



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Idaho Panhandle  
National Forests

St. Joe Ranger District  
222 S. 7<sup>th</sup> St. Suite 1  
St. Maries, ID 83861  
(208) 245-2531

File Code: 1950  
Date: October 30, 2008

## St. Joe Ranger District Travel Management Proposed Action

### Greetings Friends and Neighbors of the St. Joe Ranger District!

We are beginning the next step in our travel management planning process on the St. Joe Ranger District (RD) of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF). We have developed the Forest Service's Proposed Action for public access travel management on the St. Joe RD and would like your input. This proposal does not include winter or over-snow travel. We may develop alternatives to this Proposed Action if comments from the public indicate we need to consider another alternative. I want to remind you that the Proposed Action is only a starting point.

We encourage you to share your comments on the Proposed Action. **Your comments will be most meaningful if they are in written form and specific to the Proposed Action or to particular routes of interest. A comment form is included for your convenience.** Written comments can best be used if they are received no later than **December 15, 2008**. To ensure ample time for review of the proposal information and maps and to provide concerns and comments, this scoping period will last **45 days**. Please submit comments by mail, email or in person to:

Travel Management	
St. Joe Ranger District	Phone: (208) 245-2531
222 S 7 <sup>th</sup> Street Suite 1	Fax: (208) 245-6052
St. Maries, ID 83861	Email: <a href="mailto:comments-northern-idpanhandle-stjoe@fs.fed.us">comments-northern-idpanhandle-stjoe@fs.fed.us</a>

As part of the public participation and collaboration for this project, several open houses were held, comment forms were distributed, and newsletters were mailed to people and groups that indicated an interest in the project. In addition, a group of interested members of the public formed a focus group (St. Joe Focus Group) to represent different public access interests and work together to develop their input for travel management on the St. Joe Ranger District. This dedicated group of 15 to 20 members met every two weeks from February through August, sharing different values and perspectives. After the proposed action is mailed, the group will reconvene to discuss how it meshes with the maps and tables they produced; then will officially submit their comments during the comment period.

The St. Joe Ranger District interdisciplinary team (IDT), comprised of district resource specialists, strived to address issues such as public health and safety, disturbance to wildlife, impacts to water quality and fisheries, effects on recreation experiences and costs to manage and maintain travel routes. The St. Joe Focus Group's comments and information; other public comments received to date; and input from organizations, adjacent and cooperating agencies and land managers were instrumental in the development of the Proposed Action.



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## **Purpose and Need for Action**

On April 12, 2005, Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth said “We believe that OHVs are a legitimate use in the right place, and that includes many places on national forest land. But the days are over when folks could just drive wherever they pleased. These days, there are just too many users having too much impact. That’s why we need a new rule governing OHV use”. The 2005 Final Travel Management Rule requires each national forest to designate those roads, trails, and areas that are open to motor vehicle use. The goal for the IPNF is to have a motor vehicle use map (MVUM) published in 2009.

**Public involvement is very important to the 2005 Final Travel Management Rule process.**

### **Requirements of the Rule:**

- Designate roads, trails and areas open to motorized use by vehicle type and if appropriate by season of use
- Display designated motorized routes on a Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM)
- Motorized Vehicle Use Maps will be free to the public and available in hard copy and via the internet
- Once the MVUM is published and available to the public, cross-country motorized use will be prohibited and motorized travel will only be allowed on designated motorized routes on NFS lands

Motor Vehicle Use Map will only show those roads, trails and areas on National Forest System lands and the main routes used to access the designated routes. It will be the principle enforcement tool for motor vehicle regulations.

### **St. Joe Niche**

The St. Joe Ranger District is composed of very rugged terrain that often dictates the kind of recreation experience that is available. Rivers (including the St. Joe River which is designated as a Wild & Scenic River); large roadless areas with extensive trail systems; healthy elk herds; and excellent trout fishing play an important role in establishing the District’s niche for providing recreation opportunities. The St. Joe RD is used by local communities and is a destination for people who come from other places, especially the nearby metro areas such as Spokane, Coeur d’Alene, and Moscow. People of the local communities of Wallace, Avery, Calder, St. Maries, Santa, Fernwood, Clarkia, and Emida live near, often work in, and frequently play on national forest lands in the St. Joe RD. In addition, people from all over the United States and beyond plan trips to visit special areas such as the Route of the Hiawatha Rail Trail and the Emerald Creek Garnet Area. They engage in specific activities that the St. Joe is suited for (e.g. fishing, hunting, multi-day backpacking, and stock trips). The St. Joe RD is:

- A national destination for hunting, fishing, and special areas such as, the Route of the Hiawatha Rail Trail and the Emerald Creek Garnet Area
- A regional destination for scenery, stock riding and packing, multi-day backpacking and whitewater/drifted the St. Joe River.
- A local destination for advanced and expert motorcycle trail riding and day hiking.

