 - Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, Candidate, and Sensitive Species Management

Manage habitat to move listed species toward recovery and de-listing. Prevent listing of proposed and sensitive species.

- Establish and maintain a working relationship with county and city planning agencies to ensure coordination on planning development projects adjacent to the national forest, as well as implementation of multi-species habitat conservation plans.
- Conduct threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and sensitive species occupancy surveys within potential threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and sensitive species recreation conflict areas.

IS 1 - Invasive Species Prevention and Control

Prevent the introduction of new invaders, conduct early treatment of new infestations, and contain and control established infestations:

- Limit ground disturbance to the minimum area necessary during project activities. Promote conditions to enhance the recovery of vegetation recovery in project planning, design, and implementation. Use native plant materials as needed to restore disturbed

sites to prevent the introduction or reintroduction of invasive nonnative species. Conduct follow-up inspections of ground disturbing activities to monitor the effectiveness of restoration efforts in reducing or preventing the introduction or re-introduction of invasive non-native plants.

Air 1 - Minimize Smoke and Dust

Control and reduce smoke and fugitive dust to protect human health, improve safety and/or reduce or eliminate environmental impacts.

- Incorporate visibility requirements into project plans.

WAT 1 - Watershed Function

Protect, maintain and restore the natural watershed functions including slope processes, surface water and groundwater flow and retention, and riparian area sustainability:

- Restore, maintain and improve watershed conditions. Assure that approved and funded rehabilitation and emergency watershed treatments are implemented in an effective and timely manner.
- Maintain or restore soil properties and productivity to ensure ecosystem health (soil microbiota and vegetation growth), soil hydrologic function, and biological buffering capacity.
- Maintain natural stream channel conductivity, connectivity and function.
- Assess and manage geologic resources and hazards to integrate earth science principals and relationships into ecosystem management, reduce risks to people and resources, and to interpret and protect unique values.
- Maintain watershed integrity by replacing or disposing of displaced soil and rock debris in approved placement sites.

Her 1 - Heritage Resource Protection

Protect heritage resources for cultural and scientific value and public benefit:

- Document known significant cultural properties to identify any activity that does or has the potential to adversely affect the site, or that does not complement the site. Develop measures to mitigate the adverse effects or impacts.
- Use partnerships to implement site management plans for heritage resource sites, focusing on those sites with recognized significance or that are at risk from public or land use effects.
- Evaluate historic sites for appropriate management. Develop site management plans for noteworthy heritage resources.

REC 2 - Sustainable Use and Environmental Design

Analyze, stabilize and restore areas where visitor use is negatively affecting recreation experiences, public safety and environmental resources. Manage visitor use within the limits of identified capacities:

- Implement Adaptive Mitigation for Recreation Uses (Appendix D) in existing and new recreation sites and uses whenever a conflict between uses or sensitive resources is detected.

REC 3 – Recreation participation

Offer a wide range of high quality, environmentally sustainable developed and dispersed recreation opportunities to a rapidly growing and culturally diverse visitor population, with minimal visitor conflicts and effects to other resources:

- Develop new, environmentally sustainable recreation opportunities and infrastructure to relieve concentrated demand within existing high-use areas and to accommodate future growth and new uses elsewhere.
- Implement adaptive management processes at recreation facilities to proactively respond to persons with disabilities, contemporary urban visitors, aging populations, diverse ethnic groups, and day-use emphasis (see Appendix C, Monitoring Requirements).

REC 4 - Conservation Education

Visitors have a greater understanding about the significance and importance of forest ecosystems, heritage resources, and the interrelationship between people and the natural environment:

- Develop strong, well-supported conservation education partnerships with non-profit organizations, volunteer groups, communities, governments, organization camps and private entities, while emphasizing and enhancing the capability of field program and project delivery, especially to underserved populations and Baja, California. Coordinate between national forests.

LM 1 - Landscape Aesthetics

Manage landscapes and built elements in order to achieve scenic integrity objectives:

- Use the best environmental design practices to harmonize changes in the landscape and to advance environmentally sustainable design solutions.

Trans 1 – Transportation System

Plan, design, construct, and maintain the road and trail system to meet those objectives established to implement the forest plan, to promote sustainable resource conditions, and to safely accommodate anticipated levels and types of use:

- Implement landscape scale transportation system analysis on a priority basis. Coordinate with state, county, local and regional government entities, municipalities, tribal governments, other agencies, and the public.
- Add unclassified roads and trails to the Forest Service transportation system when site-specific analysis determines there is a public need.
- Enhance user safety and offer adequate parking at popular destinations on high traffic passenger car roads, while also minimizing adverse resource effects.
- Using the priorities identified in the Roads Analysis Process (prepared October 10, 2003 and posted to the Reading Room May 2004) reduce the road maintenance backlog to

provide safe, efficient routes for recreation traffic and the through-traveling public, and to safely accommodate fire protection equipment or other high clearance vehicles.

Trans 3 - Improve Trails

Develop an interconnected, shared-use trail network where compatible and support facilities complement local, regional and national trails and open space, and also enhance day-use opportunities and access for the general public.

- Construct and maintain the trail network to levels commensurate with area objectives, sustainable resource conditions, user safety, and the type and level of use. Convert ecologically sustainable unclassified roads and trails, and other roads that meet the need for trail-based recreation.
- New trail construction projects will emphasize development of partnerships and cooperative agreements (such as the Adopt-a-Trail program) for construction, future maintenance, and reconstruction.

Project-Specific Design Criteria

Design features that will be incorporated in order to avoid and minimize impacts for the proposed action include:

Wildlife Design Criteria

- Wildlife design considerations will be included upon Forest Biologist input once field-based surveys have been conducted.

Botanical Design Criteria

- Botanical design considerations will be included upon Forest Botanist input once field-based surveys have been conducted.

Hydrological/Soil Design Criteria

Applicable BMPs are taken from the Water Quality Management for Forest System Lands in California: BMPs (USDA Forest Service, September 2000).

- Other applicable design criteria for hydrology/soils will be incorporated after Forest Hydrologist review.

Archeological/Cultural Design Criteria

- Cultural sites will be identified, flagged, and avoided by project actions.
- Other applicable design criteria for archeology/cultural concerns will be incorporated after Heritage Specialist review and input from local tribal communities.

Scenery Management Design Criteria

- Project features will be blended with natural landscape features to create shapes and colors that mimic natural patterns.
- No manmade infrastructure components will be used in this proposed action.
- Other applicable design criteria for scenery will be taken into account after public comments have been received.