

July 14, 2000

USDA Forest Service - CAET
Attn: Roadless Areas Proposed Rule
P.O. Box 221090
Salt Lake City, UT 84122

CAET RECORD


000717000

Dear USDA Forest Service - CAET

COMMENTS ON ROADLESS AREA PROPOSED RULES

Heavenly Ski Resort, a permittee on National Forest lands in both California and Nevada, offers the following comments on the proposed Roadless Area rules.

1. We appreciate the Forest Service's attempt to make information about the proposal available through the World Wide Web. We have, however, had significant problems reading the electronic version of the map of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest which shows proposed Roadless Area boundaries. The boundaries of the proposed areas are of ultimate importance because the lands slated for inclusion appear to be immediately adjacent to lands presently under permit, and to private lands owned or controlled by Heavenly. There is a lack of necessary detail in the map which is critical to understanding the potential effects of implementing the proposed action. The problem of accurate disclosure of this information is actually worse in the maps contained in the printed version of the Draft EIS. Heavenly requests that, prior to the official close of the comment period and formulation of the Response to Comments, Final EIS and Record of Decision, an accurate and detailed map be made available for review by the public and other potentially affected forest users which clearly depicts the section, township, and range of the lands proposed to be included in the Roadless Area. It is likely that this will require a short extension of the comment period so that accurate information can be disclosed. Accordingly, Heavenly requests a 45-day extension be granted for the purpose of receiving public comment.
2. Based on our initial review of the map detailing the proposed areas to be included, and based on comparing it to existing Forest Service quadrangle and other more detailed maps, it appears that the following areas are proposed to be included and subject to the Roadless Area rules:

Heavenly 4d, 7a, 7b 

- Section 8, Township 12 North, Range 19 East, Mt. Diablo Base & Meridian;
- The southern portion of Section 4, Township 12 North, Range 19 East;
- The northern portion of Section 9, Township 12 North, Range 19 East; and
- The eastern portion of Section 7, Township 12 North, Range 19 East.

As noted above, these lands are immediately adjacent to lands presently under a Term Special Use Permit to Heavenly (permits #'s 4056/01 and 4056/02), or adjacent to privately held lands which Heavenly owns or controls. They are adjacent to an existing winter sports ski resort that is under Master Plan to the Forest Service and other governmental agencies with jurisdiction. The Master Plan was approved in 1996 following an interdisciplinary planning process. The approved master plan is required to be reviewed and updated at five-year intervals, with the next update scheduled for 2001. Beginning in 1998, Heavenly has discussed with local Forest Service officials plans to propose re-aligning the boundary of the Term Permit on the Toiyabe to include the sections of land or portions thereof, which are identified above. The benefits of including these lands under permit to Heavenly are several, and include:

- The area in question does not meet the letter or the spirit of a roadless area; the lands lie at the edge of the existing residential development along the western side of the Carson Valley. The valley's character has changed to a more urbanized landscape. Many nearby residents use the adjoining National Forest lands for a variety of purposes. The opportunity exists for these lands to help meet the expanding recreational needs of the public. Prohibiting future construction or reconstruction of roads will foreclose that recreational opportunity.
- Portions of the lands identified above already contain roads which are non-system roads that connect private lands managed for like purposes;
- The local Forest Service office has requested that we jointly amend the existing Heavenly Ski Resort permit boundary to delete certain lands from the area under permit which are clearly not needed for current or future resort operations, and therefore, streamline the administration of the existing special use permit. In cooperation with the Forest Service, Heavenly has proposed adding portions of the land identified above to its permit. Adding the lands will not only enhance the master plan as described below, but will also help to offset the potential loss in revenue to the local county government under whose jurisdiction both areas lie. It appears that the proposed boundary was simply drawn along the edge of an existing electrical transmission line. There was very little coordination between Heavenly and the Forest Service, thereby, missing an excellent opportunity to share knowledge regarding the master plan and the impacts of this proposal.
- Inclusion of these areas within Heavenly's Special Use Permit boundary (i.e., not subject to the proposed Roadless Area rules) would allow a

Heavenly 4d

Heavenly 7a,7b

Heavenly 4d

- Inclusion of these areas within Heavenly's Special Use Permit boundary (i.e., not subject to the proposed Roadless Area rules) would allow a continuous connection to be developed between a potential base area at the bottom of the slopes near the Kingsbury Grade (Nevada State Route 207), on land which Heavenly controls, and the existing resort facilities located on the Nevada side. The ability for the public to access the resort in this manner ensures that the Forest Service and Heavenly will continue to provide a high-quality outdoor recreation experience, and, that transportation impacts to the existing road network, particularly those in the Lake Tahoe Basin are minimized by providing ropeway forms of transportation.
- Any new roads which may be constructed to provide access to new skiing facilities are expected to be designated as non-system roads but will be constructed and maintained so as to have minimal environmental impact under the direction of the Forest Service watershed staff *using private dollars*.
- Any new roads which may be planned as a part of the Master Plan process will be subject to full NEPA disclosure and analysis, including the mitigation of any identified impacts to a less than significant level.

Heavenly intends to formally propose inclusion of the re-alignment of boundaries in its Master Plan update which commences next year. Until that process has concluded and an accurate assessment of the lands in question has been made, Heavenly requests that the lands identified above be deleted from the map and thus the proposed action.

In summary, the public comment period should be extended by 45 days to allow for the public, including Heavenly, to receive up-to-date and accurate information regarding the areal extents of this proposal, and thereby, better understand its effects on existing approved plans and existing permits issued by the Forest Service.

A local, more site-specific and detailed process is in place by which to develop and implement the Heavenly Master Plan. This process has been used previously with great success. By deferring action the subject lands listed above from the proposal until the master planning process is complete, the process will be allowed to move forward to develop the optimal management plan for our small corner of the world.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue. I would be happy to meet with Forest service staff to review our comments. I can be reached at (775) 586-2313 or by e-mail at astrin@slcheavenly.com.

Sincerely,



Andrew Strain
Director of Planning
Heavenly Ski Resort

Cc: Maribeth Gustafson, Forest Supervisor, USDA Forest Service - Lake Tahoe
Basin Management Unit
Gary Schiff, District Ranger, Carson Ranger District - Toiyabe National Forest