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July 14, 2008

Abigail Kimbell
Chief, U.S. Forest Service
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via U.S. Mail and Facsimile to 202-205-1765

James Bedwell
Director of Recreation, Heritage, and Volunteer Resources
USDA Forest Service
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via U.S. Mail and Facsimile to 202-205-1145

RE: TMR Implementation Schedule Concerns

Dear Chief Kimbell and Director Bedwell:

Thank you for your May 29, 2008 response regarding implementation schedules for the Travel Management Rule. I will begin by noting that there is much on which my clients and the Forest Service can agree. Recreation is a primary use on the Forest Service System and effective management depends upon a commensurate commitment of personnel, budget and energy. Recreation management must be a dynamic and continuing process, and we will do anything possible to assist national leadership and local land managers to assure that initial designations represent a beginning, not an end, to such active management.

The fact that my clients have repeatedly looked for a silver lining on TMR issues for the last five years or more does not mean we should all ignore black clouds on the horizon. I appreciate the political or public relations purpose in noting the technical fact that some Forests are so far behind the state-of-the-art as to allow cross-country travel, but the agency has possessed the regulatory ability to immediately address resource damage reasonably attributable to vehicles (or other sources) and has frequently demonstrated the knowledge of and willingness to use these mechanisms. We disagree that a theoretical possibility of "resource issues" on the few remaining acres still designated "open" justifies a half-baked transportation system on the large majority of remaining lands.

We implore agency leadership to avoid a narrow focus on completing route/area

designation in the absence of improved recreation management systems. Recreation management requires, at a minimum, a strong commitment to effective outcomes coupled with sufficient understanding of complex and interrelated disciplines, including engineering, individual resource sciences, user expectations/behaviors, and management techniques. Analysis and decisionmaking must occur within full daylight of a public planning process. A well-designed and well-conducted planning process is essential to not only defensible decisions, but effective implementation which can appropriately involve and empower diverse stakeholder interests.

The Rule and applicable law require the agency to provide for sufficient and diverse recreational opportunities and access needs. Such opportunities must be balanced against resource issues, administration/maintenance concerns, and management of other uses. Certainly not every site will support every use to the satisfaction of all interested participants. However, we caution against analyzing motorized recreation opportunity and resource preservation as endpoints of a linear equation. There is a balance where the agency can best address both of these factors. Erring excessively in one direction or the other could actually be counterproductive. An unduly restrictive or poorly-designed recreation transportation system will not protect, but could actually unnecessarily damage, physical resources as well as other components of the human environment. Put simply, poorly managed recreation could lead to greater adverse impacts than unmanaged recreation.

We respectfully disagree with the conclusion that route and area designations should be completed "as quickly as possible." Forest Service decisions virtually always allow for a range of decision options, but the option that might be the quickest or the easiest is infrequently, if ever, the most desirable. We appreciate that agency personnel often feel the need to be "defensive" in approaching even mildly-controversial decisions, and have observed the tendency of some to err on the side of restricting use when applying this strategy. This tendency, accentuated by a finite schedule, is creating a philosophy diametrically opposed to both the letter and intent of the Rule. Those crafting the Rule were apparently mindful of the dangers deadlines could pose in this type of planning process, and they went to great lengths and appear to have endured significant pressure to avoiding imposing deadlines through the Rule. Whether intended or not, the Service's self-imposed deadlines contradict this aspect of the Rule and appear to be having counterproductive effects in at least some planning units. This emphasis of arbitrary deadlines seems particularly unwise in the current state of uncertainty, which includes political transition, lacking or incomplete guidance on TMR interpretation/implementation, and a large number of pending Forest Plan revisions. These factors are further influenced, if not overshadowed, by pending litigation potentially affecting everything from planning regulations to roadless area regulations to specific TMR decisions. This is a uniquely poor time in which to impose time constraints on Forest Service planning processes.

An illustrative topic of particular concern is a frustrating trend to summarily exclude even the possibility of analyzing "user-created" routes in the initial designation process. Near the top of the list of justifications in forests using this tactic is the need to complete initial

designations “on time” and within budget/staff constraints. Examples include the Pagosa (San Juan NF) Ranger District (see, EA, pp. 2-3 attached); Mississippi Forests (see EA, p. 11 attached); Coeur d’Alene River (Idaho Panhandle NF) Ranger District (see EA, pp. EA-7-EA-8 attached). Against these examples exist at least some units apparently able to overcome such allegedly insurmountable challenges. *See, e.g.*, Columbine (San Juan NF) Ranger District (EA, pp. iii-iv (including 2 action alternatives that would “utilize selected closed roads and user-created routes...to create loops and out-and-back trails for ATVs and motorcycles”); Superior NF (EA, p. 2-17 (rejecting suggestion that all user-created remain open but noting alternatives considered in detail evaluate some user-created roads/trails and propose designating some as open while decommissioning others). We are struggling through inconsistent interpretations and application of the Rule and the situation seems opportune for effective WO guidance to improve both the substance and defensibility of the final designation decisions.

