In Brief

USDA Forest Service · Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail · Regions 4, 5 and 6 *(v.2014-11-17)*

Topic: Pacific Crest Trail Management Area Direction Forest Plan Revision (Inyo, Sierra, Sequoia NF)

The Inyo, Sequoia, and Sierra National Forests are the three "early adopter" national forests in the Pacific Southwest Region of the Forest Service that are revising their Forest Plans using the 2012 Planning Rule. The revision process involves three stages: assessment of forest resource condition and trend, development of a revised plan, and monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of plan direction. To officially start the formal NEPA process, a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) was published in the Federal Register on August 29, 2014, that briefly describes the purpose of and need for action and the proposed action to revise these forest plans. Scoping comments on the proposed action were submitted to the Forest Service which helps to refine the proposed action, identify preliminary issues, and develop alternatives to the proposed action. The comment period has now closed.

The U.S. Forest Service has meetings scheduled to share the issues and concerns the agency heard during the recently completed scoping phase.at the following dates and locations:

- 6:00-8:00pm - Monday, November 17, Sierra National Forest, Holiday Inn, 5090 East Clinton Way, Fresno, CA
- 6:00-8:00pm - Tuesday, November 18, Sequoia National Forest, Supervisor's Office, 1839 South Newcomb Street, Porterville, CA
- 6:00-8:00pm - Thursday, November 20, Inyo National Forest, Tri-County Fairgrounds, Tallman Pavilion, Sierra Street & Fair Drive, Bishop, CA

The meetings are an opportunity for the public to hear discussion how those issues and concerns are being used to frame a preliminary range of alternatives. There is no formal comment period associated with these meetings. As always, the Forest Service welcomes opportunities for thoughtful dialogue. There will be an opportunities for formal comments (scoping) when the draft EIS (DEIS) is released. The final EIS will result in three separate plans with three Records of Decision following the revised forest plans. Forest Supervisors will remain the "responsible official" for making decisions on their specific forest plans. For future updates regarding the EIS process, see http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/r5/landmanagement/planning

Scoping Comments received during the Notice of Intent Comment Period

During the NOI comment period approximately 400 (total of 7300) comments were received regarding the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Commenters shared a wide range of view regarding the PCT including support and concern for the proposed action. The attached briefing paper has been prepared to address citizens' concerns and to clarify what was proposed in the NOI for the PCT.

November 17, 2014

[11.18.14 v.1]

PACIFIC CREST TRAIL (PCT) BRIEFING PAPER

KEY MESSAGES

Motorized and mechanized trail travel use is an important recreational use on National Forest System (NFS) lands that connects citizens to public lands, provides outstanding outdoor experiences, and provides economic support to local communities:

- Nation-wide, the Forest Service provides more trails for mountain bicycling than any other land-management agency.
- Over 98 percent of the Forest Service's non-wilderness trail miles are open to bicycle use (125,962 miles).
- Similar to the Appalachian Trail, the PCT was designed and constructed for hikers and horseback riders.
- Motorized and mechanized (bicycle) use has never been authorized for the PCT.
- The Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra forest plan revisions will not change these current uses.
- There are a few sections of the PCT that have been temporarily located in suboptimal locations for the desired scenic or recreation experience. The long term solution would be to relocate these sections of trail. Examples include the road walk across the Columbia River Gorge and the Klamath River bridges and the Los Angeles Aqueduct road near CA Highway 138. In these locations, motorized and mechanized use may be present and is determined by the underlying land ownership (federal, state or private).

The Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) experience is dependent on the benefits of traveling amongst the exceptionally scenic, wild, natural and historic landscapes along the crest of the Pacific ranges of the United States:

In order to protect the trail experience, the PCT Management Area **would allow**:

- Timber harvest, prescribed burning and wildland fire designed to minimize impacts to scenic resources.
- Hiker and horseback riding throughout the management area.
- Foot and horseback riding recreation events currently permitted on the PCT to continue as long as they do not negatively impact the environment or substantially interfere with user trail experience.
- New recreation events to cross the PCT at designated crossings.
- Motorized and mechanized (bicycle) trail crossings of the PCT at designated locations.
- In locations where the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is semi-primitive motorized or roaded natural, the ROS class may be retained.

The three Forest Plan revisions do **not** make travel management decisions.

- Existing Forest Service system roads, county roads within the national forests, and Forest Service system trails will remain in place.
- Uses allowed on the current motor vehicle use maps will continue.

In order to ensure that the outstanding scenic qualities and recreation experience of the trail continue, the PCT Management Area **would prohibit:**

- New roads (permanent or temporary) unless required by law to provide access to private lands or documented as the only prudent and feasible alternative.

- New utility lines unless they represent the only feasible and prudent alternative to meet an overriding public need.
- New communication sites and wind towers.

