

# **Peavine Mountain Roads and Recreation Strategy**

**Carson Ranger District, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
In cooperation with  
The City of Reno and Washoe County  
Nevada**



**December 2002**

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## **Objective:**

The following is a strategic analysis, detailing a vision for roads and recreation management on Peavine Mountain. The objective of this analysis is to provide information for site-specific decisions, to set priorities for management actions, and to identify special situations needing attention. While it does contain specific recommendations, *it is not a decision document*. Any ground-disturbing, site specific action that would be undertaken as a result of these recommendations will require compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that includes an environmental analysis and opportunities for public comment.

## **Background:**

Peavine Mountain is situated along the northwest flanks of the City of Reno; tucked within a triangle bordered between the California-Nevada State line to the west, Highway 80 to the south and Highway 395 to the northeast. The 42,000-acre analysis area is made up of National Forest System lands (18,000 acres) and includes other public lands and private lands managed by the City of Reno and Washoe County (24,000 acres). Peavine Mountain is a deeply valued component of the Reno and Washoe County landscape and a popular destination for locals. It is also reeling from the effects of being in the midst of a rapidly growing community. As a June 13, 2002 editorial in the Reno Gazette Journal states, the area is *“getting a good look at the future as new and old collide on the slopes of Peavine Peak. It’s a classic example of the conflicts that arise as city butts up against country – as peace, quiet and safety meet freedom and open space”*.

The Forest Service, in cooperation with staff from City of Reno and Washoe County, including the Sheriff’s department, teamed up to analyze the issues on Peavine Mountain and to make a series of recommendations that will help set the stage for future management decisions. Because of the growing road and trail-related recreation demands and road related effects to the mountain and neighbors, the team analyzed the Peavine transportation system including access to the mountain. Recommendations on related recreational uses are also made in this analysis.

The Forest Service has a new road initiative that shifted its policy from *developing* its transportation system to better *managing* its system. It is charged with having a fresh look at all existing and future roads and trails it has jurisdiction over to ensure the road and trail system is appropriate to meet public needs, safe, environmentally sound and affordable. The IDT followed the “Roads Analysis Process” (RAP) developed by the Forest Service to help implement the new road policy. It’s important to remember this analysis is intended to provide information for future management decisions by the City, County and Forest Service on the merits and risks of building roads in previously unroaded areas; relocating, upgrading, or decommissioning existing roads; managing traffic, including access portals; and enhancing, reducing, or discontinuing road maintenance.

**Public Involvement:**

In the fall of 2001, the Carson Ranger District, Washoe County and the City of Reno jointly canvassed public sentiments for their thoughts on managing Peavine Mountain. About two hundred people attended four public open houses. The questions to those attending were: 1) What roads/areas are most important to you on Peavine Mountain. 2) What activities do you enjoy? 3) What concerns you? Since those meetings a series of articles have appeared in the Reno Gazette Journal and local neighbors and neighborhood advisory boards have weighed in on their issues and concerns. Approximately 350 comments were received.

Interested individuals, including local jeep and mountain bike club members, provided site-specific road and trail inventories and other site-specific documentation of issues. Previous studies that gathered public input, such as the “Recreational Strategy for Mountain Bike Use on Peavine Mountain” (Biro, 1997) were utilized for the analysis.

In addition individual neighbors and neighborhood groups have strongly expressed concerns regarding the type of public access, recreational shooting and off-highway vehicle use in the vicinity of existing neighborhoods. A summary of the public input is found in Appendix D.

A draft of the Peavine Mountain Roads and Recreation Strategy was released for public comment in September, 2002. The public was generally supportive of the draft strategy. Approximately 40 comments and three petitions signed by 315, 27, and 523 people respectively were received. An open-house was held at the McQueen fire station in Northwest Reno on October 08, 2002 to gather input on the Draft Strategy. Approximately 130 people attended. Two key issues emerged: concern for noise and dust stemming from the 7<sup>th</sup> Street Pit and concern about re-opening Roxbury Drive to motorized use. Other issues raised included adding an additional access point, a few additional motorized routes, additional non-motorized access, and concern for rare plants. Both the Reno City Council and Washoe County Board of Commissioners have endorsed the Draft Strategy. Public input on the Draft Strategy has been addressed in this document. A summary of the public comments is found in Appendix D.

