



Decision Notice / Finding of No Significant Impact

Peavine Mountain Travel Plan

USDA Forest Service

Carson Ranger District, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest

Washoe County, Nevada

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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DECISION AND REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Background / Peavine Strategy

Peavine Mountain is situated along the northwest flanks of the City of Reno; tucked within a triangle bordered between the California-Nevada State line to the west, Highway 80 to the south and Highway 395 to the northeast. The 42,000-acre analysis area is made up of National Forest System lands (18,000 acres) and includes other public lands and private lands within the City of Reno and Washoe County (24,000 acres). Peavine Mountain is a deeply valued component of the Reno and Washoe County landscape and a popular destination for locals. Its popularity comes with consequences to the environment, adjacent homeowners, and a wide variety of recreation uses. An editorial in the Reno Gazette Journal stated that the area is *“a classic example of the conflicts that arise as city butts up against country – as peace, quiet and safety meet freedom and open space”*.

In 2001, the Forest Service, in cooperation with the City of Reno and Washoe County, teamed up to analyze the issues on Peavine Mountain and to make a series of recommendations that helps set the stage for future management decisions. The recommendations are intended to provide quality recreation experiences for all types of recreation, motorized and nonmotorized. These recommendations were published in the Peavine Mountain Roads and Recreation Strategy. Several of the recommendations dealt with travel management.

Most of the roads on Peavine are user created, stemming from mineral exploration, past grazing operations or various recreation activities. Roads typically follow steep ridgelines or drainage bottoms. Many road segments are unsafe. Some are experiencing severe erosion and are readily visible from miles away. Some are causing damage to meadows, riparian areas and cultural sites. Sometimes multiple roads access the same location. Other roads, such as old mineral exploration roads, dead-end mid-mountain.

The Strategy recommended developing a road system that would best meet people’s needs and is safe, environmentally sound, and affordable. The proposed road system should include better strategic access for fires suppression vehicles, preserve jeep and OHV routes as well as provide for easier recreation travel routes while better protecting the environment. These roads should be signed and maintained. Some segments of the proposed road system should be partially relocated or reconstructed to meet use and maintenance standards.

The Strategy also discussed nonmotorized routes. Peavine Mountain is a favorite area for mountain bikers. Mountain bike use is heavy, yet there is no established trail system. Lots of social trails have been “pioneered” over the years as a result. Many single-track trails have scarred the hillside with a maze of routes to the same locations. Some users have expressed concern over this unplanned approach to trail construction. In some cases, trails that were built a few years ago have become too rocky. The finer soils have since eroded away leaving only bedrock material. Individuals built these trails without approval from the Forest Service. Many



mountain bikers have expressed an interest in developing well-designed bike routes and creating additional interconnecting routes around the mountain. The Strategy recommended developing a non-motorized trail system. User groups, and city and county agencies should be included to ensure a well developed trail system that compliments county and city recreation plans.

These recommendations formed the basis for the proposed action. Other recommendations in the Strategy have already been implemented, including the closure of the 7th St. Pit, creation of the Keystone nonmotorized recreation area, and the development of new motorized and nonmotorized trailheads. The Strategy, as a whole, was intended to enhance recreation experiences for all types of users, protect the environment, and meet the needs of the neighborhoods surrounding Peavine Mountain.

The following selected action best implements recommendations in the Peavine Strategy. Specifically, it best meets the purpose and need for the proposal by enhancing travel management on Peavine Mountain, reducing damage to heritage resources, and protecting wildlife and sensitive plant habitat, scenery, public safety and watershed conditions.

Decision

Based upon the Peavine Mountain Roads and Recreation Strategy and my review of the alternatives, I have decided to implement the proposed action as described in the EA. This decision includes these provisions:

- Road/Trail System

Update the Carson Ranger District Travel Management Plan for Peavine Mountain by designating a system of motorized and nonmotorized routes to better meet user needs and protect the environment. Designate 46 miles of roads open to the public, 36 miles of motorized trails, 8 miles of motorcycle trails, and 22 miles of nonmotorized trails (Map). About 75 miles of roads and other routes will be closed to motor vehicle use and rehabilitated as needed. Appropriate biological and cultural resource surveys will be conducted prior to any ground disturbing activity for rehabilitation, such as ripping roads. Cross country motor vehicle use off of designated motorized routes will continue to be prohibited.

