

# Chapter 2

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## **Chapter 2**

# **Alternatives**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes and compares the no action alternative and the action alternatives that were developed to respond to important issues identified during scoping and public involvement processes. All action alternatives were developed to meet the purpose and need for action described in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 compares the alternatives based on significant issues. The action alternatives were developed based on significant issues raised by the public and other agencies. Each alternative would respond differently to the issues that were identified through scoping and the analysis process, and each alternative would produce different environmental effects.

The proposed action that was advertised for scoping from November 2007 through February 2008 was not analyzed in detail. The original proposed action was the Forest's best effort to develop an action that would satisfy the requirements of the 2005 OHV rule, while addressing Forest-wide resource needs and concerns related to motorized and mechanized travel on the Clearwater National Forest. However, in response to the large number of comments that were received during the scoping period, other alternatives to the proposed action were developed by the IDT and the original proposed action was not carried forward to be analyzed in detail in the DEIS. In response to the large number of public comments were received for the proposed action, the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) incorporated elements of the proposed action into the three action alternatives that were analyzed in detail.

Chapter 2 also includes a comparative summary of the environmental consequences that would be associated with each alternative. The comparison, combined with the more detailed disclosure of impacts in Chapter 3, provides the information necessary for the decisionmaker to make an informed choice between the alternatives.

### **SCOPING AND ISSUE IDENTIFICATION**

#### ***THE SCOPING PROCESS***

Pre-scoping activities began in 2005 with the publication of the 2005 Travel Guide. The formal scoping period was advertised from November 2007 to February 2008. Over 4,000 comment documents were received. The scoping process is described in detail in Chapter 1.

## **SCOPE OF THE TRAVEL PLAN AND ANALYSIS**

The actions proposed, as well as those not included in the Travel Plan, are a result of careful consideration of the needs for change identified by the Forest Service through public comment and interdisciplinary team evaluation. Because a lot of information presented in the alternative descriptions is for clarity and understanding of the complete travel picture, it is important to understand what is, and what is not, being analyzed or ultimately decided with this project. In a nutshell, the project will analyze and make a decision only on restrictions that change from the existing condition as described in Alternative A.

Construction, reconstruction, and obliteration of roads or trails is not part of this project. The Clearwater National Forest has completed a forest-wide roads analysis to validate the needs for arterial, collector, and important local roads. The evaluation of the need for other roads will continue to occur as part of smaller-scale project analyses. It is through these other analyses that roads will be identified for retention, reconstruction, long term storage, obliteration and, in some cases, construction. The situation is similar for trails; construction and reconstruction of trails will be addressed in smaller-scale project analyses. For this reason, public route suggestions that would require construction or reconstruction of new routes were not considered in the Travel Plan but could be considered in future project analyses.

The results of previous travel management decisions are not being reconsidered in the Travel Plan. Both the North Lochsa Face Access and Palouse OHV decisions were the result of a careful look at their respective areas and considerable public input. The only variation from these original decisions is proposed adjustment of some seasonal restriction periods to better coordinate road and trail restriction dates and reduce the number of different use seasons to make the motor vehicle use map easier to understand.

Existing restrictions on system roads are the result of extensive planning processes at multiple scales and a variety of project level decisions based on very site specific resource issues. Existing road restrictions are not being reconsidered in the Travel Plan with these exceptions:

- Similar seasonal restriction periods are proposed for slight adjustment to reduce the number of different seasonal restrictions.
- Roads discovered to be travelable but inadvertently omitted from the 2005 Travel Guide are proposed for designation, and those discovered to be not travelable with vehicles are proposed for restriction to reflect their condition.
- A few road restrictions are proposed for adjustment for consistency. These are most often spur roads that had restriction periods that were more liberal than their parent roads.

- Roads on or associated with lands formerly owned by DAW Corporation in the upper North Fork and acquired in the 1996 Beaver-Cedar land exchange are being evaluated for appropriate designation or restrictions. Since these roads were primarily on lands in private ownership they had not previously been evaluated in Clearwater National Forest project decisions.

In contrast to the roads situation, trails generally have not received a similar level of transportation planning and relatively few have been evaluated as to the appropriate traffic (motorized or non-motorized) in project level decisions. Accordingly, trail restrictions are being considered in the Travel Plan and evaluated relative to Forest Plan Management Area goals. Except as noted above, trail restrictions in the North Lochsa Face and Palouse OHV decisions are not being reconsidered.

## ***SIGNIFICANT ISSUES***

Significant issues result from the anticipated effects of implementing a proposed action based on environmental effects. Issues are unresolved conflicts regarding effects of the proposed action that are identified during internal and external scoping effects. In Section 1501.7, the Council on Environmental Quality NEPA regulations require the Forest to "...identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (Sec. 1506.3)...".

