

**DECISION NOTICE  
AND  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**for the**

***East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project***

USDA Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Truckee Ranger District and Carson Ranger District  
Placer, Nevada, and Sierra Counties, California

**Decision and Reasons for the Decision**

**Introductions**

The Forest Service proposes actions in the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project including motorized road and trail management, improvement, and restoration activities. Actions are needed due to: increased demand on trails; erosion; ongoing trail maintenance; poor trail drainage; fragmented trails; impacts to natural and cultural resources; and public safety concerns as described in the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Environmental Assessment. The Project area is located on Tahoe National Forest System lands within three areas which have been determined to exhibit high levels of motorized recreation use on the Truckee Ranger District: Verdi Ridge, Boca Hill and Prosser Reservoir, and the Hwy 89 south / 06 Road / Big Chief area connecting Truckee and Tahoe City. Actions are also proposed to be implemented at adjacent connected locations on Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest System lands at the north end of the Verdi Ridge.

The Forest Service has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant laws and regulations. The EA discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from the proposed alternatives.

This document contains a Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The Decision Notice identifies the decision and the rationale for its selection. The FONSI describes the factors used in determining that the decision does not cause significant impacts on the human environment and therefore does not require preparation of an environmental impact statement. Additional documentation, including more detailed analyses of project area resources, may be found in the project file located at Truckee Ranger District in Truckee, California.

**Decision**

I have read the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project EA, reviewed the analysis in the project file, including documents incorporated by reference in the EA, and fully understand the environmental effects disclosed therein. After careful consideration of the analysis, applicable laws, *Tahoe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (1990) as amended, *Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (1986) as amended, and public comments, I have selected Alternative 1, the Proposed Action. My decision is based on a review of the project file that shows a thorough analysis using the best available science.

Alternative 1 is fully described in the EA, Chapter 2 on pages 12 through 21 and incorporates management requirements to reduce and avoid adverse environmental impacts and maps as displayed in Appendix A of the EA. The environmental effects for Alternative 1 are described throughout Chapter 3. These actions will: 1) replace fixed wet weather seasonal closures in the Verdi Ridge area with a wet weather operating plan; 2) construct 71 miles of motorized single track trail; 3) reroute approximately 2 miles of existing roads and trails; 4) make changes to the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS) including designating approximately 35.5 miles of existing non-motorized trails as open for Class 1 E-

bikes, adding approximately 1.7 miles of existing unauthorized routes to the NFTS, converting 0.7 miles of road to trail, changing maintenance levels on approximately 3.7 miles of road, and decommissioning 9 road segments (approximately 5.3 miles); 5 ) decommission 41 miles of unauthorized user created road and trail; 6) improve or develop 11 staging areas for recreation; 7) install or improve gates, boulders, barriers, and signage; 8) construct one bridge; and 9) treat 40 acres of invasive plant infestations. My decision recognizes the minimization criteria for designating roads and trails (36 CFR 212.55) as shown in Appendices B-G of the EA.

The reasons for my decision are anchored in the needs for action, described above and in Chapter 1 of the EA (pages 5 through 9). My decision focuses on the need to improve trails to accommodate current and expected trail use, provide for public safety and recreational experiences, and protect forest resources.

My reasons for selecting Alternative 1 are:

- Alternative 1 achieves the purpose and need for taking action (described on pages 5 through 9 of the EA) in the most responsible and effective manner, particularly when compared to the No Action Alternative.
- Alternative 1 will increase opportunities by adopting a more flexible, soil-moisture condition-based approach to determine when existing roads and off-highway vehicle (OHV) trails should be opened or closed in the Verdi Ridge area. The associated wet weather operating plan will also minimize resource damage caused by travel during wet weather periods. I support keeping roads and trails open for public use when use is not likely to impair natural resources in order to support multiple uses of the Forest.
- The use of barriers in Alternative 1 will mitigate unauthorized routes from accumulating in the forest, help to keep travel on designated NFS roads and trails, and protect parking and staging areas from resource damage.
- My decision includes the implementation of management requirements designed to mitigate potential adverse impacts to resources in the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project area as identified under the action description. All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm have been adopted in the design of Alternative 1. I conclude that the management requirements (EA pp. 16 through 21) included in Alternative 1 reduce effects from this project to a level of non-significance for all affected resources, while still accomplishing the purpose and need for the project.
- The effects analyses presented in Chapter 3 and Appendices B-G of the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project EA addressed the applicable general and specific criteria for designation of trails and roads for this project and informed the decision-making for this project.
- My decision will not impact Forest road or trail maintenance more than under the existing condition, as roads and trails in the Verdi Ridge motorized system will remain closed during periods of road bed saturation and therefore use will not occur during periods of potential road and trail damage. Additional proposed actions should have a positive effect on affordability and the cost of trail repairs by decommissioning unsustainable segments that need frequent maintenance and using sustainable design standards for reroutes and new road and trail.
- Alternative 1 will not significantly alter the relative speed, volume, or distribution of traffic on the trails and roads. Traffic composition will be monitored and use designations enforced post implementation. Public safety and vehicle class are compatible with current and proposed trail and road geometry and surfacing.
- Alternative 1 will not significantly alter impacts to, public enjoyment of, or current patterns of use on four trails proposed for designation to allow access for Class 1 E-bike recreation.
- Alternative 1 provides for protection of forest resources, including water quality; natural resources, cultural and historical resources; and riparian areas. Although the project would temporarily increase weed vectors, the invasive plant treatments will reduce the potential for spread of existing invasive

plant infestations. It will protect and maintain habitat for threatened, endangered and sensitive plant and animal species and management indicator species.

- Alternative 1 implements applicable standards and guidelines in the *Tahoe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (LRMP 1990) as amended by the *Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision* (SNFPA ROD 2004) and the *Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (LRMP 1986) as amended.
- Alternative 1 addresses the requirement in NEPA to consider “the degree to which the action may adversely affect” a given resource. I have considered the degree to which this project’s actions contribute to project-specific and cumulative effects on the various resources.

## **Alternatives Considered**

In addition to the Proposed Action, I considered Alternative 2, No Action. Under the No Action Alternative, no new actions would be implemented to accomplish project goals. Maintenance would occur on existing trails. Wet weather seasonal closure dates would remain for public wheeled motor vehicle travel on NFS roads and trails in the Verdi Ridge area of Truckee Ranger District. Class 1 E-bike users would continue to experience specific use restrictions. The following activities would not occur as proposed in Alternative 1: wet weather closures, new trail construction, road and trail reroutes, changes to the NFTS, decommissioning, development and or improvement of staging areas, barrier fencing, gate, signage, and boulder placement, bridge construction, and treatment of invasive plant infestations. The effects of taking no action would continue.

## **Public Involvement**

The East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Proposed Action has been included in the quarterly Tahoe National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) since April 2020.

Two 30-day scoping periods for the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project, held from April 3, 2020, through May 3, 2020 and from May 8, 2020 through June 7, 2020, were initiated when the Forest Service published a legal notice in Grass Valley’s *The Union* newspaper and distributed a scoping letter and map to more than 120 individuals, groups and Tribes disclosing information and seeking public comment on the Project.

As a result of scoping, written timely comments were received from 54 individuals, organizations and Tribes. 43 of the 54 commenters were supportive of the proposed project. The comment letters were used to consider issues and refine the proposal described in scoping.

People were invited to review and comment on the preliminary EA for 30 days following a legal notice published September 4, 2020 in Grass Valley’s *The Union* newspaper and a project letter distributed to potentially interested individuals, organizations, agencies, and Tribes. As a result, written timely comments were received from 114 individuals and organizations. 49 commenters were supportive of the proposed project. The remaining 65 comment letters were carefully reviewed and used to consider issues and refine both the proposed action (EA Chapter 2) and the project effects analysis (EA Chapter 3). In response to comments, changes were made to the proposed action including removal of a proposed 115 acre open riding area (Action #4 in the preliminary EA) and revisions to proposed staging area creation to ensure safe and accessible equestrian use (Action #6, D). Revisions were added to defined Trail Construction Standards including for “Creek or Ephemeral Drainage Crossings” to ensure bridge design and construction allow for safe and sustainable equestrian use (EA page 15), and for “Switchbacks and Rolling Turns” requiring identification and mitigation of lines-of-sight issues (EA page 16). Additional analysis was presented under FONSI element 1 in sections covering Recreation (EA page 39), Sustainability (EA page 40), Provision of Recreational Opportunities (EA page 41), Conflicts among uses of NFS Lands (EA page 43), and Transportation (EA page 53) in order to address comments associated with the proposal to designate four currently non-motorized trails as open to Class 1 E-bike use. Details on the degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety were added under FONSI element 2, specifically to address concerns over the proposal to allow use by Class 1 E-bikes on four

currently non-motorized trails (EA pages 53-55). Finally, additional minimization criteria assessments were meaningfully applied and implemented (EA, Appendices B-G) to meet requirements of Travel Management Regulation 36 C.F.R. 212.55(a)(b) and (c).

### **Finding of No Significant Impacts**

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

#### **Context**

The footprint of ground disturbing activities associated to the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project represents a fraction of the area covered by the watershed boundaries in which they will occur. The project is a site-specific action that by itself does not have international, national, region-wide, or statewide importance. It achieves goals set forth in the 2005 Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212, Subpart B). The watershed boundary areas, covering just over 41,000 acres, represent less than 5% of Tahoe National Forest overall. Many of the proposed actions have the potential to result in significant social, economic, and ecological benefits locally though they may appear to be relatively insignificant when viewed from a regional or national scale. For the purpose of this analysis, the significance of effects associated to proposed site specific actions, is most adequately interpreted in terms of the long and short term effects in the locale as opposed to the entire Tahoe National Forest or the region. No significant effects, either long or short term, local, regional or societal, are anticipated.

#### **Intensity**

I considered the following ten elements of impact intensity (40 CFR 1508.27b) in assessing the potential significance of Project effects.

##### ***1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse***

My finding of no significant environmental effects considers both beneficial and adverse impacts. I did not find any impacts adverse in terms of being significant nor biased by the beneficial effects of the action (EA Chapter 3; pp. 22 through 64 and supporting resource analyses found in the project file). Alternative 1 parameters along with the management requirements (EA Chapter 2) will mitigate effects to less than significant levels.

##### ***2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety***

No significant effects to public health and safety will occur by having additional periods of time available for motor vehicle opportunities when resource conditions allow. Safety is one of the considered criteria in determining if a road, trail or area should be closed within the season of use. Allowing motorized use during a potentially extended period of time under a proposed future Wet Weather Operating Plan would not adversely impact public safety because the existing vehicle classes allowed on the affected roads and motorized trails would not change from current management. Public safety will not be affected by the construction of new, sustainably designed motorized single-track trail. Reroutes, NFTS changes, route decommission, improved management, and staging area creation will not adversely impact public health or safety. Careful analysis and consideration of current patterns of mountain bike use along with comparative data relative to different user types, has led me to determine that designation of four currently non-motorized trails to allow for use by Class 1 E-bikes does not pose a significant increased risk to public health or safety. Construction of one bridge, properly engineered in compliance with stated construction design standards, will not affect public health or safety. Treatment of invasive plant infestations, implemented in compliance with management requirements, will not affect public health or safety. (EA, Chapter 3)

*3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas*

No parklands, prime farmlands, research natural areas, special interest areas, wild and scenic rivers or other ecologically critical areas are within or nearby the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project.

The Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act cultural resource analysis for the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration proposed action has been completed for actions on the TNF and has been initiated for actions on the HTNF and will be completed prior to a decision for this project. The inventory and management analysis meet provisions of *Amendment #1 of the Programmatic Agreement Among The USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region (Region 5), The California State Historic Preservation Officer, The Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer, and The Advisory Council For Historic Preservation, regarding the process for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, for Management of Historic Properties by the National Forests Of The Pacific Southwest Region* (Regional PA 2018). Unless the nature or scope of the undertaking changes, no additional archaeological inventory is required for the area of potential effects (APE). The Tahoe National Forest cultural resource file designation for this proposed undertaking is R2018051700080.