**What We Found:**

Based on comments received and agency concerns, we have identified the following topic areas:

- 1) Recreational target shooting
- 2) Impacts to local neighbors from motorized use
- 3) Abandoned mine safety hazards
- 4) Potential health hazards from mine waste dumps
- 5) Need for better signing and mapping
- 6) Trash
- 7) Portals – entry points to the public land and staging areas
- 8) Non-motorized use and trails (including mountain bike opportunities)
- 9) Seventh street pit and land adjustment strategies
- 10) Alternative management strategies between agencies

11) Roads and Trails – Which To Keep, Which To Improve, Areas of Significant Resource Damage

**Recommendations:**

**1) Recreational Target Shooting:**

**Current Situation:** Recreational target shooting takes place across the mountain and is enjoyed by many. Some of the more popular areas are actually on private land. Some neighbors and visitors have complained about safety implications. Shell casings litter the mountain.

**Recommendations:** Washoe County recently passed an ordinance that increases restrictions on recreational shooting on the south side of Peavine Mountain. Current laws prohibit shooting within 5000 feet of a residence. Washoe County Sheriff's Deputies are actively patrolling the area. The National Forest has a cooperative law enforcement agreement with Washoe County to pay for additional patrolling on weekends and evenings in key areas.

a) The District and County will continue to make Peavine a priority for patrolling and cooperative agreements. The Ranger District has recently been able to add additional patrolling thanks to a grant from Nevada State Parks.

b) The Forest Service has coordinated with the County Sheriff's Departments and will match the order to the 5000-foot ordinance restricting recreational target shooting enforced by the County. c) Regulatory signs and maps that include the shooting boundaries will be posted at portals. d) Some popular shooting areas within the National Forest and may be of concern. An example is the occasional shooting that occurs adjacent to the Upper Cottonwood reservoir on the north side of Peavine. Forest Service Law Enforcement Officials should focus patrols on these situations of concern and enforce existing federal regulations prohibiting shooting on the National Forest in an unsafe manner.

**2) Impacts to Local Neighbors from Motorized Use.**

**Current Situation:** In some portal areas motorized vehicles off-load directly adjacent to or behind residential areas; e.g., Kings Row. While off-loading, neighbors can experience loud noise and dust. In addition off-highway vehicles traveling at rapid speeds offend some local neighbors because of noise, dust and use conflicts (those enjoying a non-motorized experience in close vicinity to their homes). At the same time some neighbors own and enjoy using their off-highway vehicles on the mountain. One particular area of concern is the Seventh Street Pit that is 390 feet from the closest residences. The eastern half of the pit is part of the Carson Ranger District; the western half is on private land. Again there are those who enjoy the pit for the motorplay experience and those neighbors who are concerned about the noise and dust.

Locating staging areas, from a management perspective, requires balancing different perspectives: a) keeping them an appropriate distance from housing developments, b)

utilizing existing roads and previously disturbed areas in order to minimize resource damage, c) locating them in areas where they are likely to be used by OHV enthusiasts; e.g., close to portals and in areas from which roads disperse.

**Recommendations:** a) Locate, designate, construct and sign staging areas away from existing neighborhoods and future planned residential areas; e.g., Kings Row work that was recently completed. b) Two key staging areas in the southeast portion of the mountain would be located: west of the church development from the Keystone portal and east of the Las Brisas portal. See portal section for more information. c) Sign a slow traffic/quiet zone within close vicinity of area residents; e.g., east-west road, FS road #41674A, from Kings Row to Keystone traversing behind residents' homes. A long-term plan would be to consider an alternative motorized route further from the homes and convert the existing road to administrative use/non-motorized travel. d) See Seventh Street Pit section for more details regarding this area.

### **3) Abandoned Mine Safety Hazards:**

**Current Situation:** In seven different locations, entry points to abandoned mines present serious safety hazards. Two of the seven are horizontal tunnel entrances and six are vertical shafts. The concern is for children and youth exploring these areas. Many of these entryways are located next to easily accessible roads.

