



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

**Forest  
Service**

Pacific  
Southwest  
Region

R5-MB-000  
February 2012

# Environmental Assessment for A 5-year Special Use Permit for the Polka Dot Motorcycle Club Enduros

Eldorado National Forest





The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## INTRODUCTION

### **NEED**

The overriding goal for recreation across the forest is to provide a wide range of developed and dispersed recreation opportunities that meet projected demand (Page 4-2, Land and Resource Management Plan).

There is a need to provide safe organized event recreation opportunities while protecting resources and providing for public safety.

### **PUBLIC INVOLMENT**

A brief description of location and type of project has been included in the Eldorado National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) each quarter since April 2009. On February 10, 2011, approximately 17 letters were mailed out to potentially affected federal, state and local agencies, professional organizations, and local special interest groups. The letter contained the detailed proposed action and methods for participation.

Four individuals responded during scoping and two alternatives were developed to address the important issues raised (see issues discussion below).

The legal notice of comment was published in the newspaper of record on August 3, 2011 and copies of the PEA were sent to eight individuals, organizations, and government agencies. Comments were received from the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), the Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation (CSNC) and the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) during the comment period. A copy of how the comments were considered and addressed is in Appendix B.

### **Issues**

During scoping, issues were brought forward by the public (Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation and Center for Biological Diversity) concerning the purpose and need, proposed design criteria, and potential affects to Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive (TES) species. The Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation and Center for Biological Diversity brought forward an issue that the project could potentially affect the red-legged frog. An alternative, Alternative 3, was created to respond to the issue by eliminating all trails that cross live streams.

Alternative 4 was developed to address concerns that sediment delivery into Middle Dry Creek is negatively affecting aquatic habitat.

The public comments and agency responses are summarized in Appendix B at the end of this document.

### **Tiering and Incorporation by Reference**

In order to eliminate repetitive discussion and documentation, this environmental assessment tiers to the analysis of the Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP 1988) as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan

Amendment, January 2004 and the Environmental Impact Statement for the LRMP (1988).

The following documents prepared for this analysis are incorporated by reference:

- Biological Evaluation and Assessment for Terrestrial Wildlife,
- Wildlife Input for Management Indicator Species,
- Migratory Landbird Conservation on the Eldorado National Forest,
- Aquatic Species Biological Assessment and Evaluation,
- Heritage Resource Report (R2011-05-03-10007),
- Biological Assessment/Evaluation for Botanical Species,
- Hydrology Report,
- Riparian Conservation Objectives Consistency report,
- Soils Specialist Report

## **ALTERNATIVES**

### **A. Alternatives to be studied in Detail:**

#### **Alternative 1 - Proposed Action (issue a multi-district 5 year permit)**

The Forest Service proposes to issue a 5-year Special Use Permit to the Polka Dots Motorcycle Club (PDMC) for the purpose of holding the 49er and Family Enduro's each year. A multidistrict permit would be issued because, historically, the 49er Enduro was held on the Placerville Ranger District and the Family Enduro was held on the Amador District. Under a multidistrict permit both events may utilize system roads and trails authorized under the Eldorado National Forest Public Wheeled Motorized Travel Management EIS including routes that cross live streams (McKinney and Middle Dry Creeks). A map of the roads and trails proposed for use is attached.

The 49er Enduro is a motorcycle event that would be held out of the Elkins Flat Staging Area in the fall each year (October/November). This event would utilize approximately 80 to 100 miles of Forest Service system roads and trails on the Placerville Ranger District. The number of participants would be limited to 250 riders.

The Family Enduro is a motorcycle event that would be held out of the Gold Note Staging Area in the spring each year (May/June). This event would utilize approximately 50 to 60 miles of Forest Service system roads and trails on the Amador Ranger District. The number of participants would be limited to 300 riders.

The Elkins Flat staging area would be used in its entirety for the 49er Enduro. The center of the staging area would be used by PDMC for camping and the surrounding portion of the staging area would be used to park participants and spectators. If the Elkins Flat staging area reaches capacity the Simpson Camp trail head would be used for overflow camping. Participants would be allowed to park along the designated roads in compliance with the Eldorado National Forest Public Wheeled Motorized Travel Management Record of Decision. PDMC would supply information to the participants concerning parking, camping and how to prevent the spread of noxious weeds prior to the event as well as at the sign-up area. PDMC would ensure all participants and spectators comply with the Forest Service direction on parking and camping.

The Gold Note staging area would be used in its entirety for the Family Enduro, setting up similar to the 49er Enduro.

The Forest Service will coordinate with the event organizers to protect the resources described below before each event.

### **Design Criteria**

#### *Terrestrial Wildlife Species:*

Should a nesting and/or reproductive pair of either spotted owl or northern goshawk be located within ¼ mile of event routes or staging areas, during February 15 through September 15 (Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision, pages 60 to 61); the district wildlife biologist, project manager, line officer, and event organizers would take appropriate measures to reduce or remove potential disturbance effects (noise or human activity) from the events. Appropriate measures could include, but are not limited to: reroute of portions of the event route and relocation of staging, checkpoints, or other areas of concentrated event use. Background levels of potential disturbance effects from non-event use of the road and trail systems would be considered, and this mitigation would not apply where event use would not increase these impacts in intensity or duration above the baseline levels of use. The baseline impacts would be established prior to and during the first event by the district wildlife biologist and shared with the event organizers.

#### *Aquatic Species:*

The aquatic biologist would complete surveys for California red-legged frogs (CRLF) 300 feet upstream and downstream of all wet crossings 24 hours prior to the motorcycle events. If CRLF's are located at a wet crossing, the wet crossing would not be used for the event and consultation with the USFWS would be re-initiated. The event organizer would be informed as soon as possible concerning the detection of a CRLF.

#### *Archeology:*

Known sites along the proposed routes would be annually monitored, as part of routine ground operations, by an archeologist prior to and following the events. Known sites would be visually monitored for damage to sites due to evidence of vehicle tracks off of the designated trails into the sites. If monitoring results detect impacts from the motorcycle events, either signs or barricades would be installed. Areas impacted from the event would be excluded from further use and impacts mitigated.

#### *Botany/Invasive Species:*

PDMC would provide race participants with information on how to avoid introducing and spreading invasive species during the motorcycle events. All vehicles and equipment must be clean prior to arriving at the events. The Forest Service representative would inspect vehicles and equipment in coordination with the event organizers the day of the events. Vehicles that do not pass the inspection would not race or would be cleaned in a designated area prior to participating in the event. Monitoring of the trail system for noxious weeds will facilitate early detection of any new infestations.

PDMC would make reasonable efforts to use weed free material (straw, mulch, vehicles, and other equipment) and equipment while hosting the motorcycle events on National Forest System lands.

Known sensitive plant occurrences adjacent to the proposed routes would be flagged and monitored (CACLA 19, 39, 10, 83 LEKE 06) by a Forest Service botanist prior to and following the motorcycle events. As part of the ground operations known sites would be visually monitored for new impacts to plants or potential habitat annually.

Dispersed camping and check points would be excluded from known noxious weed infestations. Locations would be identified on the ground and flagged by the Forest Service prior to the event occurring.

If monitoring results detect impacts to sensitive plants or the spread of priority invasive species from the motorcycle events the forest botanist, project manager, and line officer would take appropriate measures to address impacts. Appropriate measures could include but are not limited to posting signs or barricades to prevent further impacts, treating priority infestations, and/or temporarily excluding a portion of a route. In addition, areas impacted may be restored by planting native plants.

#### *Hydrology:*

The approaches to the wet stream trail crossings at McKinney Creek (trail 26), Middle Dry Creek (trail 38, crossing #2) and Middle Dry Creek (trail 25, crossing #3) would be hardened prior to the first motorcycle event. Two trail segments in the Elkins Flat OHV area that are within Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs) will receive trail hardening maintenance prior to the first fall enduro event to eliminate trail surface runoff related sediment from being deposited into stream channels. This includes a segment of Trail 31 that crosses and intermittent tributary to Dogtown Creek, and a segment of Trail 28 within the RCA of Middle Dry Creek. A hydrologist and/or fisheries biologist would monitor the wet crossings of McKinney and Middle Dry Creek during and after the motorcycle events. During the event, turbidity would be measured in the two streams. After the event, the approaches to the wet crossings of the two streams would be evaluated for excessive erosion and sediment delivery to the streams. If necessary, measures would be taken to reduce impacts. These measures could include additional hardening of the approaches or the elimination of the use of one or more wet crossing during motorcycle events if shown to be due to intensity of riders above base line levels of use.

