

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service

Eldorado National Forest

100 Forni Road, Placerville, CA 95667



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Forest Service Land Exchange To Protect Roadless Areas, Wildlife Habitat and Provide More Recreational Lands

Placerville, CA....More recreational opportunities, greater protection for Inventoried Roadless Areas, and additional wildlife habitat protection are slated for the Eldorado National Forest following a land exchange decision that was recently signed by Forest Supervisor John Berry. The exchange involves parcels of land managed by Sierra Pacific Industries and the USDA Forest Service.

Under the exchange agreement, the Forest Service will obtain a total of 3,394 acres (16 parcels) of Sierra Pacific Industries Lands in exchange for a total 1,843 acres (14 parcels) of Eldorado National Forest land. The lands exchanged were appraised to be of equal market value.

Berry said the decision will consolidate ownership of National Forest land to enhance the Forest Service's ability to implement ecosystem management. In addition, the exchange will provide greater efficiencies to SPI in managing their lands in accordance with state and federal laws. The decision will reduce future road construction leading to SPI lands located in Inventoried Roadless Areas. And, the Forest Service decision will add lands with recreation and high scenic value to the National Forest System.

"This exchange is a win/win situation for the American people and Sierra Pacific Industries," said Eldorado National Forest Supervisor John Berry. "We had four major needs that we wanted to meet and I believe this decision will meet them."

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In addition, Berry says the exchange will increase the number of National Forest acres located in meadows and in valuable riparian and spotted owl habitats. “The decision will result in a net increase in California spotted owl protected habitat,” said Berry.

The Forest Service is acquiring the following lands: parcels located along the South Fork of the American River where the Pony Express Trail is located; undeveloped recreation lands adjacent to the Silver Fork of the American River; lands adjacent to Gerle Reservoir in the Crystal Basin; two parcels near Bassi Falls; one parcel near Hell Hole Reservoir, and two parcels adjacent to the Rubicon River. Two other parcels are located near Dark Canyon and Pilliken south of the Mormon Emigrant Trail.

An environmental impact statement was prepared to assess the impacts of the proposed exchange. The Final EIS and the Record of Decision are available in the Eldorado National Forest Headquarters located 100 Forni Road; Placerville, CA. The Record of Decision is also available on the Internet at: www.fs.fed.us/r5/eldorado.

The project will be implemented five business days after the close of the appeal period, if no appeals are filed. In the event of an appeal, the implementation may take place 15 days following an appeal decision.

Editors Note: The Record of Decision will be posted to the Internet on February 24, 2004.