**Recommendations:** The Ranger District has completed an environmental analysis and is taking action based on the outcome of that analysis. In October 2002 those entryways were physically closed.

### **4) Potential Health Hazards from Mine Waste Dumps:**

**Current Situation:** Abandoned mine waste rock dumps were identified as a potential human hazard by the public.

**Recommendations:** The Forest Service has initiated sampling and will obtain analytical reports that determine the total metals content of the mine waste rock dumps, including the 7<sup>th</sup> street pit, on National Forest System lands on Peavine Mountain. Waste rock dumps will be evaluated for human health risks and use by the recreating public. If any of the mine waste rock dumps are determined to be high risk sites, measures will be taken to mitigate the hazard.

### **5) Need for Better Signing and Mapping:**

**Current Situation:** Some individuals have expressed concerns regarding their ability to find their way around the mountain. Some are concerned about getting lost. Others

would like to know when they have left private land and are on the National Forest. Mountain bikers and jeepers would like to see maps with recommended routes.

**Recommendations:** The Ranger District in cooperation with the City and County will install portal signs, post National Forest boundary signs and develop user maps to better inform the public. (A new portal kiosk was recently placed at Kings Row.)

## **6) Trash:**

**Current Situation:** Both agency personnel and the public have expressed concerns about the amount of trash on Peavine. Notable items include everything from beer bottles to mattresses to abandoned vehicles and large appliances.

**Recommendations:** a) Increase patrolling in an attempt to reduce dumping. b) Continue to schedule agency/volunteer cleanup days. Continue to involve the National Guard in vehicle removals. Two such days were held this summer (2002) with good participation from area residents and agencies.

## **7) Portals – Entry Points to the Public Lands:**

**Current Situation:** Peavine is accessed via about a dozen key portals. Some neighbors are concerned about access because of the impacts of noise and dust. The traditional Keystone access heading north and east is no longer available for motorized use. Residential growth is rapid and existing access winds through private land. The public-at-large has been particularly vocal about the need to protect access.

**Recommendations:** a) The Forest Service, Washoe County and the City of Reno have identified management strategies for the following thirteen portals: Bordertown, Red Metal Mine, Stead, Horizon Hills, Raleigh Heights, Hoge Road, Roxbury, Mogul, Kings Row, Las Brisas, Keystone Canyon/Keystone Community Church and Mitchell Canyon from Dog Valley. Noise and dust issues will be addressed by developing staging areas and quiet zones. (See recommendations for topic #2 “Impacts to Local Neighbors from Motorized Use.”) The County and City will work with developers to ensure continued access as the private land along the base of Peavine is developed. Portals will be appropriately signed.

The following is a more descriptive vision for each portal:

This strategy addresses the following **motor-vehicle** portals, to Peavine Mountain and National Forest lands.

**Bordertown**- Located ½ mile from the Bordertown exit on U.S. 395, in California, this portal has convenient access to a major highway with relatively low traffic volume. The road is well maintained and is wide enough to accommodate parking along the shoulder. Therefore, no staging area is required. Needed improvements consist of: a kiosk with map of Peavine road network, and a sign directing motorists to portal location. This

portal will see increased pressure due to more “urban” style development in the Cold Springs area.

**Red Metal Mine**- Located 1.2 miles east of the Cold Springs Exit on US 395, along a dirt frontage road that runs along the south side of US 395. The road begins next to an Alturas power line pole. The portal is located on National Forest System lands and opportunities for a staging area exists within a short distance.

**Stead**- Located .6 miles west on old North Virginia Street from the Stead exist on 395, this portal provides convenient access from N. Virginia St. and U.S. 395. The road is maintained and no staging area is required. Needed improvements consist of: a kiosk with map when first entering National Forest system land. The portal’s current location is on private land and has the potential for development. If development should occur, continued access needs to be addressed and maintained over time, and a staging area may be necessary. This Portal location should be promoted as the main North Slope access point.

