

Notice of Proposed Action

Galena Recreation Facilities



Carson Ranger District, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Washoe County, Nevada

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

July 2004



COMMENTS WELCOME

The Carson Ranger District of the Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest welcomes your comments on its joint proposal with Washoe County to enhance recreation opportunities and reduce fire risks in the Galena area of Washoe County, Nevada (See Map). The proposal includes picnic sites, a trailhead, an environmental education/welcome center and a closure of adjacent areas to overnight use.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The objective of the proposed Galena Recreation Facilities near Reno, Nevada is to provide for additional recreation opportunities for local community residents and visitors to the Reno area.

The proposal is needed in the Galena area due to the strong demand for outdoor recreation in the Reno area. The proposed site is adjacent to Washoe County's day use facilities and offers opportunities for efficient management in partnership with the County.

Assessments that identified the need for the action include the Master Plan for the Galena Creek Park. It was completed by Washoe County in consultation with the Forest Service. It included improvements to the County's day use facility and establishment of recreation facilities on adjacent National Forest lands. A Draft Environmental Assessment was completed for the Recreation Facilities in 1992 that further confirmed the need for the project. The Environmental Assessment was not finished due to lack of funding.

The Master Plan and Draft Environmental Assessment examined alternatives to the proposed location based on public involvement as well as USFS and Washoe County staff analyses. Consideration was given to other locations within the project vicinity as well as an evaluation of the potential for expansion with the County owned lands of the adjacent existing park. No other feasible locations were found and the existing park does not have enough area for the proposed recreation facilities. Consequently none of these alternatives were considered reasonable. This rationale remains sound today.

The proposal provides opportunities to meet desired conditions as directed in the Toiyabe Forest Plan of 1986. The first recreation related goal identified in the plan included increasing the quality and quantity of developed recreation opportunities in the Sierra Nevada portion of the Forest as well as conducting recreation management in concert and coordination with other agencies.

Management direction for the Carson Front Management area, which includes the proposed sites, includes providing for a diversity of recreation opportunities, with intensive management emphasis on National Forest System lands along the Mount Rose Highway (Forest Plan IV-79). The proposed action is needed to meet this direction by providing more diverse, intensively managed recreation opportunities along the Mount Rose Highway.

Direction for the Carson Front also includes coordination with other agencies to achieve recreation objectives, with the forest emphasis generally on dispersed recreation and other agencies and the private sector managing developed sites. The proposed action is needed to meet this direction by its emphasis on partnerships with Washoe County.

Other relevant environmental analyses include the Sierra Forest Plan Amendment Environmental Impact Statement, which analyzed the effects of implementing amendments to 11 National Forest Plan across the Sierra Nevada, including the Toiyabe Forest Plan. The amendments addressed a variety of measures to protect long-term ecosystem sustainability and reduce the risk of wildfire in the urban wildland interface. The proposal has been developed in compliance to that amendment and the analysis will be tiered to the EIS.

THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action was developed in consultation with Washoe County. It includes day use facilities only, including the development of:

- Individual Picnicking
- Group Picnicking
- Trailhead Parking
- Trails
- Restroom
- Environmental Education/Welcome Center
- New Entrance Road

This alternative will include approximately 10 individual picnic sites near the proposed visitor center, approximately 6 individual picnic sites near the trailhead and approximately 15 individual picnic sites located in a cluster. The individual sites would not have fire pits or barbecues.

The Group Picnic Area would be for approximately 50 persons and be similar to the existing Group area on the North side of Galena Creek Regional Park. It would contain either a gas grill or a charcoal grill. The Trailhead Parking would consist of parking for approximately 25 cars and 8-10 horse trailers.

The new Trail segments would link from the trailhead parking to the existing Jones Creek Trail to the south and to the Whites Creek Trail to the Northwest. In addition, we would explore a link to the Sierra Base Trail.

A restroom would be provided in a central location to the picnic & trailhead areas. The Visitor/Environmental Education Center would be approximately 3,000 to 5,000 square feet. The Center would not only provide visitor information, but would include education displays on urban interface issues such as wildfire risks, living with bears and on the research currently going on in the Sierra Nevada, and displays on the local flora and fauna. It would also be linked to an interpretive loop trail.

A new entrance road from the Mount Rose Highway would be constructed. It would provide access to both the new recreation facilities and to the existing Galena Creek Park, replacing the current entrance. The new entrance would have acceleration/deceleration lanes and would have improved line of sight compared to the existing entrance.

In addition to these facilities, the proposed action includes construction of a fire break to protect the facilities, the adjacent County Park, and nearby homes from the risk of wildfire. It also includes closing the area and nearby Thomas Creek Canyon to overnight use, also to reduce the risk of wildfire.

Other alternatives suggested by the Washoe County Parks and Recreation Commission include the construction of 18 cabins and/or two group camping sites. There is also the

potential for individual barbecues for the day use facilities. These alternatives will be reviewed through the environmental assessment process.

COMMENT PROCESS

The Forest Service encourages your substantive comments on this proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the responsible official should consider in reaching a decision.

Your comments will help us prepare an environmental assessment on the proposed action. The assessment will be used to determine whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact. If there is no potential for significant impacts, that finding along with the environmental assessment and a proposed decision will be sent to those who commented. If the environmental assessment concludes that there is the potential for significant impacts then an environmental impact statement would be prepared.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the Reno Gazette Journal.

Comments must be submitted to: Gary Schiff, District Ranger, 1536 S. Carson St. Carson City, NV 89703; ph 775 882-2766; fax 775 884-8199. The office business hours for those submitting comments in person are: 8am to 5pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc) to comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-carson@fs.fed.us. Comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Those who provide substantive comments during this comment period are eligible to appeal the decision under the regulations. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the information identified in 36 CFR 215, including:

- Name and Address;
- Title of the proposed action;
- Specific substantive comments (36 CFR 215.2) on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision;

- Signature or other verification of identity upon request; identification of the individual or organization who authored the comments(s) is necessary for appeal eligibility;
- For multiple names or multiple organizations, a signature must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each organization, or for each individual that wishes to have appeal eligibility, and
- Individual members of organizations must submit their own substantive comments to meet the requirements of appeal eligibility as an individual, comments received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