The following significant issues were used to develop alternatives to the proposed action.

### **Effects on Motorized/Non-motorized Recreation and Wilderness Character**

The vast majority of comments on the proposed action expressed one of two sentiments: that there should be more opportunities for motorized travel, or that there should be fewer motorized and/or more non-motorized opportunities. These same sentiments were also expressed for certain places: specific drainages, roadless areas, and areas recommended for Wilderness designation by the forest plan. The reasons cited for advocating more or less motorized opportunity included effects on fish and wildlife, (addressed as a separate issue) effects on recreation opportunities, and effects on other resources or the character of recommended wilderness areas.

The issue indicators for motorized/non-motorized recreation and wilderness character are:

#### ***Summer***

- Area open to cross-country (off designated routes) motorized travel
- Road mileage open to motorized and non-motorized travel forest-wide
- Trail mileage open to motorized and non-motorized travel forest-wide
- Trail mileage open to motorized and non-motorized travel in roadless areas

- Trail mileage open to motorized and non-motorized travel in areas recommended for wilderness
- Trail mileage open to mechanized (non-motorized) vehicles like bicycles forest-wide
- Trail mileage open to mechanized (non-motorized) vehicles like bicycles in recommended wilderness

**Winter**

- Area open to over-snow vehicles forest-wide
- Area open to over-snow vehicles in areas recommended for wilderness
- Road mileage open or restricted to over-snow vehicles

**Effects on Fisheries and Wildlife Habitat**

Most people who commented during scoping believed that motorized recreation has adverse effects on fisheries and wildlife habitat, although a few commenters felt that motorized recreation generally does not adversely affect wildlife or their habitat.

For wildlife habitat, the issue indicators are:

- Acres open to OHV cross-country travel
- Miles of motorized routes
- Elk habitat security, in terms of acres of secure area by Management Area Group (the term “elk security,” as it is being used here, is not the same as the term used to describe numeric standards in the Forest Plan)

For fisheries and watershed resources, the issue indicators are:

- Road and Trail Density Open to OHVs
- Motorized and Non-motorized Roads Within the Riparian Area
- Motorized and Non-motorized Trails Within the Riparian Area
- Stream Crossings by Management Area with High Fishery Values

***OTHER (NON-SIGNIFICANT) ISSUES***

Non-significant issues were carried through the effects analysis, but were not used to develop alternatives to the proposed action. Many resource values are sensitive to travel management decisions, and the severity of the potential effects on each resource varies by alternative. Some of the potential effects of travel management decisions include changes in the type of use on National Forest Trails and developed ATV trail systems; effects on soil and watershed resources; effects on habitat used by aquatic species;

establishment or spread of invasive plants and aquatic nuisance species; and effects on historic properties. A detailed effects analysis in the DEIS addresses these resource concerns.

Non-significant issues that met one or more of the following criteria were not carried through the analysis:

- Outside the scope of the proposed action;
- Already decided by law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision;
- Irrelevant to the decision to be made; or
- Conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence.

## **THE ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

The initial proposed action was advertised for public scoping in November 2007. The initial proposed action responded to the purpose and need for action, and was based, in part, on pre-scoping public involvement activities that began as early as 2005, when the Clearwater National Forest's 2005 Travel Guide was released to the public. The 2005 Travel Guide, with a few modifications that are described later in Chapter 2, describes the roads and trails that the Forest considers to be the existing designated motorized system. When the 2005 Travel Guide was released, the Forest invited comments from the public about what a designated system should include.

A formal news release was advertised in July 2006, encouraging anyone interested in travel on the Clearwater National Forest to get involved in the travel planning effort. The Forest requested suggestions for motorized routes that already existed on the ground, but were not part of the initial designated system described in the 2005 Travel Guide. Other pre-scoping activities that took place are described in more detail in Chapter 1.

All of the action alternatives would fully or partially meet the purpose and need for action described in Chapter 1.

## **SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES STUDIED IN DETAIL**

Since the initial proposed action was released in November 2007, the IDT has reviewed the existing databases, maps, and past NEPA decisions relevant to road and trail management on the Forest. The Forest database that stores information about roads and trails is called the Infrastructure Database (INFRA).

Outside of areas restricted to motorized travel that were established by the Clearwater Forest Plan or other past NEPA decisions, old skid trails and user-created trails exist on the ground, and over time have been used for a variety of modes of travel. Since these routes were not part of the formal transportation system, they were not considered part of

the existing condition. User-suggested routes were first tested against the criteria that were advertised during scoping, and were further screened against Management Area goals. Table 2-2 shows the user-suggested routes that were considered in the action alternatives.

