

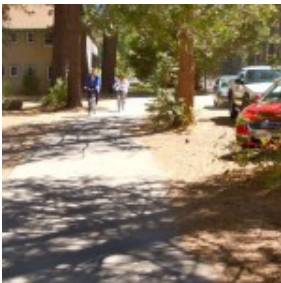
Coordinated trail system at Camp Rich in the works

By Kathryn Reed

Turning the more than 40 miles of trails in the Fallen Leaf Lake-Camp Richardson area into a more cohesive, logical system is being proposed by the U.S. Forest Service.

While the project area encompasses nearly 13,000 acres on the South Shore, nowhere near that much will be touched. The physical boundaries are Lake Tahoe to the east, Glen Alpine to the west, Mount Tallac to the north, and Angora Ridge to the south.

The proposal that is out for public review contains 12.9 miles of new trails, 8.4 miles of reconstructed trails and decommissioning 14.4 miles of trail.



The bike trail by Camp Richardson may be upgraded and parking in the dirt eliminated.

Photo/LTN file

“What is there now is a kind of spaghetti string mess,” Jacob Quinn, trails coordinator for the Forest Service, told *Lake*

Tahoe News. "Some trails are Forest Service-created and some are user-created. There is not a lot of signage where the trails go or to know how to get to where you parked your car."

Improving connectivity is a main goal of the project. While most cyclists stick to the lake side along the paved trail, the plan is to better tie that area to what is on the other side of Highway 89.

While the trails won't be technical, various loops will be different lengths. Signs will tell people what they are about to embark on. Nothing like that exists today.

While the paved trail dead ends on the north, this will be changed so there is a logical place to cross the highway to hook up with trails on the other side. However, the west side will not be paved. It will be a hard-pack natural surface.

The bridge crossing the dam at Fallen Leaf Lake will be reconstructed so cyclists can easily cross it.

All of these ideas are just that – ideas. The Forest Service will compile comments it receives between now and mid-January to see if changes need to be made to the scoping document, if something needs to be studied more, and if new ideas should be incorporated.

Input from agencies like Lahontan Water Board, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Department of Fish & Game are being sought now, too.

Most likely an environmental analysis will be done. Once that document is completed, the USFS can start seeking funding to do the work.

Quinn would not put a dollar amount on the project because with it still in the scoping stage much could change. He said funding is often easier to secure once a project is shovel ready. It's possible the project would be built in phases;

with the soonest any work might happen being late next summer.

Some of the significant changes people are likely to notice as they drive through the Camp Rich area are parking differences and the bike path not next to the road.

Caltrans has on its books (albeit without a start date) plans to eliminate parking on the shoulder of Highway 89. The Forest Service wants to coordinate its efforts with the state agency.

The USFS expects the overflow used for events at Valhalla to be paved. That area is an old polo field. Behind it could become a gravel overflow lot.

A second lot could be built about one-quarter mile east of Spring Creek. This would be where people on the far end of the bike path could park.

Expansion of the Tallac trailhead lot is also proposed. It would not grow so significantly as to bring more people to the area. What it would do is get people off the plants and dirt – which is where some people are parking.

“We don’t want to go so big so it would change the character of the recreation experience,” Quinn said of the trailhead parking.

The parking at all lots would be free.

No new paved bike paths are proposed, though slight alterations to the existing one include widening it to bring it up to current standards and having it be set farther back from the highway. This would involve the removal of some larger trees.

The myriad dirt trails leading through the meadow to the homes on West Way would not be touched with this project.

With the holidays coming up, the Forest Service has decided to extend the comment period on the Fallen Leaf Lake Trail Access

and Travel Management Project to Jan. 13. For more information on the proposal and how to comment, go online or contact Jacob Quinn at (530) 543.2609 or email jmquinn@fs.fed.us.