

The Inyo National Forest Management Plan Revision Process: Recreation and the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG)

Recreation has been identified as one of four areas of policy focus for the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) for 2016. Since recreation primarily takes place on the public lands of the region, it is important that ESCOG participate in the current management plan revision process for the Inyo National Forest. The public comment period for the "Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest" closes on August 25, and at its June meeting, the ESCOG identified a need to provide recommendations to member agencies regarding recreation.

Inyo National Forest Plan Revision: Background and Summary

The following is an edited summary from the overview guide to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Forest Plans Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra National Forests. Read the full overview and the DEIS here: <http://tinyurl.com/r5earlyadopters>.

- “Every national forest managed by the Forest Service is required to have a land management plan, or forest plan, by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 and other laws. Forest plans guide management of National Forest System lands, but do not compel any action, authorize projects or activities, or guarantee specific results.
- “The USFS is revising the Inyo, Sequoia and Sierra National Forests' plans because they are more than 20 years old. Economic, social, and ecological conditions have changed since they were written; new laws, regulations and policies are in place; and new information based on monitoring and scientific research is now available.
- “There are **three main natural resource topics**, including **fire management**, **ecological integrity**, and **sustainable recreation and designated areas**. The alternatives in the draft EIS vary in the ways they address these important issues.
- “The purpose of revising these forest plans is to: reduce risk of large high-intensity wildfires to communities, recreation sites and infrastructure; increase ability to manage wildfires to meet resource objectives and reduce smoke impacts to communities; restore the resilience of vegetation and aquatic and riparian ecosystems; restore wildlife and plant habitat and diversity; reduce risk of large high-intensity wildfire to wildlife and their habitats; provide sustainable and diverse recreation that considers demographics, reflects local communities desires, avoids overcrowding and use conflicts, minimizes resource damage and protects cultural resources; update management of wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, and the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.”

Recreation Focus and the Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative

The Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative (ESRC), funded by a grant from the National Forest Foundation, has held a series of public meetings to gather recreation-focused citizen feedback for the planning process. ESRC identified a preliminary selection of citations from the "Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest" that may be consistent with the ESCOG's intent. They are listed for the ESCOG's discussion, consideration and possible recommendation to member agencies for their comment and support, and are grouped in the following five categories that are specific to opportunities for sustainable recreation:

1. Volunteers/Interpretation/Partnerships/Stewardship

- a. Increase stewardship capacity by expanding partnership and volunteer opportunities outside of appropriated funds.

2. Digital Connection/Technology

- a. Modernize the agency's use of emerging communication channels to capture live-time data and improve quality of data collected.

3. Responsive Special Use Permits

- a. Enhance guest services and connections to public lands by streamlining and updating the issuing of special use permits.

4. Citizens Access/Trails

- a. Turn attention to developing sustainable systems for access including trails, OHV and OSV use.

5. Recreation Places / Iconic Places

- a. Better engage gateway partners by developing allocation criteria for recognizing and managing special places beyond those designated by Congress or the President.

Volunteers/Interpretation/Partnerships/Stewardship

1. “Develop memoranda of agreements or other protocols between the forest and local governments as appropriate to guide coordination processes and reflect local perspectives and interests.” Page 89
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 93 – Local Communities)*
2. “Maintain and expand contracting and partnership opportunities with local governments, businesses and organizations. Develop partnerships that leverage different sources of funding to support opportunities to contribute to the economic and social sustainability of local communities.” Page 90
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 94 – Volunteers/Interpretation/Partnerships/Stewardship)*
3. “The forest should designate a partnership coordinator who will define an easily understood process for becoming a partner as well as expectations for both the forest and the partner.” Page 147
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 151 – Appendix C: A Renewed Partnership Focus for the Inyo National Forest)*
4. “Install and maintain appropriate multilingual information boards, interpretive panels and regulatory signs at developed sites and dispersed areas within sites of sensitive resources.” Page 153
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 157 – Appendix D: Management Strategies)*

