



**OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING
Susanville, CA 96130**

April 28, 2017

STAFF REPORT: Over Snow Vehicle Program
STAFF: Kelly Long, Winter Recreation Program Manager
SUBJECT: Over Snow Vehicle Program and Over Snow Vehicle Use Designation

Summary

The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division primarily supports motorized winter recreation in California through the Over Snow Vehicle (OSV) Program. The vast majority of OSV recreation occurs on national forests. Several forests in the Pacific Southwest Region are currently undertaking the OSV Use Designation process. This report reviews the status of the OSV Program and OSV Use Designation process.

Discussion

The California Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trust Fund has supported the management and maintenance of motorized winter recreation since the early 1980s. This support is accomplished through the OSV Program, which includes 26 groomed trail systems on 11 national forests. These trail systems offer over 1,700 miles of snowmobile trails, plowed parking areas and restroom facilities at 34 trailheads and 97 miles of plowed access roads. OSV Program funds purchase and maintain trail markings and signage, provide trail maps, and support seasonal monitoring of trails. A state-owned fleet of grooming tractors, with contractors and volunteer groups, provide the OSV trail grooming. Although the groomed trails are primarily maintained for OSV use, many other users benefit from these services., including Nordic skiers, snowshoers, and other non-motorized recreationists who use the parking areas and groomed trail systems.

Since 2005, the OHMVR Division has entered into contracts with each of the 11 national forests and three counties in the program. In 2015, the OHMVR Division renewed the new Master Challenge Cost Share Agreement with the Pacific Southwest Region. The Master Challenge Cost Share Agreement allows the OHMVR Division to enter into supplemental project agreements with individual national forests in the Region to provide for OSV trail grooming and related activities. This agreement will continue through December 31, 2020.

OSV Use Designation

OSV use on federal land in California is currently being analyzed under Subpart C of the U.S. Forest Service's Travel Management Regulation (36 Code of Federal Regulations (CRF) Part 212). Subpart C is the mechanism for national forests to designate National Forest System snow trails and areas for public OSV use.

Additionally, five national forests in California are concurrently analyzing OSV use to meet the terms of a 2013 Settlement Agreement (*Snowlands Network et al.*) that required them to "complete appropriate NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] analysis(es) to identify snow trails for grooming." These include the Lassen, Plumas, Tahoe, Eldorado, and Stanislaus National Forests. Among other things, these national forests will identify snow trails to be groomed for public OSV use under the OSV Program. Each of the five national forests will conduct analyses separately, but with overlapping timelines.

The planning process included public scoping, development of proposed actions, and issues common to all or most of the five national forests. The following examples are issues identified during the planning process:

- Designate National Forest System snow trails on National Forest System lands where public OSV use would be allowed.
- Designate National Forest System lands as areas where public, cross-country OSV use would be allowed. All existing OSV prohibitions that apply to areas where public motorized use is not allowed would continue.
- Do not designate (prohibit public OSV use) National Forest lands for public OSV use. These areas include all areas where public OSV use is currently prohibited.
- Implement snow depth requirements for public OSV use. These requirements establish a minimum snow depth for allowing public use on designated snow trails, public cross-country OSV use in designated areas, and for resource protection.
- Designate public OSV crossing points of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (Pacific Crest Trail). Alternatives may also establish a corridor for the Pacific Crest Trail where public OSV use would be prohibited, except on designated crossings.
- Identify snow trails groomed for public OSV use by the National Forest Service's Grooming Program. To date no proposed action has reduced the amount of trails groomed by the OSV Program.
- Groom OSV snow trails when there are 12 or more inches of snow, and formally adopt California State Parks' snow grooming standards of 12 or more inches of snow depth before grooming can occur.

Ongoing analysis and alternatives will determine how these items are addressed.