#### *Soils:*

Seasonal designations as displayed on the Eldorado National Forest Motor Vehicle Use Maps and administrative wet weather closures apply to the motorcycle events. However, if the roads are open prior to the event and a wet period returns, the event location would be evaluated 72 hours prior to the event using the same procedures used for determining the need for an administrative closure. If the trail conditions are determined to be at risk of damage as a result of an event with wet weather dominating those three days, then the event would be postponed. If the trails are predicted to be dry enough to support the

event prior to the event, but unstable or unpredictable weather is forecast, then the event organizers can request one more evaluation one day prior to the event.

The forest soil scientist would have primary responsibility for trail readiness evaluations. A substitute would be named two weeks prior to each event to assume the responsibility of evaluating readiness should the soil scientist be unavailable. The event organizers would be informed of the substitute appointee.

The weather station of record will be the National Weather Service RAWS station at Grizzly Flats (<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/sto/getRaws.php?sid=TR935&num=48>)

The procedure for determining administrative closure is titled “*Process for Recommending Extension of Travel Management Seasonal Closures*” and is found on the Eldorado National Forest web site at [http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/eldorado/documents/travel/seasonal\\_closure\\_extension\\_process2010.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/eldorado/documents/travel/seasonal_closure_extension_process2010.pdf)

**Alternative 2** – No Action- Do not issue a 5 year permit to the PDMC.

**Alternative 3** – Alternative 3 was created to respond to the issue that the project could potentially affect the red-legged frog. Portions of trails that cross perennial streams would be eliminated from use during the motorcycle events, due to the intensity and frequency of riders above base line levels of use.

Alternative 3 is the same as Alternative 1 except for the following:

- 1) Portions of trails 25, 26 and 38 (including live stream crossings) would be eliminated from use during the motorcycle events. See map in Appendix A.

Trail	Mileage	Stream Crossing	Location of Crossing
25 (two segments)	3.7 miles	Middle Dry Creek	T9N., R14E. Sections 31 and 33
26	0.2 miles	McKinney Creek	T9N., R14E. Sections 25 and 26
38	0.6 miles	Middle Dry Creek	T9N., R14E. Section 31
Total	4.5 miles		

**Alternative 4** – Alternative 4 was created to respond to the issue that sediment delivery into Middle Dry Creek due to the intensity and frequency of riders above base line levels of use is negatively affecting aquatic habitat.

Alternative 4 is the same as Alternative 1 except for the following:

- 1) Portions of trails 25 (stream crossing #1 on Middle Dry Creek) and 26 (McKinney Creek stream crossing) and road 9N55 would be eliminated from use during the motorcycle events. See map in Appendix A.

Trail	Mileage	Stream Crossing	Location of Crossing
25	2.1 miles	Middle Dry Creek	T9N., R14E. Section 33
26 (two segments)	1.7 miles	McKinney Creek	T9N., R14E. Sections 25 and 26
9N55	1.1 miles		
Total	4.9 miles		

- 2) The trails and roads eliminated from use for the motorcycle events will not be closed to the general public, however, to prevent possible collisions ‘flaggers’ and signs would be utilized to notify non-participants that a race event is taking place.
- 3) Use of the dispersed camping area west of Elkins Flat would be controlled and confined by a flag line to minimize disturbance.
- 4) In order to reduce potential impacts to the California Red-Legged frog (CRLF) and habitat within public lands, the utilization of “wet” stream crossings for these events is restricted to the minimum number of crossings absolutely necessary to hold the event. Additionally, based on site-specific analysis of trail and road segments several trails and roads have been rerouted or prohibited from use from vehicular traffic within Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs) to ensure no degradation (e.g., sedimentation) to frog habitats would occur. In the event any wet crossings are encountered prior to a scheduled event (e.g., ephemeral channels), the aquatic biologist would 1) identify any additional reroutes necessary to reduce impacts to CRLF habitat, 2) close such crossings if a determination is made that habitat would likely be affected by sediment, and 3) complete surveys for California red-legged frogs 300 feet upstream and downstream of the crossings 24 hours prior to the motorcycle event if it is determined that the crossing is absolutely necessary and measures (e.g., silt fences, oil booms, and/or temporary bridges) are in place to minimize or prevent sedimentation. If CRLF’s are located at or near a wet crossing, the wet crossing would not be used for the event and consultation with the USFWS would be re-initiated. The event organizer would be informed as soon as possible concerning the detection of a CRLF.

The permit would include a condition in the operating plan for postponing the event in case of wet ground conditions that may promote the dispersal of California Red-Legged frogs. The conditions are as follows:

- Limited Operating Period\* (LOP) October 15 through April 15 or after the first frontal system resulting in more than ¼ inch of precipitation, or both. If

a dry period of 72 hours or more occurs after the onset of the rainy season, operations may resume.

- If there is more than ¼ inch of precipitation measured at the National Weather Service RAWS station at Grizzly Flats 48 hours prior to the event.
- (<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/sto/getRaws.php?sid=TR935&num=48>)
- If it is raining or snowing just prior to or during the event, the event may be postponed. The permit would include a condition in the operating plan for postponing the event in case of wet trail conditions.

## **B. Alternatives eliminated from detailed study:**

1. Move the enduros out of all recovery habitat for the California red-legged frog. This alternative was not considered because both the Elkins and Gold Note trail systems are currently within Core Recovery Habitat. The only area where the enduro could be moved to is Rock Creek which is outside the scope of this project.

2. Shorten the length of the course. This alternative was eliminated from detailed study because this is outside the scope of this project.

3. Eliminate additional stream crossing. This alternative was eliminated from detailed study because Alternative 3 removes all of the perennial stream crossings within the project area from use during the events. The commenter did not identify which ephemeral stream crossings to eliminate so it was determined the alternative was already addressed by Alternative 3.

4. Eliminate all crossings identified in Alternative 3 and 9N55. Alternative 4 eliminates 2 of the crossings (Middle Dry Creek and McKinney Creek) identified in Alternative 3 and a portion of road 9N55 from use during the event. This alternative would be very similar to Alternative 4 so it was eliminated from detailed study based on duplication within the existing range of alternatives.

5. Limit the number of participants in each event. This alternative was eliminated from detailed study because the number of participants is limited for each event.

6. Consider using alternative sites off the Forest such as State Vehicular Recreation Areas (SVRAs) for hosting the enduros. This alternative was eliminated from detailed study because it doesn't address the purpose and need and it is outside the scope of the project.

7. Use this enduro proposal as an opportunity for the Forest to begin identifying trails and routes in this area that should be closed and restored including 26 Trail and others such as 9N55. This alternative was eliminated from detailed study because it is outside of the scope of this project.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

### **Effects relative to significance factors**

This section describes the environmental impacts of the proposal in relation to whether there may be significant environmental effects as described at 40 CFR 1508.27. Further analysis and conclusions about the potential effects, including cumulative effects, are available in Resource Specialist Reports and other supporting documentation located in the project record. The following sections have relevance to a determination of significance.

#### **1) Beneficial and adverse impacts**

Beneficial effects were not used to offset adverse effects. In the absence of beneficial effects, no adverse effects would be significant even when considered by themselves.

The Forest Service benefits from the issuance of a 5 year special use permit, because it will not have to process annual applications for the next 5 years. The Forest Service and the OHV users benefit from the issuance of the 5 year permit, because it offers an opportunity to participate in an organized recreation event on the Elkins Flat and Gold Note Trails.

#### **Terrestrial Wildlife Species - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 1**

**California spotted owl, northern goshawk** -This alternative would have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on habitat quality or quantity, it would have an incremental additive potential for a short term (weekend of the events) disturbance effects to the potentially affected spotted owl and goshawk Protected Activity Centers (PACs). Temporary displacement of individuals could result from event related disturbance for both events. The spring event, Family Enduro would occur during the nesting and reproductive period for spotted owls and goshawks, but with the design criteria in this alternative, and the existing baseline disturbance and existing avoidance/acclimation of this species to the road and trail use, no effects to reproduction for spotted owls or goshawks would be expected to occur. The fall event, 49er Enduro, would occur outside of the nesting period for spotted owls and goshawks, therefore disturbance would only be expected to affect individuals, but there would be no effect to reproduction anticipated.

#### **Family Enduro (Gold Note)**

There are ten spotted owl Protected Activity Centers (PACs), ELD0020, ELD0023, ELD0031, ELD0142, ELD0143, ELD0144, ELD0145, ELD0159, ELD0187, and ELD0188, which could be affected by the Family Enduro Event, as these PACs are within ½ mile of the proposed routes. These PACs are adjacent to and in many cases include publicly used roads and trails, which see use during the open season from March 31st through January 1st (subject to road and trail conditions) by a variety of users and associated traffic, including: logging trucks and equipment, highway legal vehicles, off highway vehicles (OHVs), mountain bikes, and pedestrian uses. These PACs presently have 300 acres or more suitable habitat for spotted owl and have an additional 700 acres

or more of suitable habitat identified within their respective Home Range Core Areas, for a total of at least 1000 acres of suitable habitat available to each pair/PAC.

