



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

Draft Record of Decision

Rico West Dolores Roads and Trails (Travel Management) Project

**Dolores Ranger District, San Juan National Forest,
Dolores and Montezuma Counties, CO**

November 2017

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Contents

Introduction 1

Background 1

Purpose and Need for Action..... 5

Public Involvement 6

How Public Comments on the DEIS and SDEIS were Considered..... 8

Decision and Rationale 8

Rationale for Not Selecting Other Alternatives 24

Findings Related To Laws and Regulations 36

Other Considerations 44

Other Alternatives Considered 47

Administrative Review (Objection) Opportunities 50

Implementation 51

Contact 51

Introduction

This Record of Decision (ROD) documents my decision and rationale on the Rico West Dolores Roads and Trails (Travel Management) project. The project involves proposals to change motorized travel management in the Rico West Dolores (RWD) area. The Forest Supervisor will issue a separate Draft Record of Decision for a recommended amendment of the San Juan Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan).

This decision includes,

- 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

Attachments to this ROD provide additional details about the analysis process and the decision,

Attachment 1 – Maps (Roads, Stored Roads, and Trails)

Attachment 2 – Road and Trail Tables and Tasks

Attachment 3 – Design Features

Attachment 4 – History and Timeline of Analysis

Attachment 5 – Forest Plan Standards

Attachment 6 – Minimization Criteria

Background

This section explains the background of laws influencing the use of off road motor vehicle use on National Forest lands, and past actions specific to the Rico West Dolores (RWD) area.

Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act and National Forest Management Act

Congress has established the purposes for which National Forests are to be managed. “National Forests are established and shall be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes” and these surface resources are to be administered for, “multiple use and sustained yield” (Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960).

The National Forest Management Act, an amendment to the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, provides for balanced consideration of all resources. It requires the Forest Service to provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives, and within the multiple-use objectives of a land management plan.

Later in this Record of Decision (ROD) I will explain my consideration of these responsibilities along with the ‘objective of minimizing’ environmental effects and human conflicts.

Executive Orders in the 1970's

Executive Order (E.O.) 11644 (February 8, 1972), "Use of Off-Road Vehicles on the Public Lands," as amended by E.O. 11989 (May 24, 1977), "Off-Road Vehicles on Public Lands," directs Federal agencies to ensure that the use of off-road vehicles on public lands will be managed to protect resources, to promote the safety of Forest users, and to minimize conflicts among the various Forest uses. Section 3 of E.O. 11664 required each agency to "develop and issue regulations and administrative instructions...to provide for administrative designations of the specific areas and trails on the public lands on which the use of off-road vehicles may be permitted, and areas in which the use of off-road vehicles may not be permitted. . ." The Forest Service promulgated the necessary regulations

The San Juan National Forest published visitor maps prior to 2005 that included some motor vehicle route designations, however, these previous management policies did not comply with the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212) for route or area designation. In addition, the public raised concerns about motor vehicle management on the Dolores District that highlighted the need for change to existing travel management.

In response to the Executive Orders in 1972 and amended in 1977, National Forest Land Management Plans often included goals, objectives, standards or guidelines for motor vehicle management in order to reduce the impacts of management activities on general watershed health and other affected resources. The 1982 San Juan Land and Resource Management Plan included such direction. The 2013 San Juan Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) replaced the 1982 plan. The 2013 Forest Plan direction reflects the 2005 Travel Management Rule (TMR) aimed at providing access and management opportunities while protecting resources.

2005 Travel Management Rule

On November 9, 2005, the Forest Service published "Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use" in the Federal Register (36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295 Travel Management: Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use; Final Rule" (Federal Register 2005: 70FR68264)). The TMR re-emphasized aspects of the earlier Executive Orders and provided additional new direction. The Travel Management Rule (TMR) was subsequently updated on January 28, 2015 to include new regulations for designating roads, trails, and areas for over-snow vehicle use on National Forest System lands.

General Criteria for Designating Roads, Trails, and Areas (36 CFR 212.55(a)). In designating National Forest System roads, National Forest System trails, and areas on National Forest System lands for motor vehicle use, the responsible official shall consider effects on National Forest System natural and cultural resources, public safety, provision of recreational opportunities, access needs, conflicts among uses of National Forest System lands, the need for maintenance and administration of roads, trails, and areas that would arise if the uses under consideration are designated; and the availability of resources for that maintenance and administration.

Specific Criteria for Designating Trails and Areas (36 CFR 212.55(b)). In addition to the criteria in paragraph (a) of this section, in designating National Forest System trails and areas on National Forest System lands, the responsible official shall consider effects on the following, with the objective of minimizing: (1) Damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, and other forest resources; (2) Harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats; (3) Conflicts between motor vehicle use and existing or proposed recreational uses of National Forest System lands or neighboring Federal lands; and (4) Conflicts among different classes of motor vehicle uses of National Forest System lands or neighboring Federal lands. In addition, the responsible official shall consider: (5) Compatibility of motor vehicle use with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account sound, emissions, and other factors.

Requirement to Designate Motor Vehicle Roads, Trails and Areas

The TMR requires the Forest to designate those roads, trails, and areas where motorized travel will be permitted, while minimizing effects on resources and values identified in the San Juan Forest Plan. It also directs the San Juan National Forest to display those designated roads, trails, and areas on a motor vehicle use map (MVUM). Three landscape areas within the Dolores District (Mancos-Cortez, Boggy-Glade, and Rico-West Dolores) were identified for travel management planning efforts that began in 2006. By 2012, changes in travel management were approved for Mancos Cortez and Boggy-Glade Landscapes, while the RWD landscape was delayed. Travel management planning in the RWD area was delayed because the first NEPA decision was reversed due to inadequate NEPA analysis.

Previous Analysis

From 2007-2009 the Dolores District conducted a NEPA analysis including public involvement for the RWD area. The final decision for that project was reversed on appeal and is moot. The public involvement section below describes how public comments from this previous analysis informed this project.

Current Motor Vehicle Use Map

For the RWD area, in 2010, a Decision Memo was issued to temporarily eliminate cross-country travel in areas previously designated as open to motor vehicle use. This Decision Memo and Forest Order did not change motor vehicle designations on the roads and trails; it simply prohibited 'cross country' travel off of the road and trail system. Using the existing road and trail system for the RWD area, and the updated designations for Boggy-Glade and Mancos-Cortez areas, the Dolores District published its first MVUM in September 2012. Edits were made for the Mancos Cortez and Boggy-Glade areas and the Dolores District MVUM was re-published in 2014 and again in 2015. The Forest Order that temporarily prohibited cross-country motor vehicle use expired in 2015. Prohibitions on 'cross country' travel were proposed to be established permanently for this project.

Requirement to Identify a Minimum Road System

In addition to direction regarding motor vehicle route designation, the TMR instructs National Forest managers to identify the Minimum Road System needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands; and to identify roads under Forest Service jurisdiction that are no longer needed to meet forest resource management objectives which should consequently be decommissioned or considered for other uses, such as for trails (36CFR212 Subpart A).

The San Juan National Forest road management program included road conversion and road decommissioning as 'tools in the toolbox' for management of the road system. In addition, the 2013 Forest Plan direction reflects the TMR requirements in subpart A and includes direction for prioritizing road management actions based on public benefits and environmental risks. Past efforts to decommission unneeded roads were offset by a rise in unauthorized routes that became established especially in the lower elevations across the San Juan National Forest where terrain was gentle and trees more open.

In a letter to Regional Foresters (March, 2012), the Deputy Chief of the Forest Service instructed National Forests to incorporate the Watershed Condition Framework into travel analysis and to identify the MRS through proposed actions, subject to NEPA, that covered areas at least as large as a subwatershed.

The Travel Analysis Report for the Dolores District (September, 2015) included consideration of the Watershed Condition Framework and recommended a minimum road system, and conversely recommended unneeded roads. Recommendations from the Travel Analysis Report were refined based on additional field review and carried forward into the five alternatives analyzed in detail in the FEIS. The TMR directs that in determining the minimum road system, the responsible official must incorporate a science-based roads analysis at the appropriate scale and, to the degree practicable, involve a broad spectrum of interested and affected citizens, other state and federal agencies, and tribal governments. A description of public involvement is provided in this Record of Decision.

Previous Lawsuit

Several commenters referenced the 2011 Backcountry Hunters and Anglers lawsuit and the associated declarations prepared in response to a request for preliminary injunction on single track motorized use of 14 trails¹. Comments stated that the declarations demonstrated there were no issues that would require a change in the current motorized designations in this area.

To clarify, while the declarations written for the lawsuit do not necessarily conflict with conclusions in the FEIS, they did not address all concerns associated with this analysis and were

¹ *Backcountry Hunters and Anglers v. U.S. Forest Service*, 2013 WL 1191245 (D. Colo. 2013). Judgment on the merits for the Forest Service vacated for lack of jurisdiction by *Backcountry Hunters and Anglers v. U. S. Forest Service* 612 Fed. Appx. 934 (10th Cir. 2015).

confined to a subset of the total motorized road and trail system. In addition, while there was not an immediate need to prohibit motorized use on the 14 trails involved in the lawsuit, this did not mean there were not issues that needed to be addressed for their long-term effects on a particular resource. There were other issues, analyzed and documented in the FEIS that were not addressed in the declarations.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of this action is to balance the current and future recreational desires of the public with Forest Service responsibilities for wildlife and fisheries management, water resources management, and forest management as well as the desires of local communities and affected private landowners. More specifically, this action is needed in order to develop a sustainable system of trails and roads where motorized travel is appropriate. It will strive to improve both the motorized and nonmotorized user's experience.

The purpose of, and need for, the Rico West Dolores Roads and Trails (Travel Management) Project is to manage over-ground wheeled motorized vehicle use in accordance with the requirements of the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212), and to comply with Executive Order 11644 (as amended by Executive Order 11989). This Rule requires the Forest Service to designate a system of roads, trails, and areas for motorized use by vehicle class and, if appropriate, by time of year.

The Purpose and Need is described in Chapter 1 of the SDEIS and includes the need for motor vehicle designations that incorporates the general criteria and trail-specific criteria identified in the TMR. The criteria in the TMR in essence provide a framework for describing how the decision provides for the use, enjoyment, and management of public lands, while protecting resources.

In keeping with 36 CFR 212 Subpart A, the purpose of, and need for, this project is to identify the Minimum Road System needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands; and to identify roads under Forest Service jurisdiction that are no longer needed to meet forest resource management objectives and therefore should be decommissioned or considered for other uses, such as for trails.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) documents the analysis of alternatives for over-ground motor vehicle designations and identification of the minimum road system. In addition, a number of other alternatives suggested in response to scoping and comments on the DEIS and the Supplemental DEIS were considered but eliminated from detailed study. These alternatives and the rationale for not carrying them forward for full analysis are discussed in Section 2.3, of the FEIS.

This decision will verify or change the location, trail type, and allowed uses for every Forest Service motorized trail. If use designations remain the same, this decision verifies that choice

and replaces past management decisions. The environmental consequences are analyzed for every motorized trail on the trail system, even if allowed uses were not proposed to change.

Review of the existing motorized trail system identified specific needs for change that fall within one or more the designation criteria described in the TMR. The FEIS Section 1.1.3 includes a list of considerations (needs for change). Briefly, they include resource impacts at specific locations, ATV/UTV and single track motorized trail riding opportunities and connections, impacts to populated areas, hunter access and experience, nonmotorized recreation experience, livestock management conflict in specific areas, and overall maintenance needs. They also include consideration of the criteria identified in 36 C.F.R. 212.55(b).

Review of the current road system revealed that the system of roads provides recreation access to trailheads, meets forest management needs, and provides access to personal use forest products including firewood. Considerations (needs for change) include opportunities to 'downgrade' sections of road to less costly surfacing, or put them in storage, removing unneeded roads, and addressing resource impacts at specific locations. Future forest management needs could be met with a road system that contains fewer stored roads.

I will address how my decision meets the Purpose and Need under the Decision section below.

Public Involvement

Pre-NEPA

In 2014, staff from the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution Udall Foundation met in-person and by phone with 40 persons representing user groups, public agencies, and local jurisdictions. Their interviews focused on two general categories of questions: 1) What would you like to see regarding the management of the roads and trails in the Rico-West Dolores Travel Management Project area? 2) How would you like to work with the Forest Service and other user groups regarding travel management planning? The following suggestions for public engagement, collaboration, and communication were made, 1) it may not be productive to convene a collaborative working group charged with seeking consensus on travel management in the Rico-West Dolores district at this time, 2) the lead agency can exhibit collaborative leadership by offering clarity about the goals of the planning process; describing early and often the methods and criteria by which decisions will be made; providing mechanisms for meaningful input from stakeholders; and providing clarity about how stakeholders interests, questions and data were considered in planning processes.

Scoping

The *Proposed Action for Scoping* was developed through interdisciplinary discussions at the landscape, area, sub-area and individual road and trail level. The proposals followed direction in the Forest Plan and incorporated areas of known public concern. The latter was determined based on 1) previous public involvement during the 2007-2009 analysis, 2) various one on one or small group meetings at the Dolores District Office, and 3) recreation values presented at

workshop 1 of the Pre-NEPA Engagement. Proposals also incorporated recommendations for roads made through Travel Analysis and areas of resource concerns identified through ID team field reviews. Each member of the ID team also brought knowledge gained from other projects implemented in the area, or day-to-day administration of trails, roads, and permitted activities.

Public comments for the RWD Roads and Trails (Travel Management) Project Scoping Document were received during a scoping period that occurred between December 12, 2014, and January 30, 2015. Input was solicited through media releases, articles in local newspapers, letters, and e-mails to those who had previously expressed interest in the project, and letters to private landowners in the RWD area. The Forest Service also conducted a public open house at the Dolores Community Center on January 15, 2015. All comments were entered into the project file and read by the Dolores District Ranger. Preliminary concerns raised in the comment letters are described in the Revised Scoping Report (Project File).

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Supplement to the DEIS

The Rico West Dolores Roads and Trails (Travel Management) Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) published May 6, 2016, described analysis of the physical, biological, social, and economic effects of the proposed changes to the designated system of roads and trails open to over-ground travel by motor vehicles, proposed physical changes to the road and trail system (decommissioning, structural developments, maintenance levels, trail class), and proposed amendments to the Forest Plan. Five alternatives were described for detailed analysis in the DEIS.