The St. Joe RD offers a variety of motorized and non-motorized travel opportunities. Advances in motor vehicle technology and availability have created new opportunities and desires for off-road travel. If their use is not managed, they can damage the land and resources that visitors come to experience and enjoy.

Part of the Forest Service mission is to enhance public enjoyment of the national forests while maintaining other important values and uses on National Forest System lands. A managed system of trails and roads will protect natural and cultural resources, address user conflicts, and secure sustainable opportunities for the public to enjoy the St. Joe RD. **The purpose of this project is to:**

1. Bring our current travel management plan into compliance with the Travel Management Rule
2. Designate sustainable roads and trails that focus on the St. Joe RD's niche for public access and recreation travel
3. Identify the types of motorized use and season (if applicable) for each designated route
4. Designate motorized routes in a way that will protect other resources

## **The Proposed Action**

### **Starting Point**

The 1987 Land Management Plan for the IPNF is the foundation upon which the travel management plan (the Proposed Action) is built. The IPNF is currently revising the 1987 Forest Plan and in May 2006 released a Proposed Land Management Plan (PLMP). Even though a decision has not yet been made on the PLMP, the proposed desired conditions and management direction were considered during our travel management planning process.

The "Desired Condition" in the PLMP for recreation access on the St. Joe Ranger District is described as: Public access is maintained while reducing effects to water resources, water quality, and wildlife habitat. Summer routes offer both motorized and non-motorized opportunities. Motorized opportunities are more prevalent in the lower St. Joe drainage while non-motorized opportunities are emphasized in the upper St. Joe River area. However, this does not preclude proposals of motorized opportunities in the upper St. Joe River area and non-motorized opportunities in the lower St. Joe drainage.

### **Sideboards**

Current travel management direction on the St. Joe RD roads and trails was the starting point for developing the Proposed Action. The process involved a broad-based analysis, and the following sideboards have been identified to define the decision space of the decision-maker. The decision-maker is the St. Joe District Ranger. These sideboards will be utilized throughout the travel planning process:

- We will comply with all federal and state laws and regulations and meet the Idaho Panhandle National Forests Plan standards.

- Resource concerns will be considered to reduce effects to wildlife, water quality and fisheries.
- New construction or major reconstruction and user-created trails will not be considered in this designation process. However, proposals that do not require new construction or major reconstruction and link routes or facilities, create loops or convert old roads to trails may be carried forward in this analysis.
- The following areas have existing special designations and travel management direction based on previous legislation or previous administrative decisions. The Proposed Action incorporates those designations:
  1. Mallard-Larkins Pioneer Area (non-motorized trails)
  2. St. Joe River Trail 48 – located in the “wild” portion of the St. Joe Wild and Scenic River (non-motorized trail)
  3. Snow Peak Wildlife Management Area (non-motorized trails)
  4. Grandmother Mountain Area (open to single-track motorized vehicles)
  5. Hobo Cedar Grove and Hobo Historical Trails (non-motorized trails)
  6. Route of the Hiawatha Rail Trail (non-motorized, non-stock trail)
- Follow the Northern Regional Office guidance to have non-motorized recreation emphasis in recommended wilderness as identified in the PLMP.
- Follow the Northern Regional Office direction that motorized game retrieval off designated roads and trails will not be considered.

The following additional sideboards came to light during the process:

- The Little North Fork of the Clearwater River was listed as eligible for Wild and Scenic River status in the 1987 IPNF Forest Plan. The entire Little North Fork of the Clearwater River Trail 50 is within the eligible “wild” section of the river. A lawsuit to the 1987 Forest Plan brought forth an amendment requiring that trails within the eligible “wild” portions must be non-motorized to retain the capability for Wild and Scenic River status.
- Recent decisions regarding motorized access are incorporated into the Proposed Action. For example, the Hidden Cedar Record of Decision (2007) specified roads that would not be available for public motorized use. The Bussel 484 Record of Decision (2008) designated Bussel Creek Trail 258 as non-motorized. Lines Creek Trail 246 and a portion of the Norton Creek Railroad Grade as designated for motorized vehicles less than 50 inches wide. Bridges will need to be replaced on Lines Creek Trail and construction will need to be done on the railroad grade before they are available for that use.

## **ATV Use**

I would like to share a little information about the St. Joe RD, specifically in regards to all terrain vehicle (ATV) use. ATV use is rapidly increasing throughout the St. Joe and is a very popular auxiliary activity to other recreation uses such as fishing, hunting and camping. The ATV use mainly occurs on unpaved and unimproved roads throughout the Ranger District. Although the steep terrain and dense vegetation does not lend itself to overland use by ATVs, some user-created damage has occurred from poor trail location or mud bogging.