No new road or trail construction is proposed.

Four alternatives are analyzed in the DEIS. They are:

- **Alternative A:** “No Action.” The No Action alternative would take no action to change existing conditions. This alternative would not implement the 2005 Travel Management Rule, and would not meet the purpose and need for action.
- **Alternative B:** “Minimal Travel Management Rule Implementation.” Alternative B would respond to public comments about taking only the actions necessary to implement the basic requirements of the 2005 Travel Management Rule. This alternative would also respond to public comments about providing more motorized access than the proposed action.
- **Alternative C:** “Motorcycle Loop Trails and Wildlife Habitat.” Alternative C would respond to public comments about providing motorized single-track and loop trail opportunities, while moving Wildlife and Recommended Wilderness resource conditions toward the goals and objectives described in the Forest Plan.
- **Alternative D:** “Wildlife and Recommended Wilderness Emphasis.” Alternative D would respond to public comments about protecting wildlife habitat and recommended wilderness characteristics. It would also respond to public comments about providing less motorized access than the proposed action.

### ***ALTERNATIVE A: NO ACTION***

Alternative A would not implement the 2005 OHV rule, and would not meet the purpose and need for action. Motorized routes would not be designated, and unregulated cross-country motorized travel off of designated routes would continue. This alternative would take no action to change existing conditions. “Existing conditions” include the road and trail system on the Clearwater National Forest as it was described in the 2005 Travel Guide, with the following exceptions:

- Routes that were listed in the 2005 Travel Guide by mistake, but were never under Clearwater National Forest jurisdiction, are not included.
- Roads that were listed in the 2005 Travel Guide, but have been or are planned to be decommissioned, are not included.
- Routes that were listed in the 2005 Travel Guide because they were planned for construction, but have not yet been built, are not included.

- Routes that were listed in the 2005 Travel Guide as “roads,” but have been converted to trails and will not be used as roads again, are considered to be “trails.”
- The DAW Forest Products Industry (DAW) roads that were acquired in the Beaver-Cedar land exchange in 1996 are included as part of the physical existing condition; however, any restrictions implemented or changed for the DAW roads will be included as an “action common to all action alternatives (ZCOMM).”
- System routes that existed in 2005 but were inadvertently left out of the Travel Guide, or routes that have been constructed since the Travel Guide was published, have been added.
- Restrictions are included that have been added, deleted, or changed as a result of NEPA decisions made since the 2005 Travel Guide was published.
- Restrictions that resulted from NEPA decisions made prior to the 2005 Travel Guide that were not listed in the Travel Guide are included in “existing conditions” as error corrections.

### ***ALTERNATIVE B: MINIMAL OHV RULE IMPLEMENTATION***

This alternative would respond to public comments about taking only the actions necessary to implement the basic requirements of the 2005 Travel Management Rule. It also would respond to public comments about providing more motorized access than the proposed action that was advertised during the scoping period. The items described under “actions common to all alternatives except no action” would be implemented, but otherwise few restrictions would change for routes that were described in the 2005 Travel Guide. Trail restrictions would remain unchanged. A number of user-suggested routes that meet criteria described in the scoping materials would be designated for motorized use. This alternative would implement the most basic requirements of the Travel Management Rule: motorized routes would be designated, and motorized travel would be allowed only on designated routes.

In addition to the specific action items described below, all of the actions described under “actions common to all action alternatives” would be implemented for Alternative B.

#### **Alternative B Road Actions**

Motorcycle travel on Road 74500 near Gospel Hill would be retained.

#### **Alternative B Trail Actions**

No new trail restrictions would be added.

Table 2-2 lists user-suggested trails that would be designated for motorized travel because they meet the criteria for resource issues and interest levels that were used to screen user-suggested routes for inclusion in the action alternatives.

### **User-Suggested Routes Criteria**

Not all of the user-suggested routes that were received were included in the action alternatives. The following criteria were used to select the user-suggested routes that were included for analysis in the action alternatives analyzed in detail:

- User-suggested routes selected for analysis had to go somewhere that would be of general interest to many people, and did not simply dead-end at a location that would be of interest to relatively few people.
- Selected user-suggested routes had to meet the goals and objectives for motorized and non-motorized areas described in the Forest Plan.
- Because construction or reconstruction would be better analyzed at a more site-specific scale, selected user-suggested routes had to physically exist at the present time in a condition that would be suitable for most users.
- User-suggested routes were not selected if they were already part of the initial designated road or trail system; in other words, they were not already in the 2005 Travel Guide.
- User-suggested routes that were selected had to be accompanied by a map showing the route location.
- Selected user-suggested routes had to be free of unmanageable resource issues, with maintainable grades that would not require relocation and free of obstacles that would require reconstruction.

