



2024 Rainbow Gathering: Our Concerns

The forthcoming Rainbow Family Gathering is expected to draw up to 10,000 visitors to the Plumas National Forest and is likely to have significant impacts to natural and cultural resources and on our communities.

Friends of Plumas Wilderness (FoPW) is concerned about those impacts, as this concentrated use will affect wildlife, water, and sensitive areas near Thompson Peak and Antelope Lake. Fire season has begun, and wildfire risk is a major concern. We support the United States Forest Service (USFS) and local law enforcement in upholding the laws and regulations that govern our public lands. While we all have a right to access the National Forests, there are good reasons for the rules we must all follow when we visit them.

The USFS requires a special use permit for public groups of 75 people or more. The Rainbow Family has refused to comply with this requirement so the Forest Service puts together a resource protection plan to ensure sensitive resources are protected and environmental damage is minimized.

The 2024 Rainbow Family Gathering is taking place in the Diamond Mountains, an area that is unique biologically and geologically as that's where the Sierra Nevada and Great Basin meet. Because of this intersection of ecoregions and the relatively low rainfall that occurs here, unique species are found here.

Friends of Plumas Wilderness asks that the following designated areas be included within the resource protection plan for the 2024 Rainbow Family Gathering.

The Plumas National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan provides management direction for several sensitive areas in the Diamond Mountains:

- Thompson Peak Semi-Primitive Area, 2000 acres: Essentially an undisturbed area in a remote forest setting. PNF direction is for non-motorized dispersed recreation and to allow activities only if they are unobtrusive and maintain the character of the area.
- Diamond Mountain Limited Vehicular Access Area, 7000 acres: PNF direction is to establish an area with limited vehicular access during deer season to allow for roadless deer hunting. The Rainbow Family Gathering might create a proliferation of new roads in this important deer hunting area.

Other Areas of Concern:

- Sierra Nevada Yellow-legged Frog Critical Habitat Subunit 2A, 11,119 acres: The US Fish & Wildlife Service designated Critical Habitat for the Endangered Sierra Nevada Yellow-legged frog in 2016. Sierra Nevada Yellow-legged Frogs occur within Subunit 2A. Increased recreational and vehicular use in the area will likely impact water quality, frogs, and their habitat.
- In 1991 the California Native Plant Society identified the Eastern Escarpment Proposed Special Interest Area, 2126 acres: Due to the low rainfall in this area it is home to unique conifers with small cones (Washoe Pines). Because species in the area are adapted to low rainfall the area may qualify as a Research Natural Area.

Since 1974, Friends of Plumas Wilderness has advocated for the protection of, and mindful engagement with, the lands and waters of the Upper Feather River Watershed. We are dedicated to studying, exploring, and safeguarding natural ecosystems where the Sierra and Cascades meet through conservation, advocacy, stewardship, and collaboration.

Please let us at FoPW know how we can best protect the unique natural and cultural values found in the vicinity of the 2024 Rainbow Family Gathering. We believe informing people about the uniqueness of this area is a first step, but if you have other ideas, please reach out to hello@plumaswilderness.org.