Our clients remain committed to long-term solutions to TMR and larger recreation planning challenges. We cannot afford to watch a strategy unfold which will set us all up to fail. We are at a critical stage of the implementation process where the difference between indecision and effective action could significantly influence on-the-ground outcomes. We ask for change on two levels. First, the agency must reevaluate and intensify the commitment to not only the designation but long-term recreation planning process. Designation alone will not magically transition us to “managed recreation.” Second, timelines are creating confusion and improperly constraining discretion in at least some units. We urge you, through further communications with individual units and participating stakeholders, to support specific units in any requests for additional time to complete the designation process.

Sincerely,

MOORE SMITH BUXTON & TURCKE
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Forest
Service

March 2008



Environmental Assessment

Pagosa District Travel Management Rule Analysis

**Pagosa Ranger District, San Juan National Forest
Archuleta, Hinsdale and Mineral Counties, Colorado**

Responsible Official: Kevin Khung, District Ranger-Field Office Manager

Location: Portions of Townships 33 - 38 North, Ranges 4 West – 2 East,
N.M.P.M.

For More Information Contact Paul Blackman
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970-264-1505

Abstract:

This environmental assessment documents the environmental consequences of alternative ways to address compliance with the 2005 Travel Management Regulations on the Pagosa Ranger District. Two alternatives are analyzed in detail, Alternative 1 – No Action, would not change existing open motorized road and trail designations, but would eliminate the C and D areas cross country motorized (50 inches or less in width) travel. Alternative 2 –is similar to Alternative 1 but would add 18 miles of motorized trail designations.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Document Structure

The Forest Service has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) to document the environmental effects of implementing the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212) on the Pagosa Ranger District. This analysis complies with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This Environmental Assessment discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternative to the proposed action. The document is organized into four parts:

Introduction: This section includes information on the history of the project proposal, the purpose of and need for the project, and the agency's proposal for achieving that purpose and need. This section also details how the Forest Service informed the public of the proposal and how the public responded.

Comparison of Alternatives, including the Proposed Action: This section provides a more detailed description of the proposed action as well as alternative methods for achieving the stated purpose and need for action.

Environmental Consequences: This section describes the environmental effects of implementing the proposed action and other alternatives. This analysis is organized by resource area. Within each section, the affected environment is described first, followed by the effects of the No Action Alternative that provides a baseline for evaluation and comparison of the other alternatives that follow.

List of Preparers: This section provides a list of preparers of this analysis and associated assessment.

Additional analysis documentation is on file at the Pagosa Ranger District Office in Pagosa Springs, Colorado.

1.2 Best Available Science

This analysis is based on the "best available science" as evidenced by the following:

- Site-specific route analysis within the C and D areas by the Interdisciplinary Team
- Use of research, and scientific studies and information as documented in the literature cited
- San Juan National Forest, Management Indicator Species (MIS) Assessments
- Expert opinions of ID Team resource specialists, and use of most recent GIS resource layers

1.3 Scope of Analysis

Direction related to travel management in the San Juan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan 1983, amended 1992, (the Plan) states (pg III-77): "Keep existing roads open to public motorized use ...". The Plan's travel management direction was previously analyzed under the National Environmental Policy Act and included public involvement. The Plan's decision to keep existing roads open to public motorized use represents a previous administrative decision that included public involvement per the Final Travel Management Rule (the Rule) at 36 CFR

212.52. In addition, this analysis considers the current open motorized trail routes as existing legal public right-of-ways for which the previous administrative decision was made with the publishing of the San Juan National Forest Visitor map. Given this, there is no legal requirement to re-analyze the existing open transportation system in the context of the Travel Management Rule as long as the status of these routes remains unchanged.