*4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial*

The Proposed Action is consistent with the management direction in the *Tahoe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (1990), as amended by the 2004 *Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision* (USDA Forest Service 2004) and the *Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (1986) as amended. Potential adverse effects have been minimized to the point where there are few effects to draw controversy. Public involvement efforts did not reveal scientific controversies regarding the magnitude or nature of effects of this project's proposed action (EA Pg. 55)

*5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks*

The effects of the proposed action on the human environment are predictable, based on experience with similar past practices. The Tahoe National Forest has extensive experience in transportation management and habitat restoration. Proposed activities are routine in nature, employing standard practices and design criteria rooted in policy and professional knowledge, and their risks and effects are generally well known. The EA shows that the effects from the proposed transportation management actions are not highly uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk (EA Chapter 3).

*6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration*

The action will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. No significant effects are identified (EA, Chapter 3), nor does this action influence a decision in principle about any future considerations.

*7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts*

Consideration of the effects of this project and other ongoing or planned projects in or adjacent to this project revealed no significant cumulative effects. The effects of other foreseeable future actions as well as past actions and ongoing actions were included in the analysis (EA Chapter 3; pp. 56 through 61).

*8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources*

A record search, intensive resource inventory and cultural resource report (Smith 2020) have been completed for the proposed East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project under provisions of the

Regional Programmatic Agreement (Regional PA 2018) with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the California State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which complies with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The inventory documents all archaeological sites within the project area. Each component of the proposed action was carefully planned in consultation with the forest archaeologist and altered when necessary in order to avoid impacts to cultural sites. Assessment of historical and cultural resources within the project area indicates implementation of the proposed action would not adversely affect any cultural resources eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor would it cause loss or destruction of any cultural resources. Potential effects on heritage resources would be avoided by implementation of the cultural resource management requirements and by following standard procedure as outlined in the RPA (Regional PA 2018). In the event that historic properties are discovered during project implementation, operations will cease in the area until the district archaeologist and/or heritage program manager have visited the area and determined an appropriate course of action following Stipulation 7.10 of the RPA.

*9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat*

Determinations of effects are contained in the project's Biological Assessment for Aquatic Wildlife, Biological Evaluation and Assessment for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife, and Biological Assessment/Evaluation for botanical species. They are summarized in the Environmental assessment under FONSI element 1. No federally listed species, or habitat determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 will be affected by any activities proposed in the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project.

*10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protections of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b) (10))*

The selected alternative complies with all applicable federal, State, and local laws and requirements (EA pp. 62 and 63).

### **Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations**

The actions proposed under Alternative 1 are consistent with the *Tahoe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP)* (USDA FS 1990) as amended by the *Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision (SNFPA ROD)* (USDA FS 2004). Actions are also consistent with the *1986 Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (As Amended)*. The project maintains consistency with management direction as defined for the TNF in Management Areas 21 (Sardine-Worn), 32 (Stampede-Boca), 38 (Billy), 50 (Prosser Reservoir), and 68 (Sawtooth), as well as for the HTNF in Management Area 9 (Dog Valley).

The TNF's Proposed Action would change decisions on roads to meet the intent of what was analyzed in the MTM FEIS, and decided upon in the MTM ROD (USDA FS 2010) and the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Dog Valley Route Adjustment Project (USDA FS 2012). Seasons of use, established to protect Forest resources, remain unchanged. As noted in Chapter 1.05, Title 36 CFR 212.55 of the Travel Management Rule requires that decisions of designation (in this case re-designating seasonal closures, and re-designating road segments by closing them to public wheeled motor vehicle travel) to NFTS roads and trails must consider pertinent and required indicators. (Refer to Appendices B - G: Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria)

### **Administrative Review Opportunities**

This proposed decision was subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B. Two objections were received during the designated objection period of December 18, 2020 through February 1, 2021. One objector withdrew their objection and the other objection was dismissed.

### **Implementation Date**

The decision may be implemented immediately.

## Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision please contact: **Jonathan Cook-Fisher**, District Ranger, Truckee Ranger District, 10811 Stockrest Springs Road, Truckee, CA 96161. Phone: (530) 587-3558.

Approved by:  \_\_\_\_\_ March 21, 2021  
ELI ILANO Date  
Forest Supervisor  
Responsible Official, Tahoe National Forest

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
BILL DUNKELBERGER Date  
Forest Supervisor  
Responsible Official, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest

## Attachment: Appendix A, Responses to Public Comments

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## EAST ZONE CONNECTIVITY AND RESTORATION PROJECT APPENDIX A: RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

### **Background and Introduction**

The East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) was provided to the public for comment during a 30-day comment period. Please see the Environmental Assessment – “Scoping and Public Involvement” section in the EA for a detailed record of the project’s public engagement including the scoping and comment periods, and public outreach efforts.

The Tahoe National Forest received comments from approximately 113 entities, agencies, tribes and interest groups during the designated comment period. Many commenters pointed to either the same array of reasons for offering their support, or the same list of issues for voicing their concerns. To concentrate on the content of the concerns expressed within the comment letters, the Tahoe National Forest processed the comments by identifying specific issues. In each issue section, similar comment concerns were grouped, and responses were developed. This process resulted in fewer, duplicative responses while responding to each issue raised. Unique or specific comments are referred to individually under their assigned issue sections. Commenters are identified with their comments using name and Index #. In some cases, interrelated comments are presented offering concerns related to a single issue.

This project is subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B. Those who submitted project-specific written comments during scoping or the designated comment periods are eligible to file an objection. **The names of commenters who provided potentially eligible comments during the comment period are listed in Attachment 1 of this document along with commenter index numbers and the comment issues reference.** In many cases the comments responded to in this document do not refer to every name or organization that submitted similar comments. This is not intended to discredit or disqualify any commenters from the due process of the Objection Period. Please see the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project Decision Notice or Legal Notice regarding the details of the Objection Period. *If a commenter’s name or comment was not directly addressed in this document, this does not signify that the commenter is not eligible to Object under this due process.*

This document includes:

**Attachment 1:** Names and Identifiers (Index #'s) of Commenters



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## A. Speed and Safety

**Comment 1A:** The EA fails to disclose safety impacts associated with the potential speed of E-bikes on shared use trails. Forest Service Policy states that E-bikes travel at speeds of 20-28 mph, compared to pedestrians and non-motorized bicycles, which typically travel at speeds ranging from 3-10 mph. (**Backcountry Horsemen of America et al. Index #'s 103 - 108**)

**Response to Comment 1A:** The referenced Forest Service Policy, taken from the U.S. Forest Service Briefing Paper: Classification of E-bikes under the Travel Management Rule (TMR) was published in 2017. The Forest Service has more recently proposed revisions to the Forest Service Manual “specific to guidance on designating NFS trails and areas on NFS lands for motor vehicle use.” These include the addition of categorical definitions in FSM 7705, and “a category for designating E-bike use on NFS trails” in FSM 7711.3 (Federal Register 85, #186, September 2020) Tahoe National Forest is utilizing current state and industry standards for the classification of E-bikes, which employs a three tiered system in defining different classes:

- Class 1 – A pedal assisted electric bicycle with a top assisted speed of 20 miles per hour (mph)
- Class 2 – A throttle assisted electric bicycle with a top assisted speed of 20 mph
- Class 3 – A pedal assisted electric bicycle with a top assisted speed of 28 mph

The proposed designation of existing routes to allow for the use of E-bikes on four select trails on the Truckee Ranger District is specific only to those electric bicycles defined as Class 1 based on the definition criteria. Tahoe National Forest collected comparative speed data on these trails in order to measure differences in average and top speeds between traditional mountain bikes and Class 1 E-bikes (Trail Reports, incorporated by reference in the final EA). Speeds were recorded for male and female riders of intermediate to advanced ability, on Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes, across terrain that included uphill, downhill, and flat. Results showed similar average speeds between Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes on downhill and flat sections of trail. Top speeds measuring 16-19 mph were recorded for both Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes on flat open terrain. Top speeds on downhill sections, where riders generally do not pedal, were marginally slower, but again similar between Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes. Class 1 E-bikes were able to achieve higher speeds on uphill trail segments ranging from 8 - 13 mph while traditional mountain bikes averaged 5 – 8 mph over the same uphill sections. While this difference is statistically significant, our analysis indicates it to be well within the range of differences in speed that can be observed between novice and expert riders. The slightly higher speeds recorded by Class 1 E-bikes on uphill sections of trail, based on a review of collected data, does not represent a significantly increased safety risk to other user groups relative to the current level of use by traditional mountain bikes. Recreation Trail Reports were completed for the Commemorative Overland Emigrant Trail and the Sawtooth Trail. The Tahoe National Forest decided, based on results, that similar reports for the Big Chief and A1 trails were not necessary as it had been observed that there was no difference in speeds between Class 1 E-Bikes and traditional mountain bikes on flat and downhill trail segments and that speed was largely determined by rider skill and trail design. Both the Big Chief and A1 trails are designed, maintained, and ridden as downhill trails. Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes have similar frames and components including tires, wheel size, tread, gearing, and braking mechanisms. Their ability to stop is similar, and users are instructed to operate under the same guidelines of trail use etiquette. We have concluded that overall speeds on single track native surface trails are dictated mostly by trail condition and alignment, that current design and alignment standards limit all users to speeds that are consistent with safety objectives, and that relative differences in speed are mostly a factor of rider ability.

**Comment 2A:** The EA downplays the potential for recreational conflict by its failure to recognize potential safety hazards associated with the proposal to authorize use of Class 1 E-bikes on existing non-motorized trails. The EA fails to acknowledge that capable riders have the potential to exceed the maximum motor assisted speed of 20 mph. Contrast this to speeds capable by non-motorized users such

as hikers and horseback riders whose travel along natural surface trails rarely exceeds five mph. **(Backcountry Horsemen of America et al. Index #'s 103 - 108)**

**Response to Comment 2A:** As stated in the response to comment 1A, Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes have similar frames and components including tires, wheel size, tread, gearing, and braking mechanisms. Their ability to stop is similar, and users are instructed to operate under the same guidelines of trail use etiquette. Overall speeds on single track native surface trails are dictated mostly by condition, alignment, and individual rider ability. Our review of comparative speeds, collected for multiple users of varying ability on both Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes on the four select trails proposed for re-designation, generally showed similar average and top speeds with the exception of slightly higher speeds for Class 1 E-bikes on uphill sections. We observed no example on single track native surface trails, of Class 1 E-bikes reaching the 20 mph threshold at which pedal assist cuts off. The Truckee Ranger District has administrative responsibility for management of over 300 miles of existing native surface trails. Close to 100 miles of these are designated with trail management objectives designed for pack and saddle (equestrian) use. Many of these miles are closed to bicycles of any kind including the Pacific Crest Trail and all trails within existing designated wilderness areas. An additional 35 miles of existing native surface trails are designated with trail management objectives designed for pedestrian use. None of these trails were considered for Class 1 E-bike use. In consideration of potential conflicts between different users and the safety of multiple user groups on shared use trails, Tahoe National Forest looked only at approximately 50+ miles of existing native surface trails, designated with trail management objectives designed for bicycle use, for potential re-designation to allow Class 1 E-bikes. We selected four specific trails for proposed Class 1 E-bike designation. Three of these trails were conceived, designed, and constructed to offer additional recreational opportunities for mountain biking:

- A1 (A1 Trail System Adoption Project 4/29/2019)
- Big Chief (Big Chief Trail Project 12/19/2017)
- Sawtooth (Sawtooth Ridge Trail Project 10/22/1999)

Though they remain shared use trail systems, the Truckee Ranger District has observed that the majority of use on these trails is mountain bikes.

The fourth trail proposed for motorized E-bike designation is the Commemorative Overland Emigrant Trail that was constructed between 1994 and 1996 and was originally conceived as a “multiple use trail built to provide recreational opportunity in the spring and early summer months, which is lacking elsewhere in the area” (Overland Trail Commemorative Route 1996). Since its opening, the Emigrant Trail has become one of the most consistently used and well-known trails on the district. Observations by Forest Service personnel indicate that mountain bikes constitute a significant portion of overall use.

The 35 miles of trail encompassed by these four selected trails represents a subset of the total number of miles currently open to bicycles on the Truckee Ranger District. As such, and in consideration of the fact that our analysis indicates Class 1 E-bikes are a similar to traditional mountain bikes in terms of overall speeds, mechanical components, and impacts to trail, Tahoe National Forest considers the addition of Class 1 E-bikes as an allowed use on these trails and does not pose a significant increased threat to public safety and or enjoyment of them, based on their current multiple user groups and use patterns.