The public comment period revealed that it would be helpful to clarify that the Forest Service intends to include identification of the Minimum Road System (MRS) for the Rico West Dolores project area in its decision on this project. This Supplement to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) was developed to include the clarification and provide an additional 45-day opportunity for public comment. Even though the five alternatives did not change, the Forest Service took this opportunity to improve the analysis of environmental and social effects (described in Chapter 3). The SDEIS was published on July 7, 2017.

Comments are located in the Comment Analysis and Response Application database and available for public viewing in the Comment Reading Room on the Forest Service website.

State, County and Local Governments

The Montezuma and Dolores Boards of County Commission participated in discussions with the Dolores District Ranger regarding the Proposed Action for Scoping, and prior to release of the Draft and Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statements. The Colorado Parks and Wildlife also participated in informal meetings and shared resource data with the District Wildlife Biologist. The District Ranger visited with the Town of Rico Manager and Town Board.

Local Organizations

Various local recreation user groups participated in the Pre-NEPA and NEPA public involvement process. Examples of these groups include San Juan Trail Riders, PAPA Telluride, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Groundhog Store, Private Landowners, Trout Unlimited, Southwest Colorado Cycling Association, Dunton Hot Springs, COHVCO, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Timberline Trail Riders, and Mesa Verde Backcountry Horsemen. Livestock grazing and Outfitter Guide permittees also participated.

Tribal Governments

Tribal consultation with approximately 26 tribes and pueblos that are culturally affiliated and traditionally associated with the SJNF occurred, beginning with scoping and continuing throughout the planning process.

How Public Comments on the DEIS and SDEIS were Considered.

Approximately 1,100 letters, emails or phone logs were received in response to the DEIS and SDEIS. Regardless of the source or form of the comment, I considered each piece of correspondence. The public comment process is not a quantitative vote but rather a qualitative process designed to ensure that issues related to the project are considered in the analysis.

The comments received were addressed through a process known as “comment analysis,” which is used to record, classify, and respond to the statements, concerns, and questions submitted by the public regarding a project. Comment analysis is intended to help the members of the ID Team explain, clarify, and correct information, statements, or findings contained in the DEIS, and to determine whether additional analysis needs to be included in the FEIS. Additionally, it helps the ID Team and the Responsible Official understand the public’s reaction to a project.

For additional information on the comment analysis process, as well as the letters received and the responses to the comments, please refer to Appendix K of the FEIS. Some commenters requested the Forest Service consider reference material such as research articles, opinion articles, reports, photos, or webpages of data. Appendix K of the FEIS also includes a list of how this information was considered in the analysis and Appendix G of the FEIS contains some of the submitted photos.

Decision and Rationale

I have considered the analysis contained in the FEIS, along with supporting information located in the Project File, as well as comments in response to scoping, the DEIS and SDEIS. The FEIS shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgment of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty and risk. The Final Environmental Impact Statement document (dated November 2017) on which I based my decision is available for review at the Dolores Public Lands Office,

located at 29211 Hwy 184 in Dolores, Colorado or online at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=44918>

I have selected Alternative B, with modifications, for the Rico West Dolores Roads and Trails (Travel Management) Project. Implementation of this decision is estimated to begin in spring of 2018.

This decision provides long-term direction for the Rico West Dolores area because I am requiring motor vehicles to travel on designated roads and trails and am eliminating cross-country travel by motorized vehicles. The RWD area is comprised of 256,246 acres total of FS and non-FS lands. Non-FS acres total 11,702 and FS acres total 244,544. My decision designates 199 miles of roads and 103 miles of trails for public motor vehicle use and includes the type of motor vehicle and season of use (see table 1 below). My decision identifies a 324-mile road system as the Minimum Road System for the Rico West Dolores area. My decision assigns 'Objective Maintenance Levels' to all roads on the minimum road system. My decision will approve trail realignments and developments, trail decommissioning and barrier installation at specific locations.

Alternative B (modified) will downgrade 5 miles from gravel surface to native surface, downgrade 4.5 miles from ML4 to ML3, and convert 5.32 miles of roads to trail. In addition, 7 miles of ML2 or ML3 roads would be decommissioned along with 40 miles of ML1 roads. My decision also adds 2 miles of unauthorized routes to the minimum road system.

This decision reflects suggestions received from the public regarding site-specific locations of publicly accessible roads and trails. I expect adjustments to occur through time via monitoring of on-the-ground conditions and public discussions. In addition, there may be opportunity for future planning for single-track trails throughout this area, both motorized and non-motorized.

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 remainder of this document will describe the purpose and need for changes that are specific to the Rico/West Dolores area, the selected alternative, my rationale for choosing this alternative over the other alternatives, and reasons I find the project meets the intent of the TMR.

The road and trail system I am selecting is shown on the four maps in Attachment 1,

Map 1 - Rico-West Dolores Alternative B (Modified) Maintenance Level 2, 2-Admin Only and 3 Roads. The roads on this map are designated 'Open to all Wheeled Vehicles' except for the 2-Admin Only roads which are open to administrative or permitted uses only. These roads are part of the minimum road system.

Map 2 - Rico-West Dolores Alternative B (Modified) Maintenance Level 1 Roads. Roads displayed on this map are not designated for motor vehicle use and will be kept in storage as part of the minimum road system.

Map 3 – Rico-West Dolores Alternative B (Modified) Trails – This map displays two types of trails 1) Special Designation Open to Wheeled Motor Vehicles 62-inches or Less (ATVs, UTVs and single track motorized use that meet the width requirement) and 2) Trails Open to Motorcycles Only (single track motorized use). Both types of trail are also open to nonmotorized uses. Nonmotorized trails are displayed for reference only.

Map 4 – Example Motor Vehicle Use Map – This map displays roads and trails together using MVUM symbology.

The road and trail system I am selecting is also shown on tables in Attachment 2 that list each road and trail by number and name. My decision does not designate roads or trails for use by tracked vehicles. Single track motorized use refers to trail riding by motorcycles.

Alternative B is described in the FEIS, Chapter 2 Section 2.2 and is modified in four ways. First, single track motorized riding will be removed from the Little Bear trail and a section of the Bear Creek trail, while motor vehicle use would be added to #738 Loading Pen trail, second, seasonal timing restrictions on motor vehicle use of trails would be similar to Alternative C, third, one road (545J), previously identified for downgrade to a stored road would be retained as a ML2 road designated for all types of motor vehicle use and fourth, trails in the Black Mesa area would be the same as Alternative C.

The combined effect of the modifications is one less total mile of single track motorized trail, five more miles of 62-inch ATV/UTV trail, and one more mile of road designated for motor vehicle use, than shown for Alternative B. Miles of minimum road system are the same as Alternative B. The environmental impacts of these modifications are addressed in the FEIS.

Table 1 summarizes road and trail mileages compared to the existing condition.

Table 1 Alternative B (Modified) Compared to Existing Condition

Road and Trail Designations	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative Modified B
Trails Open to Wheeled Vehicles 50" or less in Width	7	0
Special Vehicle Designation – Open to Wheeled Vehicles 62" or less in Width (miles of that include NFSR 727 (Willow Divide) designated as part of trail loop)	0	12 miles new designation 7 miles existing designation widened to 62-inch
Trails Open to single track motorized use (i.e.,	114	83²

² Conversely, the total miles of nonmotorized trails increases from 142 currently to 181 miles.

Road and Trail Designations	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative Modified B
single-track trails to include motorcycle use and other nonmotorized uses)		
Season of single track motorized use on Trails	No restriction	Allowed from 6/1 to 10/30 and prohibited from 11/1 to 5/31
Season of ATV/UTV and single track motorized use on 62 Inch Trails (except Black Mesa area)	No restriction	Same as above
Season of ATV/UTV and single track motorized use on 62 Inch Trails (Black Mesa area)	N/A no trails currently	Allowed from 6/1 to 9/7 and Prohibited from 9/8to 5/31
ML2 Roads (Open to All Motor Vehicles and displayed on MVUM)	108	100
ML3 Roads (Open to All Motor Vehicles and displayed on MVUM)	93	92
ML4 Roads (Open to All Motor Vehicles and Displayed on MVUM)	4.5	0
ML2-Admin Only Roads (Not Designated and Not displayed on MVUM)	0	7.5
ML1 Roads (Not designated and not displayed on MVUM) (roads in storage)	169	125
Total Road System Miles	375	324
Total Miles Identified on the Minimum Road System	N/A	324
Total Road Miles Designated for motor vehicle use and displayed on MVUM	205.5	192³
Miles of Road Converted to Trail	N/A	5
Miles of Road currently designated for motor vehicle use to be decommissioned	N/A	7
Miles of Road currently ML1 stored roads to be decommissioned	N/A	40
Miles of Dual Designation (ML1 Road and 62-inch Trail).		13
Miles of Unauthorized Route Added to MRS (reconstruction)	N/A	2
Miles of New Road Construction		0

All ‘single track’ trails will be Trail Class 2 or Trail Class 3 trails, as defined in FSH 2309.18, with tread widths of 18-36 inches. All trails proposed to include ATV and UTV designations would be managed as trails for motor vehicles 62-inches or less. All motorized trails also continue to allow other nonmotorized uses including Hike/Pedestrian, Bicycle and Pack and Saddle. Trails

³ The 7 miles of ML2-Admin Only roads are not displayed on MVUM and public use of these roads is restricted to administrative needs such as private land or utility access.

with no change in motor vehicle designation are included because I have re-assessed and have chosen to continue single track motorized use on these trails.

Decision Details and Rationale

My decision includes actions that were common to all alternatives and Design Features (Attachment 3). Briefly, Design Features include, parking for dispersed camping 300 feet from roads designated for motor vehicles, minor trail realignments, improving brochures and other public information, interdisciplinary review of final layout and design of new trail or roads, prioritizing trail developments and maintenance to 'hydrologically connected' areas, responding to any newly discovered cultural, wildlife, rare plant or fen concerns, treating weeds, installing trail cattleguards on fencelines, limiting pathways that result in unwanted movement of cattle between pastures, using lighter methods first for road decommissioning.

Maintenance Level 1 (ML1) roads are roads that are placed in storage for more than 1 year between intermittent uses. A stored road is not currently, nor would it be available for general public use. Stored roads in the RWD area are usually stored for many years and are native surface with vegetation and trees growing in the roadbeds. Future uses of these roads could be for vegetation management projects and often roads remain in storage for 20 plus years between vegetation management entries. Through field evaluations and discussion of future forest management needs, a number of ML1 roads were identified for decommissioning and these are listed in Attachment 2.

My decision assigns maintenance levels to the minimum road system. Briefly, ML2-Admin roads will be used within 1-year or less for specific purposes such as access to utility or administrative sites, and will be gated and closed to the general public but are still operational for agency, or documented authorized uses. Maintenance Level (ML) 2 roads will provide for use by high-clearance vehicles that are low speed, single lane, and native surface. ML3 roads provide for travel by a prudent driver in a standard passenger car. These roads are typically surfaced with aggregate but can be native surface. See FEIS, Chapter 1 section 1.5.1 Road Definitions.

As mentioned above, seasonal timing restrictions on motor vehicle use of trails would be allowed from June 1st through October 31st. As stated in the FEIS, Section 3.6, "Based on the analysis of security areas and associated cover and forage along with connectivity, habitat effectiveness for elk is maintained across all alternatives". This includes providing for needs related to elk production areas. Therefore it is not necessary to restrict use of the trails based on Forest Plan guideline 2.3.59 which would prohibit use in elk production areas from May 1st through June 30th if adverse impacts were occurring. Other factors such as effects to watersheds, sensitive plants, and hunting experiences led to my decision for these broader timing restrictions compared to what was originally in Alternative B.

My decision provides for adaptive management actions to be implemented, such as more strict timing restrictions in areas of critical concern (e.g. calving areas) if trends in Colorado Parks and

Wildlife population numbers drop below established population objectives, or if CPW monitoring shows a need. This could affect both roads and motorized trails. The adaptive actions could also include forest management to improve habitat. Analysis and public involvement would be undertaken as appropriate prior to implementing adaptive actions described in Attachment 3.

The RWD landscape is a large project area so I have summarized most of my decision points by subarea. The FEIS Appendices B and C contain the subarea descriptions, which were delineated only for the purpose of easier reading.

Along with each action I approve with this decision, there is a corresponding rationale that often includes my consideration of criteria identified in the TMR. In addition to the subarea descriptions below, the criteria are described later in this Record of Decision and also in Attachment 6 that lists the criteria specific to motor vehicle designation of trails (minimization criteria) and how the actions result in minimizing effects.

Subarea 1 – Lone Cone, Groundhog Point, Fish Creek, and Willow Divide Area

These areas are destinations in the summertime for dispersed camping, and many people enjoy riding ATVs and side-by-side UTVs on the forest roads. This northwest corner of the analysis area is popular for big-game hunting in the fall, which includes dispersed camping use of roads for scouting. ATV/UTV cross-country travel is a concern at the headwaters of Fish Creek, where multiple tracks cross streams and meadows. “Hill climbs” are also seen here and ATVs/UTVs have pushed down onto the non-motorized Fish Creek Trail (647). I recognize the popularity of the area for riding but also recognize the importance of the natural water-related resources in this area. Alternative B (Modified) will provide for similar recreation access while improving road conditions, reducing road maintenance, reducing damage to willows and other riparian vegetation, and providing both road and ‘walk-in’ areas for hunting. The following actions will occur in this subarea,

1. To discourage off-road or off-trail riding to minimize impacts to wetlands and willow galleries which in turn provide habitat for rare plants, amphibians, beaver and other wildlife at the headwaters of Fish Creek and Willow Creek, my decision will install barriers (boulders, fences) or signs; move the Fish Creek Trailhead north to a new terminus on National Forest Service Road (NFSR) 404 (Black Mesa Spur) and decommission 0.63 miles of this ML2 road. Where needed, my decision will actively decommission unauthorized routes south of the new Fish Creek Trailhead location.
2. In order to maintain ‘walk in’ hunting experience and minimize impacts to wetland areas, my decision will keep NFSR 305 (Clear Fish) as is (continue to manage the last 0.37 miles as ML1 not designated for public motor vehicle use). This will be the ‘jumping off point’ for nonmotorized access into the Willow Creek area. Evaluation of timber suitability and future forest management needs resulted in recommendations to decommission a ML1 road (NFSR 536) to permanently restore the roadbeds to the

landscape. Discouraging motor vehicle access from the Fish Creek side, and from the Willow Creek side, and restoring old roadbeds to natural conditions, will improve wetlands and wildlife habitat.

