

The Public Pays Extortionary Fees To Use Public Land

The El Dorado National Forest is requiring the Polka Dots Motorcycle Club, a 55-year-old volunteer organization, to pay approximately \$50,000 in advance for an environmental analysis for an off-road event special use permit. This special use permit is required by the Forest Service to host a recreational family motorcycle enduro and an off road motorcycle event in the forest. These fees are primarily to cover the cost of an environmental assessment and secondarily for additional Forest Service monitoring for each event.

These events have been held in our National Forests for over 40 years; using existing, long used and approved Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) trails and forest roads. The Forest Service has been approving the use of these OHV motorcycle trails and forest roads for motorcycle events for decades, without any reason to conduct an environmental review. Until recently, the Forest Service has always permitted these events on a yearly basis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Categorical Exclusion. Under this exclusion the Forest Service only charged nominal administration fees. Until more recently the Forest Service had never required volunteer based organizations to pay cost recovery fees. The obvious question is what has recently changed? Nothing, except under presser from anti-access groups, the Forest Service has created a policy to establish a financial obstruction to forest access for OHV recreation.

In 2008 the El Dorado National Forest completed an environmental analysis of all roads and trails for the entire El Dorado National Forest. Considering the Forest Service completed that recent environmental analysis for all roads and trails in the El Dorado National Forest, there is no logic in requiring the completion of an additional environmental analysis for individual or group users. The Forest Service appears to be implementing this new policy solely to erect a barrier to forest access for OHV recreationists.

These fees are essentially creating a blockade to forest access and locking out the public from use of its own property. These volunteer organizations do not make much more than the cost of putting these events on. These permit and cost recovery fees are being put in place to create a barrier to forest access for anyone or any group wishing to recreate in the national forest.

July, 2010

Polka Dots MC