**Comment 3A:** A recent study published in the journal Injury Prevention (DiMaggio et al. 2019) found that E-bike riders were more than three times more likely to be involved in a collision with a pedestrian, as compared to traditional bike riders. Not surprisingly, speed was found to represent the most critical factor in such collisions. Higher speeds by one user group increases the risk for all user groups. Research by Brigham Young University indicates that E-bikes travel faster on average than mountain bikes, including the potential to travel quickly uphill, while other users are travelling quickly downhill, further increasing the risk of accidents (Hall et al. 2019) **(Backcountry Horsemen of America et al. Index #'s 103 - 108)**

**Response to Comment 3A:** The study cited from the journal Injury Prevention (DiMaggio et al. 2019), reviewed data collected primarily on urban roads and paved bike paths. Single track, native surface, trails on the Truckee Ranger District employ alignments designed to mitigate against speeds that can be reached on open paved roads (refer to response to comment 1A, and the Trail Reports, incorporated by reference in the final EA). A study published in the journal Accident Analysis and Prevention found that while E-bikes recorded higher average speeds in urban settings and on paved roadways, on shared use facilities or greenways, E-bikes recorded slightly lower average speeds and slightly lower top speeds. In addition, traditional bikes showed a wider variety of speeds overall while E-bikes were far more consistent in their speeds (Langford, Chen, and Cherry 2015).

Higher average speeds of pedal assist mountain bikes cited in the research from Brigham Young University (Hall et al. 2019) can be attributed to the slightly higher average speeds reached on uphill sections of trail however, this study was designed specifically to measure the human health benefits of aerobic or cardiovascular exercise comparing physical responses with the use of pedal assist bikes and traditional mountain bikes. Study results found that approximately 93.6% of the cardiovascular benefits from riding on a traditional mountain bike were retained when the same circuit was ridden on a pedal assist mountain bike. The results also showed that the average speed of a pedal assist mountain bike, when calculated across the entire length of the study area, was only four mph faster than the speeds recorded on a traditional mountain bike (Hall et al. 2019).

In a letter of support for the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project, the Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship (SBTS) wrote that “irresponsible trail use, whether on foot, horseback, motorcycle, or bicycle are the root of potential safety risks and or user conflicts. This issue is best mitigated by educating trail users, not restricting them from their preferred mode of travel, especially when it has no negative environmental impacts (SBTS, Public Comment Letter 2020). Tahoe National Forest proposes to increase and improve signage and educational information including standards and guidelines of etiquette for trail use, at all trailheads and staging areas (Refer to Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for E-bike Use, Appendices C - F, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Final EA).

**Comments 4A:** A Class 1 E-bike is a motorized vehicle. They make a motorized noise and allow their riders to ride faster and further than if they were riding non-motorized mountain bikes. The noise and speed, as well as the increase in volume of wheeled vehicles on trails shared by equestrians, will increase the probability of dangerous conflicts between equestrians and other users on these trails. Many horses spook at the unusual noise made by E-bikes. Furthermore, Class 1 E-bikes are more likely than mountain bikes to pass equestrians on uphill climbs, resulting in an increased volume of horses being spooked by wheeled vehicles approaching equestrians from behind. (**Truckee Donner Horsemen, Index # 032**)

A key criterion shared by equestrians is safety concerns and the, sometimes, unpredictable response of their horses or mules in the event of a surprise on-trail encounter. The ability of E-bikes to travel at relatively high speeds, combined with their, often, silent approach, elevate the potential for dangerous encounters. (**Backcountry Horsemen of America et al. Index #'s 103 - 108**)

**Response to Comments 4A:** The Tahoe National Forest recognizes that pedal assist E-bikes are considered types of motorized vehicle. Our observations locally, informed by data from industry, user groups, and peer reviewed scientific literature have led us to conclude that Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes are similar recreation activities in terms of their structure, components, versatility, health benefits (Hall et al. 2019), speeds (Langford et al.2015), impacts to trails (Wilson and Seney 1994) (IMBA 2015), and even the way they look (refer to Response to Comments 1A-3A). With respect to noise, the Truckee Ranger District considers Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes to be similar, and has determined that their use would result in similar effects. Several comments however, contend that E-bikes make “an unusual noise,” and voiced concerns that this has the potential to result in safety issues and user conflicts. The Tahoe National Forest has observed that most safety concerns and potential user conflicts arise as a result of irresponsible trail use and poor user etiquette on the part of individuals. We

find that such individuals represent a minority of trail users overall. Education along with the improvement of sight lines will be used as central tools in mitigating the potential for “dangerous encounters” whether resulting from the possibility of silent approach or of horses being spooked by unusual noise. (Refer to Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for E-bike Use, Appendices C - F, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Final EA).

We agree that Class 1 E-bikes will afford some users, who may not otherwise be able, the ability to travel further however, our analysis indicates that this will provide expanded access, distributing that use over more of the trails thereby reducing impacts to currently heavily trafficked sections of trail closer to existing trailheads and staging areas.

**Comments 5A:** Because E-bikes can exceed 20 mph, these motor vehicles can come around a corner and run into a hiker, jogger, or equestrian at high speeds. (**Hartman and Wandel, Index # 079**)

**Comments 6A:** It's just so much fun when a mountain bike comes whizzing around a blind corner and scares the bejeezus out of me and my mount. There will be much more of that, including on the flats, if you let electric bikes out on the non-motorized trails. (**Hensey, Index #074**)

**Comments 7A:** There is a safety issue, as there are blind corners that have been dangerous even with mountain bikes without a motor. They could be a disaster with a motorized E-bike. (**Eshom / Bozarth, Index #048**)

**Comments 8A:** E-bikes are motorized and travel at fast speeds. They are very inappropriate for forest trails that have blind corners and much slower moving trail users such as equestrians. (**Clarke, Index #044**)

**Response to Comments 5A – 8A:** Class 1 E-bikes are in general, similar to traditional mountain bikes with respect to components, speed, and impacts to trail across users of different age, sex, and riding ability (Refer to references in responses to comments 1A, 2A, 3A, and 4A). Tahoe National Forest considered safety as an important factor in choosing the 4 select trails proposed for designation to allow for Class 1 E-bike use. The Emigrant Trail and the Sawtooth Trail both travel through areas where recent vegetation management activities, implemented to reduce fuels and the risk of wildfire as well as to improve forest health (Dry Creek Project, 2015 and Big Jack East Project, 2019), have thinned much of the existing vegetation and significantly reduced line of sight issues and potentially dangerous blind corners. The A1 and Big Chief trails were conceived, designed, and constructed to offer increased opportunity for recreation on mountain bikes. The overwhelming majority of use on them is mountain bikes and they are predominantly ridden as one-way loops with low probability of opposite direction encounters. As stated in the Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for E-bike Use (Appendices C - F, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Final EA), lines of sight will be improved on all trails where current conditions may negatively impact the safety of multiple user groups. Barriers will be used to ensure that trail alignments like bends and turns, designed to keep speeds in check, are not circumvented, and educational signage informing users on standards of etiquette and responsible trail use will be posted at all trailheads and staging areas.

## **B. Displacement of Non-Motorized User Groups**

**Comment 1B.** The EA fails to disclose the potential displacement of non-motorized trails users associated with E-bike use. Hikers and equestrians, and particularly those with children, often will choose to avoid trails where there is the potential for encounters with fast-moving bicycles. The proposal to designate existing non-motorized trails as open for Class 1 E-bike use would result in these trails becoming viewed by hikers and equestrians as either less desirable, less compatible for shared use, or outright unsafe for shared use. (**Backcountry Horsemen of America et al. Index #'s 103 - 108**)

**Response to Comment 1B.** The Tahoe National Forest manages over 300 miles of existing trails on the Truckee Ranger District, open to public use (reference response to comment 2A). Many of these miles, including on the Pacific Crest Trail and on those trails within designated Wilderness Area boundaries, are

open only to equestrian and pedestrian use, eliminating any potential for interaction with other user groups. The Tahoe National Forest recognizes that many users prefer not to recreate where bicycles are present. The four trails, representing 35.5 miles (approximately 10% of managed trails on the Truckee Ranger District), have all been open to bicycle use since their creation. As stated in response to comment 2A, the Tahoe National Forest has observed that on each of these four trails, a large percentage of current use comes from mountain bike riders. Tahoe National Forest has also determined, based on data collected locally (Trail Reports, incorporated by reference in the final EA), reviews of relevant, peer reviewed, scientific literature (Langford et al. 2015)(Wilson and Seney 1994)(Weaver and Dale 1978), and research conducted by industry and user groups (IMBA 2015) (SBTS, Public Comment Letter 2020) that Class 1 E-bikes do not represent a meaningfully different use than traditional mountain bikes currently utilizing these four trails. Based on a careful review of our findings, Tahoe National Forest has determined that the proposal to designate four selected, currently non-motorized trails, as open to Class 1 E-bike use will not result in any new or additional displacement of users from the trail system.

**Comment 2B:** There are millions of miles for bicycles, motorized and otherwise. Please leave these few trails for those of us unable to deal with any kind of wheeled vehicle flying downhill toward our horses and pack stock. (Chancellor, Index #045)

**Response to Comment 2B:** Currently there are approximately 300 miles of existing native surface trails on the Truckee Ranger District, many of which are designed and managed for equestrian use (see response to comment 2A). The Pacific Crest Trail for example, is open only to equestrians and pedestrians, and totals 35 miles on the Truckee Ranger district. Trails within designated wilderness area boundaries are also open only to equestrians and pedestrians. The four trails proposed for designation to allow for Class 1 E-bike use are currently, and have been since their creation, open to mountain bikes. The proposal will have no impact on user ability to choose to recreate in areas and on trails where bicycles of any kind are not allowed. Additional signage designed to educate the public on responsible trail use and standards of trail use etiquette will be employed to mitigate potential conflicts between user groups on shared use trails (Refer to Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for E-bike Use, Appendices C - F, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Final EA).

**Comment 3B:** I am not sure what the best solution is for horses and bicycles. We used to see a few a week and now at times there are several hundred bikes on the trails where we used to ride. We all try to go at off times and to avoid bikes. (Anderson, Index #062)

**Response to Comment 3B:** Mountain biking has been growing in popularity across the country. Tahoe National Forest has seen a steady increase in the demand for recreational opportunities to mountain bike. Analysis has indicated Class 1 E-bikes to be demonstrably similar to traditional mountain bikes (refer to response to comments 1A-5A) and Tahoe National Forest does not consider them to be a meaningfully different mode of recreating, however we recognize the need to manage their use appropriately with respect to resource protection and public safety and enjoyment. The four select trails proposed for designation to allow for class 1 E-bikes were carefully considered in terms of their design, suitability, potential impacts to other user groups, and current use trends (see response to comment 2A). Observations on Tahoe National Forest indicate that providing Class 1 E-bike users authorized locations to ride on trails managed for heavy bike use will help to restrict unauthorized use in other areas and contribute to improved management of Truckee Ranger District trail systems for all user groups.

### **C. Lack of Travel Management Minimization Criteria**

**Comment 1C:** The EA ignores guidance promulgated via the 2005 Travel Management Rule (TMR). The EA does not describe how the proposal to authorize E-bike use on currently non-motorized trails complies with the agency's broad definition of off-road vehicle (ORV) and the requirement that all ORV's be subject to travel management planning and the so-called "minimization criteria." The Tahoe National Forest is obligated to consider and document compliance with these specific criteria for the designation of E-bike use on trails as part of the proposed action. Of particular relevance to us, the EA fails to address or

disclose the potential effects of designating trails for E-bike use, “with the objective of minimizing conflicts between motor vehicle use and existing or proposed recreational uses of National Forest system lands.” (**Backcountry Horsemen of America et al. Index #'s 103 - 108**)

**Comment 2C:** Case law confirms the Forest Service’s substantive obligation to meaningfully apply and implement – not simply identify or consider – the minimization criteria when designating each area or trail for motorized (E-bike) use, and demonstrate in the administrative record how the agency did so. Consequently, the final EA/DN must include these elements as they relate to special use designations proposed for Class 1 E-bike (motorized) use on otherwise non-motorized trails. (**Backcountry Horsemen of America et al. Index #'s 103 - 108**)

**Response to Comments 1C and 2C:** Minimization criteria were added in the final EA for designated motorized roads and trails. As stated in the proposed action #4, sub-action 7, four existing, currently non-motorized trails, totaling approximately 35.5 miles, would be designated as open for Class 1 E-bike motorized vehicle use, adding them to the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS). Under the proposed action, these trails would be displayed on the MVUM as designated wheeled motorized vehicle trails open only to Class 1 E-bikes. These trails would remain open to existing non-motorized use. Potential environmental impacts and user conflicts were carefully considered in selecting existing trails to propose for Class 1 E-bike use (East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Final EA). Minimization criteria assessments were “meaningfully applied and implemented” by resource specialists on the Tahoe National Forest in order to meet requirements of Travel Management Regulation 36 C.F.R. 212.55(b). Specifically, with respect to the requirement that “the responsible official shall consider effects with the objective of minimizing conflicts between motor vehicle use and existing or proposed recreational uses of National Forest system lands,” the Truckee Ranger District collected trail by trail specific data comparing use characteristics of Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes across multiple user types (Trail Reports, incorporated by reference in the final EA). The Tahoe National Forest considered Class 1 E-bike designation only on trails designed and managed for mountain bike use, or for which on site observations have shown a current majority of use by mountain bikes. The Tahoe National Forest produced additional road and trail minimization worksheets in order to provide a record of consideration of the designated effects criteria for each individual road and trail proposed for designation and for public motorized wheeled vehicle use including Class 1 E-bikes. These criteria are described in Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for E-bike Use, Appendices C - F, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Final EA. Finally, the Tahoe National Forest examined peer reviewed scientific literature (see response to comments 3A and 4A) and research data collected by industry and user groups (see response to comments 3A and 4A) in determining that Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes do not represent meaningfully different recreational uses.