KEY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. How will the PCT Management Area change use within the Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra National Forests?

The PCT Management Area will not change existing use. Eighty-nine percent of the PCT miles are in designated wilderness. In these places, management will continue to emphasize the wilderness character of the land. Outside of designated wilderness, system trails that are open to bicycling and motorized use will be allowed to continue.

Forest Name	PCT total trail miles	PCT wilderness trail miles (closed to motorized and mechanized use by congressional legislation)
Inyo	86	81
Sequoia	47	34
Sierra	27	27
Total	160	142

2. Will the PCT Management Area remove 21 square miles from multiple-use in the Sequoia National Forest?

No. Vegetation management including, timber harvest, fuels treatment, and prescribed burning will be allowed to continue and will be designed to minimize impacts to scenic resources. There are no Forest Service system roads or trails that will be closed in the forest plan revision.

3. Will the PCT Management Area designation lead to the closure of existing multiple-use trails on the Sequoia National Forest?

No, management area designation for the PCT will not lead to the closure of any multiple use system trails. The three forest plan revisions do **not** make travel management decisions and will **not** change current allowed uses. On the Sequoia National Forest, nine miles of the Pacific Crest Trail goes through the Piutes. There was a decision made during travel management to include the existing trail and road system in the Piutes. There are additional user-created routes that were not added at that time because of the fire but an agreement was made to the public to evaluate these for potential inclusion in the future. To become part of the system these trails would need to be evaluated for their recreation opportunities, sustainability, impacts to natural and cultural resources, and found not to be in conflict with the law that created the PCT.

4. Are trail and road crossings of the PCT limited to a "five miles apart" regulation?

Since the PCT travels from Mexico to Canada, there will be numerous crossings over the length of the trail. The proposed desired condition of the trail is to **minimize** the number of crossings to preferably less than one crossing per five miles of the PCT. In locations where the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum is semi-primitive motorized or roaded natural, a denser crossing may be allowed to continue. Since the Forest Plan revisions do not make travel management decisions, future planning efforts for new roads and trails would evaluate the recreation opportunities for all users, sustainability of the trail system, and natural and cultural resource concerns before adding new roads or trails.

5. Will the PCT Management Area allow hiker and horseback riding events?

Since most of the 160 miles of PCT in these three forests is in designated wilderness (89 percent), there are no hiker and horseback riding recreation events currently permitted. New proposed recreation events would be allowed to cross the PCT outside of designated wilderness.

6. Are there currently any motorized trespass issues on the Pacific Crest Trail?

Most off-highway vehicle and motorcycle riders are responsible and organized groups like the American Motorcyclist Association (AMA), the California Off-Road Vehicle Association (CORVA), and the Friends of Jawbone have been active in promoting responsible motorized recreation and restoration of public lands. Unfortunately, in Kern County and other locations, there has been damage to the PCT by illegal use and individuals have been cited by law enforcement agencies for riding on the PCT. Motorized vehicle trespass continues to be a concern.

7. Are bicycles allowed on easements that have been acquired for the PCT?

Lands and interests, such as easements, acquired for the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail are managed in the same way that the trail is on public lands. Since motorized and mechanized use is prohibited on the PCT, it is also prohibited on easements. Private land owners have been compensated for these interests and have agreed to allow the use of the trail by hikers and equestrians.

8. Why are bicycles not allowed on the Pacific Crest Trail?

Bicycle use on the PCT has never been authorized. Similar to the Appalachian Trail, the PCT was designed and constructed for hikers and horseback riders. The Forest Service has recently reviewed the current closure order and determined that in order to continue to provide a safe and unique recreation experience for the primary users, hikers and equestrians, (36 CFR § 212.21) the closure order is needed.

9. How wide will the PCT Management Area be?

The PCT Management Area (trail corridor) width has not been determined. It may vary in the forest plan alternatives. It will be of sufficient width to encompass national trail resources, qualities, values, associated settings and the primary use or uses. This includes vistas (key observation points), campsites, water sources, and other important resource values.

TRAIL MILES BY FOREST PLAN REVISION NATIONAL FOREST (PCT)

			Non-Wilderness				
Forest	Total trail miles Forest(PCT)	Total wilderness trail miles forest (PCT)*	Miles of trail forest (PCT)	Miles open to motorized trail use forest(PCT)	%	Miles open to bicycle use forest(PCT)	%
Inyo	1,637 (86)	787(81)	851(5)	340(0)	40 (0)	846(0)	99.9(0)
Sequoia	1,055 (47)	296(34)	759(13)	377(0)	50(0)	746(0)	98(0)
Sierra	1,242 (27)	618 (27)	623 (0)	185(0)	30(0)	623(0)	100(0)
Total	3,934(160)	1,701(142)	2,233(18)	802(0)		2,215(0)	

*Closed to motorized and mechanized use by congressional legislation