



Forest Service is shutting down access to OHVs

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They closed the forest to the lumberjacks

And I did not speak up

Because I was not a lumberjack

Then they closed the forest to the OHV community

And I did not speak up

Because I was not part of the OHV community

Then they closed many of the forest camping locations

And I did not speak up

Because I was not a camper

Then they closed the forest for my favorite activity

And there was no one left to speak for me.

This seems to be the destiny of the national forests. The local off-highway vehicle community as well as hunters and others have been working in cooperation with the Shasta-Trinity National Forest identifying old logging roads and trails. These roads have been around for years but never added to the Forest Service inventory. Since they never were on the inventory, the Forest Service never spent money to maintain them.

The Forest Service was very open to public assistance, and asked for our help in identifying where we ride. The agency even has a Web site for it: www.fs.fed.us/r5/shastatrinity/news/ohv. The local community responded and spent many hours identifying the longtime existing trails and roads that suddenly were classified as "unauthorized." Right off the Web site we are told, via a Feb. 19, 2005, Record Searchlight article:

"Shasta-Trinity Supervisor Sharon Heywood said OHVs are a legitimate use of public forests. Riders will be asked which routes they feel should be designated."

" 'It's a very difficult thing to do, to prove we are trustworthy,' Heywood said. 'But I think you'll find we're keeping our word and that we need your involvement and cooperation.' "

The story also reported, "OHVs still will be allowed on official Forest Service roads, just like any car or truck."

After we provided the Forest Service information leading to 1,200 miles of roads and trails called "unauthorized," they took the information behind closed doors. When the doors were opened again, they showed us a proposal of 32 miles of road that they are willing to consider. Now I'm told that those may be reduced as well. That is 2.67 percent of what was identified. They are offering us less than 3 percent access to the trails we identified for them. I really believe the "hard to prove we are trustworthy" statement on their Web site was an honest statement.

The Shasta-Trinity is closing many gravel Forest Service roads referencing a California Motor Vehicle Code calling them "highways" when the CHP has clearly written (I have seen the letter) and explained that these roads are not highways. Take the time to visit the Forest Service office north of the Redding Municipal Airport to see where you used to go in the forest for a ride, or where you may have camped before, as they probably are removed from the proposal maps. Everything is now declared closed and illegal unless it is on the new maps. Fines can go as high as \$5,000 for riding or camping where you used to. Speak up now before they close your forest activity.

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