

1.11 Recreation Element

The Compact requires a “recreation plan for the development, utilization, and management of the recreational resources of the region, including but not limited to, wilderness and forested lands, parks and parkways, riding and hiking trails, beaches and playgrounds, marinas, areas for skiing and other recreational facilities.” The Recreation Element of the Regional Plan provides for these resources to be developed, used, and managed.

The Recreation Threshold program has been guided by policy statements adopted as environmental thresholds by the TRPA Governing Board. The statements seek threshold attainment by preserving and enhancing high quality recreational experiences, providing additional access to the shorezone and high-quality undeveloped areas, and establishing and ensuring that a fair share of the Tahoe Basin’s capacity for outdoor recreation is available to the public.

Goals, policies, and implementing Code regulations for recreation are expected to achieve the intent of the Recreation Threshold of the Plan by ensuring that recreational opportunities keep pace with public demand, that recreational facilities remain high on the development priority list, and that the quality of the outdoor recreational experience be improved and maintained. Within the existing Recreation Element are three Subelements: Dispersed Recreation, Developed Recreation, and Urban Recreation. The need for two additional Subelements, General Recreation and Recreation Education, was identified during the Pathway process. These two new Subelements are proposed herein.

1.11.1 Dispersed Recreation Subelement

Overview

Dispersed recreation often takes place in the rural areas (though it is allowed throughout the Region) and includes hiking, riding, cross country skiing, and back-country camping. Although these activities are permitted throughout the Region, the existing Plan contains goals and policies to support and guide dispersed recreational uses.

One of the existing goals is to encourage opportunities for dispersed recreation when consistent with environmental values and protection of natural resources, because dispersed recreation activities require a high-quality resource base and some degree of solitude. Policies relating to this goal include maintenance of low-density recreational experiences along undeveloped shorelines and other natural areas and identification of new and existing areas for nature study and wildlife observation.

The second existing goal is to maintain high-quality recreational opportunities. This goal is pursued through management of wilderness and other undeveloped and backcountry (formerly termed “roadless”) areas; it also establishes separate use areas for dispersed winter activities. Appropriate locations for nearshore/foreshore structures are encouraged to minimize impacts to recreational boating and top line fishing.

Alternative 1 – Continuation of Existing Regional Plan

Summary

Alternative 1, the “No Action” Alternative, assumes the continuation of the goals, policies, regulations, and programs of the 1987 Regional Plan, including those in place for dispersed recreation.

Dispersed Recreation activity is expected to increase along with projected additional visitation to USFS lands, and is anticipated to be consistent across all alternatives. Under Alternative 1, the Persons At One Time (PAOT) allocations remaining from the 1987 Regional Plan could be allocated to new recreation projects that require PAOTs – Summer Day Uses, Winter Day Uses, and Overnight Uses. There would be no additional allocation of recreation capacity in the form of PAOTs under Alternative 1.

Dispersed recreation does not require the allocation of PAOTs unless the dispersed activity is associated with a facility that requires them (e.g., a kayaking rental concession located at a developed beach). A detailed discussion of the PAOT concept is provided in the Developed Recreation Subelement.

Goals and Policies

No changes are under Alternative 1.

Implementation Measures

No additional measures to implement Dispersed Recreation are proposed.

Alternative 2

Summary

Dispersed Recreation activity is expected to increase along with projected additional visitation to USFS lands, and is anticipated to be consistent across all alternatives. Alternative 2 strives to provide a balance of recreation development within concentrated urban areas as well as throughout the Region, while maintaining dispersed recreation as allowed Region-wide. Facilities to support dispersed recreation would be developed appropriate to the need for the facilities. Locations where certain uses that conflict with dispersed recreation, such as snowmobiling and off-highway vehicle uses, are refined. under Alternative 2. Modified goals and policies would be added to incorporate Pathway desired conditions for the recreation threshold.