## **OHV Vehicle Requirements**

All off highway vehicles must comply with Idaho State requirements including those traveling on National Forest System Lands. **For example, OHV (ATV, UTV, and motorcycle, etc.) operators driving on unpaved National Forest System roads open to full-size vehicles must be “street legal” (have a valid driver’s license, proof of insurance, license plate or valid state OHV sticker; etc). Starting January 2009, all OHVs (including those traveling on trails) will be required to have a license plate.** For more information on state laws and rules, contact: Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Motorized Trails Office: 5657 Warm Springs Avenue, Boise, ID 83716 or 208-769-1511 or check the website at [www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov](http://www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov).

## **User-Created Trails**

As noted in the sideboards, user-created routes and routes requiring construction and major reconstruction will not be considered under this travel plan project. User-created trails are sometimes poorly located within riparian zones (streamside and floodplain areas), on steep slopes, or within wildlife security areas and the use may disturb wildlife or cause erosion and other resource damage.

However, some of the user-created routes may be appropriate for inclusion in the transportation system, but a site-specific field review and separate environmental analysis would be required. New opportunities for motorized roads and trails may be suggested in your comments. For example, Lucky Swede Trail 60 is currently a single-track motorized trail, but was identified as having potential of becoming an ATV trail from the Coeur d’Alene Divide down to Forest Road 456 (Moon Pass). These opportunities will be recorded and possibly considered for future projects.

## **Mixed Land Ownership**

The area of the St. Joe RD which is located south of the St. Joe River to the Little North Fork of the Clearwater River between Hoyt and Bluff Creek, presents unique challenges for travel management because of the “checkerboard” land ownership pattern. We will only be designating motorized routes where the Forest Service has dual management with the private landowners. At this time we are only proposing to designate a few of the existing roads for motorized use. All roads currently open to all motorized vehicles would remain the same and some roads that are currently open to vehicles less than 50 inches wide may be designated. If we hear that the public desires changes to the proposed motorized access in these areas, we would coordinate with the landowners before designating additional roads for motorized access.

## More information and maps

The Proposed Action incorporates the above information, sideboards, maps, and attached tables that list the trails. Due to the large number of open roads and roads proposed for vehicles less than 50 inches wide, the proposed travel status for these routes is not listed in a table. **Refer to the maps for proposed travel status on roads.** Open roads are shown in green, proposed ATV roads are shown in gold, and closed roads are shown in red, single-track motorized trails are shown in blue and non-motorized trails are shown in black, (refer to the legend for details). Roads and trails beyond the District boundary are only shown for reference and we do not have the jurisdiction to make any changes to the travel management direction on those routes.

In order to reduce printing and shipping costs and to reduce electronic file size, maps will not be included with this letter. **The maps are available on the following internet site and paper copies are available for review at the following offices**

**Website:**

- <http://www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/stjoe/travelplan/>

**Offices:**

- St. Joe Ranger District offices at St. Maries, Idaho and Avery, Idaho
- Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District office at Smeltonville, Idaho
- Idaho Panhandle National Forests' Supervisor's Office at Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
- Palouse Ranger District office at Potlatch, Idaho

**Compact disks (CDs) are available upon request to the St. Joe Ranger District at 208-245-2531.**

The interdisciplinary team strived to create a proposed plan that will be valuable to you, the people who use the forest of the St. Joe Ranger District. We are very thankful to the focus group, the public and to other agencies and land managers for their comments and assistance.

Please review the maps and the following tables and give us your thoughts!

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection.

Your name will be removed from the mailing list for this project if you have not previously commented, do not comment during this scoping period, or do not request to remain on the mailing list.

This project is subject to public comment, notice, and appeal under the 36 CFR 215 rules. Before a decision is made for this project people on the mailing list will be given the opportunity to comment again during an official comment period. Only those individuals and organizations providing comments or expressing interest during that official comment period will be eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations.

**Scheduled Public Meetings**

- **November 17th – Cataldo Canyon Elementary School** (Going west on I-90, take Exit 34 (Rose Lake-St. Maries), turn right and cross the Interstate, then right on East Canyon Road for 1.2 miles. Turn left at East School House Loop and the school is about one-third mile ahead.)
- **November 18th – Avery Community Center**
- **November 19th – St. Maries High School Multi-Purpose Room** (Call the District office for directions)
- **November 20th - University Inn Best Western** on 1516 Pullman Road in Moscow, ID

**All public meetings will be from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm**

I look forward to working with you on this project. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Chuck Mark (District Ranger), Cornie Hudson (Acting District Ranger), or Mary Price (project leader) at (208) 245-2531.

Sincerely,

/s/ Cornelia Hudson

**CHUCK MARK**  
District Ranger