## **D. Conflict Between User Groups**

**Comment 1D:** Many of our members have experienced conflicts with other user groups on the trails in the Prosser area. One of the primary conflicts includes mountain bikes that are moving too fast to stop at a safe distance from horses. Allowing Class 1 E-bikes on the Commemorative Overland Emigrant Trail will lead to an increase in both the volume and severity of conflicts between equestrians and other users of the trail. (**Dalbol, Truckee Donner Horsemen, Index #032**)

**Comment 2D:** The allowance of motorized vehicles, such as Class 1 E-bikes, will exacerbate the danger of conflicts between users by increasing the volume and speed of wheeled vehicles on a single-track trail that is shared by mountain bikers, hikers, and equestrians. (**Dyer, Chris and Mike, Index #081**)

**Comment 3D:** Keeping motorized E-bike use on motorized trails is the best way to avoid user conflicts and help keep people safe. (**King, Patton, and Bodtker, Backcountry Horsemen of California, Index #035**)

**Response to Comments 1D – 3D:** As stated in the response to comment 2A, three of the trails were conceived, designed, and constructed to offer additional recreational opportunities for mountain biking.

The Commemorative Overland Emigrant Trail was originally conceived as a multiple use trail. Significant use on these four trails, as observed by the Truckee Ranger District, is by mountain bikers. The Tahoe National Forest has determined that Class 1 E-bikes do not represent a significantly different recreational use than traditional mountain bikes (refer to response to comment 1A). Data collected by the Truckee Ranger District on the trails in question, comparing Class 1 E-bikes with traditional mountain bikes, found stopping distances (the ability to come to a complete stop) to be the same for both on all sections of trail (Trail Reports, incorporated by reference in the final EA). Tahoe National Forest recognizes the need to better educate the public on protocols for responsible trail use. We propose to increase and improve signage informing users of trail use rules and regulations as well as standards of responsible trail use etiquette in order to mitigate the potential for conflicts between user groups and increase multiple user group safety. (Refer to Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for E-bike Use, Appendices C - F, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Final EA).

## **E. Illegal Incursions into Non-Motorized Areas**

**Comment 1E.** It is against long-standing Federal law for bicycles and motorcycles to ride on the Pacific Crest Trail. For Tahoe National Forest, this particularly includes the Granite Chief Wilderness area. Brazen intrusion of E-bikes within Tahoe National Forest will simply disregard federal laws. (**Sydnor, American Endurance Ride Conference, Index #109**)

**Comment 2E.** I am opposed to allowing motorized E-bikes on any non-motorized trails within any US Forest Service land or designated Wilderness areas. (**Babish, Index #090**)

**Comment 3E.** There are miles of paved bike paths and other suitable places for E-bikes to travel around Tahoe. They do not belong on National Forest trails used by hikers and equestrians; especially not in designated WILDERNESS Areas. (**Lopes, Index #039**)

**Response to Comments 1E – 3E:** None of the four trails proposed for designation to allow for use by Class 1 E-bikes is in or adjacent to designated wilderness areas nor on the Pacific Crest Trail. The Tahoe National Forest will continue to enforce trail use rules and regulations with respect to the Pacific Crest Trail and wilderness areas and their boundaries. Signs designating wilderness area boundaries will remain in place. The Tahoe National Forest will continue its work to “Retain the primeval character and influence of wilderness areas without permanent improvements or human habitation” (Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment, Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Record of Decision 2004) and will manage designated wilderness areas to provide “Solitude and Primitive Recreational Opportunities.” (SNFPA, SEIS, ROD 2004)

## **F. Law Enforcement Abilities**

**Comment 1F:** The EA fails to recognize that authorization of Class 1 E-bike use is unenforceable. There are two other classes of E-bike (Class II and Class III) that are not referred to in the EA. Differences in operation and functionality among these three classes of E-bikes is significant, yet the EA fails to acknowledge the potential that E-bikes, which do not fall within the definition of Class 1, could access the non-motorized trails in question. (**Backcountry Horsemen of America et al. Index #'s 103 - 108**)

**Response to Comment 1F:** The Tahoe National Forest understands the difficulties involved with enforcing federal, state, and local rules and regulations. Regular patrols implemented by law enforcement (LEO) and forest protection officers (FPO) routinely find forest visitors with illegal campfires, off-highway vehicles failing to remain on designated routes, resource damage occurring at sensitive cultural sites, meadow/wetland areas, or wildlife habitats, and sometimes individuals on trails they shouldn't be. LEO's, FPO's, and other Forest Service staff post and maintain signs, repair damage, improve barriers, construct gates, inform the public, and often write citations. All these tasks are components of a continuous effort to better manage National Forest System lands for the recreating public. With respect to present and future trail use, informational kiosks at trailheads and staging areas will clearly define the four selected trails proposed for designation to allow use by Class 1 E-bikes as “Open to Class 1 E-bikes Only.” The Tahoe National Forest Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) will define these trails as



“designated wheeled motorized vehicle trails open only to Class 1 E-bikes.” (Refer to response to comments 1C and 2C). Other classes of E-bikes will be directed to alternate routes on the designated motorized vehicle system. The rest of our non-motorized trails will be clearly posted to inform users that E-bikes are “Not Permitted.” The Tahoe National Forest has observed through experience, that a majority of the recreating public chooses to follow the rules and obey the law. Education and outreach will serve to inform all users of exactly what those rules are. (Refer to Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for E-bike Use, Appendices C - F, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Final EA).

**Comment 2F:** A key fallacy of the EA’s proposed action is the assumed ability of rangers and law enforcement officers in the field to enforce the use of only Class 1 E-bikes along 35.5 miles of otherwise non-motorized trails within the East Zone. Within the new and rapidly evolving market, there are a number of commercially available E-bikes that do not comply with the specifications of either Class 1, 2, or 3. For example, there exist E-bikes (with functional pedals) that are similar in appearance to Class 1 E-bikes yet possess motors that exceed 1,000 watts and can achieve speeds exceeding 50 miles per hour. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish these E-bikes from the Class 1 E-bikes that the Forest Service proposes to authorize for use on the East Zone. (**Backcountry Horsemen of America et al. Index #'s 103 - 108**)

**Response to Comment 2F:** The Tahoe National Forest recognizes that not all users strive to comply with existing rules and regulations specific to responsible and sustainable recreational uses on public land (refer to response to comment 1F). The EA clearly states that under the proposed action, the four trails being considered for designation to allow E-bike use would be displayed on the MVUM as designated wheeled motorized vehicle trails open only to Class 1 E-bikes. All other classes of E-bike, as well as other motorized vehicles, would be prohibited. To promote legal, sustainable, and responsible trail use, Tahoe National Forest will engage organized and targeted public educational outreach strategies and law enforcement efforts (refer to Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for E-bike Use, Appendices C - F, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Final EA) aimed at continuing to provide safe and enjoyable recreational opportunities for multiple user groups on National Forest System lands.

**Comment 3F:** The final EA/DN must disclose current law enforcement priorities and capability within the two National Forests, and the likelihood of active (if not proactive) enforcement of E-bike regulations on otherwise non-motorized trails in the East Zone. The implementation and enforcement challenges described, and their potential to result in adverse social and physical impacts, must be analyzed and disclosed in the final EA/DN. (**Backcountry Horsemen of America et al. Index #'s 103 - 108**)

**Response to Comment 3F:** The proposal to designate four select trails as open to Class 1 E-bikes (refer to east Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project final EA and Response to Comments 1C and 2C) only affects lands managed by the Tahoe National Forest and will not impact any areas on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. Actions proposed on Humboldt-Toiyabe are: gate placement, addition of a small spur to the NFTS, gated road closure improvement and decommission of a user-created road segment (refer to proposed action map 2). Physical and social impacts related to the proposed actions overall, have been carefully considered and analyzed, and are disclosed in the final EA (refer to Response to Comments 1A-8A, 1B-3B, and 1D-3D). Prioritization of law enforcement objectives is determined seasonally and informed by input from resource specialists and other Tahoe National Forest staff positions. Deployment of resources for the purpose of enforcement of Forest rules and regulations is based on past and present observations of use and misuse on Forest lands. Tahoe National Forest utilizes multiple strategies to enforce current rules of use on public lands. Specifically, with respect to new use guidelines proposed in the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project, Tahoe National Forest has developed mitigation measures designed to better manage all recreational use and minimize potential adverse environmental, social, and physical effects (refer to Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for E-bike Use, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project final EA, Appendices C – F, and Travel

Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for Motorcycle Use, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project final EA, Appendix B).

## **G. Degradation of Trails**

**Comment 1G:** The presence of E-bikes will cause additional erosion to the trails. (**Lopes, Index #032**)

**Comment 2G:** Allowing E-bikes onto any trail used by hikers or equestrians is the same as allowing motorcycles. The trails are already unsafe due to the more and more bicycles that are destroying the trails with ruts and using the banks on curves. (**Bone, Index #042**)

**Comment 3G:** E-bikes pose an extreme environmental risk when used on trails not designed for powered transportation devices of any kind. These trails were designated as non-motorized because the use of powered wheeled vehicles causes unacceptable environmental damage. The environmental damage of motorized vehicles is not caused by the type of power source, it is created by sinking, spinning and sliding wheels traveling in a line. Motorized vehicles create environmental damage because they place torque and power to a wheel. This damage creates in line trenches in the trail that forms a water runoff channel and results in a tremendous increase in erosion, creek sedimentation that harms fish, and environmental damage to plants. Foot and hoof travel do not create this type of environmental damage as they do not dig the in-line trench, nor do they spin or slide. (**Shreffler, Index #086**)

**Response to Comments 1G-3G:** As stated previously, the proposed action seeks to allow only Class 1 E-bikes as a designated use on four selected trails, already used by mountain bikes, on public lands managed by the Tahoe National Forest (refer to Response to Comments 1C and 2C). Other modes of motorized transportation, including motorcycles, would continue to be prohibited. Numerous studies, beginning in the 1970's and performed by universities, institutions, industry, and user groups, have documented impacts to trails due to multiple recreational uses. The data, carefully collected, considered, analyzed, and published has been consistent on several points of emphasis:

1. Trail use by equestrians and pedestrians produces greater sediment yields than is produced by wheeled modes of transportation. (Wilson and Seney 1994)
2. Horse traffic produces the greatest force (weight per unit area) among hikers, horseback riders, off-road bicyclists, and motorcyclists. (Weaver and Dale 1978)
3. Horses cause greater increases in soil compaction, litter, trail width, and trail depth compared with hikers and motorcycles. (Weaver and Dale 1974 and 1978)

Data collected by Tahoe National Forest staff, specific to the four selected trails proposed for designation to allow for use by Class 1 E-bikes, has been consistent with findings in the scientific literature. A comparison of relative speeds (refer to Trail Reports, incorporated by reference in the final EA) has led us to conclude that Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes represent similar recreational uses. Our observations relative to trail impacts, associated to different user groups, including soil movement (displacement and/or erosion) and changes to trail tread surface, are consistent with a study implemented by the International Mountain Bicycling Association which found similar effects between Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes (IMBA 2015).

