

Camp Rich bike trail slated for overhaul



Cyclists one day may enjoy a wider, longer Camp Rich trail. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

The most heavily used bike trail in the Lake Tahoe Basin may undergo a face-lift in the next few years.

The U.S. Forest Service is looking at tearing up the existing route in and around Camp Richardson and possibly replacing the 8-foot wide path with asphalt 10-feet wide, plus 2-foot shoulders.

All of this and more are part of the Fallen Leaf Trail Access and Travel Management Plan. Wildlife, botanical and other surveys are being conducted as part of the necessary federal environmental review. Public comments could be sought by spring 2010. A final document is expected in winter 2010 or spring 2011, with construction to follow once funding is secured.

Boundaries of the plan are from the edge of the Angora Fire to Lake Tahoe, then from where Highway 89 is four lanes to Desolation Wilderness.

“We may re-route trails. There are a lot of user created trails, some managed trails and some roads that will be reconfigured,” explained Garrett Villanueva, assistant forest engineer. “We will be looking at the trails from the visitors center to Camp Richardson – all the trails in there including the ones that go to the beaches. We want to make those work as effectively as possible.”

The idea is make it so people can bike from one place to another and not have to drive.

Today the paved Camp Richardson path dead-ends on the north at Highway 89. Villanueva said the Forest Service has not given up on the idea of having a bike trail around Emerald Bay.

“It’s very challenging with resource issues and private property,” Villanueva said.

Another idea is to resurrect plans from the 1980s to create a loop by crossing Highway 89 and going behind the stables at Camp Rich.

The dam at Taylor Creek at the eastern edge of Fallen Leaf Lake currently requires mountain bikers to dismount unless they are adept at stairs. Villanueva said his agency is studying how to link the trails in a logical manner to the dam. Constructing a crossing that is easier to maneuver and one that looks better are part of the equation, too.

The Forest Service is looking at using native surface and pavement in the project.

A bike path along Fallen Leaf Road is being talked about that could connect with Tahoe Mountain Road. El Dorado County is responsible for maintaining (or letting it be in a state of

disrepair) – not the feds.