- Motorized Travel
 Roads will be managed for use by high clearance vehicles. Motorized trails will be managed at a lower standard. They are generally steeper and rougher than roads and will be most suitable for off highway and all terrain vehicles. Motorized motorcycle trails will be open to motorcycles only.
- Nonmotorized Travel
 Nonmotorized trails will be open to hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, and other nonmotorized users and closed to motorized use. Cross country travel by wheeled vehicles such as mountain bikes will be prohibited. Nonmotorized travel will be allowed on all designated routes.



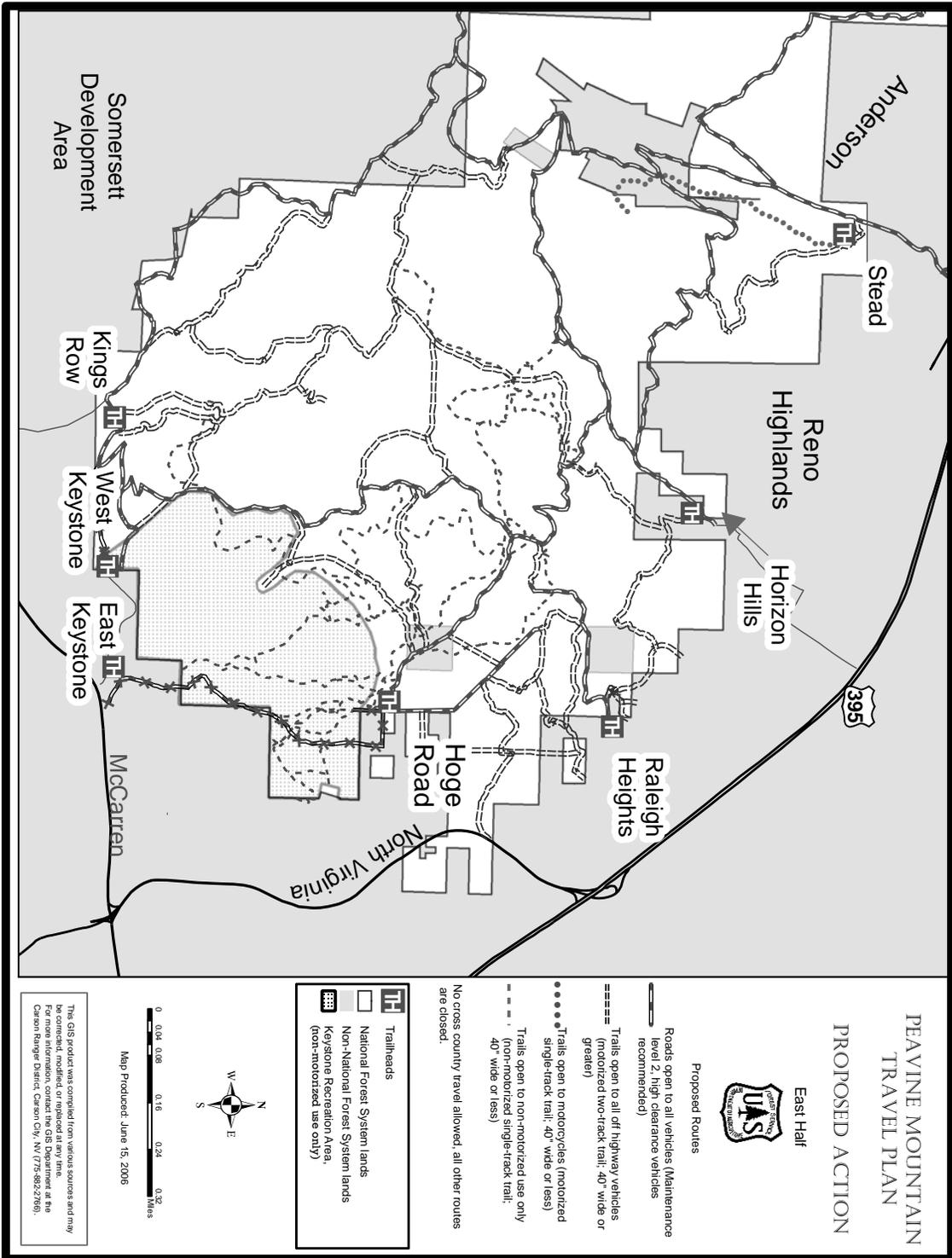
- **Signing and Patrolling**
Designated routes will be mapped and signed. The area will be patrolled by Forest Service personnel to enforce closures. Volunteers will be solicited from both motorized and nonmotorized recreation communities to help with monitoring, enforcement, and public education efforts.