There are five northern goshawk Protected Activity Centers (PACs), G3701, G3702, G3703, G3707, and G3708, which could be affected by the Family Enduro Event, as these PACs are adjacent to or within ½ mile of the proposed routes. These PACs are adjacent to and in many cases include publicly used roads and trails, which see use during the open season March 31st through January 1st (subject to road and trail conditions by a variety of users and associated traffic, including: logging trucks and equipment, highway legal vehicles, off highway vehicles (OHVs), mountain bikes, and pedestrian uses. These PACs presently have 200 acres or more suitable habitat for northern goshawk.

#### 49er Enduro (Elkins Flat)

There are thirteen spotted owl Protected Activity Centers (PACs), ELD0007, ELD0011, ELD0035, ELD0063, ELD0089, ELD0091, ELD0115, ELD0137, ELD0155, ELD0162, ELD0199, ELD0208, and ELD0316, which could be affected by the 49er Enduro Event, as these PACs are within ½ mile of the proposed routes. These PACs are adjacent to and in many cases include publicly used roads and trails, which see use during the open season from March 31st through January 1st (subject to road and trail conditions) a variety of users and associated traffic, including: logging trucks and equipment, highway legal vehicles, off highway vehicles (OHVs), mountain bikes, and pedestrian uses. These PACs presently have 300 acres or more suitable habitat for spotted owl and have an additional 700 acres or more of suitable habitat identified within their respective Home Range Core Areas, for a total of at least 1000 acres of suitable habitat available to each pair/PAC.

There are eight northern goshawk Protected Activity Centers (PACs), G2707, G2709, G2802, G2808, G3607, G3704, G3705, and G3706, which could be affected by the 49er Enduro Event, as these PACs are adjacent to or within ½ mile of the proposed routes. These PACs are adjacent to and in many cases include publicly used roads and trails, which see use during the open season from March 31st through January 1st (subject to road and trail conditions by a variety of users and associated traffic, including: logging trucks and equipment, highway legal vehicles, off highway vehicles (OHVs), mountain bikes, and pedestrian uses. These PACs presently have 200 acres or more suitable habitat for northern goshawk.

**American marten, Pacific fisher, Sierra Nevada red fox** -This alternative would have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on habitat quality or quantity, it would have an incremental additive potential for a short term (weekend of the events) disturbance effects to the associated with the suitable habitat for American marten, Pacific fisher, and Sierra Nevada red fox (SNRF). Temporary displacement of individuals could result from event related disturbance for both events. The spring event, Family Enduro would occur during the denning/ reproductive period for fisher and SNRF, but with the design criteria in this alternative, and the existing baseline disturbance and existing avoidance/acclimation of this species to the road and trail use, no effects to reproduction for these species would be

expected to occur. Neither fisher nor SNRF are known to exist in the project area making even temporary displacement unlikely. The Family Enduro takes place below the elevational range for marten, so no effects for this species would be anticipated. The fall event, 49er Enduro, would occur outside of the denning/reproduction season for the marten, fisher, and SNRF, therefore disturbance would only be expected to affect individuals, but there would be no effect to reproduction anticipated for any of the three species.

There are no known den sights for marten, fisher, or SNRF adjacent to the roads and trails proposed for use in this enduro event. This event takes place on the Gold Note OHV system which is below 5,500 ft. in elevation and is believed to be, based on literature, and local sighting data, below the marten's elevational range. For this reason no direct, indirect or cumulative effects would be expected from this event on American marten for any of the alternatives. Habitat suitable for foraging for fisher and Sierra Nevada red fox exist adjacent to the roads and trails proposed for use in this event. The suitable habitat adjacent to and in many cases includes publicly used roads and trails, which see use during the open season March 31st through January 1st (subject to road and trail conditions by a variety of users and associated traffic, including: logging trucks and equipment, highway legal vehicles, off highway vehicles (OHVs), mountain bikes, and pedestrian uses.

There are no known den sights for marten, fisher, or Sierra Nevada red fox adjacent to the roads and trails proposed for use in this enduro event. Habitat suitable for foraging for all three species exist adjacent to the roads and trails, although only the upper third, in elevation, of the trail/roads are within the range for marten. The suitable habitat adjacent to and in many cases includes publicly used roads and trails, which see use during the open season March 31st through January 1st (subject to road and trail conditions by a variety of users and associated traffic, including: logging trucks and equipment, highway legal vehicles, off highway vehicles (OHVs), mountain bikes, and pedestrian uses.

**pallid bat, and Townsend's big-eared bat** -This alternative would have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on habitat quality or quantity, it would have an incremental additive potential for a short term (weekend of the events) disturbance effects to the associated with the suitable habitat for pallid bat and Townsend's big-eared bat. Temporary displacement of individuals could result from event related disturbance for both events; however this is believed to be unlikely. As disturbance would be unlikely to affect individuals; there would be no effect to reproduction anticipated for pallid bats and Townsend's big-eared bats.

There are no known mine or cave sites within the project area that would provide suitable roosting habitat in rock crevices. Foraging habitat for this species exists adjacent to roads and trails for both enduros. Large conifer snags and bole cavities in oaks for roosting are also present in the project area, but are scarce due to road and trail management within the immediate strip either side of the roads or trails. There have been no comprehensive surveys for pallid bat on the ENF. Surveys associated with the SNFP were conducted in

2001 for pallid bats along the Highway 50 corridor north of the project area. There was a capture of a pallid bat during that survey effort (ENF 2002).

Townsend's big-eared bats are associated with a variety of habitats including desert, native prairies, coniferous forests, mid-elevation mixed conifer, mixed hardwood-conifer forests, riparian communities, agricultural lands, and coastal habitats. For this reason, the areas adjacent to the roads and trails analyzed habitats for this species appear to be roosting sites. Key habitat for Townsend's big-eared bats is roosts sites. This species is highly selective in their choice of roost locations, which include old buildings, mines, or caves that remain undisturbed. No roosting structures would be impacted by any of the action alternatives, and key habitat will not be affected, nor analyzed further in this analysis.

### **Terrestrial Wildlife Species- Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 2**

Under this alternative normal seasonal trail ridership would continue but the PDMC recreation event would not contribute to an increased risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to terrestrial wildlife species mentioned above.

### **Terrestrial Wildlife Species - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternatives 3 and 4**

Direct, indirect and cumulative effects of Alternatives 3 and 4 are the same as Alternative 1 for the Family Enduro event (Gold Note OHV system) as the dropped trails are not part of this event. For the 49er Enduro event, the reduction in approximately y 4.5 miles road/trail from the events would incrementally reduce the potential disturbance effects to spotted owls and goshawks as less of the system would be in use during the event. The potential for temporary displacement of individuals would still remain over the event course that remains under this alternative, but as with Alternative 1, no effects to reproduction would be expected. The cumulative effects are essentially the same for this alternative as was described for Alternative 1, as the reduction in potential disturbance is small and would not affect reproduction.

Direct, indirect and cumulative effects of Alternatives 3 and 4 are the same as Alternative 1 for the Family Enduro event (Gold Note OHV system) as the dropped trails are not part of this event. For the 49er Enduro event, the reduction in approximately y 4.5 miles road/trail from the events would incrementally reduce the potential disturbance effects to marten, fisher and Sierra Nevada red fox as less of the system would be in use during the event. The potential for temporary displacement of individuals would still remain over the event course that remains under this alternative, but as with Alternative 1, no effects to reproduction would be expected. The cumulative effects are essentially the same for this alternative as was described for Alternative 1, as the reduction in potential disturbance is small and would not affect reproduction.

Direct, indirect and cumulative effects of Alternatives 3 and 4 are the same as Alternative 1 for the Family Enduro event (Gold Note OHV system) as the dropped trails are not part of this event. For the 49er Enduro event, the reduction in approximately y 4.5 miles road/trail from the events would incrementally reduce the potential disturbance effects to

pallid and Townsend's big-eared bats as less of the system would be in use during the event. The potential for temporary displacement of individuals would still remain over the event course that remains under this alternative, but as with Alternative 1, no effects to reproduction would be expected. The cumulative effects are essentially the same for this alternative as was described for Alternative 1, as the reduction in potential disturbance is small and would not affect reproduction.

