



File Code: 1950
Date: November 14, 2017

Dear Participant,

The Final Environmental Impact Statement and two Draft Records of Decision are available for the **Rico West Dolores Roads and Trails (Travel Management) Project**. Per the information provided below the project will now enter a pre-decision objection process. The information in the Draft Records of Decision is preliminary. If no project changes are identified in the pre-decisional objection process the information in these Draft Records of Decision will become the final decisions of the project. The Draft Records of Decision explain the Minimum Road System, designations for motor vehicle use, and project specific amendments to the San Juan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). Only those persons who commented during one or more of the public comment periods held previously will have standing to object to these Draft Records of Decision. Instructions for submitting objections are explained below. I welcome those of you who commented to read the documents posted on the website. This is not a public comment period so comments about the alternatives or the analysis are not solicited, however, my staff and I are available to answer questions about the project at any time. I have read the public comments received previously and feel these draft decisions reflect my understanding of public concerns and impacts to the environment.

The Record of Decision for the project-specific Forest Plan amendments will be signed by Kara Chadwick, Forest Supervisor, and this Draft decision is covered by Objection regulations at 36CFR219. As Dolores District Ranger, I will sign the Record of Decision regarding all other aspects of the project and my decision will follow Objection regulations at 36CFR218.

Summary of Draft Decisions

The Draft Records of Decision include,

- 1) Motor vehicle designations for roads and trails
- 2) Location and maintenance levels of roads that will make up the minimum road system
- 3) Roads or trails to decommission or convert to motorized trails that would not be part of the minimum road system
- 4) Location, trail class, allowed uses, realignments and trail developments for motorized trails
- 5) Updates to two Forest Plan maps (Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum and Overground Travel Suitability and Off Highway Vehicle Area Designations)

The preliminary decision is Alternative B (Modified). My decision designates 199 miles of roads and 102 miles of trails for public motor vehicle use and includes the type of motor vehicle and season of use for each road and trail. The minimum road system will be comprised of 324 miles of road (which includes 125 miles of Maintenance Level 1 roads placed in storage). My decision assigns 'Objective Maintenance Levels' to all roads on the minimum road system will



approve trail realignments and developments, road and trail decommissioning and barrier installation at specific locations.

From the current situation my decision would remove motorcycle use from 31 total miles of single track motorized trail at various locations, add 12 miles ATV/UTV trail, downgrade 5 miles from gravel surface to native surface, convert 5.32 miles of roads to trail, decommission 7 miles of ML2 or ML3 roads and decommission 40 miles of ML1 roads, currently in storage. My decision also adds 2 miles of unauthorized routes to the minimum road system. Trails managed for riding by ATVs would allow side-by-side UTVs that meet a new 62-inch maximum width requirement and most of the new trails are a dual delegation with ML1 stored roads.

As described in Section 2.2 of the FEIS, Alternative B responded to a need for action regarding wetlands, riparian and fens, fish and elk habitat, demands for side-by-side UTV riding, single track motorized trail riding experience and connections, conflicts between recreation uses including populated areas, hunter access and 'walk-in' opportunities, livestock management, maintenance and funding. Alternative B reduces single track motorized trail riding in most but not all of Bear Creek, the Ryman Creek trail, trails near the Town of Rico, and in the area west of Forest Road 471. The Calico trail and its connectors, East Fork trail, and trails near Taylor Mesa and Stoner Mesa maintain single track motorized opportunities. The Forest Plan maps will reflect the choices for motor vehicle designation described above. Details about the decision are explained in the Draft Record of Decisions and corresponding maps available on the project webpage.

Alternative B is now modified in four ways. First, single track motorized riding will be removed from the Little Bear trail and another section of the Bear Creek trail while a single track motorized connection is maintained on Gold Run and Grindstone trails and single track motorized use is added to Loading Pen #738 trail; second, seasonal timing restrictions on motor vehicle use of trails would be prohibited from November 1st to May 31st, except the Black Mesa area where trail riding would be prohibited from September 9th to May 31st; third, one road (545J), previously identified for downgrade would be retained as a Maintenance Level 2 designated for all types of motor vehicle use; and fourth, 62-inch trails would be established in the Black Mesa area.

I want to thank everyone that provided input to this project, including those providing specific input regarding which of the roads and trails were important to them. In light of previous public dialogue, I believe Alternative B (Modified) does the best job of providing an array of opportunities for public access to the Forest with the need to protect the long-term health and productivity of the land.

The Draft Records of Decision, Final Environmental Impact Statement, and this letter are posted on the project webpage at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=44918>

Pre-Decisional Objection Period

Regulations at 36 CFR Part 218 and 219 provide for a pre-decision administrative review rather than a post-decision appeal process. Objections should be submitted separately for each Draft Record of Decision. Details of the objection process are explained below.