The scope of this analysis is limited, as set by the purpose and need and considers primarily those actions needed to bring the Pagosa Ranger District's travel management policy into compliance with the Travel Management Rule. This EA also analyzes a minimal number of travel management actions dealing with addition of motorized trail designations within the existing C and D areas. This analysis addresses only summer over-ground motorized travel and does not address over-the-snow motorized uses.

The scope is also limited based on the National OHV Team and San Juan National Forest, Forest Supervisor guidance as follows:

- "There is no need to reconsider decisions made prior to the new Travel Management Rule." (Motor Vehicle Route and Area Designation Guide, USFS National OHV Implementation Team)
- "For many national forests, the result of designation will be to change from cross-country motor vehicle use to a system of routes and areas designated for motor vehicle use. For other national forests, the motor vehicle use map will simply confirm travel management decisions that have already been made. Analysis should focus on the change from the current situation." (Motor Vehicle Route and Area Designation Guide, USFS National OHV Implementation Team) The District analysis approach is in compliance with both of the above scenarios by confirming previous travel management decisions outside of the C and D areas and only addressing changes to the current travel management system within the C and D areas.
- "Currently, we do not have sufficient resources to perform an analysis of every route within the allotted timeframe. Our efforts must focus on specific locations where there is an urgent and compelling need for change from the current travel management direction. Motorized travel designations in areas currently restricted to designated routes ("A" and "B" areas) will not be modified at this time unless there is a demonstrated urgent and compelling need to do so." (Letter to all SJPL employees from Forest Supervisor/Center Manager dated February 12, 2007) There is no urgent need to consider changes to routes within A and B areas at this time. These areas can be analyzed in future travel management processes. There is an urgent need to consider designating new routes in the C and D areas because the currently allowable cross country travel will now be prohibited.

Additional reasons for the not considering a broader scale travel management analysis at this time include:

- The 2008 project analysis work load and priorities such as Forest Health, non-discretionary oil and gas exploration proposals, fuels reduction and a variety of land management related projects precludes the District's ability to conduct a broader analysis;

- a lack of availability of resource specialists to conduct a broader roads and trails travel analysis (36 CFR 212.55) and associated environmental analysis of existing and future proposed motorized routes;
- a lack of funding to conduct a broader scale analysis;
- ongoing workforce reductions in key resource areas;
- and the ongoing Forest Plan revision process that will ultimately affect motorized travel suitability.

The Travel Rule (36 CFR 212) as well as Forest Service direction at FSM 7710 does not require or specify the scale at which a travel management analysis should be conducted, thus the Pagosa District has the discretion and flexibility in setting the analysis scope through the purpose of and need for action.



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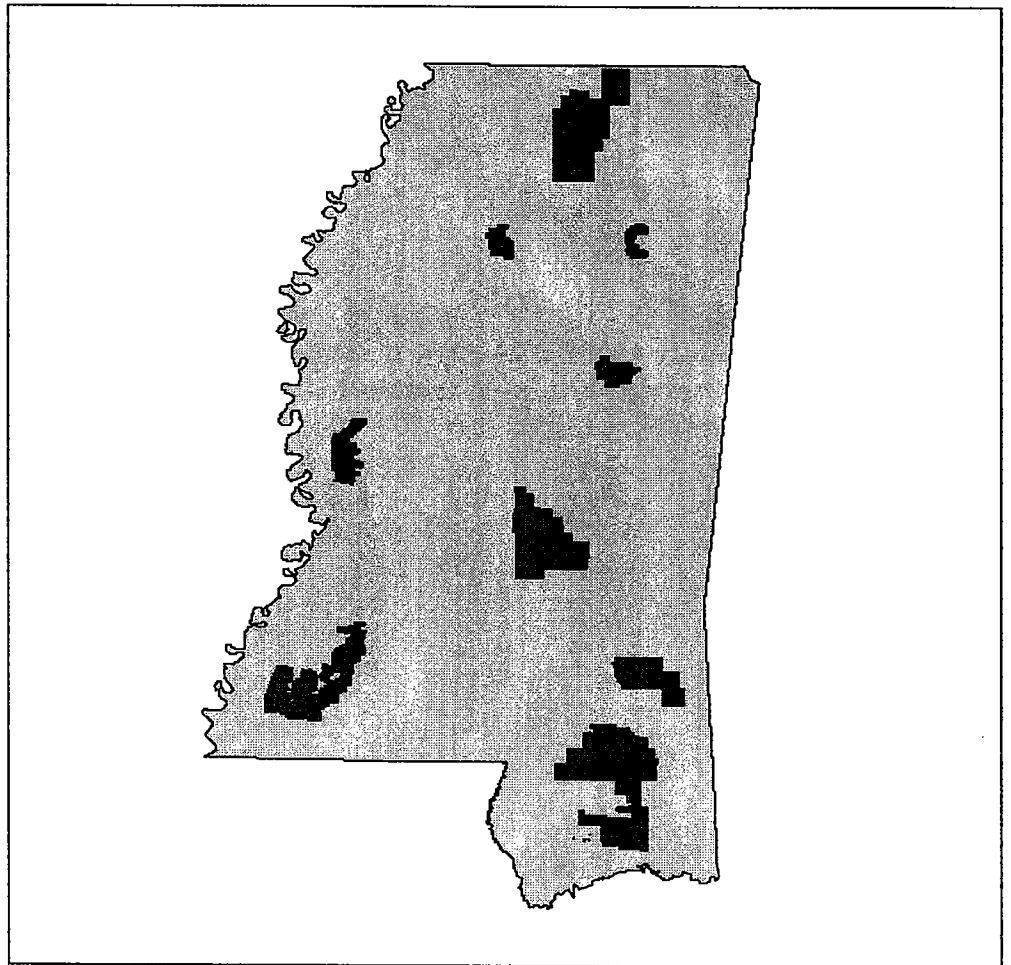
May 2008