The majority of current use on the four trails proposed for designation to allow Class 1 E-bikes is by mountain bikers. Based on a review of our findings, Tahoe National Forest has determined that inclusion of Class 1 E-bikes as a designated, legitimate use on these trails does not constitute an increased adverse impact to their sustainability.

**Comment 4G:** E-bikes detract from a true backcountry experience and should not be allowed on non-motorized trails. (**Cline, Index #113**)

**Comment 5G:** I have seen the damage caused by motorized users from going off-trail to not removing their own trash. (**Giovanine, Index #099**)

**Comment 6G:** We regularly ride our horses and camp out in the wilderness areas and find the campsites that are accessible to motorized travel have been littered and trashed and generally not respected. (Larson, Index #065)

**Comment 7G:** I am writing to comment on the proposed opening of trails to electric bikes. These are motorized vehicles and motorized vehicles have been banned on our trails for protection of the environment and to maintain the “wilderness atmosphere”. (Hartman and Wandel, Index #079)

**Response to Comments 4G-7G:** Motorized vehicles are not currently allowed in designated wilderness areas. The proposed action does not state, nor does it imply, that the Tahoe National Forest is proposing any legal bike or motorized access into designated wilderness. We remain committed to “Retaining the primeval character and influence of wilderness areas without permanent improvements or human habitation” (Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment, Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Record of Decision 2004) and will continue to manage designated wilderness areas to provide “Solitude and Primitive Recreational Opportunities.” (SNFPA, SEIS, ROD 2004) Forest Protection Officers (FPO) and Law Enforcement personnel (LEO) strive to uphold local, state, and federal laws as they apply to the Tahoe National Forest including designated trail use, illegal disposal of trash, and user caused damage to natural and cultural resources.

Three of the four selected trails proposed for designation to allow for use by Class 1 E-bikes are currently managed for mountain bike use (A1 Trail System Adoption Project 4/29/2019), (Big Chief Trail Project 12/19/2017), and (Sawtooth Ridge Trail Project 10/22/1999). Our observations and analysis also find that the Emigrant Trail, while originally designed as a multiple use trail built to provide recreational opportunity in the spring and early summer months, which is lacking elsewhere in the area (Overland Trail Commemorative Route 1996), has developed into one of the most heavily used mountain biked trails on the Truckee Ranger District and that mountain biking represents the largest percentage of its current recreational use (refer to Response to Comment 2A).

Based on a review of findings, the Tahoe National Forest considers Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes to be similar modes of recreation relative to components (refer to Response to Comment 2A), speed (Trail Reports, incorporated by reference in the final EA, and Langford et al. 2015), impacts to trail (Wilson and Seney 1994, and IMBA 2015), and health benefits (Hall et al. 2019). As such, the Tahoe National Forest has determined that the proposed inclusion of Class 1 E-bikes as a legal use on the Big Chief, A1, Sawtooth, and Emigrant trails will not detract from or alter the forest experience users currently enjoy on them.

## **H. Popularity of Trails for Equestrian use**

**Comment 1H:** The EA errs in its claim that trails proposed for E-bike use are not popular with equestrians. We are aware of a number of equestrians who live in the vicinity of Prosser Reservoir and claim to regularly use some or all of the trails in question. For example, local residents, and members of the Truckee Donner Horsemen, make frequent use of the Emigrant trail. (Backcountry Horsemen of America et al. Index #'s 103 - 108)

**Response to Comment 1H:** We have revised the language contained in the proposed action (East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project final EA) to reflect that in developing the proposal to designate four selected trails as open to use by Class 1 E-bikes, the Tahoe National Forest carefully considered current patterns of use, trail design and management objectives, original NEPA documents, and suitability for bike use. Eliminated from consideration were existing trails with management objectives designed for pack and saddle use, like the Western States Trail (which currently receives mountain bike use), and interpretive routes, such as the Donner Camp picnic area loop. The Pacific Crest Trail and trails within designated Wilderness Areas, all of which prohibit bicycles of any kind, were also eliminated from consideration. Following an interdisciplinary team review and analysis of existing single track, native surface trails on the Truckee Ranger District, the Tahoe National Forest determined that the Big Chief, A1, Sawtooth, and Emigrant trails are all currently managed for mountain bike use, receive a significant

to majority of their use from mountain bikes, are designed and maintained to sustainably handle frequent mountain bike use, and are compatible with the present and growing demand for recreational opportunities for mountain biking. Furthermore, based on research, observations, and data collected locally, the Tahoe National Forest considers Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes to be similar modes of recreating on public lands (refer to Response to Comments 1A and 2A, 1C and 2C, and 1G-3G).

The proposed action will not affect recreational access to these four trails for any other user groups currently designated for allowable use. Additionally, the Tahoe National Forest has proposed mitigation measures (see Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for E-bike Use, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project final EA, Appendices C – F) to educate users and maintain safety and sustainability through continued maintenance, improved lines of sight, and the promotion and posting of guidelines for trail-use etiquette.

## **I. Lack of Trail Use Etiquette**

**Comment 1I:** Representatives of the Truckee Donner Horsemen have conveyed ongoing challenges (i.e. conflict) with a subset of mountain bike riders who do not practice standard trail etiquette when encountering horseback riders. (**Backcountry Horsemen of America et al. Index #'s 103 - 108**)

**Comment 2I:** Many of our members have experienced conflicts with other users on trails including E-bikes passing equestrians on uphill climbs and mountain bikes moving too fast to stop at a safe distance from the horses. (**Truckee Donner Horsemen, Index # 032**)

**Comment 3I:** I have ridden my horse on shared trails. Safety is a huge issue. We almost collided with bikers on a trail because of a blind curve but also because the dense foliage prevented both parties from seeing what was ahead. The bike riders were not aware of who had the right-of-way. (**Newlun, Index #070**)

**Response to Comments 1I-3I:** All trail users are responsible for their own proper trail use and etiquette. Pedestrians failing to keep their dogs under control or neglecting to clean up after their pets, hikers cutting off grade reversals in order to shorten their hike, and bike riders not knowing who has the right of way or simply choosing not to acknowledge it, all play a role in making public trail systems less sustainable, less safe, and less enjoyable for everyone. The Tahoe National Forest understands that multiple use trails must be managed for multiple users in order to fulfill our responsibilities as public land managers. With this objective in mind, the Tahoe National Forest has proposed a number of steps designed to improve the trail use experience for all users (refer to Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for E-bike Use, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project final EA, Appendices C – F). Improved signage for way finding and information, increased posting of trail-use rules and regulations, and proactive outreach and education to properly inform the public about standards of etiquette and responsible trail use will all be vital strategic components utilized to better manage the Tahoe National Forest trail systems and improve enjoyment of the forest for all users.

**Comment 4I:** The trails are for hikers, bikers (with good manners), and equestrians. (**Jewell, Index #078**)

**Comment 5I:** Bikers get to enjoy the outdoors and our beautiful forests but allowing E-bikes opens them up to kids who may not be as considerate as their older counterparts. (**Newlun, Index #070**)

**Response to Comments 4I and 5I:** As stated in the Response to Comments 1I - 3I, irresponsible trail use on the part of individuals, not whole classes of user groups, is the root cause of adverse impacts and potential conflicts between users recreating on public lands. Our review of current scientific literature found that a recent study concluded riders of E-bikes and regular bicycles exhibit similar safety behavior (Langford et al. 2015). Based on our analysis, the Tahoe National Forest has determined that educational outreach and improved understanding relative to standards of etiquette and responsible trail use (refer to Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for E-bike Use, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project final EA, Appendices C – F) are an effective means of mitigating

potential conflicts while expanding opportunity for all users to enjoy time in the forest, and to recreate safely and sustainably on public lands.

## **J. Motorized Use of Historically Non-Motorized Trails**

**Comment 1J:** Rather than opening the few non-motorized trails to Class 1 E-bikes, we believe investments in the proposed project areas should be made to improve the safety and accessibility of trails for equestrians. (**Truckee Donner Horsemen, Index # 032**)

**Comment 2J:** There are Millions of miles for Bicycles, Motorized and other wise. Please leave these few trails for those of us unable to deal with any kind of wheeled vehicle flying downhill toward our horses and pack stock. (**Chancellor, Index #045**)

**Response to Comments 1J and 2J:** As described earlier in this response to comments (refer to Response to Comments 2A and 2B) there are approximately 300 miles of managed trail on the Truckee Ranger District. Roughly 75 of these miles are effectively closed to bicycle use of any kind based on current use designations and official forest orders. Approximately 181 miles of trail on the district are currently designated as non-motorized and 119 are motorized. By changing the designation of 35.5 miles of non-motorized to allow for Class 1 E-bike use, approximately 145 miles will remain non-motorized. Virtually all of the 300 trail miles, with the exception of 12 miles on the Pallisades Creek trail, the Boca Townsite interpretive trail, and a small section of trail by Boca Dam are open to equestrian use. Tahoe National Forest has clearly stated our intention to prioritize safety (refer to Travel Regulation Minimization Criteria Addressing Trail Designated for E-bike Use, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project final EA, Appendices C – F) on the four selected trails proposed for designation to allow for use by Class 1 E-bikes.

Accessibility of trails for equestrians is addressed later in this document (refer to Response to Comments 1N and 2N) and in proposed action #6 (Staging Area Creation, East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project final EA) incorporated specifically to improve access and to provide increased opportunity for recreational activities associated with all user groups.

**Comment 3J:** The Backcountry Horsemen of California (BCHC) are opposed to allowing motorized E-bikes on any non-motorized trails. Changes proposed by the US Forest Service Washington Office to the agency’s manuals on Travel Management and Travel Planning state that an electric bike is a “type of **motor vehicle** with two wheels attached to a frame...” The key words here are “motor vehicle” which should exclude them from non-motorized trails. (**King, Patton, and Bodtke, Backcountry Horsemen of California, Index #035**)

**Comment 4J:** The introduction of any type of motorized vehicle onto traditional non-motorized trails will not lead to positive outcomes. (**Chevallier, Index #059**)

**Response to Comments 3J and 4J:** Changes proposed by the U.S. Forest Service to the agency’s manual on Travel Management were disclosed in the Federal Register (Federal Register vol. 85, #186, September 2020). The Forest Service understands that E-bikes have become increasingly popular nationwide among outdoor enthusiasts on NFS and other public lands (Federal Register vol. 85, #186, September 2020). In response to the documented and growing demand for expanded recreational opportunities, the Forest Service proposed revisions to the Forest Service Manual (FSM 7711.3, paragraph 6) to add a category for designating E-bike use on National Forest System trails. Based on a review of findings, Tahoe National Forest considers Class 1 E-bikes and traditional mountain bikes to be similar modes of recreating (refer to Response to Comments 1A, 3A, 5A-8A, and 1G-3G). The Tahoe National Forest also recognizes that this course of action **does** have the potential to lead to positive outcomes, enabling many people, particularly the elderly and disabled, to enjoy the outdoors and associated health benefits (Federal Register vol. 85, #186, September 2020). This reasoning is consistent with our analysis, based on a review of current scientific literature, which has concluded that E-bikes give people who may not otherwise be able to bike (due to physical limitations or proximity to locations) the ability to overcome these challenges

(MacArthur, Dill, and Person 2014). Finally, the proposal to allow Class 1 E-bikes on four selected trails currently open to traditional mountain bikes, meets a key element of the purpose and need relative to E-bikes (expansion of recreational opportunity) as described in the project documents (East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project final EA).

**Comment 5J:** Allowing E-bikes onto any trail used by hikers or equestrians is the same as allowing motorcycles. **(Bone, Index #042)**

**Response to Comment 5J:** While current Forest Service policy requires that E-bikes of all classes, like motorcycles, must be considered motorized vehicles for the purpose of use designations as applied to the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS) and trails system, there exists a wealth of scientific, user group and industry produced literature showing their differences to be significant. Data analysis has led the Tahoe National Forest to conclude that Class 1 E-bikes in particular, are generally similar in nature to traditional mountain bikes in terms of components, speed, impacts to trail, and health benefits (refer to Response to Comments 1A, 3A, 4A, and 1G-3G). A review of our findings indicates that allowing Class 1 E-bikes on trails, currently open to and heavily used by mountain biking enthusiasts, will not measurably alter current patterns of use, nor will it create additional displacement of other user groups that currently choose to recreate on those trails. Motorcycles on the other hand, would represent a vastly different use in terms of speed, noise, and the potential enjoyment of other recreating user groups.