3. In order to prevent conflict between motor vehicles use and those seeking a ‘walk-in’ hunting experience, my decision would keep the gate at the current location on NFSR 403 (Groundhog Point) so that public driving would be allowed for 1.1 miles and prohibited for 1.52 miles. However, a 0.11-mile long road spur road (403A Groundhog Point A) will be added to the road system as a ML2 designated road open to all motor vehicles.
4. To minimize impacts to wetlands and high elevation meadows, reduce road and trail maintenance needs by identifying routes in more sustainable locations, and meet the demand for ATV, UTV and full size vehicle recreation access in this subarea including hunting access, the following actions will occur,
 - a. A new 62-inch OHV loop (named the “Groundhog OHV Trail”) will be added north of NFSR 533 (Groundhog), adjacent to the Forest boundary. The trail will be constructed using nonsystem (unauthorized) routes where appropriate, along with new construction. The MVUM would list this Trail as a Special Vehicle Designation Route, Open to Wheeled Vehicles 62” or less in Width.
 - b. Two ML2 roads (NFSR 543 J 2 (1.41 miles) and NFSR 534 J (1.49 miles) would be converted to a 62-inch trail to be named “Lone Cone OHV Trail,” which the MVUM would list as a Special Vehicle Designation Route, Open to Wheeled Vehicles 62” or less in Width.
 - c. Five ML2 roads NFSR534A, 534E1, 534I, 534J1, and 534K would be decommissioned.
 - d. Two ML1 roads NFSR 534F and 534E2 will be upgraded to ML2 roads and designated open to all vehicles because they are in more sustainable locations and provide similar access and user experience as the roads above to be decommissioned.
5. Additional road related actions in this subarea include,
 - a. Change the designation of the Willow Divide OHV Trail to a Special Vehicle Designation Route, open to Wheeled Vehicles 62” or less in Width. Physical work to the Trail would not be necessary to accommodate this change.
 - b. Maintenance Levels and motor vehicle designations remain unchanged for NFSR 534, 611, and 533.
 - c. To reduce maintenance needs while providing for road conditions in keeping with the average daily traffic, NFSR 533 will be managed to a ML3 downgraded from a ML4.
 - d. The ML1 portion of NFSR 727 E will be upgraded to ML2 designated for motor vehicle use
 - e. One road NFSR 616A, would be downgraded from ML2 to ML1 (closed for storage and not designated for motor vehicle use)

- f. The portion of NFSR 452 that provides access to the Fish Creek Ditch would change from ML2 to ML2-Admin Only.
- g. Downgrade 2.2 miles of NFSR 727 (Willow Divide) from ML3 to ML2, Open to All Motor Vehicles. The remaining miles of this road would not change and would remain as ML2, Open to All Motor Vehicles.
- h. Three additional spur roads would be added to the road system. These will be named NFSR 732 Willow Divided Trailhead, and NFSR 535B-West Dolores B, and NFSR 611B-Black Mesa B which will access the Dunton Guard Station.

My decision modifies Alternative B by incorporating the Black Mesa OHV loop system analyzed in Alternative C. The Black Mesa OHV loop system creates two OHV trail loops off of NFSR 611 A (Black Mesa A) in the Black Mesa area. Loops would be created from a combination of dual-use designation on ML1 roads and new construction along unauthorized routes. Riding on the Black Mesa OHV trails would be allowed from July 1 to September 8. Emphasis would be placed on walk-in hunting in the area after September 8. These trail will be designated with the 62-inch width limit and available for ATV, UTV and single track motorized use.

The addition of the Black Mesa OHV loops provides recreational opportunities in an area that is seeing increased use for OHV activities due to the areas proximity to Groundhog Lake. A formal and properly located system should reduce the creation of user created routes that are not in good locations leading to impacts to natural resources. The timing restriction associated with the Black Mesa OHV loop system would allow for use of this area for the majority of the recreational OHV driving season, but also provide for a walk-in hunting experience during the majority of the hunting season with about a one-week overlap with archery season.

Subarea 2 – Winter Trail, East Fall Trail, West Fall Trail, and National Forest System Road (NFSR) 471 Area

NFSR 471 is located west of the Calico Trail (208) and is a main gravel road that accesses high country for recreation. The road provides access to the East and West Fall Creek Trails, which are located near the end of NFSR 471. Winter Trail (202) runs between NFSR 471 and the private lands along the West Fork of the Dolores (Dunton) road.

This area contains motor vehicle roads and trails in somewhat close proximity to each other. Trails up on the Calico ridgeline are the most sought after by technical single track motorized riders and NFSR 471 is a popular motor vehicle access and ‘jumping off point’ to the ridgeline. Conversely, Winter Trail and the lower sections of East and West Fall Creek Trails cross gentler terrain but also cross wetlands and the Winter Trail is located near a fen. Looking at the entire landscape, I saw this area as an opportunity to reduce impacts to wetlands and the fen by removing one trail activity from Winter and lower sections of East and West Fall Creek Trails which would also provide a group of trails in this area with an emphasis on nonmotorized experiences. Providing some of the trails as nonmotorized, while others remain motorized

(described below) separates uses in the general area and should reduce conflicts by providing opportunities for both nonmotorized and motorized users.

Specifically Alternative B (Modified) will,

1. Remove single track motorized use designation on Winter Trail (nonmotorized trail uses are not affected by my decision).
2. Remove the single track motorized use designation on those portions of East Fall Creek Trail and West Fall Creek Trail that are north of NFSR 471 (Eagle Creek), but continue to allow single track motorized use on these trails south of NFSR 471 (Eagle Creek).
3. No change to the ML3 NFSR 471 (Eagle Creek), Open to All Motor Vehicles.

Subarea 3 – Taylor Mesa, Stoner Mesa, Spring Creek

Taylor Mesa and Stoner Mesa are mesa tops of aspen forest. Stoner Mesa is accessed by NFSR 686 off of the West Fork of the Dolores road, and Taylor Mesa is accessed by NFSR 545 off of Hwy. 145. Stoner Creek and Spring Creek bisect the two mesa tops. The road system accesses lands identified in the Forest Plan as suitable for timber production and the area has a history of providing aspen wood product to local mills. Spring Creek also bisect Single Track Motorized use trail connections so there is no direct connection between the two mesas. This subarea receives summertime dispersed camping and ATV/UTV riding on forest roads. The level of use is not as high as in the Groundhog area but is still popular. The area is heavily used during the fall big-game hunting seasons. Forest roads on Taylor Mesa provide riding opportunities currently, but there are few loops. Fish surveys identified greenback lineage cutthroat trout populations in Spring Creek.

Through fieldwork and analysis the ID team was unable, at this time, to find a route that did not result in unacceptable impacts to the 'outstanding waters' designation of Spring Creek including fish habitat, so my decision does not include single track motorized use of the Spring Creek Trail. Additionally, Alternative B (Modified) undertakes a fish restoration project approved in consultation with FWS that will remove a road culvert and convert a section of road to nonmotorized trail. Although a Spring Creek single track motorized connection could not be achieved at this time, my decision modifies Alternative B to designate single track motorized use on the Loading Pen Trail, as analyzed in Alternative C, which connects to State Highway 145.

The ML2 and ML3 roads will be maintained similar to current conditions with minor adjustments and a short ATV/UTV loop trail will be added, while a nearby section of road is decommissioned. These actions maintain access for forest products, hunter access, and riding opportunities for ATV/UTVs on roads and trails. Single track motorized trail riding opportunities are also maintained on the Stoner Mesa, East, and West Twin Springs Trails.

Specifically, Alternative B (Modified) will,

1. To meet recreation demands for ATV/UTV riding in a sustainable location, my decision will add a new 62-inch OHV trail loop off of NFSR 201 (Pipe Creek). The proposed new 3-mile loop would use 2.6 miles of ML1 road NFSR 202 (Siphon Spring). To complete the loop, approximately 0.49 miles of unauthorized road would be added to the road system as an ML1 road and OHV trail (dual designation). If needed for a timber sale, Taylor OHV Trail would be temporarily closed to recreation use.
2. To reduce impacts from motor vehicle use and restore threatened fish habitat the following actions will occur where NFSR547 currently crosses Spring Creek. Terminate NFSR 547 (Taylor Mesa) before Spring Creek at mile post 5.0. Convert NFSR 547 (Taylor Mesa) to a single-track nonmotorized trail from mile post 5.0 to mile post 5.9. This would include removing the road culvert on Spring Creek to improve fish passage.
3. The remaining 4.93 miles of NFSR 547 (Taylor Mesa) would not change from its current ML3 designation, open to all motor vehicles.
4. To improve connections in this area, add single track motorized use to the Loading Pen Trail and reconstruct sections as needed to accommodate design parameters for trails that allow single track motorized use.
5. No changes are proposed for NFSR 248 (General Taylor), and spur roads off of NFSR 547 (Taylor Mesa); these are NFSR 547 B (Taylor Mesa B), NFSR 555 (Hell Canyon), and NFSR 864 (Little Hell).
6. To reduce road maintenance needs my decision will,
 - a. Downgrade .025 miles of NFSR 545 (Taylor Creek) from ML3 to ML2. Approximately 1/4 mile from intersection with NFSR 592 (Shoas Park) there is a berm and gate that will be maintained. Beyond this point, NFSR 545 (Taylor Creek) will continue to be managed as an ML1 road.
 - b. Decommission the last 1.14 miles of ML2 NFSR 201 (Pipe Creek) to restrict use beyond the intersection with Loading Pen Trail. Up to that point, the road designation (open to all motor vehicles) would not change.
 - i. Downgrade 1.46 miles of NFSR 692 (Pothole) from ML3 to ML2. Establish a terminus and decommission the last 0.62 mile of this Road.
6. In order to provide for recreation access, my decision modifies Alternative B by keeping NFSR Road 546.J (Taylor Creek J) 0.83 miles as Level 2 open to all vehicles as analyzed in Alternative A, instead of downgrading it to a ML1 stored road. Public comments revealed that several people utilize this road for recreation purposes. After field visits it was determined that this road was not having any impacts to natural resources and did not interfere with any other forest user activities.
7. Road access for dispersed camping is limited along County Road 38 (West Dolores Road). My decision modifies Alternative B to select and designate one of two road spurs proposed near the intersection with NFSR 696 (Stoner Mesa). The new addition will be approximately 0.13 miles long and final layout will include design to avoid impacts to cultural resources. If impacts to cultural resources cannot be avoided, this route will not be added to the system.

Subarea 4 – Priest Gulch, South Calico, Tenderfoot, and Wildcat Area

As one drives north on Hwy 145, the slopes to the left make up this subarea. There are no roads on these slopes. From the Priest Gulch trailhead, located across from the Priest Gulch Campground on Hwy 145, trails climb upslope to connect with the Calico Trail (211) above timberline near Storm Peak and Expectation Mountain. There is a mix of motorized trails (Priest Gulch and South Calico) and nonmotorized trails (Tenderfoot, Schoolhouse, and Sectionhouse Trails). Wildcat Trail has had a confusing history of partial designation where the upper end allowed single track motorized riding while the lower end near the highway did not. The Priest Gulch Trailhead is large enough for trailer parking so is a popular ‘jumping off’ point for horse riders. Specifically,

1. Because there are already other trails in this area that provide options for separation of motorized and nonmotorized activities, my decision verifies and continues single track motorized use on the Priest Gulch and South Calico Trails. No major resource issues were identified for these trails and regular maintenance will minimize impacts. There are examples of conflict described in public comments for all the trails with single track motorized use and these two trails were no exception.
2. Some hunters enjoy ‘walk-in’ hunting in the Priest Gulch drainage and this experience would be improved by the timing restriction on single track motorized use in later fall hunts.
3. In order to reduce impacts of motor vehicle use on range management, my decision will manage the Wildcat Trail nonmotorized for its entire length. Because of the terrain and specific type of livestock grazing system that occurs on the Tenderfoot allotment, it is critical to minimize conflicts with livestock herding efforts in the Wildcat Creek drainage.

Subarea 5 – Northernmost Portion of Calico NRT, Johnny Bull, Eagle Peak Trails, and also portions of East and West Fall Creek

From the northern end, the Calico Trail travels through forested areas, wetlands, and meadows then winds upslope to the ridgeline above treeline, and traverses the ridgeline near Sockrider, Calico, and Expectation Peaks. The East and West Fall Creek Trails begin on NFSR 471, traverse forested areas and meadows, and intersect with the Calico Trail above treeline. One end of the Johnny Bull trail begins on Country Road 38, crosses the West Fork of the Dolores River, traverses forested areas until it also reaches the ridgeline above treeline and connects to the Calico Trail. One end of the Eagle Peak Trail begins at the terminus of NFSR 696 (Stoner Mesa), passes through forested areas, and then connects with the Calico Trail above treeline.

This group of trails is highly sought after by technically skilled single track riders some of whom travel from other states to experience these trails. The Calico trail is the most technically challenging. Passing on the narrow sections of trails is difficult but possible when trail users communicate with each other and are courteous. Johnny Bull Trail is less technically advanced because it used to be an old freight road designed for mule-drawn wagons.

A section of Calico Trail and separately, a section of the Johnny Bull Trail bisect Private land (originally patented mining claims). There is no documented public right of way for motor vehicle access on these segments of trail where it crosses private property. Accordingly, the trail will not be designate by the Forest Service for motor vehicle use on the MVUM at this time. A new trail reroute will be constructed for the Johnny Bull Trail, if necessary; however, re-routing the section of Calico Trail is not possible because of the steep terrain.

I have modified Alternative B to incorporate a phased approach as follows,

- The North Calico Trail will be designated for single track motorized use to the intersection of the East and West Fall Creek Trails. The sections of East and West Fall Creek Trails south of NFSR 471 will also be designated for single track motorized use, creating loops.
- The North Calico Trail from the intersection of East and West Fall Creek Trails to the intersection of Johnny Bull Trail will not be designated for single track motorized use in the short term. An authorized route would not be available or depicted on the MVUM until a documented public right of way for motorized use can be obtained. When documented legal access is obtained for these sections of trail, a separate decision would not be required to authorize single track motorized use
- The Johnny Bull Trail will not be designated for single track motorized use until implementation of the re-route is complete which I estimate to be approximately 2 years. After completion of the re-route (or if an easement is obtained) the Johnny Bull Trail will be designated for single track motorized use.
- The South Calico Trail and Eagle Peak Trail will be designated for single track motorized use and provide loop rides on the south side of the Calico NRT.