Digital Connection/Technology

1. “Work with local governments, businesses, and organizations to collect economic data to track changes for businesses in sectors dependent on forest activities.” Page 90
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 94 – Local Communities – LOC-FW-GOAL 03)*
2. “Regularly report potential projects suitable for partnership and volunteer opportunities to the public.” Page 91
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 94 – Volunteers/Interpretation/Partnerships/Stewardship –VIPS-FW-GOAL 02)*
3. “To the extent practical, harmonize recreation direction for forest visitors to minimize confusion when crossing administrative boundaries.” Page 91
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 95 – Sustainable Recreation – REC-FW-GOAL 02)*

4. “Provide and update interpretive signage, wayside exhibits, publications and programs using a variety of media and methods.” Page 94
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 98 – Potential Management Approaches)*
5. “Explore partnership opportunities with user groups and seek reliable information sources outside of the agency to improve data collection and data management on recreation use and demand.” Page 144
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 148 – App B: Proposed and Possible Actions – Sustainable Recreation)*

Responsive Special Use Permits

1. “Permitted recreation uses, such as recreation special events or guided activities, are consistent with recreation settings, protect natural and cultural resources and support community goals.” Page 39
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 43 – Sustainable Recreation – REC-FW-DC 11)*
2. “Work with local governments, businesses and organizations to assist in permit processes, including providing technical assistance, processing programmatic environmental clearance, and other measures to streamline the time and expense of permitting.” Page 143
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 147 – Appendix B: Proposed and Possible Actions – Local Communities)*
3. “Issue and supervise permits for new special use activities on the forest including powerlines, special events, large group gatherings, outfitter-guide activities and research.” Page 144
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 148 – Sustainable Recreation – REC-FW-DC 11)*
4. “Expand partnerships with other federal, state, and local government agencies, as well as associations, non-government organizations, outfitters and guides, local businesses, and other community groups, to leverage information (help serve as messengers to the visiting public) and resources for mutual benefit to enhance and improve forest infrastructure (i.e. roads, trails, campgrounds)” Page 147
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 151 – Appendix B: Proposed and Possible Actions – Sustainable Recreation)*

Citizen Access/Trails

1. “The diverse landscapes of the forest offer a variety of year-round recreation settings for a broad range of nature-based recreation opportunities, derived from assigned recreation opportunity spectrum classes and recreation places

management areas. Management focuses on settings that enhance the forest recreation program niche.” Page 38

- a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 42 – Sustainable Recreation – REC-FW-DC 01)*
2. “Visitors can connect with nature, culture and history through a full range of inclusive and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities.” Page 39
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 43 – Sustainable Recreation – REC-FW-DC 04)*
3. “The trail system provides a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities during summer and winter and distributed across the forest. Trails access destinations that provide for loop opportunities that also connect to a larger trail system, provide linkage from local communities to the forest and are compatible with other resources.” Page 39
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 43 – Sustainable Recreation – REC-FW-DC 15)*
4. “Work with partners and volunteers to provide recreation opportunities, maintain and enhance recreation settings, collect and manage data on recreation use and demand, and contribute to socioeconomic benefits associated with recreation and tourism.” – Page 90
 - a. *(Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 94 – Volunteers/Interpretation/Partnerships/Stewardship – VIPS-FW-GOAL 04)*

Recreation Places / Iconic Places

ESRC recommends that ESCOG member agencies take a close look at the “desired conditions” statements on the pages listed below for each of the recreation/iconic places that are in or near their jurisdictions.

1. Benton-Casa Diablo Place – Page 68
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 72*
2. Bishop to Convict Creek Place – Page 69
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 73*
3. Coyote Place – Page 70
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 74*
4. Glass Mountain Place – Page 70
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 74*
5. Golden Trout-South Sierra Place – Page 71
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 75*
6. Inyo Mountains Place – Page 71
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 75*
7. June Lake Loop-Walker-Parker Place – Page 72
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 76*
8. Mammoth Place – Page 73
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 77*

9. Mammoth Escarpment Place – Page 73
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 77*
10. Mono Basin-Lee Vining Place – Page 75
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 79*
11. Owens River Headwaters Place – Page 76
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 80*
12. Owens Valley Escarpment Place – Page 76
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 80*
13. Pizona Place – Page 77
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 81*
14. Reds Meadow-Fish Creek Place – Page 77
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 81*
15. Upper Owens River Place – Page 78
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 82*
16. White Mountains Place – PDF Page 83
 - a. *Draft Revised Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest - PDF Page 87*