UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

December 17, 2007

Ramiro Villalvazo
Forest Supervisor
Eldorado National Forest
100 Forni Road
Placerville, CA 95667

Subject: Final Environmental Impact Statement for Kirkwood Mountain Resort--Mountain Master Development Plan, Amador, Alpine, and El Dorado Counties, California (CEQ# 20070485)

Dear Mr. Villalvazo,

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the above document. Our review and comments are pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

We rated the Draft EIS for the proposed Kirkwood Mountain Master Development Plan as Environmental Concerns – Insufficient Information (EC-2) due to our concerns with limited integration of the 2003 Kirkwood Specific Plan into this environmental analysis and potential cumulative adverse watershed effects, as well as impacts to water resources, air quality, traffic, and noise.

Based upon our review of the FEIS and Response to Comments, we continue to recommend Alternative 3—Limited Emigrant Valley Development, because it minimizes cumulative watershed effects in a watershed which is already close to the threshold of concern and avoids impacts to Mountain yellow-legged frog caused by the expansion of recreation into known habitat.

We commend the additional Best Management Practices and new infrastructure design requirements that will address, in part, public concerns regarding heritage/cultural, visual, and watershed effects. While these new measures would help reduce erosion and visual effects of Alternative 2—Proposed Alternative, cumulative watershed effects would increase to 125% of the threshold of concern versus. By comparison Alternative 3 would result in 118% of the threshold of concern and avoid potential impacts to existing Mountain yellow-legged frog habitat.

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We appreciate the opportunity to review this FEIS. If you have any questions, please call me at 415-972-3988 or Laura Fujii, of my staff, at 415-972-3852, or at fujii.laura@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

Nova Blazej, Manager
Environmental Review Office
Communities and Ecosystems Division

cc: Sue Rodman, Forest Planner, Eldorado National Forest
Les Grober, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
Dave Harlow, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Susan Grijalva, Amador County Planning Department
Brian Peters, Alpine County Planning Department
Peter Maurer, El Dorado County Planning Department
Steve Knight, President, California-Nevada Chapter, Oregon-California Trails Association
Tahoe Regional Planning Agency