

## Horse Mountain Target Shooting Request for Public Input

The Six Rivers National Forest is soliciting input from the public regarding concerns with management in the Horse Mountain Botanical/Special Interest Area. We are trying to determine if there is a need to manage this area differently due to a conflict of uses, specifically, recreational shooting, with the values for which the botanical area was established. Safety concerns have also been brought forward by non-shooting recreational users in the area. There is currently no proposal to change management, but the perspectives we receive from this solicitation may result in changes.

Of note, the 2019 John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act (Dingell Act) speaks to Sportsmen's Access to Federal Land in:

### ***Title IV Sportsmen's Access and Related Matters***

#### ***Subtitle A – National Policy,***

- *Section 4001 Congressional Declaration of National Policy,*

#### ***Subtitle B – Sportsmen's Access to Federal Land,***

- *Sections 4101 Definitions,*
- *Section 4102 Federal Land Open to Hunting, Fishing and Recreational Shooting,*
- *Section 4103 Closure of Federal Land to Hunting, Fishing, and Recreational Shooting,*
- *Section 4104 Shooting Ranges, and*
- *Section 4105 Identifying opportunities for Recreation, Hunting and Fishing on Federal Land.*

<https://www.congress.gov/116/plaws/publ9/PLAW-116publ9.pdf>

*Given the nature of this area and the activities that take place here, a future avenue for making changes to management in relation to recreational shooting would be to use authorities in the Dingell Act. Prior to submitting your input, it is advised that you review both Subtitle A and B of the Dingell Act and consider its contents within the context of your submission related to recreational shooting on Federal land.*

### **Background**

The Six Rivers National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA 1995) designated seven Special Interest Areas (SIAs). These areas were established to protect unique ecological, botanical, cultural, and geologic features across the Forest and to promote public use, education, and enjoyment consistent with the values of the area. Furthermore, in 1998, the Forest developed a SIA management strategy (USDA 1998) that identified opportunities and possible management practices that protect the SIA's unique values and encourage public use and enjoyment compatible with the protection of the valuable public resources.

The Horse Mountain Botanical Area is an SIA that spans approximately 1,110 acres (see Figure 1). It was established due to the presence of rare and unique plants characteristic of serpentine areas. 'Serpentine' refers to soils derived from a type of ultramafic rock (Franciscan Complex) that is present at the Horse Mountain Botanical Area. These soils contain a high level of heavy metals and low concentrations of essential plant nutrients. They are exclusionary to most plant species but support a large number of rare species known only to occur on serpentine soils, such as evergreen everlasting, ternate buckwheat, serpentine arnica, and Geyer's sedge. These plants are of limited distribution or are infrequent throughout a broader area in California. The state of California ranks them as uncommon, but not rare, with some cause for long-term concern due to declines or other factors.