Environmental Assessment

National Forests in Mississippi Route Designation

Bienville, Delta, Chickasawhay, De Soto,
Homochitto, Holly Springs, and Tombigbee



2.4 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

Public comments received in response to the Proposed Action provided suggestions for alternative methods of achieving the Purpose of and Need for Action. Some of these alternatives may have been outside the scope of the Purpose of and Need for Action identified for this project, duplicative of alternatives considered in detail, or determined to be components that would cause unnecessary environmental harm. Therefore, a few alternatives were considered, but dismissed from detailed consideration for reasons summarized below.

2.4.1 Game Retrieval in All Areas

This alternative would have game retrieval allowed across the Forest.

Some respondents requested that all areas be open to game retrieval. Provision 212.51(b) in the TMR includes the following:

In designating routes, the Responsible Official may include in the designation the **limited** use of motor vehicles within a specified distance of certain designated routes...solely for the purposes of dispersed camping or retrieval of a downed big game animal by an individual who has legally taken that animal.

The TMR limits the Responsible Official's discretion for designating game retrieval in the following two ways:

- By requiring game retrieval to be designated on a limited basis; and
- By requiring a specified distance from certain designated routes.

Designation of game retrieval across the Forest would not be limited in either of the ways described. The TMR does not allow the Responsible Official to designate game retrieval as described for this alternative. Therefore, this alternative was not analyzed in detail.

2.4.2 OHV Use beyond Game Retrieval

Comments included the desire for alternatives with cross country OHV use for recreation and hunting beyond game retrieval. Alternatives considered included those that would extend the use of OHV's:

- Outside of the WMA's
- Throughout the year
- For off-road recreation
- For hunting access

This alternative was not studied in detail because this extent of off-road use is not consistent with the intent of the TMR as discussed in the following excerpts.

The magnitude and intensity of motor vehicle use have increased to the point that the intent of Executive Order (EO) 11644 and EO 11989 cannot be met while still allowing unrestricted cross-country travel. Soil erosion, water quality, and wildlife habitat are affected. Some National Forest visitors report that their ability to enjoy quiet recreational experiences is affected by visitors using motor vehicles. A designated and managed system of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use is needed (TMR, p 68265).

Unregulated cross-country motor vehicle use may have been appropriate on some National Forests when these vehicles were less numerous, less powerful, and less capable of cross-country travel. Today, however, the proliferation of user created routes is a major challenge on many National Forests and examples of significant environmental damage, safety issues, and user conflicts are well established. The Department believes that a well-planned, well-designed system of designated roads, trails, and areas, developed in coordination with Federal, State, local, and tribal governments and with public involvement, offers better opportunities for sustainable long-term recreational motor vehicle use and better economic opportunities for local residents and communities (TMR, p 68271).

After National Forest System roads, National Forest System trails, and areas on National Forest System lands have been designated pursuant to 36 CFR 212.51 on an administrative unit or a Ranger District of the National Forest System, and these designations have been identified on a motor vehicle use map, it is prohibited to possess or operate a motor vehicle on National Forest System lands in that administrative unit or Ranger District other than in accordance with those designations (TMR, sec 261.13, p 68291).

