

Deer Valley 4wd Meadow Restoration and Blue Lakes Road Maintenance Project

USDA Forest Service
Eldorado National Forest
Amador Ranger District
Alpine County, California

Background

The Amador Ranger District of the Eldorado National Forest proposes trail maintenance and meadow restoration on the Deer Valley 4wd trail and road maintenance on the Blue Lakes/Meadow Lakes road.

The proposed project area is located between the areas of Meadow Lake and Lower Blue Lake along Blue Lakes/Meadow Lake Road (9N01), Section 30, 25, and 26 T.9 N., R 18 E., M.D.B.&M. and along Deer Valley 4wd trail (19E01), Section 5, T.8 N., R 19 E., M.D.B.&M.

As a part of the Eldorado National Forest Travel Management SEIS, 18 routes were identified where corrective actions and further biological assessments were needed prior to opening the routes to public motor vehicle use. On June 26, 2014 a team of Forest Service Specialists visited Deer Valley 4wd trail to assess trail condition with respect to Standard and Guideline (SG) 100 and developed a preliminary proposal for corrective actions at the second crossing with Deer Creek (Meadow 9N83-2). During the site assessment it was determined that the trail was in fact currently meeting SG 100 with respect to hydrologic connectivity, but that some corrective actions could be taken to limit resource impacts within the meadow.

Meadow Lake Rd (9N01) was also reviewed by the team of Forest Service Specialists on June 26, 2014 for necessary corrective measures to bring the route into compliance with S&G 100. During the field review the team determined that standard road maintenance activities including installing rolling dips, cleaning out/upgrading undersized culverts, and regrading the road would address existing issues with hydrologic connectivity.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose and need for this project is to limit resource impacts associated with the existing Deer Valley 4wd trail at meadows 9N83-2 and 9N83-1 while also providing opportunities for high-country semiprimitive motorized vehicle use as described in the ENF LRMP 1989.

Resource impacts identified in Deer Valley and Clover Valley Meadow include:

- 1) Active erosion of the western bank of Deer Creek which will likely impact the trail in its current alignment.
- 2) Impacts to riparian vegetation from the widening of the existing stream crossings.
- 3) Impacts to riparian vegetation from user created stream crossings on the west side of Deer Creek.
- 4) Sediment entering Deer Creek from both approaches to the stream crossing.
- 5) Potential impacts to Yosemite toad from public motor vehicles traveling on the Deer Valley 4wd Trail and the Meadow Lake road.

Additionally, the purpose and need for this project is to analyze and implement corrective actions

for the Meadow Lake Road (9N01) to comply with the portion of Standard and Guideline #100 of the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment that pertains to meadows.

Standard and Guideline 100 reads,

“Maintain and restore the hydrologic connectivity of streams, meadows, wetlands and other special aquatic features identifying roads and trails that intercept, divert or disrupt natural surface and subsurface water flow paths. Implement corrective actions where necessary to restore connectivity.”

This analysis is part of the implementation of the Record of Decision for the 2013 Eldorado National Forest Travel Management SEIS, which identified 18 routes where corrective actions were needed prior to adding the routes back onto the Eldorado National Forest Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) as part of the system of routes designated for motor vehicle use.

Proposed Action:

Deer Valley 4wd trail: The proposed action would include corrective actions to reduce resource impacts associated with the Deer Valley Trail at meadows 9N83-2 and 9N83-1 and to limit potential impacts to Yosemite toad from public motor vehicle travel after the trail is reopened. Proposed action items include:

- 1) **MVUM:** Add Deer Valley 4wd trail (19E01) back to the MVUM. Adding the Deer Valley 4wd trail to MVUM is not contingent on the completion of the proposed corrective actions at Meadows 9N83-2 and 9N83-1 since evaluation has found the route to be consistent with Forest Plan Standard and Guideline 100.
- 2) **Forest Order:** A seasonal closure from January 1 to July 31st would be instituted for the portion of Deer Valley 4wd trail currently closed under the Travel Management SEIS to limit impacts to Yosemite toads from public motor vehicle use. Closure signs and maps would be placed at trailheads, Clover Valley, and the southern portion of the trail at the Eldorado and Stanislaus National Forest boundary alerting the public of the seasonal closure.
- 3) **Trail Reroute:** A short reroute (< 500 feet) of 19E01 on the west side of Deer Creek would be completed in order to move the trail away from areas of active stream bank erosion while improving the angle of approach to the existing stream crossing. The new trail segment would be located approximately 100 feet west of the existing trail and would require the removal of approximately 20 trees (5 trees >20 inch DBH) and stumps to clear a new trail corridor. Material generated from construction of the reroute (wood chips and logs) would be used to block dispersed areas, define a new trail, and apply mulch to the old trail corridor. Mulch would be incorporated into the old roadbed using a rototiller and then planted with locally collected vegetation.
- 4) **Hardening crossing at Meadow 9N83-2:** Native rock and boulders from the trail or the Clover Valley sediment field would be imported to harden the approaches to Deer Creek

using large cobbles and rock between 8-16” diameter. The stream crossing would also be delineated with boulders to limit the width of the crossing at both sides of Deer Creek.

- 5) **Stream Bank Restoration:** The proposed project would restore stream banks in Deer Valley (9N83-2) and Clover Valley (9N83-1) meadow impacted by past off-trail vehicle travel using revegetation methods such as seeding, willow cuttings, and transplanting sod plugs.

Blue Lakes/Meadow Lake road: The proposed action for Blue Lakes/Meadow Lake Road consists of road maintenance activities to bring the road into compliance with S&G 100 while also limiting potential impacts to Yosemite toad from vehicle travel. Specific proposed action items include:

- 1) **MVUM:** Add Blue Lakes/Meadow Lake road (9N01) back to the MVUM after corrective actions have occurred to restore hydrologic connectivity.
- 2) **Forest Order:** A seasonal closure from January 1 to July 31 would be instituted for the portion of Blue Lakes/Meadow Lake road currently closed under the travel management SEIS to limit impacts to Yosemite toad from public motor vehicle use. Seasonal closure signs would be placed west of Twin Lake closing approximately the last mile of the route to public motor vehicles.
- 3) **Road Maintenance:** Maintenance activities would include maintaining/installing rolling dips, regrading the road, and clearing out/ upgrading undersized culverts. Blue Lakes/Meadow Lake road (9N01) will be added to the MVUM once necessary corrective measures have been completed.