**Aquatic Species – California red-legged frog, foothill yellow-legged frog, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, and western pond turtle**

**Aquatic Species - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 1**

Under Alternative 1 there would likely be sediment increases to the creeks with “wet” stream crossings as a result of the PDMC enduro crossing McKinney and Middle Dry Creeks as well as using a portion of road 09N55 and the Trail 26 hill climb from the Elkins Flat Staging Area that could result in negative effects to the California red-legged frog (CRLF) and its habitat that are not discountable.

Direct effects from OHV use the trails utilized by the PDMC include the crushing of individual frogs especially where “wet” stream crossings exist. There are several habitats where foothill yellow-legged frogs (FYLFs) could be affected by the recreation events within the Elkins Flat – Gold Note Areas. The most likely areas to affect FYLFs would be where OHVs can come into contact with individuals such as raw or “wet” stream crossings or where trails are in close proximity to water such as RCAs that could result in injury or mortality from being crushed. The inhabited stream reach where foothill yellow-legged frogs are known to reside 1.75 miles downstream of the area of Trail 33 in Sopiago Creek does not contain any “wet” crossings and would not likely directly or indirectly affect the FYLF since they are usually not found far from a water source. Noise and vibration also generated by OHVs can cause disturbance to breeding adults who may cease calling for mates during such activities. Potential spills from petroleum products into watercourses can also have a negative impact to FYLFs. Indirect effects to FYLF include sediment transport from the approaches of wet stream crossings and trail segments within RCAs or within floodplains that could contribute sediment to streams and reduce habitat quality.

Direct effects to Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frogs (SNYFs) include crushing of individuals from OHVs especially at “wet” crossings where OHVs are in direct contact with aquatic habitats and especially since SNYF is rarely found far from water. Collection or harassment of individuals may occur in areas where recreational use such as dispersed camping in Riparian Conservation Areas is high. Indirect effects to SNYF from OHV activities would likely include effects from sediment input into water courses when trail surfaces are de-compacted by trail throw followed by annual precipitation events. Spring breeding by SNYF usually occurs within just a few weeks during optimal conditions. Noise and vibration generated by OHVs may hinder male SNYFs calling for mates by causing them to cease vocalizations until the disturbance passes, therefore reducing or interfering with the breeding cycle.

Individual western pond turtles (usually males) may have large home ranges and may wander within a given watercourse for several kilometers on a regular basis (Reese 1996). Western pond turtle nests have been found as far as 400 m (435 yd) from the stream (Reese and Welsh 1997) in open sunny areas on hillslopes, generally with a south to southwest facing aspect<sup>1</sup>. Given WPT sightings are within or adjacent to project boundary, and the fact that approximately 2,741 acres of nesting habitat was identified in a GIS for the proposed project area, there is the potential for individuals to be affected by event activities when turtles travel overland and especially when females attempt to lay their eggs from May to July. Threats to nests and hatchlings would occur from May through March since the incubation period for western pond turtles is approximately eight months and may remain in the nest for a week or more.

Western pond turtle also move into upland slopes while overwintering. Overwintering movements are poorly understood; however, in Trinity County California, western pond turtles left the study-area river in September and began return movements in February, ending in June; the only lull in activity occurred between December and January (Reese and Welsh 1997). In one study in Trinity County, California the average distance of overwintering sites from a watercourse was 167 m (550 ft) (Ashton and other 1997). In the Sierra Nevada, the most likely time for western pond turtle overwintering movements is during the fall/late fall and early spring and would represent movements to and from upland overwintering sites. If western pond turtles were overwintering within the proposed project area, crushing of individuals could occur during these timeframes.

### **Aquatic Species - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 2**

Under this alternative normal seasonal trail ridership would continue but the PDMC recreation event would not and would not contribute to an increased risk of direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to the CRLF, FYLF, SNYL, or western pond turtle.

---

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that various studies have recorded considerable variances in distances western pond turtles travel overland away from the stream channel.

### **Aquatic Species - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 3**

Under this alternative all four perennial crossings (three on Middle Dry Creek and one on McKinney Creek) would not be used for the PDMC recreation events in order to prevent an increased risk of direct, indirect or cumulative effects to the California red-legged frog especially from sediment deposition into the creek by crossing motorcycles. The hardening of the approaches on McKinney and Middle Dry Creek would occur reducing any potential sediment effects downstream where suitable CRLF habitat exists.

Since all wet crossings under this Alternative are outside of the elevation range of the SNYF this species would not incur any direct, indirect, or cumulative effects from the elimination of the use of these trail crossing for these events.

### **Aquatic Species - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 4**

Past surveys have attempted to determine whether CRLF resides or reproduces within the streams which are crossed by trails for the recreation events. No CRLF have been observed. Any wet (flowing or standing water) crossings within 2 miles of ponds or streams with suitable habitat, including raw (e.g., no culvert) seasonal crossings, shall be surveyed just prior to the recreation events. The two wet crossings where the trails cross Middle Dry Creek (Trail 25 & 38) would be surveyed 24 hours prior to the 49er event since they are within 2 miles of ponds or streams containing potentially suitable breeding habitat. If CRLFs are detected at a stream crossing, the event would not use the wet crossing. In the unlikely event that CRLF are present in the perennial and seasonal drainages affected by proposed project activities, and remain undetected during surveys, the following effects could occur:

**Loss of individual CRLFs from crushing/killing/disturbance:** Foraging or dispersing CRLF could become crushed by motorcycles on trails in the fall after a precipitation event, typically after October 15. However, it is unlikely that a bare, hardened trail surface would provide much cover or foraging opportunity for CRLF, therefore, the risk of being intercepted by motorcycles in this scenario seems low. Since CRLF remain close to water during the dryer months and are not known to disperse overland more than 300 feet from a water source, surveys of wet crossings, if any are found, are expected to effectively locate CRLF at sites where they could be directly affected by motorcycles.

**Habitat alteration from sedimentation and water quality:** Although many habitats occupied by CRLF are influenced by dynamic processes that alter temporal and spatial habitats due to the nature of floodplains and fluvial processes, some of these factors including sediment, can be accelerated from trail surface runoff to a water feature and consequently could negatively affect CRLF and habitat. CRLFs can be affected as a result of accelerated sedimentation of deep pools which causes an alteration of primary productivity, fills in interstitial spaces with fine particles, impedes water flow and, reduces dissolved oxygen content, and restricts waste removal (USDI 2002).

Aquatic habitat surveys after events identified light sediment deposits had occurred in slow water habitats in the reaches of Middle Dry Creek but not to the extent that pool

depth was reduced. At the Middle Dry Creek wet crossings, some sedimentation from turbidity to the stream has been observed occurring from motorcycles crossing. The heaviest amount of sediment transport to the project area streams typically occurs during and shortly after heavy rainfall events. Markman (2011) found that trail crossings as well as surface erosion along Middle Dry Creek to be causing downstream sedimentation after storm events. Additionally this report noted there was a temporary, localized decrease in water quality at the stream crossings during recreation events for about 100 feet downstream. This degradation was primarily the result of a temporary suspension of material already present in the stream. The stream returns to pre-disturbance conditions soon after the disturbance passes.

Recent surveys have revealed sedimentation is occurring associated with general trail use, although much more sediment is being delivered from current and unmaintained roads. The most important effect to stream systems from OHV activities is soil compaction (Liddle 1997). This leads to decreased infiltration and increased runoff of rain water, which accelerates erosion (Sack and da Luz Jr. 2003). Many of these trails have persisted for decades and have reached a maximum level of compaction and/or erosion (e.g., down to volcanic lahar).

Impacts that do increase with increased use are trail widening, direct displacement of soil (especially if the soil is wet), and deterioration of water diversion structures, such as water bars. In order to reduce erosion rates, the steepness and lengths of trails need to be reduced (Wilshire, Shipley and Nakata, 1978). This is done by rerouting overly steep trails and by maintaining water diversion structures. The Amador and Placerville Ranger Districts are working to remedy these issues with various trail work projects completed (e.g., hardened crossings on Middle Dry Creek) and in the planning phase (e.g., hardening approaches on Trail 26 crossing McKinney Creek).

**Risk of pollution from petroleum spills and the natural crossings:** The risk of pollution from petroleum spills at stream crossings is low, although it still exists. This would have more potential to occur on the existing larger wet crossings without bridges, such as the three fords on Middle Dry Creek, of which two will only be used under this permit, and one ford on McKinney Creek. When motorcycles crash at fords, oil from engines or gas tanks may leak into the streams. If oil products were to enter the streams from motorcycles, they could affect aquatic life downstream with a sufficient quantity of fluids. An oil boom will be set up across wet crossings which would prevent petroleum contaminants from flowing downstream.

