

Finding of No Significant Impact

5-Year Special Use Permit for the Polka Dot Motorcycle Club Enduros

Elkins Flat & Gold Note OHV Trail Systems

United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Eldorado National Forest, Placerville Ranger District

El Dorado County, California

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Context

The 49er Enduro is a motorcycle event that would be held out of the Elkins Flat Staging Area utilizing approximately 80 to 100 miles of Forest Service system roads and trails on the Placerville Ranger District. Elkins Flat Staging Area would be the primary staging area but if it 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.

The Family Enduro is a motorcycle event that would be held out of the Gold Note Staging Area utilizing approximately 50 to 60 miles of Forest Service system roads and trails on the Amador Ranger District. The Gold Note staging area would be used in its entirety for the 49er Family 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.

Intensity

The intensity of effects was considered in terms of the following.

1. Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. The Forest Service benefits from the issuance of the 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 OHV systems. Consideration of the intensity of environmental effects is not biased by beneficial effects of the action. (See EA pages 8-22).

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety. The issuance of the special use permit for the Polka Dot Motorcycle Club (PDMC) to conduct two recreation events does present some risk of injury to the participants of the events and other people using the area during the event. This risk is reduced to some degree by providing education and event notification to the people who are not involved in the events. Collisions have occurred between event participants and people out for casual recreation at other riding areas. The Forest Supervisor has considered this request, but prefers to continue to allow people who are not involved in the event to have access to the trails and roads. The 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.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area. The proposed action is located in the Elkins Flat and Gold Note OHV Recreational Trails area, 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, monitored and tested from past Enduros and Archaeological Reconnaissance Report and Assessment (R2011-05-03-10007). The cultural resources would not be affected along the event routes, because event participants and organizers should be traveling on established trails and roads and within the confines of the staging areas. (See EA pages 8-22).

4. The degree to which the effects on the human environment are likely to be highly controversial. Issuing a special use permit for the PDMC to annually conduct their two

recreation events is not likely to be highly controversial. PDMC has been issued a special use permit to conduct their recreation events for over 20 years. There is no substantial scientific controversy related to effects disclosed in the EA (See pages 8-22), therefore, there is no significant direct or cumulative effect. These types of recreation events occur at various locations across National Forests in Northern California and are not likely to be highly controversial. The PDMC has conducted their annual events both on the Placerville and Amador Ranger Districts. There have been a few years when the event did not take place due to excessive dust or snow.

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 the project 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 Placerville and Amador Ranger District as well as the Mendocino and Stanislaus National Forests. The effects from this type of project are well known to the scientific community, interdisciplinary team members and visitors to the Elkins and Gold Note Trail Systems.

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.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. The Biological Assessments and Evaluations considered potential cumulative impacts of this proposal on habitat and plants. In addition, cumulative watershed effects analysis was completed for all watersheds within the project area, which considered past, present and reasonably foreseeable future activities. These documents and analysis disclosed in the EA support the finding that this proposal would not cause significant cumulative effects on biological or physical resources, even when considered in relation to other actions. 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. (See EA pages 24-29)

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. The recreation events will not impact cultural resources along the event routes. Historic research was conducted to determine whether any cultural resources at risk were known to be present in the project area. The report R2011-05-03-10007 – Polka Dots Enduro 5 Year Permit EA (Whiteman 2011) documents cultural resource studies conducted to ensure that potential project effects have

been analyzed. 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. (See EA Page 29)

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. Biological Evaluations were prepared for wildlife and plant species. Based on the analysis conducted in Section IV of the Terrestrial Biological Evaluation and Assessment for the Polka Dots Motorcycle Club 5 year Enduro permit, implementation of the proposed project will have no effect on terrestrial threatened, or endangered species: bald eagle, American peregrine falcon, California wolverine, great gray owl, Sierra Nevada red fox, Townsend's big-eared bat, valley elderberry longhorn beetle, willow flycatcher or 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 Region 5 Sensitive species: California spotted owl, northern goshawk, Pacific fisher, American marten, pallid bat, Sierra Nevada red fox, California red-legged frog, Foothill yellow-legged frog, Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog and Western pond turtle.

The issuance of a special use permit for recreation events to the Polka Dots Motorcycle Club will not produce off-site effects for the following reasons: The proposed action would not result in direct, indirect or cumulative effects to threatened, endangered or sensitive species, since there would be no changes to vegetation, river water quality, or changes in level of recreational use as a result of project implementation (See the Biological Evaluations in the Project File).

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 12, 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 NFMA and consistent with the Eldorado National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan (1989) as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (2004).

After considering the effects of the actions analyzed, in terms of context and intensity, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Kathryn D Hardy

2/3/12

Kathryn D. Hardy
Eldorado National Forest Supervisor

Date

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