2.4.3 Adding User Created Trails

Several groups and individuals requested the designation of user created trail systems. An alternative was considered that would include several trail systems created for recreational use.

These trails would require areas of construction and reconstruction to meet Forest Service standards. There are areas of highly erodible soils, such as the Holly Springs National Forest, that would require careful planning and placement of routes. However, the intent of the TMR is to designate existing access. The following excerpts from the TMR display reasons for deferring these areas from this analysis. Although the TMR mentions 'roads', it is interpreted to include both roads and trails.

Construction must be subjected to site-specific environmental analysis, which establishes road management objectives. Roads constructed as part of these projects could be added to the system of designated roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicles, depending on the results of these local decisions (TMR, p 68267). Road reconstruction is also outside the designation provisions in the rule (TMR, p 68269).

However, the final rule recognizes that designations of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use are not permanent. Unforeseen environmental impacts, changes in public demand, route construction, and monitoring conducted under section 212.57 of the final rule may lead Responsible Officials to consider revising designations under section 212.54 of the final rule (TMR, p 68268).

In response to these comments, the National Forests in Mississippi will be conducting a separate analysis to identify user created trails that may be suitable for future designation.

**United States
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**Idaho Panhandle
National Forests**

April 2008



Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District

Travel Plan Project Environmental Assessment

2.A.3. Proposal Identification and Screening

Using a “Checklist for Proposed Changes” the public had the opportunity to identify specific route or use changes to the Starting Option. During the May 31 and June 22, 2006 meetings, proponents were guided through a process designed to assess the feasibility of their proposals. Each proposal was registered in a database and given an identification number for tracking purposes. With the help of Team members, each proposal was marked on a large District map using its identification number. The proposals were then checked against the initial (Level 1) screening criteria, as described below.

Initial (Level 1) Screening

The initial screens were designed to make sure the proposals were consistent with Forest Plan direction and other law, regulation or policy, the 2005 Travel Management Rule, the 2005 Court Order, and associated timelines. These initial screens are identified below, with a brief explanation of why the criteria were appropriate.

- **Proposals were not advanced if they would potentially conflict with areas on the District where motorized use is restricted or prohibited by closure order, or conflict with Forest Plan standards and guidelines that could not be mitigated.** For example, where site-specific closure orders have been issued to protect sensitive vegetation or fragile riparian areas (see Section 2.B.2). Any proposals not consistent with Forest Plan standards (such as for aquatics, wildlife, or other resources) could not advance.
- **Proposals were not advanced if they would conflict with travel management strategies on neighboring federal, state or tribal lands (for example, designating a motorized route that would lead into an area designated as non-motorized on a neighboring district or national forest).** In designating National Forest System routes, the responsible official must consider (with the objective of minimizing) conflicts between motor vehicle use and existing or proposed recreation uses of National Forest System lands or neighboring Federal lands (2005 Travel Rule, §212.55).
- **Proposals were not advanced if they would require designation of a user-created route, new construction, or reconstruction of a route.** User-created routes have been developed without agency authorization, environmental analysis, engineering design, or public involvement, and therefore are not included in the District inventory (i.e. not maintained to Forest Service Standards for safe public use). To be considered for addition to