**Actions for the Implementation of Recovery Tasks:** Within the Gold Note OHV vehicle area several actions that are either being implemented, or analyzed to fulfill actions identified in the Recovery Plan for the California Red-Legged frog including:

- Protection of suitable habitats and buffers in perpetuity
- Reducing the detrimental effect of livestock grazing
- Designing and maintaining roads in a manner that reduces impacts

- Development of site-specific guidelines for recreational activities to reduce or eliminate impacts to the CA Red-Legged frog where these activities pose an on-going threat to habitat quality
- Reducing the impacts of trail and road use on CA Red-Legged frog habitat within public lands
- Minimizing off-highway impacts
- Reducing impacts on the CA Red-Legged frog from developed recreation sites and dispersed recreational use on public lands

#### Recovery Tasks

- Develop and implement watershed management and protection plans for core areas.
- For the Cosumnes River Core Area – protect existing populations, restore additional habitat, protect connectivity, reestablish populations and/or augment existing populations.

Past surveys have attempted to determine whether CRLF resides or reproduces within the streams within the recreation events (Elkins Flat & Gold Note Areas). Despite intensive surveys and surveys to full Fish and Wildlife Service Protocol in highly suitable areas, no CRLF have been observed. The only known observed sighting in 2002 of three adult frogs in an impounded section of Sopiago Creek was on private land (CNDDDB 2011). This impoundment is believed to have since failed and is no longer present. The current status of the CRLF on this parcel of private property is unknown. The Eldorado National Forest has conducted 2 day and 2 night surveys in 2010 in Sopiago Creek approximately 0.25 mi. downstream of the documented location on National Forest lands where suitable low-gradient (2% or less) habitat was identified in a GIS in an attempt to document CRLFs, but none were found. Even though the CRLF has not been detected in these areas the trail systems are still within Core Recovery Habitat (Cosumnes River Watershed) for CRLF and measures are in place to ensure that potentially suitable habitat is protected in perpetuity for the CRLF. Wet crossings where habitat would be most affected, where CRLF could be crushed by motorcycles, or be affected by sediment deposition have been identified and have been restricted from use to all OHV traffic during the event (e.g., raw crossing Middle Dry Creek –Trail 25). In other instances, improvements will be made to approaches like McKinney Creek such as hardening to reduce sediment entering streams during runoff events. All wet crossings used for the 49er event along Middle Dry Creek in the Elkins Flat OHV area (Trail 25 and Trail 38) would be surveyed just prior to the event to minimize the risk of CRLF being affected by the event if they are found to be present. In the event any ephemeral drainages are found to be containing standing or flowing water prior to any enduro event, mitigations are in place that include surveying such features just prior to the event to minimize the risk of CRLF and their habitat. Wet weather closure restrictions will also ensure any effects to dispersing frogs are limited.

Alternative 4 effects from the recreation events would not occur and any effects to the SNYF from the trail systems would be from annual public use on authorized trails including sediment deposition from annual precipitation events on decompacted soils.

## **Botanical Resources - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 1**

Pleasant Valley Mariposa lily occurs in the vicinity (<100 feet) of proposed routes for the events. Individual plants occurring within or immediately adjacent to the travel corridor may be impacted by vehicle travel or dispersed recreation in sensitive plant areas. This is most likely to occur during the Family Enduro event when plants are preparing to flower. Currently six known occurrences (CACLA occurrence # 10, 19, 38, 39, 41, 68) all have plants that could be directly impacted by vehicle travel on designated routes since plants are known within or immediately adjacent to the existing travel routes. The remaining occurrences within 100 feet of designated routes generally occurring in terrain that is unsuitable for vehicle travel and dispersed recreation so direct impacts are less likely. Direct impacts to Pleasant Valley Mariposa lily are not expected during the 49er event since the enduro would be held in the fall when Pleasant Valley Mariposa lily and Hutchison's lewisia are dormant. Flagging known occurrences prior to the spring enduro event would help race participants and organizers avoid sensitive plant habitat when selecting dispersed recreation areas, checkpoints, and staging areas.

During race events there may be increased levels of users in the Elkins Flat and Gold Note areas which could drive recreationist associated with the event into marginal areas or even pioneering new dispersed recreation areas. If this occurs in existing Sensitive plant occurrences, individual plants could be affected directly by trampling or indirectly by reduced habitat quality. The occasional incursion into sensitive plant habitat would not cause long-term reduction in population viability as long as new trails or dispersed recreation areas do not become established in the Elkins Flat and Gold Note trail systems. Forest Service enforcement of travel management regulations during recreation events would limit the potential for resource impacts from dispersed recreation during the event. Post race monitoring of sensitive plant occurrences would document any new incursions into sensitive plant habitat and necessary measures to prevent further use and development would be implemented.

The one known Hutchison's Lewisia occurrence in the project area is found along the Elkin's Flat trail system so direct effects from the proposed recreation event would be limited because events would occur during the dormant period for the species. Some direct effects could occur if vehicles disturb or uproot dormant plants within or along designated travel routes, but the potential to trample individual plants is reduced compared to potential direct impacts from vehicle travel when plants are flowering. Because a majority of reproductive individuals at the known population are outside of the established route, population viability is expected to be maintained. Potential habitat also occurs along portions of the Gold Note trail system for this species. Any undiscovered occurrences along the Gold Note trail system would be more sensitive to direct impact because the proposed recreation events coincides with the life stage of the species that is most sensitive to impacts from trampling. Occasional trampling of individual plants should not result in mortality if the root structure remains intact; however, repeated trampling that may be associated with trail widening or dispersed recreation could eventually result in the loss of undiscovered individuals. Hutchison's and Kellogg's lewisia were both added to the Eldorado National Forest Sensitive plant list relatively recently (2006) so there is a greater chance for undiscovered occurrences happening

along proposed routes than other species with greater survey coverage on the forest. If new occurrences are found along proposed routes the Eldorado National Forest would take necessary protective actions.

Vehicle travel associated with the proposed recreation events through known occurrences may cause erosion or disturb individuals by moving soil, rocks, or change microsite conditions along the designated travel corridor. This may expose bulbs or root structures of plants growing along trails. Once a plant is uprooted or has its underground structure exposed it would likely perish or be more sensitive to herbivory as both Pleasant Valley Mariposa lily and *Lewisia* species roots and bulbs are desirable food sources for wildlife. Continued vehicle travel would also prevent establishment of plants within travel corridors, reducing available potential habitat. Because these trails are used throughout the year the expected indirect effects from the proposed recreation events would be relatively minor in the context of existing vehicle use along the established trail system.

Three-bracted onion and mountain lady's slipper orchid have not been located in the project area. Even though surveys of potential habitat for three-bracted onion (*Allium tribracteatum*), and mountain lady's slipper orchid (*Cypripedium montanum*) have occurred in the analysis area, it is possible that past and recent surveys have overlooked existing sensitive plants (surveys can only positively state a species presence, not its absence). If surveys inadvertently overlook sensitive plants, these individuals may be affected directly by trampling from vehicles, or dispersed recreation activities.

The potential for trampling of veined aquatic lichen during the proposed enduro events is unlikely since ongoing vehicle traffic and hardening of the designated wet crossings precludes the establishment of the lichen at the four crossings. To date veined aquatic lichen has not been found along McKinney or Middle Dry Creek but if the lichen is found necessary measures would be recommended to limit potential impacts.

## **Botanical Resources - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 2**

OHV travel along designated routes within the Elkins Flat and Gold Note trail system would continue throughout the year including the days when the proposed recreation events would occur. Potential direct and indirect effects to sensitive plant species from vehicle travel would be largely the same as described under Alternative 1. Recreation activities and OHV use would be subject to applicable regulations and Forest Orders. Pleasant Valley Mariposa lily and Hutchison's lewisia populations in close proximity to existing trails would continue to be at risk for impacts from continued OHV activity and dispersed recreation in the area. The Forest Service would continue to monitor known sensitive plant occurrences at risk for impact from vehicle travel and would take corrective actions if new incursions into sensitive plant habitat are found. The risk of development and expansion of dispersed recreation areas, and impacts to high risk occurrences along existing routes would be similar for the trail system under Alternative 2 as described for Alternative 1 from continued trail use.

### **Botanical Resources - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 3**

Alternative 3 eliminates approximately 4.5 miles of trail along FS trails # 25, 38, 26. There are no Sensitive plant populations along these sections of trail so the potential effects for Alternative 3 would be the same as described for Alternative 1 except for potential effects to undiscovered aquatic lichen would be lower for Alternative 3 compared to Alternatives 1 and 4.