**Horizon Hills**- This portal is located at the terminus of Kiowa Way adjacent to the Horizon Hills sub-division. Currently, there is a well-established parking area that will meet the staging needs of this portal. However it is located on private land and is subject to development. Access and a staging area should be maintained with new development. A controlled parking area, buffered from homes, should be provided to stop future resource damage to the surrounding area. Needed improvements consist of: kiosk with map and sign.

**Raleigh Heights**- This portal is located at the western terminus of Burgess in the Raleigh Heights sub-division. The existing parking area is ever expanding and a controlled parking area, buffered from homes, should be provided to stop future resource damage to the surrounding area. Also, a kiosk with map is needed at the parking area.

**Hoge Road**- This portal is located at the top of Hoge Rd. The area to the south of the Hoge Rd. portal is proposed for non-motorized designation and the proper controls would need to be established. Other improvements include: kiosk with map, and a small parking\staging area, well removed from the residential area, to accommodate 5-10 vehicles.

**Roxbury**- Interim access to Peavine and 7<sup>th</sup> street pits to relieve pressure from the Kings Row portal. This portal could be converted to non-motorized use if the portion of the 7<sup>th</sup> St. Pit located on National Forest were conveyed.

**Mogul**- Located at the terminus of Mountain Ridge road in Mogul. The access point is located on private property. As development occurs the portal will be moved up Peavine Mountain ideally to a controlled parking area, buffered from homes, and that will control resource damage to the surrounding area. A kiosk with map is needed at this access point. Maintain motorized access through the Somerset development and provide

staging within the development for critical firefighting equipment. This staging could also provide parking for the general public.

**Kings Row**- Located in an urban, residential neighborhood with poor buffering. The goal is to reduce traffic at this portal and create more distance between high traffic areas and the adjacent homes. Currently, the area experiences a higher level of traffic volume. If the 7<sup>th</sup> St. pit were to be conveyed or closed, the Kings Row portal should see lesser volumes of traffic. Individuals using this portal should be encouraged to use the Keystone Church portal or the portal on Las Brisas. Improvements recently completed consist of: a staging area away from homes, and a kiosk with map.

**Las Brisas**- This portal, along with the Keystone Community Church portal will likely maintain the highest volume of access to Peavine Mountain. Located in proximity to schools and regional sports complex, this site is easily accessible and heavily used. A staging area should be created with parking for 15-20 vehicles, including vehicles with trailers, and a kiosk with map should be located at this parking site. Trailhead facilities such as a vault toilet and hardened parking surface would also be desirable here. The access road, that links the National Forest Service land and the portal, passes through private property. Should this property be developed in the future, access should be maintained by the developer and staging requirements should be considered.

**Keystone Canyon/Keystone Community Church**- Historically this portal has been, and will continue to be, a main access point to Peavine Mountain (due to the proximity to Reno's urban core and convenient access off of McCarran Blvd. and N. Virginia St.). This portal experiences very high traffic. This area is also currently being developed. Motorized access through the private property to National Forest System lands has been secured. A staging area servicing the western Peavine road network should be developed. A potentially suitable site is located on the National Forest just west of the Keystone property. The staging area should provide parking for 20-25 vehicles, including vehicles with trailers, and include a kiosk with map. Additional trailhead facilities such as a vault toilet and hardened parking surface would be important.

**Mitchell Canyon/Dog Valley**- There is a connection to Peavine, through the Mitchell Canyon/Dog Valley area, via a National Forest Service Road. No improvements are needed at this access point.

This strategy addresses **non-motorized** portal access to Peavine Mountain and National Forest lands.

**Keystone Canyon/Keystone Community Church**- On the east side of this development, non-motorized access is being provided. This portal will connect with the non-motorized trails extending north out of Rancho San Rafael Regional Park. The developer is providing a parking area. A kiosk with map should be provided at this location.

**Roxbury**- Provides interim access to Peavine and the 7<sup>th</sup> street pit area to relieve pressure from the Kings Row portal. This portal could be converted to non-motorized when the pit is closed to motorized use or use if the portion of the 7<sup>th</sup> St. Pit located on National Forest is conveyed from public ownership.