## **K. Need to Further Address Connectivity Issues**

**Comment 1K:** You have not addressed the County roads and their place in this project. Currently you cannot ride most of the area without using one of the county roads in direct violation of the law. This is a crucial component that you have not adequately addressed. Current conditions, and a lack of information and signs has created a disaster in the TNF. All riders are in violation due to this ongoing confusion and lack of planning and management. You have not demonstrated a clear management strategy to address this problem and therefore have fallen short on this issue. You must clearly state your intentions to correct this problem and ensure users can get around without using these county roads. **(Griffin, Index #061)**

**Response to Comment 1K:** As stated clearly in the purpose and need for the proposed project, Action is needed to increase loop riding opportunities, improve trail connectivity, and create sustainable developed recreation staging areas. The Tahoe National Forest understands that each and every problem associated to the successful management of public land cannot be resolved within the context of one project; however, meaningful solutions to a number of existing connectivity issues have been proposed in the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project. These include legal, designated routes of movement between Prosser Hill OHV staging area, Prosser Pits open riding area, Boca Hill, the newly proposed Verdi Ridge single track motorized trail system, and increased designated miles of motorized single track trail in the 06 Road area (refer to Proposed Action maps). Encompassed within this project are additional new proposed motorized trails on Billy Hill and in the Dry Creek / Russel Valley area (refer to proposed Action maps 3-6). The Tahoe National Forest will continue to pursue negotiations with Nevada County, Sierra County, and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) in order to secure legal routes of travel for green stickered vehicles connecting both sides of the dams at Prosser and Stampede reservoirs, and work to produce new maps for OHV user groups designed to identify current forest roads with alignments capable of adequately replacing connectivity between existing and newly proposed OHV routes which some users currently travel between on county roads.

## **L. Too Much Traffic on the 06 Road**

**Comment 1L.** I have great concern about any project that will draw/attract any more people to the 06 Road area. We already experience growing traffic through the neighborhood by those looking for the 06 Road access point. I can imagine the need for more parking and the spill-over of cars and trucks starting to park on the streets. We really do not need more people in the area.

The residential area at the entrance to the 06 Road is already a congested area (Dry trees, homes, and lots of cars). The area is also in the higher rated fire zone for insurance, and fire department capabilities. We

do not need more congestion. We do not need any activity that will further increase our insurance costs (My insurance was 1700.00 /year three years ago. My insurance is currently 6000.00/year for the last year, and my agent thinks it will go to 13K for the next year).

I would like to see efforts to minimize the numbers of people having access to the 06 Road area. I believe the USFS should first do things to help lower the fire rating in the area. I would like the USFS think about what the impact to our homes and the safety of our homes will be when people come to look for the 06 Road and see that they might have access to the vacant second homes in the area (we already have Christmas tree lookers taking trees when driving through, and I have run off strangers that seem to be spending a little too much time driving up and down the street looking at houses. (**Finney, Index #002**))

**Response to Comment 1L:** The 06 Road area is one of Truckee's most popular and heavily used recreation locations owing to its close proximity to the town and the large community of local residents who live directly adjacent to the immediate access point. The Truckee Ranger District has no reasonable or legal justification to limit public access to public land in the area given that there already exist well known and popular motorized and non-motorized trails there. Recent efforts to more effectively manage recreation in the area, in conjunction with the ongoing Big Jack East Vegetation Management project (Big Jack East Project 2019) includes improved signage and staging area development, improved maintenance and trail alignments to reduce motorized traffic near private property, managed parking for both summer and winter use, proactive compliance patrols to enforce road and trail use rules and regulations, and trailhead hosts to inform the public of current safe and sustainable trail use guidelines and temporary and / or seasonal area closures. New trail proposed for development in the 06 Road area will serve to expand recreational opportunity for multiple user groups and to disperse the current recreational use across a larger area, thereby reducing overall impacts to public resources.

Risk of wildfire in the area is in the process of being greatly reduced through management actions relative to the Big Jack East Project which has been implementing vegetation management prescriptions consistent with Forest Plan direction associated to desired conditions in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) zones (SNFPA, SEIS, ROD 2004).

Tahoe National Forest and the Truckee Ranger District will continue monitor use on and around the 06 Road with the objective of improving public enjoyment and long-term sustainability.

## **M. Suitability for Equestrian Use**

**Comment 1M:** We support the construction of bridges and other measures to protect the watershed, however it is imperative these measures do not impair an equestrian's ability to use the trails. A walkway was recently added to the Commemorative Overland Emigrant Trail over the marshy area just off the Donner Camp picnic area parking lot. One of our members asked the U.S. Forest Service if the walkway was engineered to handle the weight of an equestrian, as she felt unsafe when riding her horse across the walkway. It is clear the safety of equestrians was not considered when this walkway was constructed on this non-motorized trail that is regularly used by equestrians. We ask that the safety of equestrians be considered when making any future changes to trails shared with equestrians. (**Truckee Donner Horsemen, Index # 032**)

**Comment 2M:** The proposed crossing in a riparian area [south side of Prosser Reservoir] needs to be safe for equestrians. (**King, Patton, and Bodtker, Backcountry Horsemen of California, Index #035**).

**Response to Comments 1M and 2M:** Though the walkway constructed through the marshy area near the Donner Camp picnic area parking lot was not, and is not a component of the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project, Tahoe National Forest is open to collaborating in discussions with the equestrian community in order to improve existing trails to make them safe for equestrian use.

With respect to the proposed re-route of existing multiple use trail 16E11, currently passing through a meadow area on the south side of Prosser reservoir and associated bridge construction designed to protect watershed resources, Tahoe National Forest is committed to making the structure safe and accessible for

all user groups, including equestrians, as is reflected in the revised proposed action number 8 (refer to East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project final EA).

## **N. Staging Areas**

**Comment 1N:** There are staging areas in the plan being considered for design improvements. You should consider separating equestrian staging areas from motorized staging areas as this is where some conflicts begin and there is no enforcement. There needs to be different access areas for E-bikes and for hikers and equestrians. (**King, Patton, and Bodtker, Backcountry Horsemen of California, Index #035**)

**Comment 2N:** The lack of adequate equestrian staging areas in the three proposed project areas prevents our equestrian community from fully utilizing the trails in these areas. For example, the only Truckee Donner Horsemen members that ride in the Russell Valley area are those that can access the trails from their home. The only staging area our members use is located at the end of Prosser Dam Road, and this staging area is too far from many of the trails referenced in your proposed action. We support your proposal to develop or improve staging areas, however we again believe the investment should be balanced between motorized and non-motorized users of the trails. (**Truckee Donner Horsemen, Index #032**)

**Response to Comments 1N and 2N:** Separating staging areas for separate user groups is not a sustainable strategy for the management of recreational uses on Tahoe National Forest lands. The Truckee Ranger District must consider impacts to natural and cultural resources in the provision of meaningful recreational opportunities for multiple user groups. Tahoe National Forest carefully considered the ability of multiple user groups to recreate on National Forest System lands in its proposal to develop and / or improve staging areas in the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration final EA. Specifically, Tahoe National Forest has proposed designing new and / or improved staging areas to afford access to designated recreation trails, offer enough space for adequate parking and the loading and unloading of people, recreational equipment, and horses. Additionally, proposed improvements include adequate signage with maps, information on available routes and other recreational activities, and interpretive information designed to mitigate against potential conflicts between multiple user groups (Proposed Action #6, sub-actions A, B, and D).

As stated clearly in the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration final EA, Tahoe National Forest recognizes that currently, “the lack of a sufficient number of well managed staging areas creates barriers to public enjoyment of the Tahoe National Forest recreational roads and trails system.” Proposed new and / or improved staging area locations will increase safe and sustainable access to recreational trails for all user groups, including equestrians. In particular, proposed locations near Prosser reservoir and on the south side of Stampede reservoir will offer equestrians improved access to areas open for equestrian use, which include Prosser reservoir as described in Comment 1H (**Backcountry Horsemen of America et al. Index #'s 103 - 108**), the Prosser / Lakeview access trail (16E11), the Commemorative Overland Emigrant Trail (16E30), and routes on Boca Hill. Other locations proposed for new and / or improved staging area development will provide safe and sustainable access for multiple user groups to additional areas that are, and will continue to be, open to equestrian use.

**Comment 3N:** Water Board staff support the inclusion of restroom facilities at all recreational staging areas. With potential for increased recreational use and visitation, restroom facilities are critical to maintain sanitation and prevent potential impacts to water quality from improper human waste disposal. In the final EA please analyze potential impacts to water quality due to increased visitation at recreational staging areas that do not contain restroom facilities. (**Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, Index #114**)

**Response to Comment 3N:** Restroom facilities will be included at all proposed recreational staging area locations per Alternative 1 #6C. Additional analysis is not required as staging areas that do not contain restroom facilities are not being proposed in this EA.



## O. Support for Project

**Comments 10:** Tahoe National Forest received 51 separate comments submitted by 45 individuals or organizations during the official comment period voicing general support for the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project overall. Each of these comment submittals pointed to agreement with premises laid out in the purpose and need for the project (East Zone Connectivity and Restoration project final EA) and overwhelming support for each of the actions proposed to address them. (**Commenter Index #'s 1, 4-31, 33, 61, 63, 72-73, 82-84, 92-93, 96-97, and 110-112**)

**Response to Comments 10:** Tahoe National Forest is grateful for the input, collaboration, assistance, and support we received from multiple individuals, organizations, industry, user groups, and other land management agencies throughout the conception, planning, and development process for this project.

## P. Against Project Overall

**Comment 1P:** There is no reason to respond to the alleged increase in demand for trail use. Deny it. Such increases will in fact harm and hurt the forest which demands protecting itself. The forest should have the right to protect itself from human demands. We all need that to happen. Nature needs the right to defend itself. I am for the forest to be kept as it is without these alleged "increased demands." Humans go to hell and find something else for your insatiable, constant demands for more fun for yourselves. Do without for a change.

The 26 miles [of motorized trail] should be enough. I see no action as the best course here. I am totally against 70 miles of new trails. Totally. What a desecration that is. That is nature destruction. Watershed protection is a myth with this plan. The plan needs to be stopped. Nature deserves full protection and respect from human insatiability that keeps destroying and destroying and destroying. This comment is for the public record. Please receive it. We need our laws changed to give all nature the right to defend itself from human insatiability. We only have one planet. We all need to adjust and stop screaming for more, more, more, more. (**B. Ker, [bk1492@aol.com](mailto:bk1492@aol.com), Index #003**)

**Response to Comment 1P:** Analysis of current conditions on the Tahoe National Forest indicates that the increase in demand for all recreational uses is not "alleged" but a very real issue. As stated in the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project final EA, current patterns of use are adversely impacting natural and cultural resources, negatively affecting watershed health and hydrologic integrity, and genuinely threatening the long term viability and sustainability of publicly managed lands in the project areas. The Truckee Ranger District, under its responsibility to manage lands on Tahoe National Forest, is directed first and foremost to "secure and protect the American public's rights, title, value, and interests in its national forests and grasslands and authorizes a variety of uses on those lands to meet the needs of present and future generations." (LRMP 1990). Recreation represents an important public use authorized on National Forest System lands. One of our core missions is to provide opportunity for recreational activities, and to support businesses providing recreational activities, and which also contribute to the economic base of our community (SNFPA 2004).

Several of the key actions proposed in the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project including:

- #1 – Seasonal Closure Change
- #3 – Route Realignment
- #5 – Route Decommission

Were conceived specifically to protect Tahoe National Forest from potential impacts associated with present and future human demands. Watershed protection is directly addressed in each of these proposed actions, which are designed in part, to protect key local watersheds from impacts due to recreational use, and to repair and restore areas currently exhibiting signs of hydrologic impairment.

Based on our analysis of local conditions and current environmental data, Tahoe National Forest has determined that improved and effective management of recreational uses on National Forest System lands is a vital strategic component in our effort to protect and preserve public land.

### **Q. Need for Additional OHV Friendly Campgrounds**

**Comment 1Q:** OHV friendly campgrounds, as well as OHV access from existing campgrounds is needed. (Wik, Index #005)

**Response to Comment 1Q:** Improved connectivity and access from several existing National Forest System campgrounds is addressed in the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project final EA. These include Boca Rest, Boca Spring, and Lakeside.