### **Botanical Resources - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 4**

Potential effects for Alternative 4 would be the same as described for Alternative 1 expect for the following. The portion of trail 26 eliminated for use during the motorcycle event is within 100 feet of Pleasant Valley Mariposa site #134. The risk of direct effects from vehicle travel is considered low for this occurrence under Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 since existing terrain impedes vehicle travel within the occurrence. Eliminating this portion of trail 26 for the enduro event would slightly reduce potential effects from vehicle travel to CACLA 134, but the difference in potential effects would be relatively minor given continued non enduro vehicle travel along trail 26.

By eliminating two of the four known wet crossings from the recreation events the potential effects (as described under Alternative 1) to undiscovered aquatic lichen would be lower for Alternative 4 compared to Alternative 1, but slightly greater than Alternatives 2 and 3.

### **Invasive Species-Noxious Weeds - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 1**

Soil disturbances in combination with potential vectors (OHV recreationist and equipment) visiting from across California creates an elevated risk of invasive plant introduction and proliferation along OHV trail systems on the Eldorado NF and within the analysis area. Many noxious weed species have the potential to quickly outcompete native plants including Sensitive plants for sunlight, water, and nutrients. These species often form dense monocultures which may adversely impact habitat for Sensitive plants (Zouhar et al, 2008). Seeds of these species could be carried into Sensitive plant areas on vehicles, motorcycles, and other recreation equipment during the recreation events. The incremental increase in potential vectors from two annual recreation events is not expected to significantly increase the risk of noxious weed spread in the project area in the context of existing vectors from public use throughout the year. Design criteria for cleaning equipment prior to arriving to the race and using weed free materials during the event would reduce the potential introduction of noxious weeds from outside of the project area. Excluding checkpoints, staging areas and dispersed recreation from known high priority infestation would also reduce the potential spread of existing infestations. While effective in reducing the risk of noxious weed introduction and spread, the above measures are not expected to completely eliminate potential introductions of noxious weeds or address the spread of non-native annual grasses which are already well established throughout the trail system (see noxious weed risk assessment).

There are a number of high priority noxious weed infestations known along the Gold Note and Elkins Flat trail system including yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), rush skeletonweed (*Chondrilla juncea*), and spotted knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe*) (see noxious weed risk assessment). Race day checkpoints, staging areas, and areas for dispersed camping would be excluded from currently known and potentially future infestations of high priority species (ENF list A species), which would limit the potential spread of known noxious weeds during the recreation events into sensitive plant habitat.

### **Noxious Weeds - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 2**

Risk of noxious weed introduction within the analysis area would be very similar under Alternative 2 due to existing vehicle travel, and other potential vectors for noxious weed introduction already present in the project area (described further in the project noxious weed risk assessment).

### **Noxious Weeds - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 3**

The direct and indirect effects for Alternative 3 are the same as described under Alternative 1.

### **Noxious Weeds - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 4**

The direct and indirect effects for Alternative 4 are the same as described under Alternative 1.

### **Special Interest Plants – Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternatives 1, 3, and 4**

The Pacific yew within the project area is not expected to be impacted by the continued OHV activity in the project area. No other special interest plant species have been found within the project area. However, if past and recent surveys inadvertently overlook special interest plants other than Pacific yew, it is possible that some individuals may be affected directly by the development and continued use of existing designated trails. Indirect effects from continued OHV activity to undiscovered individuals may include soil compaction, and potential introduction of non-native species and noxious weeds.

### **Hydrologic Resources - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 1**

Alternative 1 carries a higher risk of elevated turbidity and suspended sediment downstream of the four “wet” OHV trail crossings of Middle Dry Creek and McKinney Creek than Alternative 2. In addition, there could be higher levels of turbidity and suspended sediment. This is because Alternative 1 would likely result in more concentrated use of the “wet” OHV trail crossings than compared to Alternative 2. The above conclusions are based on three sources of information:

- The 2009 Polka Dot enduro event, where approximately 50 riders drove through crossing #2 of Middle Dry Creek in 30 minutes. The increase in the turbidity of the stream occurred in less than 100 feet of stream length and persisted for less

than 30 minutes. The results from this monitoring, which include measurements of turbidity and photographs of the stream, are in Appendix A, item #1a of the Hydrologic Assessment.

- Observations at OHV crossing #1 of Middle Dry Creek on May 18, 2011. The visual clarity and turbidity of Middle Dry Creek - approximately 25 feet downstream of the crossing - was nearly unchanged after two riders crossed the stream. The results from this monitoring are described in more detail in Appendix item #1a of the Hydrologic Assessment.
- Estimates of OHV trail use outside of events by the PDMC, where less than 100 riders would be likely to cross Middle Dry Creek during an entire day (1,440 minutes) of most days (Appendix A, #3) Hydrologic Assessment.

Alternative 1 would likely deliver more sediment to Middle Dry and McKinney Creeks than Alternatives 2, 3, and 4. This is because Alternative 1 has no restrictions on the number of “wet” stream crossings that would be used, while the other alternatives would use fewer “wet” crossings. As a result, Alternative 1 carries a greater risk of altering the stream condition and aquatic habitat of Middle Dry Creek and McKinney Creek than Alternatives 2, 3, and 4. However, the existing data cannot quantitatively separate the effects to stream condition and aquatic habitat from individual sources such as the trail use for the recreation events, trail use outside of the recreation events, other recreation activities, roads, and past timber harvest.

### **Hydrologic Resources - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 2**

Alternative 2 (No Action) carries a lower risk of elevated turbidity and suspended sediment downstream of the four “wet” OHV trail crossings of Middle Dry Creek and McKinney Creek than Alternative 1. In addition, there would likely be lower levels of turbidity and suspended sediment. Alternative 2 would not contribute to detrimental effects to stream condition and aquatic habitat of Middle Dry Creek and McKinney Creek. However, the Elkins Flat trail system has already resulted in detrimental effects to Middle Dry and McKinney Creeks. The above conclusions are based on an absence of OHV trail use for the recreation event, and the observations at crossing #1 of McKinney as described in Appendix A, and item #1a of the Hydrologic Assessment.

### **Hydrologic Resources - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 3**

The effects from Alternative 3 are similar to Alternative 2. This is because Alternative 3 eliminates the use of the “wet” OHV crossings on Middle Dry Creek and McKinney Creek.

### **Hydrologic Resources - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternative 4**

The effects from Alternative 4 are less than Alternative 1, but slightly greater than Alternatives 2 and 3. This is because alternative 4 eliminates the use of two “wet” crossings and the last mile of road 9N55.

## **Soils - Direct and Indirect Effects – Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4**

The effects between Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 are similar except for the effects of the wet crossings. The effects of the wet crossings are analyzed in detail in the Hydrologic Assessment. Although there would be concentrated weekend use during the events, it is not possible to identify effects that would be of greater magnitude during the events than what would be expected during a busy weekend such as Memorial Day or July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend. The effects to the soil resources are intrinsic to OHV activity. The effects expected are trail tread disturbance, dusting, water erosion, and trail widening.

The mechanical action of spinning OHV tires tend to loosen the surface of trail treads. This soil loosening disturbs the aggregating capability of soil particles. Depending on soil type, loosening the soil can have the indirect effect of soil removal. Loosened soils are lofted into the air by OHV traffic particularly on volcanic soils. Most of the airborne soil returns to the trail tread as a fine powder, however, the smaller particles stay airborne and can be transported by wind, the transported material represents soil lose and trail incisement results.

Loosened soil is also transported by concentrated water. Concentrated water is either diverted by control features and deposited on upland soils or not diverted and directly deposited onto roads and into drainages. Sediment deposited into drainage could cause water quality problems. Water erosion is generally expected on all trail gradients; however, water control features on trails with gradients greater than 10 percent generally have accelerated degradation.

Observations indicate the trails are widening. This is evidenced by exposed roots and retreating vegetation on portions of the trails. The widening may be due to passing, wide turns, or raveling of the trail banks. Trail widening leads to soil productivity loss and reduced water holding capacity. Consequently, this increases surface water flow and the potential for soil erosion.

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

The issuance of the special use permit for PDMC to conduct the recreation events does present some risk of injury to the participants of the events and other people using the area during the event.

Collisions have occurred between event participants and people out for casual recreation at other riding areas. Public notification of the events may help influence trail users to go to other areas instead of trying to use the Elkins Flat or Gold Note trails during these events. The Forest Service information staff will share the event dates with callers and visitors. Educating non-event riders to follow course markings would be important for avoiding collisions.

