

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2009

Gail Kimbell  
Chief, USDA Forest Service  
1400 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief Kimbell:

We are writing today to request your review and response to concerns that have been communicated to us by our constituents regarding travel management planning on national forests throughout California. As you are aware, the Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region is currently conducting this process in response to the agency's 2005 Travel Management Rule regarding motor vehicle use on the National Forest System (NFS). We all share a mutual goal to provide an appropriate balance of public access with environmental stewardship of our national forests. As such, we believe that the final travel management plans should not greatly restrict reasonable and prudent vehicle access on existing NFS roads and trails.

During the travel management planning, the Forest Service has maintained that the California Vehicle Code (CVC) prohibits the use of off-highway legal vehicles (OHVs) on NFS passenger car roads with a maintenance level (ML) of 3, 4, or 5, despite the California Highway Patrol's clarification that motorized mixed-use is acceptable on unpaved NFS roads. While the Forest Service has indicated that OHV use will still be allowed on ML 2 roads, these are generally short, dead-end spurs that will fail to provide contiguous travel loops desired for quality OHV use. We ask that the Forest Service preserve its national direction for analyzing mixed motor vehicle-use on NFS unpaved passenger car roads. Also, local counties maintain many miles of unpaved roads throughout the NFS that even link with Forest Service maintained roads. Several of these counties already allow or will be designating their roads for mixed motorized vehicle-use at the same time the Forest Service is prohibiting such. It is our understanding that many of these county boards have reached out to the agency regarding this issue but have failed to receive a response from the Regional Office.

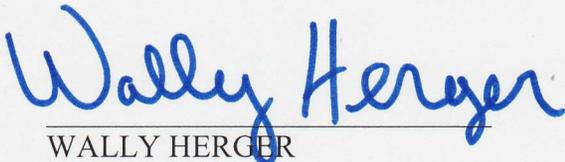
In addition, there has been great concern that public collaboration has been lacking in the course of the planning process. During the unauthorized route inventory - which found over 10,000 miles of such routes - members of the OHV community submitted many miles to be proposed for designation. To date, several national forests in northeastern California are proposing to close 75-97% of them without sufficient rationale as to why they are being removed from consideration. It does not appear as if closing the large majority of these routes reflects a proper balance between public access and resource protection.

Chief Kimbell  
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Finally, in spite of national Forest Service policy that allows vehicles to park within 30 feet of a designated road, national forests within Region 5 are proposing to limit this distance to one vehicle length as well as restrict vehicle use for dispersed camping or big game retrieval which national agency policy also allows for. Such a policy would present considerable inconvenience to the many taxpayers that recreate in and enjoy their national forests, particularly when such policy is contrary to national directive.

We would appreciate your timely consideration and response to these concerns as well as any initiative that the agency has or will be implementing to address them. Thank you in advance for your attention and assistance on this issue.

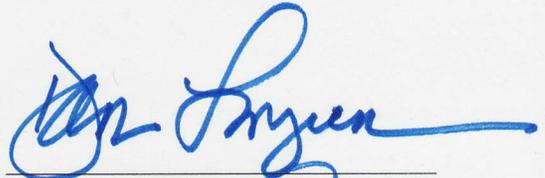
Sincerely,



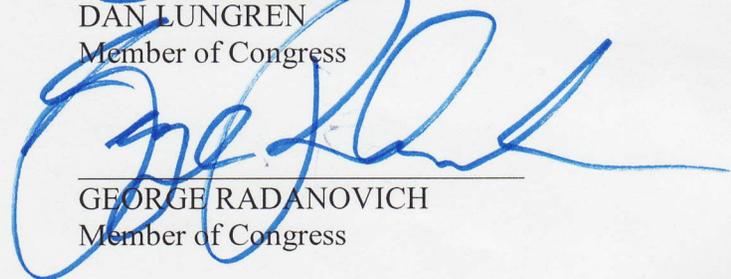
WALLY HERGER  
Member of Congress



TOM McCLINTOCK  
Member of Congress



DAN LUNGREN  
Member of Congress



GEORGE RADANOVICH  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, USDA