Changing the use designations within other existing National Forest System campgrounds is not a component of this project, however Tahoe National Forest is always open to public input on various ways we can improve experience, enjoyment, and public use on National Forest System lands.

### **R. Wet Weather Travel Management**

**Comment 1R:** You have stated that your “wet weather plan” is not subjective and based on a soil moisture threshold. The study and threshold has not been established yet the new rule has been proposed. This is a subjective ruling until the definition and exact details of the testing procedures have been established. You must accurately define your testing procedures and moisture threshold standards before you implement a new rule and change the forestry plan. This is not acceptable. (Griffin, Index #061)

**Response to Comment 1R:** As described in the proposal to replace fixed seasonal closure dates with a soil moisture-based route management strategy (Proposed Action #1), implementation and enforcement will not occur arbitrarily. The Tahoe National Forest has proposed conducting a study, based on protocols and criteria laid out in a scientific paper prepared for the U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region titled; Wet Weather Management of OHV Trails on National Forests in California (Poff 2014). Data will be collected with electronic soil moisture content monitoring equipment, and compared with determinations made by professional resource specialists (hydrologist, soils scientist, and roads manager) as to use suitability. These data will identify a soil moisture content threshold point at which travel on roads and trails is no longer sustainable and likely to cause resource damage or excessive maintenance requirements. Once a threshold has been established, permanent soil moisture content monitoring equipment will be placed strategically at chosen locations within the proposed project area. Soil moisture content readings will be monitored at regular intervals and access to roads and trails within the proposed project area will be restricted temporarily whenever the threshold is reached.

Currently, all forest roads and trails open to OHV use on the Truckee Ranger District are closed to travel between December 31<sup>st</sup> and April 24<sup>th</sup>, which represents an arbitrary timeline in an area where snow accumulations vary significantly from year to year. Under the guidelines of the proposed wet weather travel management plan, proposed identified routes may remain open to travel past the current seasonal closure date when the region is experiencing drought conditions. Under wetter conditions associated to heavy winters and deeper snowpack, these routes may also close earlier or remain closed to travel past the current April 24<sup>th</sup> open date. Employing soil moisture-based travel regulations, with associated gates and public information announcements, will allow for focused route management, improve route quality and sustainability, and will dramatically reduce long term maintenance requirements.

**Comment 2R:** The description for this proposed action states that criteria for establishing opening and closing dates will be defined by a study of local conditions and based on the report “Wet Weather Management of OHV Trails on National Forests in California.” It is possible that the process contained in the report may not meet the expectations for TMDL implementation. In addition to the referenced report, please ensure the Seasonal Closure Change is consistent with the TMDL for the Middle Truckee River Watershed and also with the Basin Plan to prevent the discharge, or threatened discharge, of wastes to

lands within the 100-year floodplain and surface waters of the Truckee River and Little Truckee River Hydrologic Unit.

Please ensure the final EA defines the process for studying local conditions. The process should identify specific physical conditions that will be studied, identify when the conditions will be studied, identify specific locations where the conditions will be studied, and ultimately the how the conditions will dictate motorized vehicle access to NFTS. Please also include details for how this Proposed Action would be implemented and enforced to be complaint with the Basin Plan and Middle Truckee River Watershed TMDL. (**Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, Index #114**)

**Response to Comment 2R:** Language has been added to the EA that speaks to the consistency of the proposed actions with both the TMDL for the Middle Truckee River and the Basin Plan. The goal of this proposed action is to decrease the likelihood that unsustainable use will occur on roads that might interact with the 100-year floodplain and result in sedimentation into tributaries to the Truckee River. Language has been added to further define the process for studying local soil conditions and is based on a data driven framework that has been adopted on multiple forests within USFS Region 5 and is protective of water quality. We have added language to proposed action to describe the use of proposed gates and existing gates to implement and enforce the proposed seasonal closure change based on the Wet Weather Operating Plan.

## **S. Support for Designated E-bike Use**

**Comment 1S:** I am a former horse rider but am unable to ride horses now. For several years I was unable to enjoy the trails until I recently discovered peddle assist (PAS) E-bikes. Now, with the assistance of my PAS E-bike I am able to get out on the trail and enjoy life. With our disabilities we would not be able to enjoy the Forests. Just like horse riders we can adjust our speeds. We go slow and respectful. To be denied the same opportunities as the horse riders would be wrong. To suggest that we only ride with motorcycles would not only be dangerous but would be like saying horse riders should only ride on a racetrack because horses are fast. So, perhaps there could be a way to meet in the middle? Thank you for your time and consideration. (**Jazzy Catt, Index #034**)

**Response to Comment 1S:** Tahoe National Forest recognizes the value benefit that Class 1 E-bikes can afford a significant segment of the population who might otherwise feel restricted from the enjoyment of recreating on public lands. The U.S. Forest Service showed a clear understanding of the issue in recently proposing changes to Travel Management policy, specifically pointing out that E-bikes enable many people, particularly the elderly and disabled, to enjoy the outdoors and associated health benefits (Federal Register vol. 85, #186, September 2020). This premise is confirmed based on reviews of current scientific literature which have concluded E-bikes give people who may not otherwise be able to bike (due to physical limitations or proximity to locations) the ability to overcome these challenges (MacArthur, Dill, and Person 2014). The Tahoe National Forest will continue to promote opportunities to recreate on National Forest System lands for all user groups.

## **T. Investment in Motorized Trails is out of Balance Relative to Trail System Users**

**Comment 1T:** We believe in the past and in the Proposed Action, the U.S. Forest Service's investment in motorized trails is out of balance relative to the users of the trail system in these areas. The Prosser area in particular is surrounded by neighborhoods of hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians, and the trails in Prosser are predominantly used by these groups. However, very few non-motorized trails in this area are maintained by the U.S. Forest Service. While we support the construction of new designated motorized single-track trails for the motorcycle user group, we recommend a similar investment be made in single track trails for the non-motorized user group. (**Truckee Donner Horsemen, Index # 032**)

**Response to Comment 1T:** Tahoe National Forest endeavors each season to implement maintenance activities on all forest system trails. Much of this work on the Truckee Ranger District is done with the

assistance of partner organizations such as the Truckee Trails Foundation and the Pacific Crest Trail Association. A review of current conditions indicates that a great deal of maintenance is accomplished on non-motorized trails each year. Maintenance on motorized trails on the district is almost entirely funded through the California State Parks, OHV Division Green Sticker Grants program, paid for through the purchase of green stickers by OHV user groups statewide. Often this work is accomplished in cooperation with, and with the assistance of, local volunteer partner groups like the Truckee Dirt Riders.

Many of the trails frequented by locals in the Prosser area are user-created trails and, thus, do not receive routine maintenance from Forest Service personnel.

Based on analysis of current user data, Tahoe National Forest has determined that investment in the management of motorized recreation on the Truckee Ranger District is not out of balance with local and visitor demand for motorized recreational activity.

## **U. Lahontan Basin Plan Waste Discharge Prohibitions**

**Comment 1U:** TKRD will need a Basin Plan prohibition exemption from the Water Board because the Project proposes work within surface waters of the Little Truckee River and Truckee River Hydrologic Units. The final EA, or subsequent permit applications, should include specific information to support the Water Board's development of Basin Plan prohibition exemption findings. Basin Plan prohibition exemptions, and findings necessary to grant exemptions, are issued in Water Board permits. (**Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, Index #114**)

**Response to Comment 1U:** The Truckee Ranger District will coordinate with the Water Board to determine the need for a Basin Plan prohibition exemption for proposed actions. The following language was added to additional sections within the document outside of the hydrologic analysis to demonstrate that the *"The proposed actions will meet the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Board Basin Plan Objectives and will also be consistent with the TMDL Management Agency Agreement (MAA) between the State Water Board and Forest Service (USFS). The USFS continues to identify, implement, maintain, and monitor best management practices (BMPs) to protect water quality."*

**Comment 2U:** TKRD will need to receive a Basin Plan prohibition exemption from the Water Board because the Project proposes work within the 100-year floodplain of the Little Truckee River and Truckee River Hydrologic Units. The final EA, or subsequent permit applications, should analyze Project alternatives designed to avoid 100-year floodplains. Project elements that do not fall into one of the above categories cannot be granted an exemption to the waste discharge prohibition and therefore cannot be permitted by the Water Board. The final EA, or subsequent permit applications, should include specific information to support the Water Board's development of Basin Plan prohibition exemption for exemption criteria i – v above. Basin Plan prohibition exemptions, and finding necessary to grant exemptions, are issued in Water Board permits. (**Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, Index #114**)

**Response to Comment 2U:** The Truckee Ranger District will coordinate with the Water Board to determine the need for a Basin Plan prohibition for proposed actions. One of the main goals of the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project is to reduce erosion sources from existing routes through proposed actions including decommissioning routes, providing centralized staging areas, route closures based on soil moisture conditions, and watershed restoration actions which will also restore natural hydrologic function. These actions will restore the natural 100-year floodplain and, as such, work within the stream environment zone (SEZ) is necessary to restore hydrologic function and reduce ongoing sedimentation issues.

**Comment 3U:** We request the final EA clarifies the strategy used to identify and prioritize proposed actions that will control sediment delivery from USFS lands in the Middle Truckee River Watershed, and provides a method to report progress on project implementation and effectiveness. Project specific

comments in the next section provide focus on specific proposed actions where this strategy should be included in the final EA. (**Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, Index #114**)

**Response to Comment 3U:** The following language was added to the “Need for the Proposal” section to clarify the process by which TKRD prioritized routes for actions: “*Surveys conducted by TKRD using the Soil & Water Roads Condition Inventory (SWRCI) protocol, rates road segments as functional, at-risk, or impaired and aids in identifying problem areas. The segments, identified for decommissioning or re-route in Alternative I, were identified as at-risk or impaired through SWRCI surveys.*” Language pertaining to the compliance with the TMDL Management Agency Agreement (MAA) between the State Water Board and Forest Service (USFS) is contained in the EA in at least two locations and has a reporting mechanism that will be utilized for reporting out on project activities that reduce sediment delivery to the Middle Truckee River.

## V. Permitting Requirements

**Comment 1V:** TKRD will need to receive a Basin Plan prohibition exemption from the Water Board because the Project proposes work within the 100-year floodplain of the Little Truckee River and Truckee River Hydrologic Units. The final EA, or subsequent permit applications, should analyze Project alternatives designed to avoid 100-year floodplains. Project elements that do not fall into one of the above categories cannot be granted an exemption to the waste discharge prohibition and therefore cannot be permitted by the Water Board. The final EA, or subsequent permit applications, should include specific information to support the Water Board’s development of Basin Plan prohibition exemption for exemption criteria i – v above. Basin Plan prohibition exemptions, and finding necessary to grant exemptions, are issued in Water Board permits. (**Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, Index #114**)

**Response to Comment 1V:** TKRD will coordinate with Army Corps and Water Board to address the potential need for the following permits: The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater program and Clean Water Act (CWA) section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) 404 and 401 regulations for Water Quality Certification program, and Basin Plan exemption. The proposed crossings will be designed to slightly modify the existing channel without significantly changing capacity or channel form, without adding fill or excavating (dredge). The proposed design will be constructed to maintain flow capacity and only minor changes, rearranging in channel rock for ingress and egress are proposed. If the trail design is amended such that the channel capacity is changed or results in infilling the channel affecting capacity all necessary permits will be obtained.

## W. Proposed Open Riding Area

**Comment 1W:** The EA does not analyze potential impacts to water quality related to the proposed Travel Management / open riding area. The EA does not describe the extent of watercourses, wetlands, or riparian features within the open riding area and any potential for waste discharge to such features from this proposed action. All impacts to surface waters and 100-year flood plains should be avoided.

The final EA should analyze potential water quality impacts associated with the proposed Travel Management / open riding areas. If potential impacts are identified, the final EA should describe measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the potential impacts. Mitigation measures such as signage and fencing, to prevent the open riding area from potentially expanding beyond the intended physical extent, should be described in the final EA. An assessment of current and/or potential water quality impacts that exist at other open riding areas in the Tahoe National Forest may lend to this analysis. The final EA should also describe how TKRD proposes to enforce the boundaries of the Travel Management / open riding area. (**Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, Index #114**)

**Response to Comment 1W:** In response to this comment, the Forest Service reconsidered the proposed open riding areas and removed them from the proposed action; therefore, they do not require additional analysis at this time.