PDMC will prepare a traffic control plan for approval by the Forest Service. This traffic control plan would include signage to alert vehicle operators of the recreation event. As part of the implementation of the traffic control plan, flaggers would be posted at

intersections of roads and trails to control traffic to prevent collisions. Forest Service personnel have radio communication to assist PDMC staff for locating and providing emergency medical services to more severely injured people. The Forest Service staff would request medical and rescue assistance from the local fire departments and medical helicopters if necessary.

Alternatives 1 and 3 would have a slightly higher safety risk than Alternative 2 (no action), because there would be a greater number of riders on the trails. However, because the course is marked to generally avoid two-way traffic on the trails, there is generally lower probability of head-on collisions, unless there are riders who do not follow the course markings. There is a higher potential for head on collisions in Alternative 2, because there is not an assigned course that people are following and there may be two- way traffic on the trails.

The general speed law applies to the trails, requiring the riders to travel at speeds that allow them to stop their vehicle if they see an obstacle or oncoming traffic, to avoid collisions.

**3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area.**

The proposed action is located in the Elkins Flat and Gold Note areas, but not in the proximity to any parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas; therefore none would be impacted.

Information on the cultural resources in the area has been reviewed in the Heritage Resources Report R2011-05-03-10007. The cultural resources would not be affected along the event routes, because event participants and organizers would be traveling on established trails and roads.

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

Issuing a special use permit for the Polka Dot Motorcycle Club to conduct their recreation events is not likely to be highly controversial. PDMC has been issued a special use permit to conduct recreation events over the last 20 years. There is no substantial scientific controversy related to effects disclosed in the EA. These types of recreation events occur at various locations across National Forests in northern California and are not likely to be highly controversial.

If Alternative 2 is selected, no permit would be issued to PDMC to conduct their recreation events. There is no controversy associated with no action.

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

The effects on the human environment from implementing Alternatives 1, 3 and 4 are not uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks. The proposed action is similar in type and scope to other applications for recreation event special use permits on the Eldorado National Forest as well as the Mendocino and Stanislaus National Forests. The effects from this type of project are well known to the scientific community and interdisciplinary team members.

The Forest Service has issued special use permits to other motorcycle clubs on the all four Ranger Districts on the Eldorado National Forest for years. These recreation event permits did not result in uncertain effects or unknown risks.

Alternative 2 (no action) would not involve any uncertain effects or unique or unknown risks to the human environment.

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.**

Issuing a special use permit for recreation events represents a site-specific action that does not set precedence for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future considerations. Similar recreation events have taken place on the Eldorado National Forest and on other National Forests in northern California for many years. This action also has no potential for setting precedent because this proposed action is limited to specific locations. Any other applications for special use permits for recreation events would be evaluated on their own merits and their effects would be evaluated on an individual basis.

Denial of the application for a special use permit to conduct recreation events would mean that PDMC would have to find alternative locations to conduct their recreation events, or forego conducting these events. Alternative 2 does not set a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future considerations. PDMC or other motorcycle organizations may choose to apply for special use permits to conduct recreation events in the future. Alternative 2 has no potential for setting precedent, because no recreation event activities would take place with this alternative.

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

**Terrestrial Wildlife Species – California spotted owl, northern goshawk, American marten, Pacific fisher, Sierra Nevada red fox, pallid bat, and Townsend’s big-eared bat**

### **Terrestrial Wildlife Species– Alternative 1**

As there are no direct or indirect effects to habitat, no cumulative effects to habitat quality or quantity are anticipated with either the action alternatives (1 or 3). The recreation events would be additive to the disturbance presently produced by trail and roads used by both events. These baseline disturbances include OHV use, other recreational uses such as camping, fuel wood cutting, logging, hauling, and general transportation across these areas. As the events are one day events, and most of the associated other use of the trails and other activities such as camping are confined to the weekend of the event, and the trails and roads would be used to some extent with or without the events by the general public on these weekends, the additional potential disturbance is believed to be small, and as it is not expected to result in effects to reproduction, no cumulative effects to the local population, or species trends would be anticipated from implementing Alternative 1.

### **Terrestrial Wildlife Species - Alternative 2**

There would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects of taking no action.

### **Terrestrial Wildlife Species - Alternatives 3 and 4**

Direct, indirect and cumulative effects of Alternatives 3 and 4 are the same as Alternative 1 for the Family Enduro event (Gold Note OHV system) as the dropped trails are not part of this event. For the 49er Enduro event, the reduction in miles of road/trail from the events would incrementally reduce the potential disturbance effects as less of the system would be in use during the event. The potential for temporary displacement of individuals would still remain over the event course that remains under this alternative, but as with Alternative 1, no effects to reproduction would be expected. The cumulative effects are essentially the same for this alternative as was described for Alternative 1, as the reduction in potential disturbance is small and would not affect reproduction.

As there are no direct or indirect effects to habitat or disturbance effect anticipated for either Alternatives 1, 3, or 4 there would be no cumulative effects to Townsend's big-eared bats generated by Alternatives 3 or 4.

### **Aquatic Species – California red-legged frog, foothill yellow-legged frog, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog, and western pond turtle**

**Aquatic Species - Alternatives 1, 3, and 4:** A cumulative effect is the influence on the environment resulting from the incremental effect of an action when added to the impacts of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions listed in the following table. The cumulative effects analysis presented here for aquatic and aquatic-dependent species considers the effects of this project when combined with past, present, and foreseeable future actions and events. Past land disturbances within the proposed project area were considered if they had the potential to influence species population dynamics and/or potential habitat. Similarly, future land disturbances were considered based on their probability of influencing species populations and/or aquatic community components.

Habitat loss, alteration, and fragmentation can be largely attributable to roads and water development within FYLF range. Introduced predators such as fish and bullfrogs also pose a major risk to FYLFs. Other risk factors to this species include: loss of riparian function from grazing resulting in changes in hydrology, disease, water pollution, mining activities recreation and motorized vehicle use, increased UV-B radiation and climate change. Vegetation and fuels management have the potential to affect populations through changes in vegetation structure and composition as well as ground disturbing activities however, data documenting these impacts on foothill yellow-legged frogs is lacking (Hayes et al 2009).

One major cause in the decline of western pond turtle populations was extensive commercial harvest of the species as a food source (Holland 1994). And, although there has been a ban on the sale and/or exhibition of native reptiles and amphibians since the 1980s, illegal collection of turtles still occurs (Holland 1994) and may be more common in riparian areas where recreational use and dispersed camping is high. Deliberate shooting, incidental catch by fisherman, predation by non-native species, water contamination and habitat loss or alteration are all major threats to western pond turtle populations (Holland 1994). Furthermore, since western pond turtles need to overwinter and deposit eggs in terrestrial habitats this makes them more susceptible to management activities as well as encounters with motorized vehicles on trails and roads.

<b>Past Actions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Timber harvest</li> <li>- Road construction</li> <li>-Livestock grazing</li> <li>-Mining</li> <li>-Recreational Activities</li> </ul>
<b>Foreseeable Future Actions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Caldor Fuels Reduction Project</li> <li>- Tonys Ecological Restoration Project</li> <li>- McKinney Creek (Trail 30) Culvert Upgrade</li> </ul>

**Aquatic Species - Alternative 2**

There are no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to aquatic species from Alternative 2.

**Botanical Resources - Alternative 1**

Within the analysis area direct and indirect effects to known sensitive plants from the proposed action are expected to affect individuals but not lead to a reduction in population viability or trend towards Federal listing. Potential effects include trampling of some plants along and within designated travel routes, introduction of noxious weed species, and development of new dispersed recreation areas in sensitive plant habitat. Many of these potential direct and indirect effects are expected to impact a fraction of any given occurrence and should be short lived if the Forest Service can effectively

discourage repeated impacts to individual plants in the analysis area. Design criteria included in the proposed recreation events would minimize the risk of some effects, but these potential impacts are not limited to the proposed action and would also continue to be addressed through implementation of travel management along designated roads and trails on the forest. Past, current, and reasonable foreseeable activities in the project area that may impact Pleasant Valley Mariposa lily and Kellogg's lewisia include past and ongoing timber harvest, fuels reduction projects, OHV activities, and potentially future climate change. Collectively these activities have likely contributed to the overall rarity of Pleasant Valley Mariposa lily in the analysis area and the Eldorado National Forest. These existing conditions necessitate minimizing future impacts to existing populations while allowing for the expansion into suitable habitat. For the majority of foreseeable future activities, the Forest Service would reduce potential impacts to known occurrences, largely by flag and avoid methods, public signage, or physical barricades when necessary. While some cumulative effects for Pleasant Valley Mariposa lily are possible, the proposed design criteria for the recreation events, relative stability and number of mariposa lily populations in the analysis area, and presence of occurrences outside designated OHV trails all suggest that any potential cumulative effects from the proposed enduro events may affect individuals, but would not adversely affect the species viability within the analysis area.