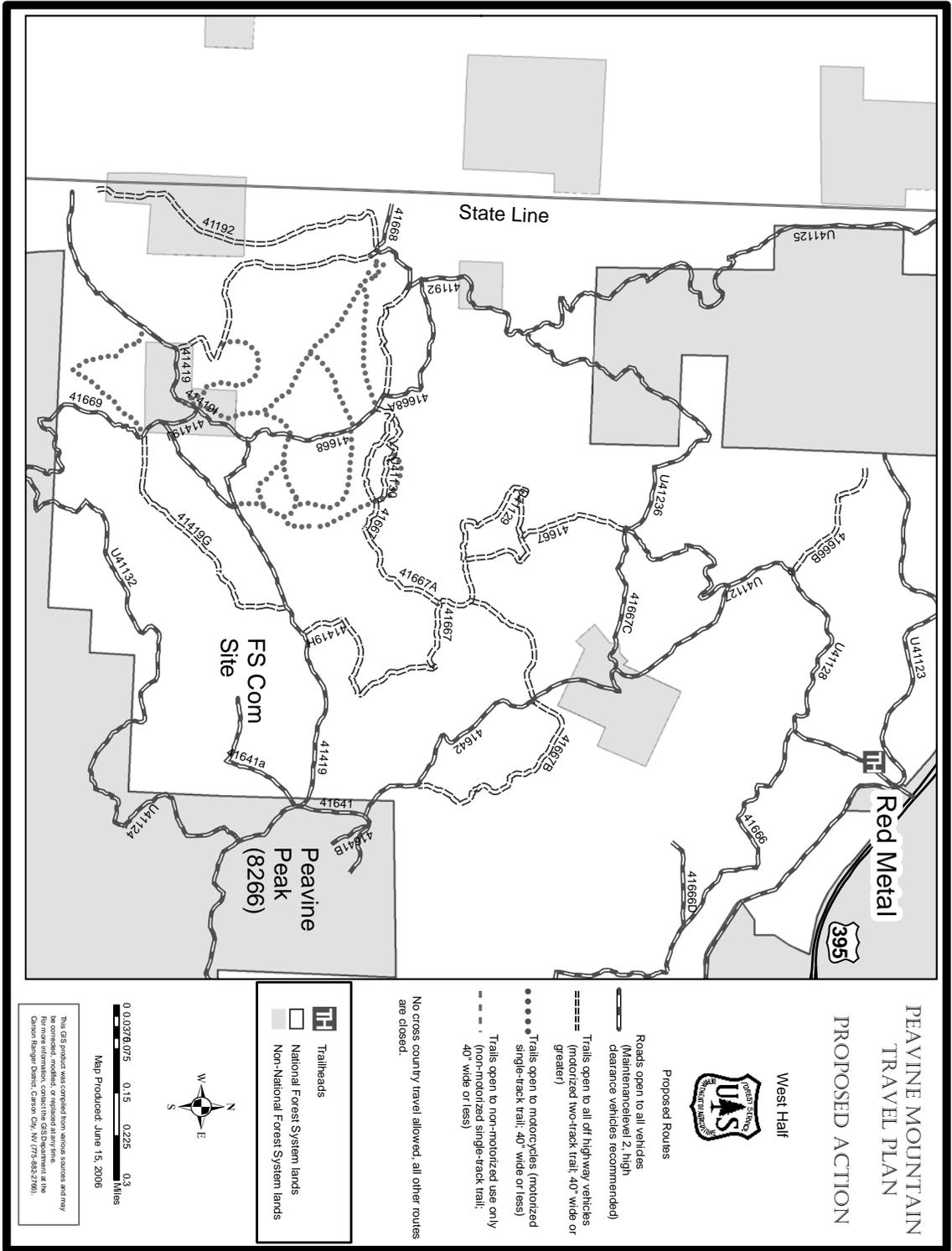
- **Exceptions for Off Road Use**
Motorized uses off designated routes that require a permit (such as fuelwood cutting) will be authorized on a case by case basis.

