# Tahoe area OHV riders seek more access

**By Kathryn Reed**

Look outside – that's why the U.S. Forest Service doesn't open all trails in April – especially ones that allow motorized vehicles.

Last week a group of off-highway vehicle enthusiasts gathered at the South Lake Tahoe Forest Service office to talk about how best to maintain the roads, suggest ways for user groups to work together and offer ideas to the Forest Service. Users included four-wheelers, all terrain vehicle riders and dirt bikers.

One thing many advocated for was access when spring arrives even if the calendar says winter. But it was pointed out that the storm that arrived Sunday, which was in the forecast days in advance, was reason alone to limit access.

"Gates are closed for resource reasons," Jacob Quinn with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit told *Lake Tahoe News*. This includes critters nesting, and other fauna and flora considerations that go beyond looking at whether the ground is dry.

Users said if the sand pits and Twin Peaks on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe were open now, it might curtail the illegal activity that is going in places like Upper Kingsbury Grade. People are going around the gate off Andria Drive.

"They are running it like crazy right now," Frank Machler, USFS law enforcement officer, said. "They are there illegally. We are trying to get a handle on it."

One person suggested a few boulders and better signage. Signs

may come later in the summer.

Those in the room want to be stewards of the land, including helping with trail maintenance. Much like the mountain bike community in the past few years has partnered with the USFS, the same goes for the motorized recreation community.

The Forest Service has actively been applying for grants from California and Nevada entities with the goal of helping make improvements for off-roaders.

With the Forest Service unable to be on every trail, the feds welcome input from users about what they see so improvements or enforcement can be more immediate.

The users spoke about how they often take apart illegal campfire rings. Fire is a concern for them, whether it's from illegal fires or their vehicles. Most who belong to organized riding groups have spark arresters on their vehicles and carry fire extinguishers.

Vegetation will be abnormally dry this summer because of the lack of snow. Safety is an issue especially when it comes to those in the backcountry knowing about dangerous conditions – something like last fall's King Fire. Cell phone service is usually non-existent so the use of ham radios is often used.

Later this year the LTBMU will be revising the motor use map. Public comments will be solicited in the fall.

"That's our legal document for when we can open and close gates," Quinn said. "The idea is to improve accuracy. That is the point of the revision."

Forest Service employees suggested users pay attention this season to what improvements they would like so they can be brought up in the form of a comment down the road, with the goal of its being addressed with the revised document. This would be the time to ask for more regulated fire pits with the

goal of fewer illegal ones being built.