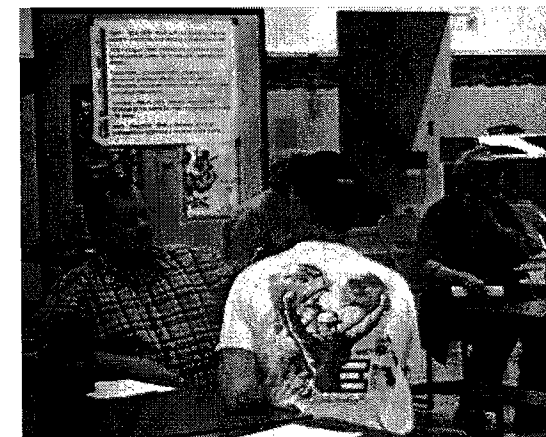
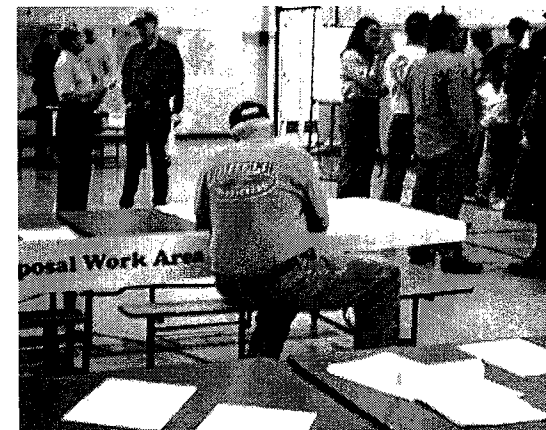
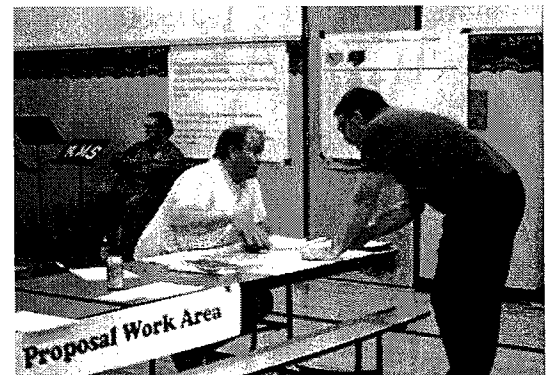
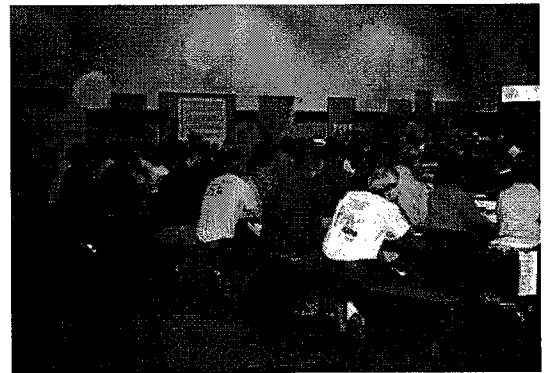


Figure EA-2. Photos from the May 31, 2006, public meeting to assess proposals.

the Travel Plan, a user-created route must comply with Forest Service standards for safe use by the proposed vehicle class. The same goes for proposed routes requiring new construction or reconstruction. The Forest Service must also assess a route's suitability and needs for improvement, including engineering survey and design, provide for public involvement, develop a detailed proposed action, assess environmental effects, prepare documentation in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and procure funding and/or resources needed to develop, manage and maintain the route to appropriate standards. Since accomplishing these tasks would take longer than the timeframe allowed by the 2005 Travel Rule and 2005 court decision, user-created routes and routes requiring reconstruction or new construction were not considered. That is not to say that those routes may never be designated for motorized travel. The District will work with user groups and others to identify such routes and consider them on a site-specific basis for separate project analysis in the future.

- **Proposals were not advanced if they were too generic to map (for example, “close all roads to motorized use,” or “open all routes to motorized use”).** These generic suggestions reflected a desire for one type of recreation over another, but would not meet the purpose and need for this project.
- **Proposals were not advanced if they did not recommend any change from the existing conditions (for example, “Keep Trail XYZ open to motorized use”).** The Starting Option provided a baseline for a level of motorized use across the District. The Team was looking for proposed changes to that Starting Option in developing the Proposed-Action Alternative.
- **Proposals were not advanced if they involved a route through private land for which the Forest Service does not hold any legal right-of-way or easement.** Many roads and trails on National Forest System lands originate on or cross non-federal land, which requires acquisition or reservation of a right-of-way across that land by the Forest Service. The Forest Service seeks, wherever possible, to secure or retain public access to Federal lands by purchasing or exchanging rights-of-way and reserving rights-of way in land exchanges. Acquiring such rights-of-ways can be a lengthy process, and would take longer than the timeframe allowed by the 2005 Travel Rule and 2005 Court decision.
- **Proposals were not advanced if they addressed winter (over-snow) travel.** Over-snow travel represents a different set of management issues and environmental impacts than other types of motor vehicles. Therefore, the 2005 Travel Rule exempts over-snow vehicles from the mandatory designation scheme provided for under §212.51, but retains a manager's ability to allow, restrict or prohibit snowmobile travel as appropriate on a case-by-case basis (§212.81). The scope of this travel planning effort was for non-snow modes of motorized travel.

The preceding criteria were shared with proponents so they could develop their proposals accordingly. Maps and other supporting information were available to proponents to assist them in their efforts. Team members were also at the open-house forums to clarify criteria and answer questions. Approximately 200 proposals were received and reviewed against these initial (Level 1) screens. Disposition of specific proposals and associated rationale is provided in Appendix E.