The City of Reno and Washoe County have numerous pedestrian paths providing non-motorized access to Peavine Mountain. Future trails on Peavine should connect to these existing trails. Examples include: Lower Mogul going north up-canyon into the Somerset development, Bull Ranch Creek at the future neighborhood park site in the new Verdi subdivision, Evans Creek Canyon going north out of Rancho San Rafael Park.

Rancho San Rafael-non motorized access is being provided from either the parking lot off of North Virginia Street in the northern portion of the park or from the main portion of the park on the south side of McCarran via a trail and pedestrian tunnel under McCarran Blvd. This portal provides access to Evans Creek Canyon and to adjacent National Forest system lands on Peavine.

Bull Ranch Creek- is a future portal that will provide non-motorized access into the Bull Ranch Creek drainage and to other higher elevations on Peavine. A future trail in this creek drainage could eventually lead to National Forest system lands on the mountain. The portal is located on planned park acreage located at the confluence of the creek and the Truckee river which is within an approved un-built subdivision north of US 40 on the east side of the river.

## **8) Non-motorized Use and Trails (including mountain bike opportunities):**

***Current Situation:*** Peavine Mountain is a favorite area for mountain bikers. Mountain bike use is heavy yet there is no established trail system. Numerous social trails have been pioneered in over the years as a result. Many single-track trails have scarred the hillside with a maze of routes to the same locations. Some users have expressed concern over this unplanned approach to trail construction. In some cases, trails that were built a few years ago have become too rocky. The finer soils have since eroded away leaving only bedrock material. Individuals built these trails without approval from the Forest Service (Biro 97). Many Mountain bikers, including mountain bike clubs have expressed an interest in designating well-designed bike routes and creating additional interconnecting routes around the mountain.

Washoe County has been concerned about motorized incursions into San Rafael Park from the Keystone access portal. Motorized access is restricted north and east from the Keystone portal due to the private property development. Hikers, walkers, and mountain bikers heavily use the Keystone drainage. Some constituents expressed interest in a non-motorized area on Peavine in which to walk and bike.

There are currently no facilities for persons with disabilities in the high mountain area of Peavine.

**Recommendations:** a) Develop a non-motorized trail system. Include user groups, and city and county agencies to ensure planning that will provide for a well developed trail system that compliments county and city recreation plans in urban areas.

b) Upon completion of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements, the Forest Service can enlist the assistance of volunteer bicycle organizations, such as the Reno Wheelmen, Procrastinating Peddlers, or IMBA to construct trail, install route markers and sign trailheads (Biro 97).

c) Develop trailhead facilities and a wheelchair accessible “whole access” interpretative trail at or near the summit.

d) Develop trail guides in cooperation with the mountain biking community specifically for mountain bikers to enjoy the mountain.

e) Designate a portion of National Forest system lands in the Keystone drainage around San Rafael Park and the Keystone Portal for non-motorized use. This area would encompass about 1950 acres (approximately 10% of the National Forest on the mountain). Some of the existing roads within this area could be converted to non-motorized single track. The area could be accessed from Hoge Road, San Rafael County Park, and Keystone (see map 3).

## **9) Seventh Street Pit:**

**Current Situation:** Some local off road vehicle users have enjoyed riding and jumping in the 7<sup>th</sup> Street Pit for many years. At the same time, some local residents in close proximity to the pit have complained about noise and dust. As more residents move into the area, those concerns are increasing as well. The eastern half of the Pit (23 acres) is on National Forest land and the western half (26 acres) is on private land. Land managers are concerned about liability, impacts to neighbors, and resource impacts.

**Recommendation:** The Forest Service, City of Reno and Washoe County Sheriff’s Department will pursue options for restricting access to the entire 7<sup>th</sup> Street Pit, including utilizing fencing, barrier rock and signing combined with a focused compliance campaign. The Kings Row staging area located between the Kings Row portal and the pit, and the road from Kings Row to the Las Brisas bypassing the pit would be maintained. Once the pit is closed the Roxbury portal would convert to non-motorized access. Concurrently alternative motorplay locations on non- National Forest system lands could be sought.

One long term strategy could be to convey the public portion of the pit out of public ownership. Any long-term strategy would be developed in close coordination with the City and County.

