



Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative Proposed Recreation Strategy - Talking Points

In the fall of 2014, the Eastern Sierra Recreation Collaborative (ESRC) was developed with the general purpose of enhancing regional recreation opportunities through focused engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and gateway communities of the Eastern Sierra.

In preparation for the next phase of the Inyo National Forest management plan revision process, ESRC convened diverse recreation enthusiasts, regional stakeholders and gateway community members to participate in a series of public meetings held in September, October and November 2014 and January 2015. The ESRC meetings were open public forums, professionally facilitated, and focused on identifying key recreation values that were then used to develop a recreation strategy proposal for the U.S. Forest Service. It is the intent of ESRC to share the proposed recreation strategy with the Inyo NF for their consideration and to potentially integrate the strategy, or elements thereof, into a draft alternative developed for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) scheduled for release in April 2015.

The ESRC Proposed Recreation Strategy has been finalized and is being delivered to the U.S. Forest Service Region 5 and Inyo NF Leadership and Planning Teams. Additionally, ESRC is requesting that the R5 Team consider extending the timeline for releasing the DEIS in order to review the ESRC Proposed Recreation Strategy and possibly integrate it into one of the draft alternatives for the DEIS. The following points are being shared with interested stakeholders to assist with communicating the value of the ESRC process and the ESRC Proposed Recreation Strategy:

Why Does the ESRC Proposed Recreation Strategy Matter?

1. Lessons learned during the development of the Travel Management Plan for the Inyo NF showed that a community-based collaborative effort can deliver recommendations that may help inform a management decision that will be supported by diverse interests and user groups after a decision is made.
2. The extension being requested by ESRC is intended to provide the Inyo NF an opportunity to consider actively engaging with ESRC to develop a draft alternative that encompasses substantive content from the preliminary alternatives and the ESRC Proposed Recreation Strategy.
3. The ESRC Proposed Recreation Strategy offers a path for achieving core conservation values by engaging recreation stakeholders and identifying the symbiotic relationship between recreation and conservation interests.
4. The ESRC Proposed Recreation Strategy identifies ways to increase the capacity of the USFS to implement targeted projects by activating and leveraging existing capacities of gateway communities and user groups.



Modernization

1. The ESRC used the USFS “Framework for Sustainable Recreation” as a foundational document for establishing recreation values and desired conditions. Because it has significant elements that are relevant to today’s “facts on the ground” and because it also anticipates future conditions the USFS is likely to face, the USFS “Framework for Sustainable Recreation” should be integrated into the Inyo NF Management Plan decision together with the ESRC Proposed Recreation Strategy.
2. Conditions have changed significantly since the last revision of the forest management plan and trends point to conditions changing rapidly in the future. As a result of these quickly emerging realities such as population growth, diversity of population, introduction of new recreation uses, advances in technology, declining public resources, economic decline, drought and climate impacts, there is pressure on this version of the management plan to consider a balance of issues, including elevating recreation elements to a level of importance along with ecological restoration.

Collaboration

1. The 2012 Planning Rule requires a robust collaborative effort as part of future forest plan revisions. The ESRC offers a model for creating a forum for diverse interests and stakeholders to engage with the forest management plan revision process.
2. The ESRC collaboration model offers a scalable approach for the three Early Adopter Forests (EAFs) within the USFS R5. This model can also be used with additional regional and national efforts.

Economics

1. The Inyo NF receives over 2.5 million visitors per year, while the Sierra NF receives approximately 726,000 visitors and the Sequoia receives approximately 626,000 visitors (per USFS NVUM round 3 2010-2014). These numbers represent increases in visitation from previous NVUM counts, and with California’s population increasing, trends are pointing to increased visitation to the USFS public lands in the coming years. Visitors to the public lands are participating in diverse activities including passive and active recreation opportunities, pointing to the relevancy of using a recreation “lens” to look at ecologic restoration opportunities.
2. Visitors to the USFS public lands contribute to the economies of the gateway communities throughout the region through visitor spending on supplies, equipment, lodging and services. The resulting improvement in economic vitality encourages active community stewardship of these public lands.