Advanced (Level 2) Screening

Proposals that advanced through the initial (Level 1) screening were subjected to a more intensive advanced (Level 2) screening. These screens addressed issues that required further analysis by the Team to determine a proposal's compliance with the Forest Plan and other applicable laws, regulations and policies, such as the Endangered Species Act.



United
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May 2008



Environmental Assessment

Lakes Travel Management

Columbine Ranger District, San Juan National Forest
Archuleta, Hinsdale, and La Plata Counties, Colorado

T36-37N, R5W-8W, N.M.P.M.

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SUMMARY

The USDA Forest Service proposes to implement the 2005 Travel Management Rule through the designation of roads, trails and areas open to motor vehicle use by vehicle class and, if appropriate, by time of year (36 CFR 212.51) within the Lakes Landscape. The project area encompasses 67,600 acres of National Forest system lands. It is located north of Durango and Bayfield within T36N and T37N, R5W-8W, N.M.P.M. on the Columbine Ranger District, San Juan National Forest, Archuleta, Hinsdale, and La Plata counties, Colorado.

This action is needed to provide a consistent national approach for motorized travel on National Forest system lands and to provide for motorized and non-motorized opportunities while protecting the biological resources. The proposal is designed to provide for appropriate motorized use yet eliminate cross country motorized travel. It will provide for a sustainable system of roads, trails and areas and lessen the resource impacts from uncontrolled motorized travel. This analysis and decision will revise the current travel management which allows for cross country motorized travel by All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and motorcycles in some areas during the “summer” season. The action will not address over the snow winter travel.

The Forest Service evaluated the following alternatives in detail:

Alternative 1 - No Action

This alternative would allow for the existing travel management designations to remain in place; cross-country travel by ATVs and motorcycles in the existing “D” areas would continue to be permissible. Utilization of user-created routes and the proliferation of those routes would continue. This alternative would not address mixed use or off road travel for dispersed camping. A motor vehicle use map (MVUM) would not be published. This alternative does not meet the requirements of the 2005 Travel Management Rule and cannot be chosen; it will be used as a basis for comparison for the alternatives.

Alternative 2 - Minimum Compliance with 2005 Travel Management Rule

This alternative would allow for existing travel management designations to remain in place except in areas where cross-country motorized travel is currently permitted. Cross-country motorized travel by ATVs and motorcycles in the existing “D” areas of the Lakes Landscape would no longer be allowed and all motorized travel would be restricted to existing open National Forest system roads and trails. No new motorized roads, trails or areas would be designated. The existing seasonal closure at Tuckerville would remain unchanged.

Alternative 3

This alternative would utilize many existing open Forest roads for all motorized vehicle use. Some selected closed roads and user-created routes would be utilized to create loops and out-and-back trails for ATVs and motorcycles. Cross-country motorized travel by ATVs and motorcycles in the existing “D” areas of the Lakes Landscape would no longer be allowed and all travel would be restricted to system roads and trails as designated under this analysis and decision. Road closures would be put into effect for all Forest roads to protect the road base from erosion and rutting during the wet seasons (December 1 – May 31).

- The Forest roads, both system roads and user created routes, beyond Tuckerville would be closed to all motorized vehicle travel.
- The spur roads (NFSR 597B, NFSR 597C and NFSR 597D) off the East Florida road (NFSR 597) would be closed to all motorized vehicle use.
- The Forest road between Florida Campground and Transfer Park Campground and the roads within Transfer Park Campground would be closed to non-highway legal vehicles.

- The East Vallecito road (NFSR 603) would be closed to non-highway legal vehicles.
- Red Creek road (NFSR 599) would be graveled for approximately 1.1 mile, a parking area would be constructed and the remaining 0.6 mile of this road would be closed to all motorized vehicle use.
- All other existing open Forest roads in this landscape would remain open to all motorized vehicle use.
- The Runlett trail (NFST 530) from milepost (MP) 0 to MP 3 would remain open to ATV and motorcycle use. The remaining segment from MP 3 to MP 5 would be closed to all motorized use.