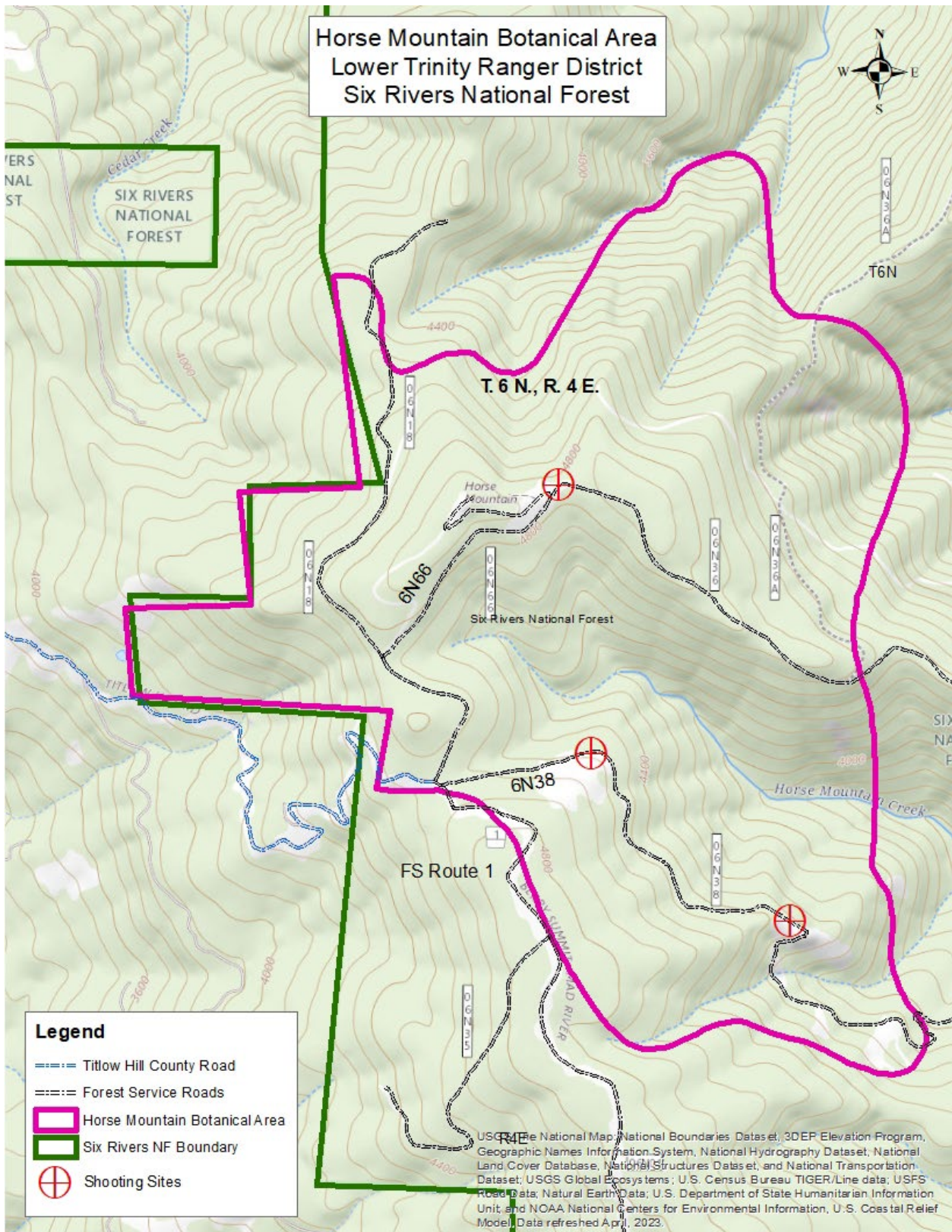


Figure 1- Horse Mountain Botanical Area

Harsh growing conditions have resulted in open forests with areas of dense shrub cover and restricted tree growth. Horse Mountain Botanical Area is known for Jeffrey Pine Woodlands, which, like the rare plants, are associated with serpentine soils (USDA 1998). This Botanical Area also contains the southernmost population of Port-Orford-cedar (POC). According to research conducted on the genetic variation of Port-Orford-cedar, the Horse Mountain population was identified as distinctive from other coastal populations in terms of containing unique genetic material, which is especially significant to conservation biology (Miller and Marshall, 1990). Based on inventories last completed in 2012, watersheds in Horse Mountain are not known to be infested with POC root disease, which threatens nearby populations of POC.

The Horse Mountain Botanical Area is classified as "roaded natural" in the recreation opportunity spectrum. The main route through the area is Forest Route 1. Recreational use of Horse Mountain and surrounding area is seasonally heavy in winter and moderate the rest of the year. It is one of the primary snow play areas on the forest. Other activities engaged in a lesser degree during other times of the year are dispersed camping, wildflower viewing, scenic viewing (Trinity Alps to the east, Pacific Ocean to the west), horseback riding, hiking, target shooting, mountain biking, driving for pleasure, and hunting. Hunting (bow and gun) occurs throughout the area, especially during deer season. Primitive hunting camps are interspersed throughout this dispersed area and have been noted within the botanical area by the presence of fire rings.

Target shooting occurs at locations shown in Figure 1. Recreationists shoot into former mining sites and into dirt banks in this area, although damage to vegetation within the SIA has been reported. Target and associated litter are often visible. Additionally, other dumping of trash occurs here.

Over the years the Six Rivers National Forest has received a number of complaints from members of the public whose recreational experience at Horse Mountain Botanical Area were negatively impacted by target shooting at the three former mining sites (see Figure 1). These experiences include safety concerns. The 1998 SIA Management Strategy identified possible management activities to address concerns with target shooting and dumping at the Horse Mountain Botanical Area, including:

- Remove material that has been dumped at the mine site and along the Horse Mountain mine road.
- Remove targets at the mine tailing site; periodically rid the area of target shooting debris.
- Post appropriate regulations near sites traditionally used for target shooting. Employ law enforcement officer to periodically patrol the area.
- Consider partnership with local hunting or gun club to manage under a special use permit.
- Consider eliminating shooting within the SIA. If eliminated, seek another site that provides safe conditions.

Despite routine patrols by law enforcement and periodic clean-up efforts, trash and debris, including appliances, ammunition casings, and clay pigeons are often left at the target shooting sites. This accumulation of debris degrades site conditions and invites a continuation of undesirable activities.

### **Desired Condition**

Six Rivers National Forest desires to provide public use and enjoyment of the Horse Mountain Botanical Area by providing a safe, undefiled environment for forest visitors that are complimentary to the protection of the serpentine vegetation and rare plants for which the botanical area was established. The Forest would like to reduce or eliminate dumping of refuse, end damage to the unique serpentine vegetation and promote compatible recreational opportunities. Due to the safety and resource concerns created by recreational target

shooting and the degradation of the site from dumping, the Six Rivers National Forest is requesting input from the public on these issues so that an informed decision can be made on how to proceed. We would like your ideas on how to make this area safer for users, cleaner, and better able to sustain the unique serpentine vegetation of the SIA, all in support of the multiple uses that occur there.

**Please send your input to:**

Six Rivers National Forest  
Attn: Justin Spedding  
1330 Bayshore Way  
Eureka, CA 95501

Electronically:

<https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?project=NP-4224>

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Nolan Colegrove  
District Ranger

Nolan Colegrove

Lower Trinity, Orleans, and Ukonom District Ranger

**References Cited**

USDA Forest Service, 1998. Special Interest Area Management Strategy, Version 1: Six Rivers National Forest. On file at Six Rivers National Forest Supervisor's Office, Eureka, CA. p. 73 – 99.

USDA Forest Service, 1995. Land and Resource Management Plan. Six Rivers National Forest, Eureka, California