#### **Botanical Resources - Alternative 2**

There would be no cumulative effects because no action is proposed.

#### **Botanical Resources - Alternative 3**

The cumulative effects for Alternative 3 are the same as described under Alternative 1.

#### **Botanical Resources - Alternative 4**

The cumulative effects for Alternative 4 are the same as described under Alternative 1.

#### **Invasive Species-Noxious Weeds - Alternative 1**

The establishment of noxious weeds in sensitive plant habitat can impact species by competing with native species for resources. Historic logging, grazing, and OHV travel have already introduced noxious weeds, primarily nonnative annual grasses, into much of the project area. These annual grasses likely became established early in the analysis area during the Euro American settlement of the Sierras, probably as a result of grazing, logging, and mining activities. The grasses are common in both natural and developed opening such as lava caps, landings, and roadways throughout the Eldorado NF. The proposed recreation events are not expected to result in a detectable increase in the spread or proliferation of these non-native species above existing levels because disturbance would be limited to designated travel routes and recreation areas where non-native annual grasses have already become relatively established. For less common, high priority noxious weed infestations the incremental increase in vectors from the proposed recreation events is relatively limited compared to existing potential vectors from current use of designated trails. In addition, proposed design criteria for the recreation events are

expected to reduce the risk of introducing and spreading high priority noxious weeds in the project area (see Weed Risk Assessment).

The threat of noxious weeds (current and future) introduction cannot be completely eliminated for the proposed recreation events or other expected activities in the area. Therefore it is necessary to continue to monitor and control high priority infestations that already occur or may develop in the project area (Eldorado National Forest Draft Noxious Weed Strategy). The Eldorado National Forest noxious weed program is expected to continue monitoring and managing noxious weeds and would take necessary actions to address new infestations if they are discovered in the project area. Continued surveys for noxious weeds are expected to occur during future projects in the analysis area. Additional surveys for noxious weeds would also occur along designated trails with the goal of visiting a majority of trails every three years (Eldorado National Forest Draft Noxious Weed Strategy). To further assist with detection of new infestations, annual noxious weed identification training would be offered to Forest Service staff expected to work in the Elkins Flat and Gold Note trail system.

The Noxious Weed assessment is in compliance with the Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USFS PNF LRMP 1989), the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA) FSEIS and Record of Decision (ROD), Executive Order on Invasive Species (Executive Order 13112), and the direction in the Forest Service Manual section 2080, Noxious Weed Management (amendment effective since 11/29/95), which includes a policy statement calling for a risk assessment for noxious weeds to be completed for every project.

#### **Noxious Weeds - Alternative 2**

There would be no cumulative effects because no action is proposed.

#### **Noxious Weeds - Alternative 3**

The cumulative effects for Alternative 3 are the same as described under Alternative 1.

#### **Noxious Weeds - Alternative 4**

The cumulative effects for Alternative 4 are the same as described under Alternative 1.

#### **Hydrologic Resources – All Alternatives**

There would be no change in the risk of cumulative watershed effects (CWE) in any of the nine HUC 7 watersheds that contain the Elkins Flat and Gold Note OHV trail systems. This is because none of the alternatives would create new land disturbances or new impervious areas. Alternatives 1, 3, and 4 would use the existing road and trail system. In addition, the OHV trail system is only a small portion of the existing land disturbances in each watershed. Those land disturbances include roads, past timber harvest, miscellaneous impervious areas (e.g. buildings, campgrounds, parking lots), and

a number of recreation activities). The risk of CWE for each watershed is listed in Table 1 of the Hydrologic Assessment. The risk of CWE for each watershed is based on the method of Equivalent Roaded Acres (ERA). This method quantitatively evaluates all land disturbances in a HUC 7 watershed – past, present, and reasonably foreseeable – and assigns the watershed to one of the following risk categories: low, moderate, high, or very high. The ERA method for evaluating the risk of CWE, as well as the types of land disturbances in the watersheds, is described in more detail in Appendix A, #2 of the Hydrologic Assessment.

#### **Soils - Alternatives 1 and 2**

The cumulative effects of past, current and future events are incremental and would occur regardless of the alternative. The trails that currently are eroding and widening would continue to erode and widen. Soil erosion and sediment transport would continue because of deeply incised trail cross-section and soil type.

#### **Soils - Alternatives 3 and 4**

The cumulative effects for Alternatives 3 and 4 are similar to Alternatives 1 and 2 except those trails that cross drainages that are wet during the time of an event would have less of a sustained splash effect from user transported water likely resulting in less erosion on the approaches.

**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.**

Existing routes along the parameters of established trails, roads and staging areas have been cleared under report number R2001-05-03-10007 located in the project file. The recreation events will not impact cultural resources along the event routes. Examination of Forest heritage resource base maps and inventory files revealed that the project area had been previously surveyed to standards adequate to find resources at risk and did not locate any archaeological resources in the vicinity of the new event only trails, (Refer to Heritage Resource Report PDMC 5 Year Permit NEPA, (R2011-05-03-10007).

**9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.**

A Biological Evaluation was prepared for aquatic and wildlife species.

Based on the analysis conducted in the Biological Evaluation and Assessment for Terrestrial Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species for the issuance of a 5-year Special Use Permit to the Polka Dot Motorcycle, implementation of the proposed project will have no effect on the following species:

American peregrine falcon  
bald eagle  
California wolverine  
great gray owl  
Townsend's big-eared bat  
valley elderberry longhorn beetle  
willow flycatcher  
western red bat

Implementation of the proposed projects may affect individuals, but is not likely to result in a trend toward Federal listing under the Endangered Species Act or a loss of species viability for the following species:

American marten  
California spotted owl  
northern goshawk  
Pacific fisher  
pallid bat  
Sierra Nevada red fox  
California red-legged frog  
Foothill yellow-legged frog  
Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog  
Western pond turtle

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has issued a letter of concurrence on the Biological Assessment (BA) for the 5-year Special Use Permit for the Polka Dot Motorcycle Club Enduros project. The letter, issued January 31, 2012, concurs with the findings in the BA that the project will have no significant impact on any endangered species, including the CA red-legged frog.

**10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or other requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.**

The proposed action was developed in accordance with and, therefore, does not threaten to violate any Federal, State or local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment (i.e. Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and the National Forest Management Act). Discussion in the EA of effects and the related references in the project file document that this project will not adversely affect threatened or endangered wildlife species. The proposed action is compliant with the National Forest Management Act and consistent with the Eldorado National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan (1989) as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (2004).

### **Management Indicator Species - Lacustrine/Riverine Habitat - Alternatives 1, 3 and 4**

Under Alternative 1 habitat for these species does exist primarily adjacent to the proposed routes which would be used for the two enduro events. The three wet crossings on trails 25, 26, and 38 would be the only potential for direct habitat effects to habitat for macro invertebrates. At these location there would be expected to be short term, the day of the events, pulses of increased sedimentation at these locations and affecting a short distance of the habitat downstream. These short term effects would not be expected to be noticeable far downstream from the crossings (less than 200 feet downstream of the crossing), nor substantial enough to noticeably affect the local populations. Where the identified habitat exists adjacent to the road/trail systems, which would be used for these events, no habitat alteration which would affect population or trend (above baseline non-event trail/road use) is expected for these species, for any of the alternatives. Alternative 3 would have the same effects, with the exclusion of the short term effects at the removed live stream crossings. Alternative 4 would reduce the indirect contributions to turbidity and sedimentation by removing trail segments and the wet crossings from the 49er enduro.

As no noticeable direct or indirect effects are anticipated for the local population, and the effects would be indistinguishable from the existing non-event use of the road and trail system, no cumulative effects are anticipated from either of the action alternatives.

### **Management Indicator Species - Lacustrine/Riverine Habitat - Alternative 2 –No Action**

Presently the project area, which includes the Family Enduro and 49er Enduro events include roads ephemeral, seasonal, and perennial waterways. The seasonal and perennial streams provide habitat for macroinvertebrates as defined previously. These streams are influenced by runoff which includes sedimentation from the roads and trails accessed by general road and trail use by both OHVs and other vehicles. The impact of the existing uses does not appear to have degraded habitat to a large extent within the project area.

## **AGENCIES AND PERSONS CONSULTED**

Tri-county Technical Advisory Committee  
Foothill Conservancy  
Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Polka Dot Motorcycle Club

# Appendix A

## Maps:

Colored Maps- Located on the Eldorado National  
Forest Website

## Appendix B

### Consideration of Comments Submitted During the Comment Period for the Preliminary Environmental Assessment