In addition, Alternative B (modified) will,

1. Take advantage of an old trail alignment around Sockrider Peak to separate single track motorized use and hikers to provide an experience for each around the peak. My decision will officially add a segment of trail as an alternate trail for hikers only around Sockrider Peak (named the Sockrider Trail).
2. To improve stream habitat, maintain water quality and enhance recreation experience, my decision authorizes construction of a trail bridge where Johnny Bull Trail crosses the West Fork of the Dolores River.
3. My decision continues single track motorized use designation on the Eagle Peak Trail with regular trail maintenance to install cross drainage and prevent rill erosion on the shale soil sections of this trail. Although erosion occurs the impacts are not connected to streams, wetlands or fens.
4. To enhance trail users experience and minimize impacts to wetlands which provide habitat for rare plants and amphibians and whose function is important for watershed health my decision implements turnpikes, trail hardening, short realignments and other

trail improvements on the northernmost 4 miles of the Calico trail as shown in Attachment 2.

5. Change 1.05 miles of NFSR 205 (Meadows) from an ML1 to an ML2-Admin road. This road is not truly a stored ML1 road because intermittent use occurs more frequently than once a year. Public use is not needed because the primary use of this road is access to private land or for Forest Service administration.
6. Reconstruct an existing route to a new road spur to be named Johnny Bull Trailhead A. The first section of this road will be ML2 and provide recreation access, the latter section of road adjacent to the West Fork of the Dolores River will be gated ML2-Admin only for administrative access to the powerline.
7. Decommission NFSR 538 (Johnny Bull), which is currently an ML1 road not designated for public motor vehicle use.

Subarea 6 – Burnett Creek, Horse Creek, and the Town of Rico

This subarea includes the slopes both east and west of Hwy 145 around the Town of Rico. National Forest land borders the town on all sides and currently Forest roads and motorized trails intersect with town streets. The Town of Rico is a small town and the Forest Plan identified National Forest lands immediately adjacent to the town as MA2-Special Area to be managed in keeping with historic “mountain town” scale and appearance. A few Forest roads intersect with the Town of Rico on the west side of Hwy 145, and the Burnett Creek Trail is accessed through town and the Burnett Creek Road. The Horse Creek Trail passes through private land and immediately adjacent to cabins north of Rico.

Meeting the desires of the Town of Rico and its residents were factors in my decision to remove single track motorized use designations from the Burnett Creek and Horse Creek Trails. An alternate alignment of the Burnett Creek Trail was considered, but concerns were raised about that trail’s proximity to the town so I did not select that option. Single track riders expressed concern that if Burnett Creek Trail is closed, riders would not have a quick way to exit the ridgeline in case of bad weather or mechanical trouble. Options to exit the ridge to the east would not exist but there are multiple options to exit the ridge on the west side (East and West Fall Creek, Johnny Bull and Eagle Peak Trails). The Town of Rico was also valued as a gas stop and this access remains in place via Hwy 145.

Conflicts between the populated area of the Town of Rico and motor vehicle use are reduced by my decision which will remove single track motorized use designations from the Burnett Creek and Horse Creek trails. By removing single track motorized use from both Burnett Creek and Horse Creek Trails, an almost fully nonmotorized loop now exists from Rico to Burnett Creek Trail to the Calico Trail and down Horse Creek Trail (the Calico section of this loop would be motorized). Single track motorized use through Town streets should be reduced because the Burnett Trail will be nonmotorized. Single track motorized use would be allowed on NFSR422 (Burnett) but use should be reduced because there would no longer be the trail connection.

In addition, Alternative B (Modified) will,

1. Decommission the 0.5 miles of road that parallels the Burnett Road (which may be grown in already), the remainder of this road remains unchanged as Open to All current ML2 designation on 4.1 miles of NFSR 422 (Burnett).
2. No changes are proposed for NFSR 422 A (Burnett A) (Open to All Motor Vehicles) and ML2.
3. Establish a new terminus for NFSR 423 (Horse Gulch) on Forest Service lands downslope from the current terminus/informal parking area.
4. Downgrade 0.05 miles of NFSR 423 (Horse Gulch) to ML2-Admin because of private land access needs.
5. Change NFSR 422 A 1 (Burnett A 1) from an ML2 to an ML2-Admin only road (0.50 miles).

Subarea 7 –Barlow Road, East Fork Trail and Bolam Pass (Tin Can Basin) Areas

This area located north of the Town of Rico and east of Hwy 145 has very few roads and trails. The Barlow Road (NFSR578), also called the Hermosa Road, leaves Hwy 145, travels up to Bolam Pass on the spine of the La Plata Mountains, and continues into the Hermosa Landscape to the Durango area. The East Fork Trail begins at a trailhead near Lizardhead Pass, travels up East Fork Creek south of Sheep Mountain, and intersects with NFSR 578B1 and 578B, which are sections of the Colorado Trail.

At the top of Bolam Pass, NFSR 578B and B1 are remote roads and very difficult to maintain on a regular basis because of the distance required to haul heavy equipment. The roads have deteriorated and are affecting fens and wetlands. Although the Colorado Trail is a nonmotorized trail designation, some sections of the trail still use roads, and this is the case for the section of Colorado Trail that uses 578B. NFSR 578B1 accesses the Tin Can Basin area, which is a large tract of unroaded land. A previously designated ML1 section of 578B1 has been used where drivers have broken down the earthen berm. Hunting in the fall is the most popular use for the Tin Can Basin area. Because of the distance to haul equipment, and the damage to fens that is occurring, my decision will convert both 578B and 578B1 to trail. The new trail will connect to the East Fork trail and will be designated for single track motorized use. The section of Colorado Trail that is currently a road designated for full size vehicles, ATVs and UTVs will now only be designated for single track motorized use and will continue to allow non-motorized use. This is acceptable for this short section of the Colorado Trail.

For NFSR578B and 578B1, specifics include,

- Maintaining 0.12 miles of NFSR 578 B (Tin Can Basin) as ML2 (at intersection with NFSR 578 (Hermosa Park/Barlow)).
- Converting 0.62 miles of NFSR 578 B (Tin Can Basin) to single-track trail.
- Decommission 0.68 miles of ML2 and 0.65 miles of ML1.
- Convert 0.82 miles of ML2 NFSR 578 B 1 (Tin Can Basin Spur) to a trail designated for single track motorized use.

- Decommission 0.04 miles of ML2 and 1.73 miles of ML1.

Alternative B (Modified) will,

1. Correct the maps to reflect the actual alignment of East Fork Trail, which will officially remove the section of trail from the fen/wetland complex and decommission any remaining trail segments to discourage all types of use on this section. (see Attachment 2)
2. In order to provide a more sustainable trail location that will require less regular maintenance, and to reduce impacts to high elevation wet meadow and individual smaller wetlands, my decision will realign approximately 1000 feet of the East Fork trail near the Hwy 145 trailhead, and realign the trail at three separate wetland locations (see Attachment 2).
3. In order to minimize impacts from parking and dispersed camping in the meadows on Lizardhead Pass, my decision will add 0.10 miles of unauthorized road to system as an ML3 to be named 206 (Trestle) and .09 miles of unauthorized road to ML3 to be named Trestle A. In addition, physical barriers such as boulders will be placed to limit unauthorized routes across the meadow near the corrals.
4. Maintain current designations on NFSR 578 (Hermosa Park/Barlow).
5. To reduce overall road maintenance needs, reduce impacts to wet areas and erosion on steep slopes, while continuing to provide recreation access the following actions will occur on NFSR 496.
 - a. Downgrade the ML on the first 0.49 miles of NFSR 496 from ML3 to ML2.
 - b. Maintain 1.11 miles of the ML2 section of this Road.
 - c. Move the gate downslope and downgrade 0.95 miles from ML2 to ML1 (not open to general public use).
 - d. Maintain 0.22 miles of ML1 as ML1 and decommission 1.39 miles of ML1 section.
6. To reverse sedimentation impacts to a high elevation wetland complex, close NFSR 149 (Hermosa Peak) at a point approximately 0.4 miles before the current terminus. Change the 0.4-mile closed portion to ML1. This will require vehicles to be parked further away from the Colorado Trail.
7. Keep ML2 NFSR 424 (Lizard Head) open for .09 miles to the current gate location at the Cross Mountain Trailhead. Beyond the gate, change 0.08 miles of NFSR 424 (Lizard Head) from ML1 to ML2-Admin and decommission the remaining 0.27 miles of this Road.
8. Change 1.96 miles of NFSR 476B (Cayton Campground B) from an ML1 to an ML2-Admin only Road because this road is used more than once a year for administrative purposes and is not a 'stored' road.
9. Change 204A1 (East Fork A1) from ML1 to ML2-Admin (1.69 miles) because use occurs more than once a year for private land access so the road is not in storage.

10. Change 0.87 miles of NFSR 424 A (Lizard Head A) from ML1 to ML2-Admin and decommission 1.45 miles of this Road for similar reasons as above.

Subarea 8 – Ryman Creek, Lower Ryman, Scotch Creek, and NFSR 564

As a person drives north on Hwy 145, this subarea is the slopes on the right side of the road between Hwy 145 and the La Plata Mountains. Forested slopes are bisected by drainages. There are few roads and few trails on this side of the project area. Forest Road 574 connects from the Roaring Fork Road over to the Scotch Creek Road and runs parallel to the Colorado Trail long the top of the mountain ridge. The road is a popular access to high elevation scenic driving, dispersed camping and provides access to the Colorado Trail.

I recognize the value that Ryman Creek Trails hold for single track motorized users as part of a loop that includes trails in the Hermosa landscape. However, the soils on the slopes in this subarea are more susceptible to downcutting because of the soil types, the position of soil layers on the slope and the lack of rocks to hold it in place. My decision to remove single track motorized use from Ryman Creek Trail will provide an additional opportunity for semiprimitive nonmotorized experiences. During the analysis process, options to add a motorized designation to the nearby Salt Creek Trail was evaluated, but discarded because of the same trail maintenance concerns identified for Ryman Creek Trail. Additionally, although not the ideal experience for riders, Scotch Creek Road is a very primitive Level 2 road that provides an option for a loop opportunity.

Alternative B (Modified) will,

1. To improve motorized trail connections to the adjacent Hermosa landscape, extend Corral Draw Trail approximately 350 yards to the northwest, across the Colorado Trail, and tie it in to NFSR 550 (Scotch Creek), which connects to NFSR 564 (Divide).
2. In order to reduce impacts to soils and reduce the frequency of maintenance visits, one activity (single track motorized use) will be removed from the Ryman Creek trail.
3. To reduce impacts to soils and riparian vegetation, a separate section of the Ryman Creek Trail will be decommissioned, revegetated and would not be available for any type of recreation trail use.
4. Keep current designation and maintenance levels for NFSR 550 (Scotch Creek) and NFSR 564 (Divide).

Subarea 9 – Bear Creek, Little Bear, Grindstone, Rough Canyon, and Hillside Drive

As a person drives north on Hwy 145, this subarea is on the right hand side south of subarea 8, described above. Densely forested slopes are bisected by drainages, including Bear Creek drainage, which is a large perennial stream. Bear Creek drainage is unroaded and the rest of this subarea includes roads that access lands suitable for timber production that also provides access for recreation, hunting and gathering personal use forest products like firewood. NFSR

436 Hillside Drive, and NFSR 435 Roaring Fork are popular routes for aspen color viewing in the fall. Motorized and nonmotorized trails are located in and around the Bear Creek drainage.

My decision modifies Alternative B by incorporating the options analyzed in Alternative C for Gold Run, Grindstone, Little Bear, and Bear Creek Trails. This will allow single track motorized use on the Gold Run and Grindstone Trails and the section of Bear Creek Trail between those two trails to provide a connection between the Manco/Cortez landscape and the Rico/West Dolores landscape. It will remove single track motorized use from lower third of Bear Creek Trail and Little Bear Trail. It will add single track motorized use as a Managed Use to the Hillside Connector to provide a connection to Hillside Drive. This is in response to many commenters who identified Bear Creek as a unique river, which is significant in length and width without a major road paralleling it. The lower third is also very popular for day hikers due to its proximity to Highway 145. Single track motorized users identified the need for a connection between the Mancos/Cortez landscape and the Rico/West Dolores landscape. This option provides for meeting the desires of many users of this area.

In addition, Alternative B (Modified) will,

1. To provide additional opportunities for separate uses on the section of the Bear Creek drainage closest to Hwy 145, my decision will officially add the existing nonmotorized Little Bear Pack Loop Trail (1.73 miles) and Pack Connector (0.52 miles) to the trail system.
2. To limit motor vehicle use of the Colorado Trail on sections designated as nonmotorized, my decision will officially change the end of Grindstone Trail (0.27 miles) to a non-motorized trail where it intersects with the Colorado Trail so that a motorized trail does not “dead-end” at a non-motorized trail.
3. In order to reduce overall road maintenance needs while maintaining recreation access the following actions would be taken
 - Decommission the last 0.24 miles of NFSR 358 (Grindstone). No change to the remainder of this road Open to All Types of Motor Vehicles, ML2 (3.23 miles).
 - Decommission the last 0.86 miles of NFSR 208, No changes proposed on 0.70 miles (ML2 and Open to All Types of Motor Vehicles).
 - Downgrade 0.69 miles of NFSR 436 (Hillside Drive) from ML3 portion to ML2.
4. No changes proposed for NFSR 435 (Roaring Fork) – Open to All Types of Motor Vehicles.

Rationale for Not Selecting Other Alternatives

This section describes my rationale for not selecting Alternatives A, C, D or E. Additional information about these alternatives is described later in this ROD.

Alternative B (Modified) will achieve the objective of providing a manageable system of designated motorized public access that is consistent with the Forest Plan and travel management regulations.

When considering which alternative to choose, my most important consideration was to provide an adequate motorized route system while minimizing potential adverse effects to forest resources, and to comply with minimization criteria in a manner that is feasible, prudent and reasonable while still meeting the agencies multiple use mandate. Alternative B (Modified) incorporates input received during public involvement process and will move closer to the goals and objectives in the Forest Plan. , It will also ensure designated motorized travel complies with laws, regulations, policy, and Forest Plan direction.