**Table 2-1: User-Suggested Routes Included in the Action Alternatives**

Trail Number	BMP <sup>1</sup>	Trail Name	Proposed Season of use by Alternative		
			B	C	D
20L	0	Johnagan Creek	OYM <sup>2</sup>	RYA <sup>3</sup>	RYA
20M	0	Tinkle Creek	OYM	RYA	RYA
20R	0	Windy Jam Ridge	OYM	RYA	RYA
165	0	Cave Creek	OYM	RYA	RYA
445	2.5	Elizabeth Mountain	OYM	RYA	RYA
632	0	Smith Butte	OYM	RYA	RYA
632	6.5	Smith Butte	OYM	OYM	RYA
2410	0	Weitas Ridge South	OYM	RYA	RYA
9002	0	Little Weitas Butte South	OYM	RYA	RYA
9003	0	Little Weitas Butte	OYM	RYA	RYA
9004	0	Weitas Butte North	OYM	RYA	RYA
9012	0	Swede Creek Connector	OYS <sup>4</sup>	OYS	OYS

<sup>1</sup>BMP = Beginning Mile Post

<sup>2</sup>OYM = Open Yearlong to Motorcycles

<sup>3</sup>RYA = Restricted Yearlong to All

<sup>4</sup>OYS = Open Yearlong to Small Vehicles.

All the trails listed in Table 2-1 are on the North Fork District except for Trail 9012, Swede Creek Connector, which is on the Lochsa District. A total of 28.28 miles of user-suggested routes would be included in the action alternatives. Table 2-2 shows how the season of use would vary by alternative for the user-suggested routes.

**Table 2-2: Seasons of Use for User-Suggested Route Mileages Included in the Action Alternatives**

<b>Designation</b>	<b>Alternative B</b>	<b>Alternative C</b>	<b>Alternative D</b>
OYA <sup>1</sup>	0.94	0.94	0.94
OYM <sup>2</sup>	26.61	2.35	0
OYS <sup>3</sup>	0.19	0.19	0.19
RYA <sup>4</sup>	0.54	24.81	27.15
<b>Total</b>	<b>28.28</b>	<b>28.28</b>	<b>28.28</b>

<sup>1</sup>OYA = Open Yearlong to All vehicles. 0.94 miles of Trail 632 that are coincident with Road 555 would be designated OYA (Open Yearlong to All vehicles) in all action alternatives.

<sup>2</sup>OYM = Open Yearlong to Motorcycles. 2.35 miles of Trail 632 (an old storage trail) would be designated OYM in Alternative C.

<sup>3</sup>OYS = Open Yearlong to Small Vehicles. There are 0.19 miles of Trail 9012 (a new trail called “Swede Creek Connector”) that would be designated OYS in all alternatives.

<sup>4</sup>RYA = Restricted Yearlong to All

**Alternative B Bicycle Actions**

Existing bicycle restrictions on trails within Management Area B2, Recommended Wilderness, would be retained.

**Alternative B Over-Snow Vehicle Actions**

Management Area B2, Recommended Wilderness, would remain open to over-snow vehicle use.

***ALTERNATIVE C: MOTORIZED SINGLE-TRACK AND LOOP TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES***

This alternative responds to issues and concerns about opportunities for motorcycle loop trips raised during public scoping. It addresses Forest Plan goals for wildlife, though at a lower level than Alternative D, to provide for more quality motorcycle loop trips in areas of the forest that were of greatest interest, including Weitas Creek, Cayuse Creek, and Pot Mountain. The Forest Supervisor has identified Alternative C as the Preferred Alternative.

This alternative would address concerns about motorized (motorcycle) loop trips with minimal use of roads, particularly main roads, as part of the loop. Motorized trail locations were selected to provide large blocks of secure wildlife habitat. There would be no motorized trails in Management Area B2 except for Fish Lake Trail 419. Management Areas C1 and C6 would contain fewer motorized trails, and those would be limited to trails having the least overall conflict with overall Management Area goals. Motorized trails would be provided in Management Area C8S, and would be focused on

retaining large blocks of secure wildlife habitat, while still providing some motorized loop opportunities. Motorized trails would be selected that would reduce stream fords in Management Areas that prioritize protection of fisheries and watershed resources. User-suggested trails in Management Areas C1, C6, and C8S would be included if they provided an opportunity to make loops while reducing resource concerns.