## **X. Route Decommissioning**

**Comment 1X:** A review of Project maps indicates that some roads and trail segments proposed for decommissioning intersect watercourses, and potentially wetlands or other riparian features. In the final EA, for all trail and road segments with known or potential water quality impacts proposed for decommissioning, please:

- describe current impacts within 100-year floodplains and/or surface waters and describe proposed mitigation measures associated with decommissioning actions
- assess current trail and road segment hydrologic connectivity and describe proposed mitigation measures to support hydrologic disconnection following decommissioning
- describe areas of fill materials placed in watercourses and/or 100-year floodplains and associated mitigation measures to remove and restore these areas.

The final EA should also describe the process used by TKRD to prioritize road and trail segments proposed for decommissioning as a part of the Project. (**Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, Index #114**)

**Response to Comment 1X:** Additional mitigation measures have been added to address decommissioning actions. Additional language has been added to describe the SWRCI method that was used to identify and prioritize segments for decommissioning. A description of the current impacts is included in the Hydrology and Soils section and is also included here: *“Within the overall project area heavy local residence use, high recreation use and historic uses have resulted in degraded trails and routes. Rutted roads and compacted soils commonly occur along these trails, roads, and historical terraces, which also serve as conduits for intercepting subsurface flows and concentrating surface runoff. Much of the historic logging practices have affected meadow function and stream stability. Numerous pipeline and powerline roads and other linear infrastructure features disrupt natural overland flow. The existing county roads bisect meadows and concentrate flows that contribute to degradation of meadow systems and stream channels. Sheep grazing patterns have resulted in areas of compacted stringer meadows and, in combination with areas where OHV users travel channel pathways and where concentrated county road drainage discharges, contributes to erosion of soils in the hydrologic system.”*

## **Y. Watershed Protection and Herbicide treatment**

**Comment 1Y:** Based on a review of project maps, Water Board staff are unable to determine what measures will be taken at watercourse crossings that are not identified in the map legends as Riparian Crossings. Riparian Crossings are indicated on Project maps on both perennial and intermittent crossing types but are not provided at all intersections of proposed trails and watercourses (perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral). In the final EA please provide clarity regarding what water quality mitigation measures will be implemented at watercourse crossings that are not symbolized on Project maps as Riparian Crossings. (**Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, Index #114**)

**Response to Comment 1Y:** All newly constructed or decommissioned watercourse crossings are subject to the same construction and mitigation measures outlined in the Trail Construction Standards and the Management Requirements sections. Additional language has been added to provide for more uniform treatment of the proposed action where watershed protection measures and stream crossings are proposed. Additional mitigation measures and edits to existing mitigation measures have been added to the document to further clarify.

**Comment 2Y:** : In the final EA, please describe how applications of herbicides to surface waters would not violate regionwide Basin Plan prohibitions for the discharge of pesticides to surface or ground waters (Basin Plan section 4.1-2) and/or meet the exemption criteria (Basin Plan section 4.1-3). The final EA should clearly state that the application of herbicides to water will not occur unless an exemption is granted from the Water Board. (**Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, Index #114**)

**Response to Comment 2Y:** : Additional language has been added to the herbicide application proposed treatment to describe how proposed actions would be consistent with the Basin Plan (section 4.1-2) and to specify that herbicides will not be applied to water.

## RESPONSE TO COMMENTS, ATTACHMENT 1

This table summarizes information received from commenters during the Comment Period. Actual comments are in the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Record and are available upon request.

The Table of Contents for Response to Comment Reference Issues can be found in the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) Response to Comments, Appendix A.

This project is subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B. Those who submitted project-specific written comments during scoping or the designated comment periods are eligible to file an objection. The names of commenters who provided potentially eligible comments during the comment period are listed in this document. In many cases the comments responded to in the Appendix A Response to Comments do not refer to the names or identifiers of those who made the comments. This is not intended to discredit or disqualify any commenters from the due process of the Objection Period. Please see the East Zone Connectivity and Restoration Project Decision Notice or Legal Notice regarding the details of the Objection Period for more details. If an entity or commenter's name or comment was not directly addressed in this document, this does not necessarily signify that the entity is not eligible to object under this due process.

Commenters are listed in order of the date on which each comment was received.

<b>Commenter Index #</b>	<b>Commenter Name / Organization</b>	<b>Comment date</b>	<b>Comment Issues Reference</b>
001	Daron Rahlves / Rahlves Enterprises	9/4/20	O
002	Michael Finney	9/4/20	L
003	Bk1492@aol.com	9/7/20	P
004	Conners family	9/9/20	O
005	Stuart Wik	9/10/20	O and Q
006	Steve Minniear	9./10/20	O
007	John Pellizzer / Nevada City Woods Riders	9/10/20	O
008	John Barnhart / Nevada City Woods Riders	9/10/20	O
009	David Zimmerman	9/17/20	O
010	Joshua Dubansky	9/17/20	O
011	Kerry Lofy	9/17/20	O
012	John Perhacs	9/17/20	O
013	Zach Olsen	9/17/20	O
014	Andy Mond	9/17/20	O
015	Jim Riley / Truckee Dirt Riders	9/17/20	O
016	Scott Snavely	9/17/20	O
017	Casey Timms	9/17/20	O
018	Rhett Stemmler	9/17/20	O
019	Jennifer Newkirk / Lofy	9/17/20	O
020	Steve Morgan	9/17/20	O
021	John Perhacs	9/18/20	O
022	Herb Cunitz	9/18/20	O
023	Steven Davis	9/18/20	O
024	Ryan Schopen	9/19/20	O
025	Frank Havlik	9/19/20	O
026	Marty Schoenberg	9/19/20	O
027	John Manocchio	9/21/20	O
028	Lloyd Garden	9/21/20	O



Commenter Index #	Commenter Name / Organization	Comment date	Comment Issues Reference
029	Bill Pindar / Truckee Dirt Riders	9/23/20	O
030	Robbie Huntoon	9/25/20	O
031	Michael Kirsch	9/26/20	O
032	Kim Dalbol / Truckee Donner Horsemen	9/26/20	A, D, F, H, I, J, M, N, and T
033	Steve Cherneff	9/28/20	O
034	Jazzycatt@gmail.com	9/28/20	S
035	Michael King, Troy Patton, and Thor Bodtker / Backcountry Horsemen of California	9/28/20	A, D, F, G, H, J, M, and N
036	Rhonda Labernk / Backcountry Horsemen Motherlode	9/28/20	J
037	Peg Crowley	9/28/20	A, D, F, G, H, J, M, and N
038	Jeff Kermode	9/28/20	A, D, F, G, H, J, M, and N
039	Karen Lopes	9/28/20	A, B, D, E, G, and J
040	Lucy Badenhoop	9/28/20	A, H, and J
041	Mike Paiva / Backcountry Horsemen of California	9/28/20	J
042	Donald Bone	9/28/20	A, G, J
043	Linda Samuelson	9/28/20	A and E
044	Linda Clarke / West Coast Rocky Mountain Horse Club	9/28/20	A, H, and J
045	Earl Chancellor / Backcountry Horsemen, Top of the State Unit	9/28/20	A, B, and J
046	Pat Mumford	9/28/20	A, B, H, and J
047	Liz La Rovere	9/28/20	A, D, F, G, H, J, M, and N
048	Meg Eshom / Backcountry Horsemen of California	9/28/20	A, D, F, G, H, J, M, and N
049	Lillian Clary	9/28/20	A, D, H, and J
050	Jamie Wilson	9/28/20	A, H, and J
051	Valerie Zera / Backcountry Horsemen of California, Antelope Valley Unit	9/28/20	A and J
052	Susan Tuttle	9/28/20	J
053	Chestine Anderson	9/28/20	A, H, and J
054	Harry Wyeth	9/28/20	A, G, and J
055	Sheila Ryan	9/28/20	A
056	Marcee Hansen	9/28/20	J
057	Jamie Canon	9/28/20	A, B, D, F, and J
058	Teresa Locatelli	9/28/20	A, B, D, F, H, J, M, and N
059	Roy and Pam Chevallier / Backcountry Horsemen of California, San Diego Unit	9/28/20	A, H, and J
060	James Herbert and Kandace Kost-Herbert	9/29/20	A, H, and J
061	Micheal Griffin	9/29/20	C, F, J, K, N, O, P, and R
062	Gail Anderson	9/29/20	A, B, D, I, J, and M
063	Greg Williams / Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship	9/29/20	A, D, I, O, S
064	Henriette Bruun	9/29/20	A, C, D, and F
065	Michael Larson	9/29/20	E, G, and I
066	Nicola Julian-Vasquez	9/29/20	A, I, and J
067	Nancy-Debra McKittrick	9/29/20	A and G
068	Leslie Bisharat	9/29/20	A, B, and F
069	Kathy Bowers	9/29/20	A, H, and J
070	Geri Newlun / Backcountry Horsemen of California, Top of the State Unit	9/29/20	A, B, D, F, H, I, J, M, and N
071	Pat Wolff	9/29/20	A, D, and J
072	Cory Maier	9/30/20	O and S
073	Chris Swenson	9/30/20	O

Commenter Index #	Commenter Name / Organization	Comment date	Comment Issues Reference
074	Stephanie Hensey	9/30/20	A, D, and J
075	Helen Steenmen / Backcountry Horsemen of California, Redshanks Unit	9/30/20	A, G, and J
076	Joe and Carol Kaminski / Backcountry Horsemen of California, San Joaquin Sierra Unit	9/30/20	J
077	Ginette Reitz	9/30/20	A and J
078	Joyce Jewell	9/30/20	A, I, and J
079	Amy G. Wandel and G. Harris Hartman	9/30/20	A, E, G, and J
080	Cyndi Denny / lakeside Frontier Riders	9/30/20	A, F, H, J, M, and N
081	Chris and Mike Dyer	9/30/20	A, D, F, H, J, M, and N
082	Patrick Koltz	10/1/20	O
083	Greg Forsyth	10/1/20	O and S
084	Michael (Murph) Murphy	10/1/20	O
085	Gail Perez	10/1/20	A
086	Patrick V. Shreffler / Backcountry Horsemen of California, Kern Valley Unit	10/1/20	A, G, and J
087	Sherrin Fraiman / Margolis	10/1/20	G, E, I, and J
088	Kathleen Phelps	10/1/20	A, D, F, H, and N
089	Kelly Garner	10/1/20	A and G
090	Steve Babish	10/1/20	A, B, D, E, F, H, J, M, and N
091	Carrie Johnen Backcountry Horsemen of California, Motherlode Unit	10/1/20	A
092	Bob Lynn	10/2/20	O
093	Allison Pedley / Truckee Trails Foundation	10/2/20	O and S
094	Christa Romanowski	10/2/20	A and J
095	Mike and Norma Kohlbaker	10/2/20	A, B, H, and J
096	Arthur Rader	10/3/20	O
097	Morgan Lommele / People for Bikes	10/3/20	O and S
098	Michael Latendresse	10/3/20	G and J
099	Teri Giovanine	10/3/20	G, H, and J
100	Mark Hodges	10/3/20	J
101	Lori Codey	10/3/20	A
102	Patricia McCartney	10/3/20	J
103	Randy Rasmussen / Backcountry Horsemen of America	10/3/20	A, B, C, D, F, H, I, and J
104	Randy Hackbarth / Backcountry Horsemen of California, Motherlode Unit	10/3/20	A, B, C, D, F, H, I, and J
105	Tyler Ray / American Hiking Society	10/3/20	A, B, C, D, F, H, I, and J
106	Bernie Molloy / Gold Country Trails Council	10/3/20	A, B, C, D, F, H, I, and J
107	Don Rivenes / Forest Issues Group	10/3/20	A, B, C, D, F, H, I, and J
108	Judy Suter / Action Coalition for Equestrians	10/3/20	A, B, C, D, F, H, I, and J
109	Robert Hadley Sydnor / American Endurance Ride Conference	10/3/20	A and E
110	David Newkirk	10/4/20	O
111	Bill Pindar / Truckee Dirt Riders	10/4/20	O and S
112	Christopher Parker / Sugar Bowl Resort and Royal Gorge Cross Country Ski Area	10/4/20	O and S
113	Geoff Cline	10/4/20	G and J
114	LRWQCB- Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board	10/2/20	N, Q, R, U, V, W, X, and Y