Alternative 4

This alternative would be the same as Alternative 3 with the following changes:

- Middle Mountain Road (NFRS 724) would remain open beyond Tuckerville to a parking area located approximately 0.1 mile from the Weminuche Wilderness boundary.
- A requirement of this alternative would be monitoring of motorized designations in the Tuckerville area for a three year period after the Decision. If users continue to use non-designated routes and create new routes above Tuckerville, a closure to all motorized vehicle use beyond Tuckerville would be put into effect.
- The Runlett trail (NFST 530) would remain open and designated for ATV and motorcycle travel from MP 0 to the private property boundary, a distance of five miles (one-way).
- Eight miles of single track trail would be designated in the future for motorcycles pending further design and re-construction.
- A Closure Order would be put into effect for the area above the gate at Tuckerville from April 15th – June 15th annually to protect the naturally occurring herd of bighorn sheep during their lambing period.
- The four routes above Tuckerville identified for decommissioning (Figure 8) would have the highest priority within this landscape as funds become available.

All Action Alternatives

The following items would occur under any of the action alternatives: An MVUM depicting roads, trails and areas open to motor vehicle use by vehicle type and by time of year (36 CFR 261.13) would be published; the designated road and trail system would be signed; closures of non-designated roads, trails and areas would be accomplished as money becomes available; mixed use analysis would be conducted; parking for the purpose of dispersed camping within 300 feet of a designated system road would continue to be allowed where such travel would not result in resource damage; and day use parking off of a designated route would be allowed within one vehicle length from the edge of designated roads.

Based upon the effects of the alternatives, the responsible official will decide what roads, trails and areas will be open to what type of motorized vehicles; what seasonal or wildlife closures will be implemented; and what distance motorized vehicles will be allowed to travel from forest roads for dispersed camping and day use parking. Also, the responsible official will determine routes for decommissioning, and the appropriate mitigation and monitoring measures to protect the resources while providing both motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities.

(See pages 8 - 17 for detailed alternative descriptions.)

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Service

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Environmental Assessment

Forest-wide Travel Management Project

Superior National Forest

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The 2005 Travel Management Rule does not permit cross-country travel by OHVs on National Forest lands. Furthermore, the 2004 Forest Plan also prohibits cross-country travel by OHVs (Forest Plan, p. 2-44, S-RMV-3) and cross-country travel is not compatible with the Forest Plan desired condition to 'provide a consistent travel system for OHV use that provides for experiences in a variety of forest environments, while protecting ecological resources and minimize conflicts among forest users' (Forest Plan, p. 2-43, D-RMV-1 and D-RMV-2). Permitting OHV use on a cross-country basis would create unacceptable impacts to ecological resources and create increased levels of conflict among forest users. Accordingly, this alternative was not analyzed in detail.

C. Provide for more than 90 miles of OHV trails on the Superior National Forest.

A commenter wanted the Forest Service to allow for the construction of more than 90 miles of new OHV trails on the Superior National Forest.

This alternative would not meet the purpose and need of this project to allow minor amounts of new construction and when coupled with other additions to the OHV trail system would greatly exceed the Forest Plan limit. (Forest Plan, p. 2-43). Accordingly, this alternative was not analyzed in detail. Alternative 3 does consider converting additional snowmobile trails to ATV/OHV trails in excess of the 90 mile limit and implementation of this alternative would require a Forest Plan amendment.

D. Keep 'user-created' trails open to OHV use.

Some commenters wanted user-created roads and trails that are not part of Forest Service System roads to be permitted for OHV use. The commenters cited the historical use of these roads and trails is valued by some local residents and that the Forest Service has the authority to allow use on these roads and trails.

In some cases, the Alternatives examined in detail designate these user-created roads and trails as national forest system roads and trails open to OHV use when such designation fit the purpose and need of this project. In other cases, these user-created roads and trails were designated for decommissioning in the Alternatives examined in detail. This practice reflects direction in the 2004 Forest Plan (p. 2-43, G-RTL-2). The conversion of all user-created trails to national forest system roads and trails that permit OHV use does not meet the purpose and need of this project. Upon implementation of the final decision for this analysis, OHV use will only be allowed on national forest system roads and trails.

E. Provide special provisions for OHV use during hunting season.

Some commenters wanted access to roads and trails that are normally closed to OHV use to be open during hunting season for the purpose of hunting and retrieving large game species. The Record of Decision for the Forest Plan determined that no special provisions would be made for retrieval of game species. (Forest Plan EIS, Record of Decision, p. 22) Once a decision is made on unclassified roads, those identified for decommissioning are not available for public motorized use. The national Travel Management Rule does not allow public motorized use on any roads that are not part of the National Forest Road system. Therefore, use on unclassified roads would not be allowed. OML-1 and 2 roads that cross wetland areas