For winter uses, this alternative would adopt the same philosophy as Alternative D. All over-snow motorized vehicles would be prohibited in areas where they are currently prohibited, and in Management Area B2 (Recommended Wilderness).

In addition to the specific action items described below, all of the actions described under “actions common to all action alternatives” would be implemented for Alternative C.

Management Area descriptions can be found in the glossary and in Table 1-2 in Chapter 1.

### **Alternative C Road Actions**

All motorized travel on Road 74500 would be restricted to be consistent with the restriction on connecting Trail 373.

### **Alternative C Trail Actions**

To protect wilderness character, motorized travel would be restricted yearlong on all trails in Management Area B2, except for Fish Lake Trail 419. Fish Lake Trail 419 would remain open to summer motorized traffic.

Alternative C would include user-suggested motorized trails that passed the screening criteria, and that contribute to loop opportunities, in Management Areas E1/E3 and motorized portions of Management Areas A3 and C8S.

Alternative C would not include user-suggested motorized routes in Management Areas B2, C1, or C6 since additional motorized use would run counter to Management Area goals for those areas.

Alternative C would restrict motorized use on most trails within Management Areas C1 and C6. The motorized trails that would be retained would be those that conflict the least with overall Management Area goals for C1 and C6. Motorized use in Management Area C1 would only be allowed only during the fall, in keeping with Management Area goals to minimize summer disturbance and provide for motorcycle use associated with big game hunting.

Motorized use on selected trails in Management Area C8S would continue to provide motorized loop opportunities while retaining large blocks of secure wildlife habitat.

Trails 31 and 32 in Management Area E1 would be closed in Alternative C and D due to watershed resource issues.

### **Alternative C Bicycle Actions**

Bicycle and mechanized vehicle use in Management Area B2 would be restricted yearlong to protect wilderness character.

### **Alternative C Over-Snow Vehicle Actions**

Over-snow motorized vehicle use would be restricted yearlong in Management Area B2.

Over-snow motorized vehicle use would be restricted yearlong on Fish Lake Trail 419.

## ***ALTERNATIVE D: WILDLIFE AND RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS EMPHASIS***

This alternative would respond to public comments about protecting wildlife habitat and recommended wilderness characteristics. It would also respond to public comments about providing less motorized access than the proposed action that was advertised during the scoping period. This alternative would also respond to public comments about allowing less motorized use in roadless areas by sharply reducing motorized use in roadless areas, although all motorized use in roadless areas would not be eliminated. This alternative would provide high levels of wildlife security in Management Areas C1, C6, C8S, A3, and B2. It would also address concerns about protecting wilderness character in Management Area B2.

All trails that lie primarily in Management Areas with high wildlife security and wilderness character goals (Management Areas B2, C1, C6, and C8S) would be non-motorized. When more than 50% of the length of a given trail is within one of these Management Areas, then the entire trail would be restricted to avoid creating dead-end motorized routes. User-suggested motorized trails would be included only in Management Areas E1 and E3.

All over-snow motorized vehicles would be prohibited in all of Management Area B2.

In addition to the specific action items described below, all of the actions described under “actions common to all action alternatives” would be implemented for Alternative D.

### **Alternative D Road Actions**

All motorized travel on Road 74500 would be restricted to be consistent with the proposed restriction on connecting Trail 373.

### **Alternative D Trail Actions**

To protect wilderness character, motorized travel would be restricted yearlong on all trails in Management Area B2.

Motorized travel on most trails in Management Areas C1, C6, and C8S would be restricted to protect wildlife or fisheries/watershed values. When more than half of a given trail lies within one of those Management Areas, the entire trail would be restricted, not just the part within the Management Area. This would avoid short dead-end motorized routes.

Alternative D would include user-suggested motorized trails that passed the screening criteria in Management Areas E1 and E3. Alternative D would not include additional user-suggested motorized routes in Management Areas B2, C1, or C6 since additional motorized use would run counter to Management Area goals for those areas.

Fish Lake Trail 419 (in Management Area B2) would be closed to motorized traffic.

Trails 31 and 32 in the Upper Eldorado area would remain closed to motorized traffic in Alternative D due to resource issues).

Trail 20 (Weitas) would be closed from the bridge above Liz Creek to 12 Mile Saddle because that section is in Management Area C8S. The rest of Trail 20 would remain open to motorized use.

### **Alternative D Bicycle Actions**

Mechanized vehicle use in Management Area B2 would be restricted yearlong to protect wilderness character.

### **Alternative D Over-Snow Vehicle Actions**

Over-snow motorized vehicle use would be restricted yearlong in Management Area B2 to protect wilderness character.

Over-snow motorized vehicle use would be restricted yearlong on Fish Lake Trail 419.