Impacts on soils, fens, riparian and wetland resources were factors in my decision not to choose Alternatives A or C. In addition, the desires from many commenters for more non-motorized options in this landscape were also factors not to choose Alternative A or C. Meeting the desires of the Town of Rico and its residents were factors in my decision not to choose Alternatives A, C, D, or E. All of these alternatives would have had single-track motorized routes leading into the Town of Rico or nearby, counter to direction in the Forest Plan and the desires of this community.

Alternative B (Modified) provides for a mix of multiple use activities that would not be available with Alternative E (provides the least opportunity for motorized uses). A 43% reduction in single-track motorized opportunities would occur with Alternative E compared to the 27% reduction in Alternative B (Modified). Alternative E would eliminate popular single-track motorized riding loop opportunities on National Recreational Trails that allow for this use as well as on other single-track trails that are known nationally for their technical nature and the high elevation experience they provide. This reduction in motorized use would concentrate use in the remaining areas and could lead to increased resource damage on those sites.

The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act on 1960 emphasizes that national forests should be managed to best meet the needs of the American people and be sustainable in the long-term. Motorized use is a legitimate and appropriate way for people to enjoy the national forest and the agency must strike a balance in managing all types of activities on the national forest land (described in more detail below).

I believe closure of the routes as described in Alternative E would decrease the multiple use opportunities that are reasonable and prudent to maintain, while Alternative B (Modified) provides for a mix of motorized and non-motorized use for a broader range of users and will be sustainable.

Compared to Alternative B (Modified), Alternative E would not provide for a quality, motorized experience. Conversely, Alternative C, with its emphasis on motorized recreation, would result in greater overall benefits for motorized recreation; but would be the least beneficial to wildlife and watershed resources. I believe Alternative B (Modified) will achieve the objective of providing a manageable system of designated routes while also reducing impacts from motorized uses.

How Alternative B (Modified) Addresses My Responsibilities for Managing the Health and Diversity of Forest Resources and Providing Goods and Services to the Public

I also incorporated my responsibilities for managing the health and diversity of forest resources and providing goods and services to the public as outlined in the National Forest Management Act and Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act into this final decision. Implementation of the specific actions described under each subarea will,

1. Balance the current and future recreational desires of the public with Forest Service responsibilities for wildlife and fisheries management –

- a. With respect to wildlife management, as described in the FEIS, under the current situation, wildlife security areas of adequate size make up 41 percent of the RWD area. The effectiveness of these security areas (cover, forage and connectivity) is also adequate under the existing situation. Changes due to selection of Alternative B (Modified) for other reasons further enhances this situation, increasing security areas by 3 percent when comparing to Alternative A, the existing condition (FEIS Chapter 3, Section 3.63). Adaptive management options described earlier in this document will also provide for addressing issues in the future if necessary.
- b. My decision further enhances habitat by prohibiting motor vehicle use of trails from November 1st through May 31st. This would allow single track motorized riding on trails from June 1st through October 31st including areas identified as elk production habitat. The Forest Plan guideline recommends a longer seasonal restriction if an activity would create adverse impacts to habitat. As described in the FEIS, adverse impacts cannot be attributed to trail riding specifically and existing habitat security is effective in terms of the habitat condition (forage, cover, and water) and the security area and connectivity. Therefore, I have selected a timing restriction that enhances habitat by providing the spring months of April and May where no motor vehicle use of trails would occur. In addition, my decision removes single track motorized use from some trails entirely.
- c. With respect to fisheries management, Alternative B (Modified) undertakes a restoration project and minimizes impacts to threatened greenback lineage cutthroat trout. (FEIS Section 3.3).
- d. Restoration of fens also supports rare plants and a variety of wildlife species. Specific actions are described under each Subarea above.

2. Balance the current and future recreational desires of the public with Forest Service responsibilities for water resources management –

- a. Spring Creek is the only stream affected by the project that is identified as an 'outstanding water' by the State of Colorado. Alternative B (modified) will continue

robust stream health and removing a culvert and road segment will result in restoration of the channel morphology leading to improved spring flows into the stream. (FEIS Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2 Water Quality b. Outstanding Waters)

- b. Alternative B (Modified) will not have an impact on impaired waters listed in Silver Creek (within the analysis area) and McPhee Reservoir (located downstream from the analysis area). All other stream segments within the RWD area currently meet water quality standards for their designated beneficial uses. (FEIS Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2)
- c. Currently, the waters within the Rico-West Dolores landscape meet water quality standards for sediment. My decision will reduce the risk of sediment delivery to the stream network by reducing intersections between roads and streams and by reducing the mileage of roads near streams. (FEIS Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2)
- d. At the sub-watershed scale, road densities are currently below Forest Plan guidelines for 1 mile per square mile and Alternative B (modified) provides a small additional overall reduction. In addition, trail realignments and developments would be applied in select areas. For these reasons, the proposed activities would not have an impact to municipal watersheds. (FEIS Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2)
- e. Road and trail realignments, decommissioning, along with implementation of mitigation measures identified in Alternative B (Modified) will eliminate or minimize impacts to fens, riparian areas, and wetlands from motorized use. (FEIS Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2)
- f. Timing restrictions prohibiting motorized use of trails prior to June 1st should allow for more drying of the trail system, which will lead to less trail damage due to premature use of the system.

3. *Balance the current and future recreational desires of the public with Forest Service responsibilities for forest management –*

- a. The designated system identified in Alternative B (Modified) will provide access for the variety of non-recreation uses of the National Forest. This includes, but is not limited to, commercial timber sales, firewood gathering, and outfitter and guide activities. (FEIS, Chapter 3, Section 3.10, 3.12).
- b. My decision reduces conflicts between livestock grazing operations and motor vehicle use although some conflicts may still occur. Trail and road maintenance will continue to include trail or road cattle guards at fence lines. (FEIS, Chapter 3, Section 3.9).

4. *Balance the current and future recreational desires of the public with Forest Service responsibilities with respect to the desires of local communities and affected private landowners –*

- a. Alternative B (Modified) addresses the concerns brought forward by the Town of Rico, residents of the Town of Rico and several other private landowners that have trails that bisect their properties. The desire of having non-motorized designations on some of these trails provided for an additional 30 miles of non-motorized opportunity in an area some felt lacked in that type of opportunity (FEIS Chapter 3, Section 3.12.3 and 3.14)

5. Balance the current and future recreational desires of the public between conflicting uses.

- a. My decision reduces conflicts between motor vehicle use of trails and those hunters that prefer a 'walk-in' nonmotorized hunting experience. Roads remain open for full size vehicle access to hunting areas. However, trail riding by single track motorized use would end on October 31st, eliminating trail use by single track motorized use during some big-game rifle seasons. In addition, my decision provides for 'walk-in' hunting opportunities in areas of stored roads or no roads. In addition the Black Mesa area provides 'walk-in' areas because the trails would be closed to use by motor vehicles starting September 8th (FEIS Chapter 3 Section 3.12.3).

In summary, while the other action alternatives would have met these statements to varying degrees as described in the FEIS, I believe that Alternative B (Modified) provides the best mix between recreational access and resource protection.

Minimum Road System and Road Designations Requirements in the TMR

The TMR requires the Forest Service to consider a number of factors, only one of which is the Minimum Road System. The roads I have identified for the Minimum Road System are necessary for recreation access to backcountry trailheads, personal use forest product utilization, accessing lands identified in the Forest Plan as suitable for timber production and livestock grazing, and providing recreation opportunities of scenic driving, dispersed camping and hunting (also identified in the Forest Plan). The FEIS Chapter 3 Sections 3.9, 3.10, 3.12 and 3.17 describe the relationship of the road system to these important public services.

Further, I considered the long-term sources of funding in designating the Minimum Road System. The FEIS describes the road maintenance costs and identified the various sources of funding (FEIS Chapter 3 Section 3.16.3). Short term investments in road decommissioning, and downgrading gravel surface roads to native surface roads, will result in long term reduce maintenance costs. Selection of Alternative B (Modified) generally reduces maintenance costs and balances the needs for transportation investments, resource needs, cost efficiencies, funding sources and budget expectations.

It is necessary to maintain open roads across soils types with a potential for mass movement in order to provide access for recreation and forest management in the RWD area. These roads provide access that cannot be provided without crossing these soil types. Re-locating is not likely to reduce impacts given the topography and engineered character of the existing alignments. Slides or slump events provide an opportunity for appropriate stabilization efforts,

and these efforts can be designed to realize appropriate safety standards and long term cost savings.

Alternative B (modified) minimizes adverse environmental impacts associated with road system. No new road construction is proposed. Small sections of unauthorized routes will be reconstructed and added to the Minimum Road System, and my decision includes road decommissioning.

My decision carries forward past management decisions for mixed use of licensed and unlicensed vehicles on forest roads. An engineering analysis did not recommend prohibiting unlicensed vehicles from any roads in the RWD area and such 'mixed use' will be monitored and if issues arise will be addressed in the future. The forest road system is an integral part of ATV and UTV riding opportunities. Therefore, I chose the 'Open to All Motor Vehicles' designation for all ML 2 and 3 roads.

General Trails Criteria in the TMR

In addition to the above listed topics, I considered the need for maintenance and administration that would arise if the uses under consideration were designated as well as the availability of resources for that maintenance and administration. My decision not only addresses designation of motor vehicle use on trails, but also how the physical location and characteristics of the trails affect the environment.

Alternative B (Modified) is a mix of physical actions and motor vehicle designations. Physical actions are aimed at reducing long-term maintenance costs, reducing environmental impacts, and increasing the overall sustainability of the trail system. My decisions to undertake on-the-ground projects will improve the trail experience for both the motorized and nonmotorized enthusiast and would often be necessary whether or not the trail is motorized.

Although my decision increases trail maintenance costs in the short term, it will decrease maintenance needs in the long term once trail developments such as turnpikes are installed and once trail re-alignments are implemented. The FEIS estimates the total cost of trail improvements (FEIS Chapter 3, Section 3.12.3).

Minimization Criteria

Context for the Decision and How I Applied the Criteria (36 CFR § 212.55 (b) with the Objective of Minimizing Motor Vehicle Use on Trails and Areas

In addition to the general criteria listed above, my designations of motor vehicle use on trails require me to consider, with the objective of minimizing, the effects of those designations on the resources and uses listed at 36 CFR 212.55 (b). See Attachment 6.

Alternative B (Modified) includes motor vehicle designations for ATVs, UTVs (less than 62-inches wide, and single track motorized use on the OHV trails designated as Special Designation Open to Motor Vehicles 62-inches or less. Alternative B (Modified) also designates some 'single track' trails 'Motorcycle Only' i.e. available for single track motorized use.

“Minimization,” as used in the regulations and the underlying Executive Order is not defined. However, the EO states a clear purpose focusing on the outcomes of protection of resources, safety of users and minimization of conflicts. The EO’s clear outcome based purpose is stated as follows:

“Section 1: Purpose: It is the purpose of this order to establish policies and provide for procedures that will ensure that the use of off-road vehicles on public lands will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands, to promote the safety of all users of those lands, and to minimize conflicts among the various uses of those lands.”

To that end, the following discussions provide what I believe are important contexts for understanding what minimization means, here and now, on the Dolores Ranger District. It is also important to the understanding of why I believe my decision represents the feasible, prudent, and reasonable application of these criteria.

Prior to the 1980s, and outside of limited localized prohibitions at that time, motor vehicle use was permissible virtually anywhere on the San Juan National Forest (including much of the RWD project area) subject only to terrain, vegetation, and vehicle performance limitations. By the early seventies, off road use of motor vehicles was still largely limited to occasional four wheel drive vehicles and single track motorized use. Nationally, however, off road use was growing rapidly and environmental concerns were heightened.

In responses to these concerns, President Nixon signed Executive Order 11644 to address use of off-road vehicles on the public lands in 1972. Section 3 of the EO required each agency to, “develop and issue regulations and administrative instructions... to provide for administrative designations of the specific areas and trails on the public lands on which the use of off-road vehicles may be permitted, and areas in which the use of off-road vehicles may not be permitted...” The Forest Service promulgated the necessary regulations (see 43 CFR 20006, May 10, 1978 and 36 CFR 295, 2004). Section 3 of the Executive Order, besides requiring the initial designations discussed above, also places constraints and conditions on designations for off-road vehicle use. In general, it requires “that designation of such areas and trails will be based upon the protection of the resources of the public lands, promotion of the safety of all users of those lands, and minimization of conflicts among the various uses of those lands.”

In the 1970’s, the San Juan National Forest published ‘Travel Maps’ which provided some seasonal timing restrictions for motor vehicle use and some areas closed to motor vehicle travel. These early travel maps were later incorporated into the San Juan National Forest Visitor Maps, which included Forest Orders that regulated motor vehicle use. The 1982 San Juan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan provided additional management direction for recreation in specific management areas, set standards and guidelines for the protection of resources and identified road density guidelines to provide for the health of watersheds. Monitoring of the Forest Plan addressed a variety of resource topics including road and trail construction and reconstruction. The 2013 Forest Plan replaced previous

versions and provides updated direction. The task was not to build a new travel plan from scratch. Instead, it was to examine past management actions, validate and carry forward those past actions, or make adjustments where new information, including extensive public involvement, indicated it is feasible, reasonable, and prudent to do so. This is the approach set out in Sec. 8 of EO 11644.

Congress has established the purposes for which National Forests are to be managed. “National Forests are established and shall be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes” and these surface resources are to be administered for, “multiple use and sustained yield” (Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960).

“Multiple use” means: The management of all the various renewable surface resources of the national forests so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people; making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions; that some land will be used for less than all of the resources; and harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources, each with the other, without impairment of the productivity of the land, with consideration being given to the relative values of the various resources, and not necessarily the combination of uses that will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output.” (16 U.S.C. § 531).

Included is the entire definition of “Multiple use” from the Act here because, in considering and applying the language of the E.O. to National Forest lands, it must be considered in context of the laws that existed at the time it was enacted as well as in light of all the laws Congress has passed. This affects how we consider, weigh, and manage all the resources and values of our National Forests and, in this case, the Dolores Ranger District.

