



Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest

Bridgeport Ranger District
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Bridgeport, CA 93517
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West Hoover Wilderness Planning Area

3/15/04

The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is working with snowmobile clubs, OHV groups, local businesses, and governments to inform them of a long standing vehicle prohibition in the area commonly referred to as the “West Hoover Wilderness Planning Area”

Area of Concern

- The area of concern lies south of Highway 108 and east of Sonora Pass. It includes National Forest lands in the vicinity of Ski, Koenig, and Latopie Lakes; McKay Creek; Sardine Falls and Meadow; and the upper West Walker River drainage, generally south of Leavitt Meadows. The area abuts three Congressionally designated Wildernesses: the Emigrant to the west, Yosemite to the south, and Hoover to the east.

Open Areas

- California State Highway 108 and Leavitt Lake Road corridor (FDR 077) will continue to remain open to vehicle use. Users are encouraged to use caution when driving in this area. US Marine Corp operations routinely utilize these roads and adjacent National Forest lands for winter survival and avalanche training.
- The Bridgeport Ranger District “Forest Visitor/Travel Map” identifies National Forest lands open to vehicle use. See below for more information on the map.

Background

The Forest is initiating action to comply with 1) long-standing Forest Supervisor Special Orders; 2) the California Wilderness Act of 1984; and 3) the Forest Plan.

- Special Orders (36 CFR 261.50[a][b]) prohibiting vehicle use in the area have been in place since 1980, prior to both the 1984 California Wilderness Act and the 1986 Forest Plan. Bridgeport Ranger District Visitor Travel Maps, including the current map published in 1994, have consistently identified the area as “closed yearlong to vehicles”.
- The California Wilderness Act of 1984 (Public Law 98-425—Sept. 28, 1984) required that the 49,200-acre West Hoover Wilderness Planning Area (Hoover Wilderness Additions Planning Area) be assessed for its suitability as Wilderness. It also required maintenance of “the presently existing wilderness character and potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation system”
- As mandated by Congress, the Forest Service completed a wilderness assessment. The 1986 Forest Plan recommended the area to Congress for wilderness designation.

- Although the California Wilderness Act identified a four year mandate to manage as Wilderness, the Forest Plan agreement with the public is to manage the area as Wilderness until acted upon by Congress or revised in the Forest Plan.

Planned Management

- For the remainder of this snowmobile season, the Forest will continue to inform and educate users about rules and regulations governing the vehicle closure area.
- This coming summer, information will be posted at key access points and with local businesses to assure that all potential users are fully informed. Information will also continue to be provided to the news media and OHV groups.
- The Bridgeport Ranger District "Forest Visitor/Travel Map" identifies vehicle use restrictions. Users are responsible for assuring that they are recreating in areas legally open to their use. The map may be reviewed at local Forest Service offices or on the Humboldt-Toiyabe website (_____), or purchased for \$6.

Exemptions

The Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 261.50[e]) provide the following exemptions:

- Persons with a permit or contract authorizing the otherwise prohibited act
- Any federal, state, or local officer or member of an organized rescue or firefighting force in the performance of an official duty.

Future Planning

The Forest is aware of growing demands for vehicle use areas, and intends on addressing those interests as part of the Forest Plan Revision. The Revision process will include a reassessment of Roadless Areas, including the West Hoover Wilderness Planning Area. A formal, public process is scheduled to begin in 2005.

A public meeting date of May 22, 2004 has been tentatively scheduled to begin informal discussions about desired recreation in the area. Specific plans regarding the meeting will be distributed to those expressing interest and the media.

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