- **Access to administrative sites and private lands will continue to be provided.** The Forest Service will pursue legal public access or reciprocal rights of way where needed, and pursue maintenance agreements with permittees and co-owners.

- **Resource Protection Measures**
In order to protect several rare plant species, including Webber ivesia, Sierra Valley ivesia, and altered andesite buckwheat, several miles of roads will be closed or rerouted. A small section of road leading to an abandoned mine site will also be closed to protect sensitive bat species. These areas have been previously surveyed.

Two spur roads will be closed to protect archaeological sites. A heritage resource data recovery project will be completed in the Bull Ranch area.







Decision Rationale

In selecting the action alternative, I considered a number of issues and factors.

First, I considered the purpose and need for the action and the recommendations outlined in the Peavine Mountain Roads and Recreation Strategy. The Strategy was developed in cooperation with Washoe County and the City of Reno. The decision outlined in this notice is in alignment with that Strategy. The no action alternative is not.

Peavine Mountain is the “backyard” for the City of Reno and adjacent Washoe County neighborhoods. Providing designated travel routes is critical, especially given current and projected population growth.

Second, in arriving at this decision, I have closely examined the analysis of affects in the Environmental Assessment. The Environmental Assessment demonstrates that travel management as proposed is not free of environmental impacts, but that those impacts do not rise to the level of significance that is defined by the National Environmental Policy Act and Council on Environmental Quality regulations as requiring an Environmental Impact Statement.

This position is supported by the site-specific analysis provided in the Environmental Assessment. Specific environmental effects and conclusions provided in the Environmental Assessment include:

- Heritage Resources
- Recreation
- Rare Plants and Wildlife
- Watershed Conditions

Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered the no action alternative. An analysis of these alternatives can be found in the EA.

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area. The recommendations identified in the Peavine Mountain Roads and Recreation Strategy would not be implemented.

Public Involvement

The proposal was listed in the appropriate Schedules of Proposed Actions. A Notice of Proposed Action was published in the Reno Gazette Journal on July 29, 2005 for a 30 day public comment period. Notices of the proposed action were also mailed to interested parties and posted on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest web site. Public comments focused on concerns about vehicle use by adjacent home and land owners and the need to maintain motorized and nonmotorized recreation opportunities.

In addition, the proposal was part of the overall Peavine Mountain Roads and Recreation Strategy. That project was based on extensive public consultation. In the fall of 2001, several hundred people attended four public open houses hosted by the Forest Service, City of Reno, and Washoe County. Interested individuals, including local jeep and mountain bike club members, provided site-specific road and trail inventories.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that 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:

1. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action.
2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety.
3. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area, because the enhanced travel management would protect Cultural and Natural resources. (see EA Environmental Consequences).
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. There is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of the project.
5. The Carson Ranger District has considerable experience with travel management planning. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk (see EA Environmental Consequences).
6. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. Travel planning of this type is a common, nonprecedent setting action for the Forest Service.
7. The cumulative impacts are not significant (see EA Environmental Consequences).
8. The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places,

because the motorized closure would reduce the potential for impacts to cultural resources. The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources, because the project reduces the potential for impacts to those resources (see EA Heritage Resources).

9. The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species act of 1973, due to the lack of suitable habitat (see EA Wildlife and Plants).
10. The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered for this project. The action is consistent with the Toiyabe Forest Plan (See EA Background/Purpose and Need).

Implementation Date

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, five business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215. Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. Appeals must be postmarked or received by the Appeal Deciding Officer within 45 days of the publication of this notice in the Reno Gazette Journal. The Appeal Deciding Officer is Forest Supervisor Ed Monnig. Appeals must be sent to: Appeal Deciding



Officer, Intermountain Region USFS, 324 25th Street, Ogden, Utah 84401; or by fax to 801-625-5277; or by email to: appeals-intermtn-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Emailed appeals must be submitted in rich text (rtf) or Word (doc) and must include the project name in the subject line. Appeals may also be hand delivered to the above address, during regular business hours of

8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, the environmental assessment, or the Forest Service appeal process, contact David Loomis, Project Manager, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, 1536 S. Carson St. Carson City, NV 89701 Ph 775-882-2766.

/s/Gary Schiff

GARY SCHIFF
District Ranger
Carson Ranger District

6/21/06

Date