## ***ACTIONS COMMON TO ALL ACTION ALTERNATIVES***

The following actions would be included in all of the action alternatives:

- Cross-country motorized summer travel off of designated routes would be prohibited, except as described for “off-route exceptions.”
- The Travel Planning analysis will not include the construction, reconstruction, or decommissioning of roads or trails. These actions would be better addressed at a more site-specific scale.

## **Off-Route Exceptions**

### ***Background***

Under the Clearwater National Forest Travel Plan, motorized travel off of designated routes would be prohibited for all but over-snow vehicles. The exceptions would be that off-route motorized travel would be permitted in certain areas and under certain conditions for purposes of camping or parking, and that it would be permissible to pull off the route to allow other traffic to pass.

The original proposed action tried to differentiate what would be acceptable in the general forest from more sensitive areas. The proposed action provided for motorized travel up to 300 feet off designated routes to access campsites in most areas of the forest, subject to certain conditions. Along certain river and stream corridors, the proposed action would have allowed off-route travel within 100 feet of the stream, to approved campsites only. The intent was to identify those campsites on the ground with some sort of marker. Originally, this was thought to be a more workable solution than trying to number and designate many very short roads to campsites, which would have to be shown with many zoom-in views on the Motor Vehicle Use Map.

There is a need to exert greater control over off-route travel for camping in some places, and less in others. This need for control is based not only on resources at risk, but also on the numbers of visitors and related campsite use. However, in response to comments from the public, and recognizing that specific campsite designations would be better done in more site-specific analyses, the approach below will be used to describe areas where off-route travel would be permitted.

There would be two exceptions in the Travel Plan where off-designated-route motorized travel would be permitted.

**General Forest:** A basic set of conditions would allow off-designated-route travel under certain circumstances, as described in Table 2-3. This would apply across most of the forest, except in the Special Corridors described below.

**Special Corridors:** A more limiting set of conditions would apply in these areas to address greater camping pressure, greater resource risks, and in some cases, Forest Plan direction. The travel limitations for the special corridors described below are outlined in Table 2-3.

### ***Wild & Scenic Rivers***

- Middle Fork and Lochsa Wild & Scenic Rivers: US Highway 12 from the forest boundary near MP 87 to the Powell Ranger Station junction near MP 161, including any portion of a designated route (road or trail) tributary to US Highway 12 (such as Road 5503, 568, etc or Trail 107, 2, 203, etc) which lies within the Wild and Scenic River Boundary.

***Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers***

- North Fork Clearwater River: Roads 700, 247 and 250 from Isabella Landing to the junction with Road 255 and along tributary roads and trails within ¼ mile of the river.
- Kelly Creek: Road 255 from the junction with Road 250 at Kelly Forks Work Center to the junction with Road 581, and Road 581 from there to the junction with Road 581-C and Road 581-C and tributary roads and trails within ¼ mile of Kelly Creek.
- Cayuse Creek: Road 581 from the crossing of Gorman Creek to the crossing of Toboggan Creek and tributary roads and trails within ¼ mile of the Cayuse Creek in this area.
- Colt Killed Creek: Road 111 from the junction with US Highway 12 to ½ mile past the junction with road 368 and the lowest ½ mile of Road 368 from the junction with Road 111 and any other roads or trails within ¼ mile of this stream.
- Fish Creek: Road 462 from the junction with US Highway 12 and any portion of Trail 2240 within ¼ mile of this stream.

***Other Sensitive Areas***

- North Fork of Clearwater River – Road 250 from junction with Road 255 at Kelly Forks work center to the mouth of Long Creek
- Orogrande Creek – Road 250 from the junction with Shanghai Road 669 to the junction with Road 247 at Bungalow
- Elk Creek – Road 382 from the forest boundary north of the town of Elk River to the junction with Road 4763.
- Lolo Trail – Roads 500 and 104 and any portion of a designated route (road or trail) within ¼ mile of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail and Lewis and Clark Historic Trail.

The Middle Fork Clearwater and Lochsa Rivers adjacent to US Highway 12 are Wild and Scenic Rivers. The North Fork Clearwater River (parts of it), Kelly Creek, Cayuse Creek, Colt Killed Creek and Fish Creek are eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers. More restrictive measures are necessary to protect the Outstandingly Remarkable Values for which these rivers and stream have been or may be designated. These restrictions are consistent with current Forest Plan direction found at page II-36.

Existing resource conditions near parts of the North Fork Clearwater River, Orogrande Creek, and Elk Creek include unacceptable resource impacts, including the proliferation

of user-created routes to and between campsites, and the pioneering of new campsites with motor vehicles.