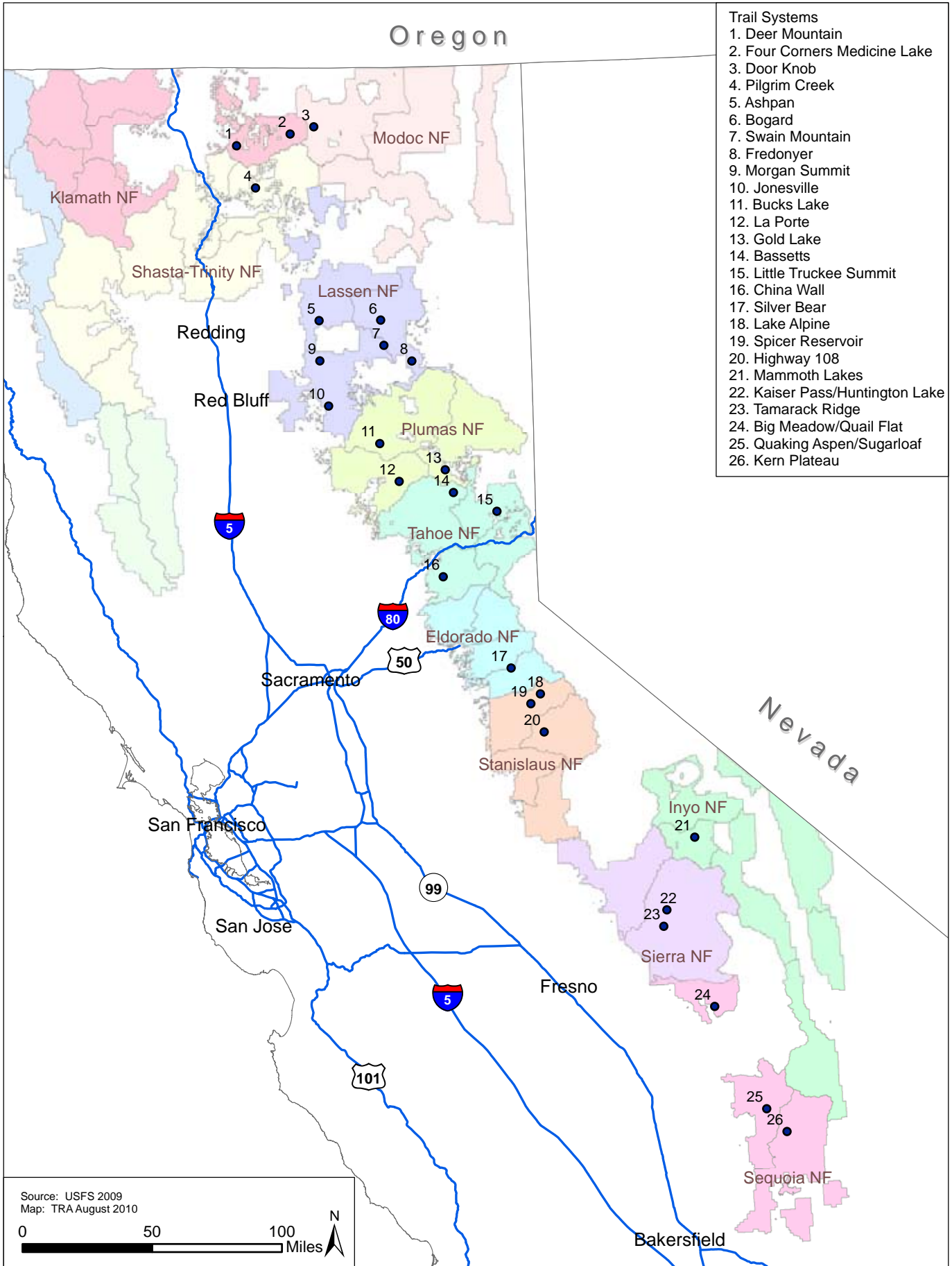
Commission Action

For information only.

Attachments

Attachment 1: OSV Trail System Map

Attachment 2: Photo of grooming activity



Over Snow Vehicle Grooming