Objection Process for Project-Level Decision

The decision described in my Draft Record of Decision regarding the minimum road system and designation of motor vehicle uses are subject to objection pursuant to Federal Regulations at 36 CFR Part 218, Subparts A and B. Objections, including attachments, must be in writing and filed with the Objection Reviewing Officer within **45** calendar days following the publication of a legal notice announcing the Opportunity to Object in the *Cortez Journal* (the newspaper of record for District Ranger decisions). Publication is anticipated to occur on November 14, 2017. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Those wishing to object should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Objections will be accepted only from those who have previously submitted specific written comments regarding the proposed projects during designated scoping or comment periods (36 CFR 218.5(a)). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted timely, specific written comments regarding the proposed project unless based on new information arising after the designated comment opportunities (36 CFR 218.8(c)). Objections must contain the minimum content requirements specified in §218.8(d); incorporation of documents by reference is permitted only as provided in §218.8(b). It is the objector's responsibility to ensure timely filing of a written objection with the reviewing officer pursuant to §218.9. All objections are available for public inspection during and after the objection process. Objections, including attachments, must be in writing and filed with the Objection Reviewing Officer as follows:

Postal service and street delivery address: Objection Reviewing Officer, **Forest Supervisor, San Juan National Forest**, 15 Burnett Court, Durango, CO 81301

- ✓ Hand-delivery is accepted Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays. or via FAX: 970-385-1386
- ✓ or via the Electronic Objection Form on the project webpage
- ✓ or via Email: r02admin_review@fs.fed.us
- ✓ Electronically mailed objections must be submitted in an email message, plain text (.oc.t), Word (.doc or .docx), Portable Document Format (.pdf), or Rich Text Format (.rtf) file formats.

Objection Process for Forest Plan Changes

The decision described in the Draft Record of Decision to amend the Forest Plan (to be signed by Kara Chadwick, Forest Supervisor) is subject to administrative review (objection) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 219 Subpart B. Only those who previously submitted substantive formal comments specific to the Management Plan during designated scoping or comment periods have eligibility to file an objection to the draft decision under 36 CFR 219.53. Objections must be based on previously submitted substantive formal comments attributed to the objector unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the opportunities for formal comment. Incorporation of documents by reference is permitted only as provided in §219.54(b). It is the objector's responsibility to ensure timely filing of a written objection with the reviewing officer pursuant to §219.56(c). All objections are available for public inspection during and after the objection process.

Objections, including attachments, must be in writing and filed with the Objection Reviewing

Officer within **60** calendar days following the publication of a legal notice in the *Durango Herald* (the newspaper of record for Forest Supervisor decisions on the Dolores District) announcing the Opportunity to Object (36 CFR 219.56). Publication is anticipated to occur on November 15, 2017. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Those wishing to object should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. Objections must meet the minimum content requirements listed in 36 CFR 219.54(c). Objections, including attachments, must be in writing and filed with the Objection Reviewing Officer as follows:

Postal service and street delivery address: Objection Reviewing Officer, **Regional Forester, US Forest Service Rocky Mountain Region** 1617 Cole Blvd. Building 17, Golden, CO 80401

- ✓ Hand-delivery: Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays. or FAX: (303) 275-5134
- ✓ or via the Electronic Objection Form on the project webpage
- ✓ or Email: r02admin_review@fs.fed.us
- ✓ Electronically mailed objections must be submitted in an email message, plain text (.txt), Word (.doc or .docx), Portable Document Format (.pdf), or Rich Text Format (.rtf) file formats.

Implementation Date

Implementation will occur under the Final Record of Decisions, which will be issued following the close of the Objection resolution periods (36 CFR 219.58 and 36 CFR 218.12). If no objections are received, implementation of the decisions may begin on, but not before, the fifth business day following the close of the objection filing periods (36 CFR 219.58(c) and 36 CFR 218.12(c)(2)). If an objection is received, the Final Record of Decisions would not be signed until the close of the objection resolution process (36 CFR 219.58(a) and 36 CFR 218.12(a)).

The FEIS will be filed with EPA and notice of its availability posted in the Federal Register. Implementation may not occur until 30 days after the Federal Register notice. The Federal Register notice is not tied to the objection process timelines. Implementation may begin immediately following signing of the Final Record of Decisions as described above, or 30 days after the Federal Register notice of availability of the FEIS, whichever comes first.

Additional Information

If you have any further questions about the project or the objection process contact myself or the Deborah Kill at 970-882-7296 or email dkill@fs.fed.us

Sincerely,



DEREK PADILLA
District Ranger