**Table 2-3: Motorized Travel Off Designated Routes; Exceptions to General Prohibitions and conditions**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>General Forest</b>	<b>Special Corridors</b>
Distance Permitted Off Designated Route	300 feet perpendicular to designated route	300 feet perpendicular to a designated route, but only on existing tracks as described for “selecting a route to a campsite.”
Selecting a Campsite	Use of existing campsites is encouraged, but not required. Explore for a campsite by non-motorized means.	Use of existing campsites is required. Confine vehicles and camping activities to within the existing disturbed area.
Selecting a Route to a Campsite	Use existing track if present and without resource issues. Otherwise select the track with the least impact by traveling as directly as possible to the campsite while avoiding steep slopes, streams, wet areas and areas where vegetation would be damaged (rutting, wheel spin). Use only one track.	Use an existing track that does not have resource issues. Acceptable tracks have obviously been regularly used before, are completely or mostly devoid of surface vegetation, do not cross steep slopes, streams or wet areas and are free of barriers, obstructions, or materials placed to deter vehicle use.
Travel To and From Campsite	Use only one track to enter and leave the site. Use of motor vehicles is for camping access only, not repetitive recreational riding.	Use only an existing track. Use of motor vehicles is for camping access only, not repetitive recreational riding.
Parking	Park adjacent to or within one vehicle length of the designated route or in obviously stable, wide areas adjacent to designated routes.	Park adjacent to and within one vehicle length of the designated route or in existing campsites as described above.
Firewood Cutting	Same as Parking. There is no exception to use vehicles off designated routes to gather firewood.	Same as Parking except not permitted in Middle Fork and Lochsa Wild & Scenic River Corridor.
Passing Another Vehicle	Pull off designated route in an area that does not cause impacts like rutting or lasting vegetation damage.	Pull off designated route in an area that does not cause impacts like rutting or lasting vegetation damage.

**Roads Actions Common to All Action Alternatives**

Existing road restrictions have normally been developed during smaller-scale project analyses, using detailed site-specific information, and will not be reconsidered in this broad-scale analysis except in specific situations as described below

- System roads that were not displayed in the 2005 Travel Guide because it was believed that they were overgrown and impassable would be included in the action alternatives and coded as RYA (Restricted Yearlong to All). In the Travel Planning Database (see Appendix B), a code of “Overgrown Not in Travel Guide” identifies these roads. Even though these roads were not previously restricted, a

code of RYA would reflect the existing situation, rather than an actual change in usable road miles.

- The “date combination package,” consisting of proposed changes to seasonal road restrictions that are intended to reduce the number of use seasons, is included. See Appendix B, “All Travel Codes Defined,” for a detailed description of the proposed date combinations that would be implemented.
- Restrictions proposed for roads on the lands formerly owned by DAW Forest Products Company in the upper North Fork River drainage are included. These roads were not in the 2005 Travel Guide, and have not been previously considered in project-level analyses, because they had been in private ownership (see Appendix B, Report RP-801, “MVUM Restrictions by Alternative for Former DAW Areas Road”).
- Restriction changes that have been proposed to make restrictions consistent on related roads are included in actions common to all action alternatives.

See Report RP-100 in Appendix B for a summary of reasons for road restriction changes for MVUM vehicles in all action alternatives.

### **Trails Actions Common to All Action Alternatives**

Existing trail restrictions have mostly been developed during smaller-scale project analyses, and will not be reconsidered except in specific situations as described below.

System trails that are in “storage” status (have not been maintained for 10 or more years), and that are generally overgrown and impractical for motorized travel, would be included in all of the action alternatives and Restricted Yearlong to All (RYA). In the Travel Planning Database (see Appendix B), a code of “STO Trail/Maint Cost” identifies the storage trails that are not proposed for motorized use. Even though these trails were not previously restricted, a designation of RYA would reflect the existing situation, rather than an actual change in usable trail miles.

The “date combination package,” consisting of all the changes to seasonal trails restrictions that have been proposed to reduce the number of use seasons, would be implemented. See Appendix B, “All Travel Codes Defined,” for a detailed description of the proposed date combinations that would be implemented.

See Reports RP-301 through RP-306 in Appendix B for restriction changes and the reasons for those changes.

Error corrections to the 2005 Travel Guide for Trail 330 (Sand Mt), Trail 607 (Morgan Gul), and Trail 3610 (Disalto Cr) are included in all action alternatives.

### **Mechanized Actions Common to All Action Alternatives**

Area-based bicycle restrictions are shown on the alternative maps in Appendix A. Report RP-207 in Appendix B lists all system trails where bicycle travel is restricted under all action alternatives.

