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Organization:

Title:

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to respectfully protest the decision by the United States Forest Service to close motorized access to sections of public trails between Lake Arrowhead and Big Bear in California. While I understand the importance of protecting these lands and rivers, I believe that closing these trails to motorized access undermines the larger goal of fostering a strong, collective commitment to conservation by reducing public engagement with these areas. By ensuring responsible motorized access alongside other forms of access, the Forest Service can maintain the public's opportunity to experience and appreciate our public lands, which plays a fundamental role in inspiring people to protect and preserve them.

Public access to natural spaces, particularly through motorized means, has long proven essential in encouraging conservation. Real-world examples demonstrate that when people regularly experience nature firsthand, they are more likely to value and advocate for its preservation. Public-private partnerships that focus on protecting lands while allowing motorized access can achieve conservation goals without limiting public engagement-and they also bring significant economic benefits to local communities.

For example, the Paiute ATV Trail System in Utah exemplifies the benefits of maintaining motorized access. The U.S. Forest Service has collaborated with local communities to keep over 2,000 miles of trail accessible to off-road vehicles, which has not only supported conservation efforts but has also bolstered the economy of nearby towns. Resulting visitation supports local businesses, creates jobs, and generates revenue that directly benefits these communities, proving that sustainable motorized access, conservation, and economic growth can go hand in hand.

Similarly, the Hatfield-McCoy Trail System in West Virginia demonstrates how managed motorized access can coexist with environmental stewardship and bring economic benefits. Created through a partnership between the state and local organizations, the Hatfield-McCoy system allows extensive ATV and off-road vehicle access while implementing environmental protections. The trail has become a significant tourist attraction, bringing millions of dollars to the local economy, supporting small businesses, and providing local employment opportunities.

In California, the Rubicon Trail in the Eldorado National Forest serves as a model for balanced motorized access with economic rewards. Managed through partnerships between local clubs, landowners, and the U.S. Forest Service, the Rubicon Trail benefits from active stewardship by groups like the Rubicon Trail Foundation, which ensures responsible use. The trail attracts off-road enthusiasts from all over, generating substantial revenue for local communities and supporting local businesses. The Rubicon Trail's success shows that managed motorized access can benefit both conservation efforts and the surrounding economy.

The Forest Service's commitment to preserving our public lands is commendable. However, by limiting access to motorized recreation, the Service risks alienating those who engage with nature through responsible motorized means, including families, older visitors, and those with physical disabilities who rely on motorized vehicles to enjoy these areas fully. Additionally, by reducing visitor access, the Forest Service may inadvertently impact the economic vitality of surrounding communities that rely on this for of tourism.

I urge the Forest Service to consider an alternative approach that includes partnerships with local organizations, stakeholders, and environmental groups to implement sustainable trail management rather than closures. I am aware of numerous community organizations who would be enthusiastic to engage in this project. Together, we

can create a management plan that supports motorized access in a way that aligns with conservation goals and supports the local economy, ultimately fostering a shared commitment to the preservation of these incredible landscapes.

Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to seeing the Forest Service embrace a balanced approach that maintains access for all while preserving these lands for future generations.