Goals and Policies

Alternative 2 would amend the existing goal that encourages opportunities for dispersed recreation when consistent with the protection of the natural resources, reorganized to better describe the intent of the goal. The existing eight policies would either be revised or re-worded to update and clarify their intent, and all eight are grouped under the one dispersed recreation goal. Policies emphasize providing for the following

- a range of dispersed recreation activities, including the creation of comprehensive trail networks linking public lands with support facilities
- low-intensity recreational experiences in the shoreland and natural areas
- areas for wildlife viewing which ensure that habitat remains undisturbed
- the prohibition of off-highway vehicle use except where it is permissible
- the encouragement of management of wilderness areas for low-intensity uses

The second 1987 goal – to provide high-quality recreational opportunities – was incorporated into a Pathway Desired Condition and is located in the General Recreation Subelement as Goal Rec-1.

Implementation Measures

In addition to maintaining the current implementation measures, the following measures are proposed (Code Section 2.2 and 18.4):

- Designate permissible uses in wilderness and backcountry areas within the proposed transect-based zoning system. Limited roads may be present, and off-highway vehicle use will be authorized if so designated in backcountry areas. USFS boundaries and terminology for wilderness and backcountry areas will be incorporated into the Regional Plan maps and documents.
- Allow dispersed recreation in all transect districts. The transect zoning system would describe the form of the natural and built environment for each district.
- Establish appropriate use areas for snowmobiling within the transect districts, and match use areas established by the US Forest Service and State Parks.
- Change use definitions to replace “off-road vehicle course” to “off-highway use” in Chapters 2 and 18 to reflect current terminology and usage.
- Include mountain biking in the Chapter 18 definition of “Riding and Hiking Trails” as a recognized use allowed only on roads and trails designated for that use.

Alternative 3

Summary

Dispersed Recreation activity is expected to increase along with projected additional visitation to USFS lands, and is anticipated to be consistent across all alternatives. Alternative 3 would provide more recreation development than Alternative 2, spread throughout the Tahoe Region (see Table REC-1, Recreation Growth Scenarios 2005-2025). Facilities developed to support dispersed recreation would continue to be constructed as under Alternative 2. Dispersed recreation would continue to be allowed throughout the Region, but under Alternative 3 there is less emphasis on separating uses such as snowshoeing, from motorized uses, such as snowmobiling.

Goals and Policies

The goals and policies for dispersed recreation under Alternative 3 would be the same

as those proposed for Alternative 2.

Implementation Measures

The implementation measures for dispersed recreation under Alternative 3 would be the same as proposed for Alternative 1, with the exception of the following:

- Designate permissible uses in wilderness and backcountry (formerly roadless) areas within the proposed transect-based zoning system. Limited roads may be present and off-highway vehicle use will be authorized if so designated in backcountry areas. USFS boundaries and terminology for wilderness and backcountry areas will be incorporated into the Regional Plan maps and documents.

Alternative 4

Summary

Dispersed Recreation activity is expected to increase along with projected additional visitation to USFS lands, and is anticipated to be consistent across all alternatives. Alternative 4 would project more limited recreation development than Alternative 2, although dispersed recreation would continue to be permitted throughout the Basin. Facilities developed to support dispersed recreation would be constructed as under Alternative 2.

Goals and Policies

The Goals and Policies for dispersed recreation under Alternative 4 would be the same as those proposed for Alternative 2.

Implementation Measures

The Implementation Measures for dispersed recreation under Alternative 4 would be the same as proposed for Alternative 1, with the exception that the following strategies to be implemented within the Plan Area Statement system:

- Designate permissible uses in wilderness and backcountry (formerly roadless) areas within the Plan Area Statements. Limited roads may be present and off-highway vehicle use will be authorized if so designated in backcountry areas. USFS boundaries and terminology for wilderness and backcountry areas will be incorporated into the Regional Plan maps and documents.
- Establish appropriate use areas for snowmobile uses within the Plan Areas on private recreation land, in addition to uses established by the US Forest Service and State Parks.
- Change use definitions to replace “off-road vehicle course” to “off-highway use” in Chapters 2 and 18 to reflect current terminology and usage.
- Include mountain biking in the Chapter 18 definition of “Riding and Hiking Trails” as a recognized use allowed only on roads and trails designated for that use.