## **10) Alternative Management Strategies between agencies:**

**Current Situation:** Washoe County, the US Forest Service and the City Of Reno all have limited resources to manage recreation use of the mountain.

**Recommendation:** Jointly develop management strategies and agreements as appropriate between agency land managers, law enforcement personnel and others to best utilize the resources of each agency to manage this mountain.

## **11) Road Management:**

**Current Situation:** A vast majority of the roads are user created stemming from mineral exploration, past grazing operations or various recreation activities. Roads typically follow steep ridgelines or drainage bottoms. Many road segments are unsafe. Some are experiencing severe erosion and are readily visible from miles away. Some are causing damage to meadows, riparian areas and cultural sites. Sometimes multiple roads access the same location. Other roads, such as old mineral exploration roads dead-end on mountainsides (See Map 2).

There are a total of 322 miles of inventoried roads, which equates to an overall road density of 4.8 miles of road per square mile. 163 of the total miles are located on the National Forest portion of Peavine. The road density on the National Forest is 5.6 miles of road per square mile. Of the 322 total miles, 93 miles are *system* roads (county or federal agency managed roads). The rest are non-system roads (or roads that are not part of an agency's managed road network).

A variety of noxious weeds exist on Peavine Mountain. Given the high density of existing roads and the possibility of continued proliferation of new unauthorized roads, there is an increased susceptibility to invasion by noxious weeds.

The high density of the road network and the location of some roads are affecting the quality and quantity of wildlife habitat. Wildlife habitat is being fragmented as unauthorized roads proliferate (e.g. Mule deer winter range).

Some historic and prehistoric artifacts are vulnerable due to the ease of access on Peavine. Petroglyphs, grinding stones and other features have been damaged and in a few cases stolen.

Road surfaces and roadside features (such as ditches, culvert basins, cutbanks, and unvegetated surfaces) can generate erosion and contribute to degradation of water resources. Preventative maintenance measures such as stabilization and vegetation of roadside features can significantly reduce this concern. As roads age and their use increases, travel surfaces, roadside features, and drainage structures deteriorate, requiring increased maintenance.

Road maintenance funding is not adequate to fully maintain all inventoried roads on the Humboldt–Toiyabe National Forest. Available funding is targeted for the most heavily used roads on the forest. Future road maintenance plans and associated requests for funding should display the heavy use of roads on Peavine.

*A detailed analysis of the existing and proposed road system is found in Appendix A:*

**Recommendations:** a) With the goal of developing a road system that best meets people’s needs and is safe, environmentally sound and affordable, a “backbone road system” of about 101 miles is proposed. Approximately 71 system miles would be on the National Forest. This would equate to a National Forest system density of 2.2 miles of road per square mile. While the number of miles of system roads would remain about the same as exists today, the proposed system would be comprised of a new combination of the most important classified and unclassified roads and some new roads. The proposed road system includes better strategic access for fires suppression vehicles, preserves challenging jeep and OHV routes as well as provides for easier recreation travel routes while better protecting the environment. These roads would be signed and maintained to appropriate standards. Some segments of the proposed road system would need to be partially relocated or reconstructed to meet use and maintenance standards. Consider site specific seasonal road closures for resource protection. (See Map 3).

b) Comments continue to conducting rare plant inventories with the help of the Nevada Rare Plant Society, utilizing this information to help determine the best locations for roads and trails.

**This document makes no decisions to close or relocate specific road segments.**

Any proposed change of management to the current National Forest road system would be subject to site-specific analysis. Decisions could include adding to or removing roads from the road system, changing the use level and/or maintenance standard of a system road, closure, rehabilitation, or restoration. Our highest priorities would be to address roads that are unsafe, roads causing significant impacts to nearby residents, newly created (unauthorized) roads, and those roads causing damage to meadows, wildlife habitat, riparian and cultural sites. Those analyses will include additional public comment opportunities.

b) A road maintenance agreement between the communication site users, Forest Service and County is recommended for the main road accessing the communications facilities located at the top of the mountain (FS Road # 41641). This is currently the only road (e.g. passable by low clearance, 2 wheel drive vehicles) on the National Forest portion of Peavine.

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Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest

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Date

