

SUSTAINABLE OUTDOOR RECREATION COLLABORATIVE

Overview of Effort

Background: With the appreciation that outdoor recreation contributes greatly to the physical, mental, and spiritual health of individuals, bonds family and friends, instills pride in heritage, and provides economic benefits to communities, regions, and the nation, the U.S. Forest Service understands that recreation has become an essential part of our American culture.

In support of these benefits, Region 5 is committed to providing responsible recreation opportunities in a balanced way for the enjoyment of all while ensuring that ecological values are maintained and improved for the benefit of future generations. To this end, with the encouragement of a number of advocacy groups, Region 5 agreed to utilize funds to retain a neutral, third-party facilitation team from the Sacramento State Consensus and Collaboration Program (CCP) to help guide a Sustainable Outdoor Recreation Collaborative (SORC).

SORC is an effort composed of willing and committed organizations and individuals to undertake shared learning, build trust, and develop ideas and suggestions for how all recreationists and interest groups can collaborate and work effectively together to instill a strong sense of community ownership and responsibility for the public lands.

The purpose of the SORC is to gather a diverse group of interested parties who will work together in public workshops, discuss mutual and differing recreation desires and challenges on Forest Service managed lands, and provide input to the Forest Service on recreation related topics that are of importance in upcoming Forest Plan revisions scheduled to start in 2021 and continuing for several years. (See below for a list of some of the participating organizations.) The SORC process is not being convened by the USFS to review any specific proposed project nor will the Forest Service be bound to any recommendations that may result from the SORC's discussions. However, participants hope that outcomes will inform future forest plans and other recreation-related deliberations and will result in mutually constructive, safe, economically feasible and environmentally sound ways to support diverse recreational uses on publicly managed lands within Region 5.

Over the past year, the SORC has met five times to share information, discuss assorted topics, including the process for identifying and developing projects suitable for Great American Outdoors Act funding, and actively engage in aiding the Forest Service during an unparalleled fire year along with a pandemic.

2021 Overview: Building on their past efforts, the SORC intends to focus on building relationships between interested volunteer and stakeholder groups and forest-level leadership over four "zone-by-zone" meetings detailed below.

- February 24 (10 am - 12 noon): Southern Zone (Cleveland, Angeles, San Bernardino, Los Padres)
- March 31 (10 am - 12 noon): Southern Sierra Zone (Sequoia, Sierra, Inyo, Stanislaus)

- April 28 (10 am - 12 noon): Central Sierra Zone (Eldorado, Lake Tahoe Basin, Tahoe, Plumas)
- May 26 (10 am - 12 noon): North Zone A (Mendocino, Lassen, Shasta-Trinity)
- June 23 (10 am - 12 noon): North Zone B (Six Rivers, Klamath, Modoc)

By focusing the meetings on each zone separately, Region 5 staff hope that key Forest Service line officers and relevant volunteer/stakeholder groups will be able to discuss recreation-related projects (both approved and desired) and develop volunteer opportunities. Meetings are intended to:

- Build and strengthen working relationships between stakeholder groups and relevant USFS staff at the various National Forest Supervisor and District levels.
- Discuss how volunteer groups can engage in implementation of the FY21 and FY22 projects.
- Identify potential projects for the Great American Outdoor Act (GAOA) funding request for FY23.
- Share information concerning relevant events, projects and opportunities for further collaboration.
- Hear and learn about successfully implemented recreation-related projects.

The following specific questions are being used to guide the conversations at the meetings this year:

- Where are the highest priority areas on the forest and what types of recreation infrastructure should we work on for the benefit of the community and stakeholders?
- How can we work together to increase volunteer opportunities to increase responsible recreation and on-the-ground volunteer engagement?
- What can the Forest Service do to be more responsive to partners/volunteers? What can partners/volunteers do to work together and come to the Forest Service in a unified and constructive way?
- What can we do together to build a more inclusive and diverse recreation visitor base? What opportunities do you want to pursue to remove and/or reduce barriers to getting underserved communities to the forest and what can the Forest Service do to help make this happen?

Participating organizations

SORC participants have included the following, as well as many other groups:

- Access Fund California
- American Hiking Society
- American Whitewater
- Backcountry Horsemen
- California Mountain Bike Coalition
- California Off-Road Vehicle Association
- California Outdoor Engagement Coalition/ Inclusion Outdoors

- California State Parks, OHMVR Division
- California State University, Chico
- CALREC Vision
- CalWild
- Central California Off-Road Cyclists
- Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association
- Eastern Sierra Conservation Corps
- Great Basin Institute
- International Mountain Biking Association
- Mono County/Rural County Representatives of California
- National Forest Homeowners
- Outdoor Alliance California
- Pacific Crest Trail Association
- Post Wildfire OHV Recovery Alliance
- Sierra Access Coalition
- Sierra Business Council
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy
- Sierra Snowmobile Foundation
- Siskiyou Outdoor Recreation Alliance
- Ski California
- Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals
- Stewards of the Sequoia
- Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
- Tahoe Rim Trail Association
- The Wilderness Society
- Truckee Dirt Union
- Winter Wildlands Alliance