

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2802

June 8, 2010

The Honorable Tom Tidwell
Chief
United States Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250-003

Dear Chief Tidwell,

As you know, the Mountain City, Ruby Mountains and Jarbidge Combined Travel Management Plan (TMP) is currently underway in Northeastern Nevada. I am writing to address concerns my constituents have expressed regarding the Forest Service's (FS) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the TMP.

I appreciate the willingness of the FS thus far to attempt to address the concerns of my constituents in impact counties; however I am concerned about the process going forward. As you are aware, the decision to close roads in Nevada has the potential to create serious conflict—especially if impacted communities have not had their concerns adequately addressed. Given that, it is important that any decisions to close roads be made in a very open, straightforward, and transparent process. Elko County officials and citizens have been very engaged in the TMP process to date. The level of participation in the process thus far is a testament to the strong feelings associated with the areas encompassed by the DEIS. The TMP is an enormous undertaking and, in an effort to insure the integrity of the outcome, I respectfully request a 6 month extension on the DEIS comment period. This will give my constituents additional time to evaluate the impacts of actions proposed by the DEIS.

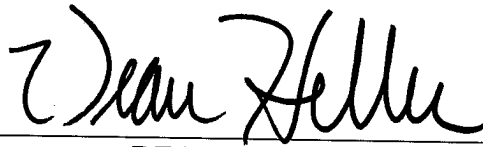
Given that nearly 85% of Nevada is controlled by the federal government, I believe it is vital that the federal government work in partnership with communities. Our unique land ownership configuration presents many challenges for Nevadans. We rely on adequate access to public lands for recreational, cultural, and economic opportunity, as well as for public safety and stewardship. An extension of the DEIS comment period will lend more transparency and integrity to this process that will impact so many Nevadans.

The concerns about the TMP are not limited to motorized travel through Forest Service lands. Campsite availability, dispersed parking, game retrieval, access for disabled forest users, and myriad other issues are also very important to the communities impacted by the DEIS.

One item of particular concern to me related to the TMP is the requirement that roads be deemed closed unless posted open. This provision poses a problem not only for the lands being analyzed under this DEIS, but for lands throughout Nevada. This is in direct contravention to Nevada state law and, as such, has the potential to cause confusion among public lands users in Nevada. I would like a commitment from you to work with me and the residents of Nevada to resolve this issue to maintain the goal of protecting resources and insuring adequate access to public lands.

Thank you for your attention to these issues. If I can answer any questions or be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dean Heller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

DEAN HELLER
Member of Congress

Cc: Jeanne Higgins, Forest Supervisor, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Gar Abbas, Ruby Mountains District Ranger, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Tom Montoya, Jarbidge and Mountain City District Ranger, Humboldt Toiyabe
National Forest
Charlie Myers, Chair, Elko County Board of Commissioners