The Forest Plan, in essence, defines what the agency’s multiple-use mandate on the San Juan National Forest including the Dolores Geographic Area. As such, it frames what is “feasible, prudent, and reasonable” as I apply the TMR’s “minimization criteria” to this decision. This is important because, on the surface, the EO and TMR criteria only set out to “minimize” certain effects of off-road motor vehicle, implying an “if-an-effect-restrict-use” policy with no mention or explicit allowance for finding balance between the various uses of these National Forest lands; there is no explicit allowance for some amount of conflict or effect. The Forest Plan, under the mandates of the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act and National Forest Management Act, on the other hand, had to tackle this very question. Important programmatic decisions made in the Forest Plan include Management Areas where uses are prohibited, allowable or restricted based on the suitability determinations made under the grazing, timber, and travel programs. The Forest Plan describes what lands are suitable for various uses, including motorized uses, and what uses are compatible with each other (or where they may be compatible, even if some level of “conflict” would exist). The plan geographically separates

some uses providing, for example, nonmotorized/nonmechanized areas and areas of both motorized and nonmotorized opportunities.

I am mindful that forest plans are permissive by nature. While certain uses may be permissible under the plan, the plan itself does not require those uses to occur. Nevertheless, the Forest Plan provides my framework for what is “feasible, prudent, and reasonable” as I applied the TMR’s “minimization criteria” to this decision and, to the extent that current resource conditions allow, I should strive towards achieving the overall balance envisioned by the plan.

This analysis is timely because it also allows the evaluation and application of adjusted standards and guidelines for riparian, wetlands and fens and route density guidelines for key wildlife habitats and sub-watersheds described in the 2013 Forest Plan, which replaces previous versions. It is noteworthy that, with respect to travel management in the RWD area, the plan states: *“A number of travel landscapes on the SJNF have not undergone site-specific overground travel management planning prior to publication of this LRMP. For these landscapes, travel suitability as depicted on Figure 2.13.1 primarily reflects current management and is subject to change through a plan amendment based on site-specific analysis that will be completed through the travel management planning process. Travel management planning will be initiated in these areas after this LRMP is finalized, and in some cases is already underway.”* (San Juan LRMP, 2013). However, this does not preclude consideration of the Forest Plan’s Desired Conditions and Objectives that describe multiple uses and striking a balance between environmental effects and the provision of multiple goods and services.

Except for the comparatively limited focus of the EO, there are only nominal differences in practice between the Executive Order’s purpose to “minimize conflict among the various uses of those lands” and the responsibility to integrate and manage the “various renewable surface resources of the national forests so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people.” This dual integration requirement is a daunting task. However, the Executive Order, the Multiple-use Sustained Yield Act, Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act, and National Forest Management Act neither require nor anticipate that the current decision be the ultimate answer for all time. Each anticipate periodic adjustment as conditions and needs change.

As with previous adjustments, what is right for today will be monitored and further adjusted over time. As before, I have emergency closure authority at hand for urgent needs such as resource damage or user safety, and through an established public process, I can consider new proposals adjusting motorized use as monitoring results suggest.

Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that the EO and TMRs’ “minimization criteria” apply only to the part of my decision concerning motor vehicle designations on trails (no area designations are proposed). These criteria do not apply to the final decision’s identification of the minimum road system. We have achieved a net reduction in roads and made decisions for

important repairs to the remaining system to minimize impacts to the same resource values the EO and TMR minimization criteria are intended to protect.

Compliance with (36 CFR § 212.55 (b)) – Minimization Criteria

Access management is one of the most complex issues currently facing federal land managers. The Forest Service approaches access and travel management with the recognition that it affects every program and every person served. The overarching aim is to seek an array of access opportunities on NFS lands while considering physical conditions, resource needs, user conflicts, and user safety. Providing a “fair” allocation between different forest users is a challenging task and the Dolores Ranger District recognizes it cannot equally meet the needs of all recreation groups nor base it on the percentage of users in each user group.

The ID team went through a Trail Analysis Process, similar to the Travel Analysis Process required for roads. Criteria were developed that address the first two bullets below. Other criteria were also developed to address other resource concerns that are not directly applicable to the “minimization criteria”. The analysis incorporated information from the public, district personnel, and acquired and provided research to address the last two bullets {Project File Folder Public Engagement Summary, Trail Analysis Criteria}.

I incorporated the criteria for motor vehicle designations of trails early in the analysis process where the Proposed Action for Scoping included reducing conflict between recreation uses, reducing impacts to wetlands, reducing conflicts with populated areas, reducing conflicts with livestock grazing operations (‘other forest uses’). Early in the analysis process Forest Plan standards and guidelines (many of which mirror the ‘minimization criteria’) influenced project proposals. Additional field reviews and analysis, documented in the project record and FEIS Appendix E, refined aspects of the Proposed Action for Scoping into Alternative B and other alternatives were analyzed. Please refer to the History of the Analysis and Timeline Attachment 4. This document contains a timeline of the analysis process and associated project file documents associated with each step. Also, refer to Forest Plan Standards Attachment 5.

The members of the ID Team considered every motorized trail for possible change of designation. In addition, “Unauthorized” or “user-created” routes were also considered for designation in the case of the 62-inch trail locations (per FSM 7709.55, §21.5 (3), but not for single track trails.

When considering this decision to select Alternative B (Modified) I incorporated the following:

Damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, and other forest resources:

- Motor vehicle areas were considered but not analyzed in detail in part due to potential damage to rare plant habitat (FEIS Section 3.2)
- Utilize Forest Protection Officers for local education/outreach to motorized users.

- Apply design criteria for trail construction and maintenance from FSM 2309.18. and implement trail realignments and improvements as described in Attachment 6 to restore wetlands.
- This criteria was considered in the decision to manage Spring Creek, Ryman Creek and Winter trails as nonmotorized (see subarea discussion above).
- Currently, the waters within the Rico-West Dolores Landscape meet water quality standards for sediment.
- Many trails occur on soils prone to mass movement however the trails do not increase the potential for movement, and trail maintenance crews would respond to slumps or slides if they occur.
- The decision to permanently prohibit cross country travel will minimize impacts to rare plant habitats including alpine areas above treeline.

Harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats:

- This criteria was considered and applied to the decision to prohibit on cross-country travel by motor vehicles and to implement timing restrictions on motor vehicle use of trails both of which reduces impacts to all types of wildlife. Motor vehicle areas were considered but not analyzed in detail in part due to potential disruption of wildlife habitat (FEIS Section 3.2).
- Effective elk habitat is enhanced by the implementation of timing restrictions on motor vehicle use of trails. Removing single track motorized use from trails, for other reasons, expanded habitat security areas. When combined with my decision for roads, security habitat is increased by 7 percent.
- For wildlife species associated with streams, riparian, wetlands and fens (fish amphibians, birds) actions will minimize disruption of wetland habitat. Disturbance to greenback lineage cutthroat trout habitat was a factor in the decision not to designate Spring Creek trail as motorized.

Conflicts between motor vehicle use and existing or proposed recreation uses of National Forest System or neighboring Federal lands:

- To provide motorized travel opportunities while minimizing effects to natural resources and conflicts of uses, my decision will add a new seasonal use restriction. It will prohibit motor vehicle use on trails during the period of November 1st to May 31st; use will be permitted from June 1st to October 31st. In the Black Mesa area, use of the Black Mesa 62-inch trail loops will be prohibited from September 8th to May 31st; use will be permitted on the Black Mesa trails from June 1st to September 7th. This timing restriction was in response to public comments regarding conflicts of uses between non- motorized and motorized archery hunters.

- By designating proposed trails for UTVs, implementation would be done to change these to a more sustainable design using USFS trail specifications, thus enhancing safety, the recreation opportunity, and resource protections. Better control of UTV travel is expected, reducing potential resource impacts and conflicts of use. Clearer understanding by the public would result in better user compliance on National Forest System lands
- A reduction in the miles of motorized trails has the potential to increase conflict of uses between motorized and nonmotorized uses, to concentrate users, and to displace some users, which may impact some visitors' recreation experiences. The presence of single track motorized use will likely increase on motorized trails. It is reasonable to expect that individuals that do not wish to experience intermittent sound or presence of single track motorized use will seek out nonmotorized trails in the area. Signing, maps, brochures, and visitor contacts will help set expectations that in turn will reduce conflict.

Compatibility of motor vehicle use with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account sound, emissions, and other factors:

- To move towards the San Juan LMRP Desired Condition 3.27.4: "Trails accessing SJNF-administered lands from within town boundaries emphasize non-motorized recreation modes in order to emphasize the community's quiet-use character."
- To address comments from the Town of Rico and from several Rico areas residents requesting compliance with the aforementioned desired condition, no single track motorized trail designations were made for trails that lead directly into the Town of Rico.

Conflicts between different classes of Motor Vehicles

- Conflicts were not identified in public comment regarding ATV, UTV, and single track motorized use of the 62-inch trails. Trail design will accommodate these three types of motor vehicles and signing/brochures will alert riders to the presence of these various vehicle types. My decision places more single track motorized use on Forest roads to make connections. These roads currently have low use by vehicles, are rough, and require slower speeds so conflicts are not anticipated.

Application of the minimization criteria requires a sufficient analysis to allow consideration of minimizing effects in compliance with legal requirements. Minimizing effects, however, does not mean eliminating all effects. Eliminating all effects would prevent the Forest from meeting the purpose and need for this project, which is to designate a system of roads, trails and areas to meet transportation, access, and recreation objectives. Considering minimization of impacts, suggest that the Forest have a designated system to meet transportation and recreation needs, while minimizing the impacts from that designated system to an acceptable level.

36 CFR §212.55 (b) does not require that every designation choice be made in favor of natural resources. By including the above measures and constraints in my decision, I believe that I have, to the best of my ability, with the motorized designations in Alternative B (Modified) complied with the intent of 36 CFR§212.55(b) to minimize resource effects and user conflicts in a feasible, prudent and reasonable manner in light of the Forest Service’s multiple-use mandate.

Findings Related To Laws and Regulations

To the best of my knowledge, my decision is consistent with all laws, regulations, and agency policy relevant to this project.

National Forest Management Act

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) provides for balanced consideration of all resources. It requires the Forest Service to provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives, and within the multiple-use objectives of a land management plan adopted pursuant to this section, provide, where appropriate, to the degree practicable, for steps to be taken to preserve the diversity of tree species similar to that existing in the region controlled by the plan. See the paragraphs below specific to the San Juan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan).

Forest Plan

The Forest Plan is in accordance with the transition provisions of the current USFS planning regulations (36 CFR 219.17(b)(3)) that permit use of a previous 1982 version for the purpose of amending the LRMP. The RWD project was initiated on December 15th, 2014 when the Forest Service published a *Proposed Action for Travel Management of the Rico West Dolores Roads and Trails* as a starting point for the NEPA process. Based on comments received, the deciding official chose to document the environmental analysis in an Environmental Impact Statement and a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS was published on June 5th, 2015. Because the project was initiated within the timeframes set forth in the transition provisions, the proposed Forest Plan amendment is subject to 1982 Planning Rule regulations 219.17 (f), which state that “[i]f the change resulting from the amendment is determined not to be significant for the purposes of the planning process, the Forest Supervisor may implement the amendment following appropriate public notification and satisfactory completion of NEPA procedures.”

Management activities are to be consistent with the Forest Plan ((16 USC 1604 (i)). Consistency is achieved through progress towards relevant Desired Conditions and Objectives described in the Forest Plan and compliance with Standards and Guidelines. Deviations from Guidelines are allowed when rationale is provided.

The Forest Plan sustainable ecosystems strategy includes a four-pronged approach: 1) the designation and management of protected areas, 2) the application of ecosystem management using sustainable ecosystem concepts, 3) the development and application of the Forest Plan

components (desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines) that provide a framework for the management and preservation of ecosystems, and 4) the monitoring of effects of management activities and application of adaptive management principles in response to monitoring results.

In general, protected areas provide relatively unaltered, connected areas of forest vegetation that serve as conservation reserves and refuges to protect the native biodiversity within them and will provide wildlife movement corridors and linkage areas that connect landscapes and habitats. Protected areas within the RWD area include the Colorado Roadless Areas, Grizzly Peak Research Natural Area and Lizard Head Wilderness. Outside protected areas, the land is subject to greater management emphasis in order to supply a wider diversity of goods and services under multiple use management. Forest Plan components are developed to assure management use of the land occurs in a sustainable manner that is not limiting to the ecosystem, including terrestrial wildlife species.

I have evaluated the alternatives in terms of meeting Forest Plan standards. Alternative B (Modified) will meet Forest Plan standards and will contribute towards reaching Forest Plan goals and objectives. The following sections in Chapter 3 of the FEIS include Forest Plan information; Section 3.2 Watershed, Riparian and Water Resources, Section 3.3 Fisheries, Section 3.4 Geology and Soils, Section 3.6 Terrestrial Wildlife, Section 3.12 Recreation, and Section 3.16 Transportation (Roads). Excerpts from the Forest Plan are also listed in Appendix F of the FEIS. For a list of Forest Plan standards please refer to Attachment 5 of this Record of Decision.

The biological evaluations and biological assessments prepared for fisheries, plants and wildlife resources confirm that this project will not impact the viability of sensitive, or threatened species. See discussion below regarding the Threatened and Endangered Species Act.

Under a separate Draft Record of Decision, the San Juan Forest Supervisor describes project-level amendments to the Forest Plan Overground Travel Suitability Map and the Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Map. These amendments are compatible with my decision regarding motor vehicle route designations and the minimum road system. The updated maps will reflect the new choices for motor vehicle use and guide future decisions specific to the Rico West Dolores Area.

Executive Order 11644 as Amended by Executive Order 11989

In the 1970s, the cumulative impacts of motorized vehicle traffic, road construction, and timber harvest on watersheds became a concern. In 1972 Executive Order (E.O.) 11644, as amended by E.O 11989 (1977), was signed and states: “It is the purpose of this order to establish policies and provide for procedures that will ensure that the use of off-road vehicles on public lands will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands, promote the safety of all users of those lands, and to minimize conflicts among the various uses of those lands.” The Executive Order directs agencies to designate the “specific areas and trails on public lands on

which use the off-road vehicles may be permitted, and areas in which the use of off-road vehicles may not be permitted” (section 3). The TMR includes many of the same requirements as these Executive Orders but the TMR did not replace them.

I believe the effects of off-road motor vehicle use have been further ‘minimized’ by my decision. See the Decision and Rationale section of this document. Previous and ongoing management actions, both programmatic and site-specific, have reasonably reduced and minimized the adverse effects of off-road vehicle use and conflict among the uses of the Forest. I find the FEIS for this project demonstrates continuing consideration of the general criteria (roads and trails) and the ‘minimization criteria’ (trails). Alternative B (Modified) protects resources, promotes the safety of users, and minimizes conflicts among the various uses of the project area.

Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act

Congress has established the purposes for which National Forests are to be managed. “National Forests are established and shall be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes” and these surface resources are to be administered for, “multiple use and sustained yield” (Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960).

“Multiple use” means: The management of all the various renewable surface resources of the national forests so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people; making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions; that some land will be used for less than all of the resources; and harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources, each with the other, without impairment of the productivity of the land, with consideration being given to the relative values of the various resources, and not necessarily the combination of uses that will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output.” (16 U.S.C. § 531).

Through allocation of allowable uses and descriptions of desired conditions and objectives, the Forest Plan provides a general ‘zoning’ of recreation opportunity at a broad scale across the San Juan National Forest. Examples include establishment of Management Areas with allowable uses identified for each. Of the five Management Areas that occur within the RWD project area, only Management Area 1 – Wilderness prohibits motor vehicle use. Management Areas 2 and 3 allow restricted motor vehicle use and Management Areas 4 and 5 describe motor vehicle use as allowable. Restricted activities are those that are allowed, but may only be allowed during certain times of the year, within specific areas, or under specific conditions. The Colorado Roadless Areas comprise the majority of MA3 lands in the RWD project area so motor vehicle use on roads does not occur. Alternative B (Modified) would manage trails in MA3 areas as single track motorized trails not managed for ATV or UTV travel. Off-trail travel would be prohibited. Alternative B (Modified) meets the Forest Plan definition of restricted motor

vehicle use for MA3. The MA4 areas are developed recreation areas along Highway 145 and the County Road 38. Alternative B (Modified) does not change current motor vehicle use in these areas except to prohibit off-road and off-trail travel on a permanent basis. MA5 areas, where most forest roads are located, include recreation, forest products, and other goods and services. Alternative B (Modified) continues forest roads access for hunting, gathering forest products, livestock grazing, and timber production. Roads in MA5 area also provide access to trailhead parking for the trail system in unroaded areas.

Clean Water Act and Safe Water Drinking Act

Compliance with the Clean Water Act and the Safe Water Drinking Act is discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.2 Watershed, Riparian, and Water Resources).

Spring Creek is the only stream affected by the project that is identified as an 'outstanding water' by the State of Colorado. Alternative B (modified) will continue robust stream health and removing a culvert and road segment will result in restoration of the channel morphology and improved spring flows into the stream.

My decision will not have an impact on impaired waters listed in Silver Creek (within the analysis area) and McPhee Reservoir (located downstream from the analysis area). All other stream segments within the RWD area currently meet water quality standards for their designated beneficial uses.

The 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) Amendments established a new emphasis on preventing contamination problems through source water protection and enhanced water system management. The communities of Dolores, Cortez, and Dove Creek depend upon the Dolores River and McPhee Reservoir for municipal water supplies. Although most municipalities obtain their water from surface water sources, homeowner associations and campgrounds depend on groundwater for their supply.

The Silver Creek Watershed, a municipal watershed for the Town of Rico, has no existing National Forest system roads or trails and my decision does not include any new roads or trails in this watershed.

Currently, the waters within the Rico-West Dolores landscape meet water quality standards for sediment. My decision will reduce the risk of sediment delivery to the stream network by reducing intersections between roads and streams and by reducing the mileage of roads near streams. Stream crossings by roads by stream mile are reduced from 0.35 to 0.30 and miles of road within 100 feet of a stream is reduced from 28.9 to 25.6. Stream crossings by motorized trails would also be reduced, however, the trail tread would remain in place to accommodate nonmotorized uses. Stream crossings by trails by stream miles is reduced from 0.16 to 0.11 and motorized trail miles within 100 feet of streams is reduced from 19 to 13.8.

At the watershed scale, there would not be a measureable difference between action alternatives for sediment delivery to the stream network. In addition, trail realignments and

developments would be applied in select areas. For these reasons, the proposed activities would not have an impact to municipal watersheds.

Endangered Species Act

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) directs that actions authorized, funded, or carried out by federal agencies do not jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered (T & E) species, or result in the adverse modification of habitat designated as critical to these species.

As there are no threatened or endangered plant species known to occur on the Dolores District, consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was not required and a biological assessment (BA) was not prepared. A biological evaluation (BE) for sensitive plants was prepared and analysis of impacts to rare plants is documented in FEIS Section 3.5. There is one known population sensitive plant species within the project area. In addition, several species have potential habitat within the project area across a variety of vegetation types. Stonecrop gilia, Missouri milkvetch, Aztec milkvetch, lesser yellow lady's slipper orchid, Smith's draba, west silver bladderpod, violet milkvetch, lesser panicled sedge, English sundew, giant helleborine orchid (or stream orchid), Chamisso's cottongrass, slender cottongrass, Lone Mesa snakeweed, Colorado tansy-aster, Mancos shale pakera, Kotzebue grass-of-Parnassus, cushion bladderpod, Arizona willow, sageleaf willow, sphagnum, Baltic sphagnum, largeflower triteleia, lesser bladderpod. These were organized by vegetation types of fens, riverine, alpine, ponderosa pine, and sagebrush. Alternative B (modified) may adversely impact individuals, but is not likely to result in a loss of viability on the planning area, nor cause a trend to federal listing or a loss of species viability range wide.

Formal consultation with the USFWS regarding effects to the threatened greenback cutthroat trout and Canada lynx was initiated in August 2017 when a BA was sent for their review. Preliminary determinations for these species are "May Affect, is Not Likely to Adversely Affect". The consultation for this project included updates to a previous consultation for travel management projects on the Dolores District. On September 27, 2017 the USFWS concurred with the 'not likely to adversely affect' findings.

Four threatened fish species that reside in rivers downstream from projects in the Dolores and Colorado Rivers were evaluated, and the project effect determination is 'No Effect' because this project does not include water depletions. Other species with no habitat in the project area and/or no potential for effect were not evaluated further; Mexican spotted owl, southwestern willow flycatcher, New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, western yellowbilled cuckoo, and Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly.

A BE for sensitive fish species was prepared and information regarding these species is located in FEIS Chapter 3 section 3.3 Fisheries. Alternative B (modified) will not alter current population trends or habitat trends on a Forest wide scale for MIS fish species. Alternative B (modified) may impact individual flannelmouth sucker, bluehead sucker and roundtail chub (Sensitive

Species) but is not likely to result in a loss of viability in the planning area, cause a trend toward federal listing, or loss of species viability range wide. This project has no impacts to other sensitive fish species. No genetically pure populations of Colorado River cutthroat trout are present. As described above, greenback Colorado cutthroat trout were addressed in the biological assessment.

A BE for terrestrial wildlife species classified as sensitive by the Regional Forester was also prepared and incorporated into FEIS Chapter 3 section 3.6 Terrestrial Wildlife. No further analysis was needed for species that are not known or suspected to occur in the project area and for which no suitable habitat is present. Species for which no changes to habitat are anticipated but human disturbance to individuals is possible, were evaluated, as well as species for which both changes in habitat and human disturbance to individuals could occur. The effect determination is 'May adversely impact individuals, but not likely to result in a loss of viability in the Planning Area, nor cause a trend toward federal listing'. The effects of Alternative B (modified) are not expected to be significant, and the species and its habitat will remain well distributed for the following species; Olive-sided flycatcher, white-tailed ptarmigan, purple martin, boreal toad, northern leopard frog, hoary bat, North American wolverine, rocky mountain bighorn sheep, American bald eagle, American peregrine falcon, black swift, Lewis's woodpecker.

Environmental Justice Act

Compliance with Executive Order 12898 is discussed in the FEIS Chapter 3 Section 3.13 Socioeconomic Considerations. The Executive Order directs federal agencies to identify and address the issue of environmental justice: adverse human health and environmental effects that disproportionately impact minority and low-income populations.

Given high rates of poverty and presence of minority populations in the project area, the FEIS Chapter 3 Section 3.13 Socioeconomic Considerations addressed the potential for management actions to disproportionately and adversely affect minority and low-income individuals. Roads in the RWD area provide key access to forest products for local communities. Alternative B changes road status to decommissioned where it would no longer be appropriate to encourage public motor vehicle use on those old roadbeds. While potentially adverse, it is not anticipated that these effects would be borne disproportionately by minority or low income populations.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Alternative B (Modified) provides adequate conservation measures for migratory birds. Overall, impacts on forest land birds are expected to be minimal and are not expected to impact species viability (FEIS, Chapter 3 Section 3.6.7).

National Historic Preservation Act, Archaeological Resources Protection Act, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act

Federal agencies consider the potential effects of their management activities on historic properties by conducting surveys to locate cultural properties and by assessing the results of those inventories. The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and its implementing regulations require that agencies consider the effects of their undertakings on historic properties that have been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Federal agencies must also consider American Indian traditional uses, belief systems, religious practices, and lifeway values.

GIS mapping of known sites and field survey was conducted. Tribal consultation with approximately 26 tribes and pueblos that are culturally affiliated and traditionally associated with the SJNF also occurred. Should any previously unrecorded cultural resources be discovered during the course of ground disturbing activities, those activities will cease in the immediate area of the discovery until a qualified archaeologist can visit the location and make a complete assessment. The qualified archaeologist would also share new information with the culturally affiliated tribes. With adherence to the Design Features (Attachment 3), this project is not anticipated to have adverse effects on Heritage Resources.

Hunting rights currently apply only to the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe, acknowledged when the tribe sued the State of Colorado for their historical hunting rights in 1978. The rights were granted to the tribe under a consent decree that gives enrolled members of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe the right to hunt deer and elk in the Brunot area for subsistence, religious, or ceremonial purposes. The RWD project area encompasses a portion of the Brunot area. Under Alternative B (Modified), access remains similar to current conditions. Route designations apply only to general public use of the road and trail system. Administrative or permitted access decisions are made separately on a case-by-case, site-specific basis. Access under the Brunot Agreement is not affected.

National Trails System Act

The act establishes a National Trail System containing national recreation, scenic, historic, and connecting or side trails for the purpose of providing trail recreational opportunities. It also encourages the use of volunteers in the trail program. This decision does not change National Recreation Trail designations.

Surface Transportation Assistance Act

This act establishes criteria for forest highways and defines forest roads and forest development roads and trails.

Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands:

Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, requires Federal agencies to minimize loss of wetlands and wetland quality through consideration of effects and minimization of new construction in wetlands.

There is no significant difference in the Maintenance Level 2 and 3 roads that are within 100 feet of mapped riparian areas when Alternative B (Modified) is compared to the existing condition. Road maintenance will minimize impacts through proper drainage. My decision would remove roads from approximately 2 miles of mapped riparian areas where ML1 stored roads are decommissioned. Off-road travel by ATVs, UTVs and full size vehicles was identified as a concern in the headwaters of Fish Creek and Lone Cone areas. My decision will reduce impacts to riparian by discouraging use in sensitive wetland and riverine areas through physical barriers and road/trail realignments in the Fish Creek area. Reconstruction of NFSR 534 (Lone Cone) in the Lone Cone area would halt the pioneering of routes through wetlands. Loops in the Lone Cone area would provide recreational opportunities in appropriate locations.

Based on hydrologist fieldwork, current motorized trails are having some level of impact on 37.3 acres of palustrine wetlands. These include the Winter, East Fork, South Calico and North Calico Trails. Alternative B (Modified) would remove single track motorized use as a user group from the Winter Trail, however, the trail treads would remain in place for nonmotorized use. My decision would implement trail realignments and trail developments to improve palustrine wetlands on the East Fork, and Calico North Trails (Attachment 2). Although frequent maintenance would still be necessary, new trail layout and design, including alignment and trail developments, will reduce the amount required. Field review of South Calico determined that the primary impact is livestock grazing not trail use.

Other trails pass through riverine riparian vegetation or meadows. The FEIS includes a map of motorized trails and riparian vegetation under the current condition. Trails that were field checked where no wetland restoration was identified include Johnny Bull, Willow Divide, the portion of East Fork Trail that has already been re-routed, East Twin Springs, Priest Gulch, Ryman, Rough Canyon, Little Bear, and Bear Creek. In the RWD landscape, trail users tend to stay on the trail tread and do not damage adjacent vegetation. In those areas where trail users do deviate from the trail to avoid wet areas, this decision will authorize corrective actions to be implemented to decrease or eliminate this situation. My decision would establish long-term limitations on off-trail motor vehicle travel which restricts travel through riverine riparian vegetation adjacent to trail treads.

Executive Orders 11988, Floodplain Management

Executive Order 11988 requires Federal agencies to reduce the risk of flood losses and preserve floodplains by limiting new construction in floodplains. No new road construction would occur.

Executive Order 13112 Invasive Species

Executive Order 13112 of February 3, 1999 (Invasive Species), called upon executive departments and agencies to take steps to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species, and to support efforts to eradicate and control invasive species that are established. In 2016, the order was amended and directs actions to continue coordinated Federal prevention and control efforts related to invasive species.

Federal Noxious Weed Act

Public Law 93-639, defines a noxious weed is one that causes disease or has other adverse effects on people or their environment and therefore is detrimental to the agriculture and commerce of the United States and to the public health.

Wilderness Act of 1984

The Lizard Head Wilderness was established under this Act. My decision maintains road access to trailheads. Adjacent to the project area, Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection legislation designated the new Hermosa Creek Wilderness area, however the new Wilderness Area is not immediately adjacent to or directly affected by motor vehicle use in the RWD area. Alternative B (Modified) includes actions to discourage illegal off-trail travel into this new wilderness area.

Other Considerations

Colorado Roadless Rule

The FS has inventoried and studied Roadless Areas since the 1970s. Roadless Areas are generally defined as areas in a National Forest or National Grassland that (1) are larger than 5,000 acres (in the west) or, if smaller, contiguous to a designated wilderness or primitive area; and (2) contain no roads; and (3) have been inventoried by the FS for possible inclusion into the Wilderness Preservation System. Colorado Roadless Areas (CRA) inventory was updated in 2009 during rulemaking for the *Colorado Roadless Rule (36CFR294)*. CRAs are divided into Upper Tier areas and Non-Upper Tier areas. Upper tier areas have fewer exceptions for roads, linear corridors, or tree cutting than lower tier areas, but the desired roadless area characteristics would be the same between the two tiers.

Roads, developed facilities such as campgrounds and trailheads, parking for dispersed camping and ATV trails fall within areas that lie outside of the CRAs. Recreation trails, both motorized and nonmotorized are allowed activities in CRAs. In the RWD area, trails with the designation for single track motorized use would occur in keeping with semiprimitive recreation settings in the CRAs.

The FEIS Chapter 3 Section 3.15 Colorado Roadless Area Characteristics provides a discussion of roadless area characteristics identified in the rule. Alternative B (Modified) will maintain these characteristics which include, High quality or undisturbed soil, water and air, sources of public drinking water, diversity of plant and animal communities, habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate and sensitive species, and for those species dependent on large,

undisturbed areas of land, primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized and semi-primitive motorized classes of dispersed recreation, reference landscapes, natural-appearing landscapes with high scenic quality, traditional cultural properties and sacred sites, and other locally identified unique characteristics. All of the CRAs within the RWD project area were released from consideration as wilderness areas except for a small area adjacent to the Lizardhead Wilderness that is not affected by Alternative B (Modified). The *Rule* describes three general prohibited actions within CRAs, but allows some exceptions to those prohibited actions. The first prohibition is against tree cutting, sale, or removal, the second prohibition is against road construction and reconstruction in CRAs, and the third prohibition is against linear construction zones. Alternative B (Modified) does not include any of these prohibited activities.

National Recreation Trails

Calico NRT Establishment Report: This 1979 Report established the northernmost 6 miles of the Calico NRT as a National Recreation Trail. It lists motorcycle riding and other uses as recreational values of the Trail. The National Recreation Trail website lists the Calico NRT as 22 miles long and including the North Calico and South Calico sections.

Highline NRT Establishment Report: This 1979 Report established the 20 mile Highline Loop Trail. This trail includes portions of Bear Creek, Grindstone, Sharktooth, and Highline Trails (Indian Ridge in the Hermosa Landscape). The Grindstone section included motor vehicle use at the time the Highline Loop Trail was designated (USFS 1979a).

My decision does not change the National Recreation Trail designations identified in the reports listed above.

Watershed Condition Framework

The Watershed Condition Framework was completed in 2012 and used 12 indicators composed of attributes related to watershed processes. The indicators and their attributes are surrogate variables representing the underlying ecological functions and processes that affect soil and hydrologic function. The indicators were summarized into a final rating of good, fair, or poor. The FEIS Chapter 3 Section 3.2 includes a table, which displays ratings of good or fair for watersheds in the RWD project area. Roads were not identified as a major factor for watershed health. Currently, the waters within the RWD area meet water quality standards for sediment. The density of motor vehicle routes is currently below the Forest Plan guideline of 1 mile per square mile.

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Resource Category 1 Designation for Fens

Fens located in the Rico-West Dolores project area fall under Resource Category 1 Designation for Fens. The designation criterion for habitat in Resource Category 1 is "habitat to be impacted is of high value for evaluation species and is unique and irreplaceable on a national basis or in the ecoregion section." The mitigation goal for habitat in Resource Category 1 is "no loss of existing habitat value." The Service will recommend that all losses of existing fen habitat be prevented, as these one-of-a-kind areas cannot be replaced. Insignificant changes that do

not result in adverse impacts on habitat value may be acceptable provided they will have no significant cumulative impact.

There are 26 total sites from the Peatland Fen database within 100 feet of maintenance level 2-5 roads, roads open to all types of motor vehicle use. The majority of these sites were on the Taylor Mesa and Grindstone areas. It was determined through field verification that none of these roads is causing a negative impact with the exception of NFSR578B, which accesses Tin Can area. My decision will convert the road to a single track trail and reverse the downcutting in the fen complex that lies across both sides of Bolam pass.

Several motorized trails are currently within 100 feet of mapped fens, including; Rough Canyon Trail (435), South Calico (211), Winter Trail (202), East Fork Dolores Trail (638). These sites were field checked and it was determined that there currently are no impacts from trails on fens. In the case of the Rough Canyon Trail, the fen was mapped incorrectly making it appear that the trail bisected the fen, which was not the case on the ground. The 'unknown' fen located near South Calico Trail was actually a spring and small associated wetland. Winter Trail is not impacting the fen, but trail maintenance is needed to reduce impacts on other wetlands located along the trail. The East Fork Dolores Trail has already been realigned/re-routed so that it no longer goes through the fens. My decision includes a new 62-inch OHV trail in areas of high elevation wetlands. Final layout of these routes would occur during implementation and design features have been added to ensure final layout avoids any adverse impacts to fens (Attachment 3).

Local Land Use Plans

The FEIS Chapter 3 Section 3.14 describes local government plans for Montezuma and Dolores Counties and the Town of Rico. My decision is in line with these plans. County commissioners and representatives from the Town of Rico have participated the NEPA process.

Alternative B (Modified) provides a network of roads and trails that accommodate livestock grazing, timber harvesting, and gathering of wood products all of which are activities valued by county residents and listed in the land use plans. My decision responds to the Town of Rico's goals for providing nonmotorized trails for pedestrian and biking recreation and a broad range of outdoor activities.

Elderly and Disabled Populations

All people, including the elderly or those with disabilities, may use their motor vehicles on roads, trails, and areas designated for such use and identified on the MVUM. Restrictions on motorized use that are applied consistently to everyone are not discriminatory. This was addressed in the FEIS, Chapter 3, Section 3.12 Recreation. This concept also applies to providing special provisions for aging populations that may have limited mobility.

Other Alternatives Considered

Alternative A No Action: The No Action alternative is required under NEPA regulations (40 CFR §1502.14(d)). It represents the existing condition, and provides a baseline against which the effects of implementing the “action” alternatives are compared.

This alternative would continue current motor vehicle designations for roads and trails and would follow the designations displayed on the 2015 MVUM. Long-term restrictions on cross-country travel would need to be addressed by other NEPA analysis and Forest Orders. Roads would be maintained as identified in the road database Operational Maintenance Level. No roads would require dual delegation as a road and trail. The current mileage of roads, including ML1 stored roads, would remain on the forest road system. A minimum road system would not be identified at this time. Standard road and trail maintenance practices would continue. Reconstruction, realignment or extensive trail developments would not occur or would be considered on a case-by-case basis in separate NEPA analysis. New ATV/UTV trails would not be implemented and the existing Willow Divide trail would remain restricted to vehicles less than 50 inches. No timing restriction on motor vehicle use would occur. Removal of fish barriers would not occur at this time.

Table 1 displays the current road system including motor vehicle designations. Road numbers and names are listed in Attachment 2.

Table 2 Alternative A (No Action) Road Maintenance Level and Motor Vehicle Designations

Maintenance Level and Motor Vehicle Designation	Alternative A (No Action) Miles
ML2 Roads (Open to All Motor Vehicles and displayed on MVUM) (licensed and unlicensed vehicles)	108.32
ML3 Roads (Open to All Motor Vehicles and displayed on MVUM) (licensed and unlicensed vehicles)	92.74
ML 4 Roads (Open to All Motor Vehicles and displayed on MVUM) (licensed and unlicensed vehicles)	4.5
ML2-Administrative Roads (Not Designated for Public Motor Vehicle Use and not displayed on MVUM)	0
ML1 Roads** (Not designated for motor vehicle use and not displayed on MVUM) (stored)	169.16
Total National Forest System Road Miles	374.72
Total Road Miles Designated Open for All Motor Vehicles (public use and displayed on MVUM)	205.54

Table 2 displays the current trail system including motor vehicle designations. Trail names and numbers are listed in Attachment 2.

Table 3 Alternative A (No Action) Type of Trail and Trail Designations

Trail Designations	Alternative A (No Action)
Trails Open to Wheeled Vehicles 50" or less in Width	7
Special Vehicle Designation – Open to Wheeled Vehicles 62" or less in Width (miles of that include NFSR 727 (Willow Divide) designated as part of trail loop)	0
Trails Open to Single track motorized use Only (i.e., single-track trails to include single track motorized use and other nonmotorized uses)	114

The trail names are listed in Attachment 2 of this Record of Decision.

Alternative C – This alternative would reestablish single track motorized use on some, but not all, of the trails that would be closed to single track motorized use under alternative B. This includes a proposal for new trail to circumvent the Town of Rico from Burnett Creek. The Calico Trail and most of its connecting trails remain open to single track motorized use. A connection through Bear Creek is also maintained. It proposes new single track motorized trails in order to create connections and adds 20 miles of 62-inch trails (additional 5 miles in the Black Mesa area). Timing restrictions of motor vehicle use on trails would be less restrictive under this alternative than they would be under alternative B. The minimum road system would be same as alternative B. Minor additions to the nonmotorized trail system are the same as alternative B. The culvert would be removed for fish restoration the same as alternative B.

Table 4 displays the current road system including motor vehicle designations for Alternative C

Table 4 Alternative C Road Maintenance Level and Motor Vehicle Designations

Maintenance Level and Motor Vehicle Designation	Alternative C Miles
ML2 Roads (Open to All Motor Vehicles and displayed on MVUM) (licensed and unlicensed vehicles)	99
ML3 Roads (Open to All Motor Vehicles and displayed on MVUM) (licensed and unlicensed vehicles)	91.89
ML 4 Roads (Open to All Motor Vehicles and displayed on MVUM) (licensed and unlicensed vehicles)	0
ML2-Administrative Roads (Not Designated for Public Motor Vehicle Use and not displayed on MVUM)	7.53
ML1 Roads (Not designated for motor vehicle use and not displayed on MVUM) (stored)	125.5
Total National Forest System Road Miles	323.92
Total Road Miles Designated Open for All Motor Vehicles (public use and displayed on MVUM)	198.42

Table 5 displays the trail system including motor vehicle designations for Alternative C. The FEIS Chapter 2 lists trail names and FEIS Appendix A includes a map.

Table 5 Alternative C Miles of Trail by Trail Type and Designations

Trail Designations	Alternative C
Trails Open to Wheeled Vehicles 50" or less in Width	0
Special Vehicle Designation – Open to Wheeled Vehicles 62" or less in Width (miles of that include NFSR 727 (Willow Divide) designated as part of trail loop)	20
Trails Open to Single track motorized use Only (i.e., single-track trails to include single track motorized use and other nonmotorized uses)	100

*In Alternative C the 7 miles of 50" trail are proposed to be widened to 62"

Alternative D – This alternative focuses on a semiprimitive nonmotorized recreation setting in the Bear Creek drainage by removing single track motorized use from the entire drainage (Bear Creek trails and connecting trails). Alternative D would continue to provide a motorized single track riding trail system throughout the rest of the analysis area that would be similar to alternative C’s system. Alternative D would also include single track motorized use on the Calico NRT and most of its connecting trails. ATV/UTV trails miles would be the same as alternative B. Timing restrictions would be the same as those proposed under alternative C. The minimum road system would be same as alternative B. Minor additions to the nonmotorized trail system would be the same as alternative B. The culvert would be removed for fish restoration the same as alternative B.

Table 6 displays trail miles for Alternative D. The FEIS Chapter 2 lists trail names and FEIS Appendix A includes a map. Road miles are the same as Alternative C in Table 3 above.

Table 6 Alternative D Trail Miles and Designations

Trail Designations	Alternative D
Trails Open to Wheeled Vehicles 50" or less in Width	0
Special Vehicle Designation – Open to Wheeled Vehicles 62" or less in Width (miles of that include NFSR 727 (Willow Divide) designated as part of trail loop)	15
Trails Open to Single track motorized use Only (i.e., single-track trails to include single track motorized use and other nonmotorized uses)	88

Alternative E – Like alternative D, this alternative would provide a semiprimitive nonmotorized setting throughout the entire Bear Creek drainage and similarly, it would create nonmotorized settings on North Calico Trail (NRT) and its connecting trails, as well as in the East Fork Trail area. Motorized single track riding in this alternative would be focused on areas from Eagle Peak Trail south to Taylor Mesa. Timing restrictions would be the same as those under alternative C. ATV/UTV trail miles would be the same as alternative B. The minimum road system would be the same as alternative B. Minor additions to the nonmotorized trail system are proposed the same as alternative B. The culvert would be removed for fish restoration the same as alternative B.

Table 7 displays trail miles for Alternative E. The FEIS Chapter 2 lists trail names and FEIS Appendix A includes a map. Road miles are the same as Alternative C and D.

Table 7 Alternative E Trail Miles and Designations.

Trail Designations	Alternative E
Trails Open to Wheeled Vehicles 50” or less in Width	0
Special Vehicle Designation – Open to Wheeled Vehicles 62” or less in Width (miles of that include NFSR 727 (Willow Divide) designated as part of trail loop)	15
Trails Open to Single track motorized use Only (i.e., single-track trails to include single track motorized use and other nonmotorized uses)	65

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

The environmentally preferred Alternative is Alternative B which is different from Alternative B (Modified). Alternative B is the environmentally preferred alternative because it provides the most improvements to fens, wetlands, and fish habitat. The improvements to streams, fens, wetland, and riparian areas that also improve habitat for rare plants, threatened fish species, and riparian dependent wildlife species are described in the FEIS. Alternative B would also limit motorized trail riding for one additional month in the spring which would allow additional time for trails to ‘dry out’, however, nonmotorized uses of trails would still occur.

Administrative Review (Objection) Opportunities

Regulations at 36 CFR Part 218 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.

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 §21 8.8(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.

Implementation

Pursuant to 36 CFR 218.12, if objections are received, I may not sign the Record of Decision until the Reviewing Officer has responded in writing to all pending objections. Based on the discussions and findings in that review, I will issue a final decision. My decision will be consistent with the final review on the project.

If no objections are received, I may sign the Record of Decision five business days after the close of the objection filing period. Implementation may begin immediately after the Record of Decision is signed.

Implementation will occur under the Final Record of Decisions, which will be issued following the close of the Objection resolution period. 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 218.12(c)(2)). If an objection is received, the Final Record of Decision would not be signed until the close of the objection resolution process (36 CFR 219.58(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, and at least 30 days after the Federal Register notice of availability of the FEIS.

Implementation is estimated to begin in the 2018 field season.

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, project details, to obtain a copy of the FEIS or draft Record of Decision, or to obtain information about the Forest Service objection process, contact Derek Padilla or Deborah Kill at Dolores Ranger District, 29211 Hwy 184, Dolores, CO 81323, (970) 884-7296.

You may download the FEIS, this Draft Record of Decision and other relevant documents from <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=44918>