Two new bicycle restrictions are common to all action alternatives. They are on Trails 790 and 790-A near the Lolo Pass visitor center.

### **Over-snow Vehicles Actions Common to All Action Alternatives**

Cross-country travel by motorized over-snow vehicles would continue to be permitted, except in certain areas or on specific routes as described in the action alternatives. Over-snow motorized vehicle use would be prohibited from October 1 through November 15 annually to provide for big game security during the core of the big game hunting season. This would replace a variety of route-based, seasonal restrictions that had the same purpose.

Most route-based over-snow vehicle restrictions for roads would be removed, except as needed to protect things like ski routes, big-game winter range, and facilities. Because few trails provide any real avenue for over-snow vehicles under deep snow, most trail restrictions would be removed. Report RP-304, “Over-Snow Restriction Changes for Action Alternatives” in Appendix B describes changes to route-based over-snow vehicle restrictions that are analyzed in the DEIS. For Alternatives B, C, and D, only the routes where restrictions vary by alternative are shown.

The reports in Appendix B do not show area restrictions to over-snow travel. See the Motorized Winter Use Map in Appendix A for that information. Area-based over-snow motorized vehicle restrictions would be retained for Forest Plan Management Areas B1 (Wilderness), A3 (Non-Motorized Recreation), and A2 (Elk Creek Falls), as well as in several specific areas that were previously described in the Travel Guide.

Van Camp Trail 16 would be restricted yearlong in all action alternatives.

All currently groomed over-snow vehicle routes would be retained.

### **Forest Plan Amendments**

Two forest-wide Forest Plan amendments are proposed that would be included in all of the action alternatives.

One amendment would modify the periods of restriction for on-road use described in Appendix F of the 1987 Forest Plan. The full text and description of the proposed restriction period amendment is included in Appendix D of this DEIS.

The other proposed amendment would remove current Forest Plan elk habitat potential standards, and would adopt direction included in the proposed Travel Management Plan.

The existing standards for elk habitat potential as related to the effects of roads in backcountry Management Areas (MA's) are not achievable, and/or could be in conflict with the concept of establishing travel planning areas and route-by-route management direction. The full text and description of the proposed elk habitat amendment is included in Appendix E of this DEIS.

### **Tribal Treaty Rights**

All of the action alternatives would maintain access to areas important to all Native American Tribes who use the Clearwater National Forest, and would preserve local Native American culture by providing for the continued ability to practice inherent tribal treaty rights and traditional uses of the forest.

## **COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES STUDIED IN DETAIL BY SIGNIFICANT ISSUE**

This section summarizes the differences between the alternatives by issue and concern. More detailed comparisons of the potential effects of the alternatives on various resources are provided in Chapter 3. Where a quantitative comparison is not possible, or would be less useful for summarizing purposes, a narrative discussion is to qualitatively compare the effects of the alternatives analyzed in detail in terms of their potential effects on the issue indicators.

### ***EFFECTS ON MOTORIZED/NON-MOTORIZED RECREATION AND WILDERNESS CHARACTER***

#### **Summer Recreation**

##### ***Alternative A***

Alternative A, the existing condition, would provide the most motorized opportunity since the possibility of using non-designated routes and traveling cross-country (provided it could be done without resource damage) would be retained. The variety of seasonal restriction periods would be retained, which would cause some confusion. No motor vehicle use maps would be available to show travelable routes.

##### ***Alternative B***

Alternative B would minimally implement the travel rule, including the requirement for summer motor vehicles to use designated routes as shown on the MVUM.

There would be little change in opportunities for motorized travel on National Forest System Roads.

Opportunities for motorized travel on National Forest System Trails would increase. About 44 miles of user-suggested trails would be included that passed basic screening and are compatible with Forest Plan Management Area goals.

Bicycle restrictions would be removed from nearly all system roads and trails, except in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and on National Historic Trails, so bicycle opportunities would increase.

### **Alternative C**

Alternative C would provide opportunities for motorcycle loop trips on trails while increasing protection for wildlife, fish, and wilderness character.

Opportunities for motorized travel on National Forest System Roads would be very similar to Alternative B, and would be reduced by only a few miles on one road. This change would primarily affect motorcyclists.

Opportunities for motorcycle travel on National Forest System Trails would decrease, mostly in MA B2 (Recommended Wilderness) and in MA's C1 and C6, which have the highest wildlife and water quality/fisheries goals. Opportunities for some lengthy motorcycle loop trips would be retained. Non-Motorized travel opportunities would increase as a result of motorcycle restrictions. Opportunities for ATV travel on trails would be the same as Alternative B.

Bicycle restrictions would be removed from routes, as noted in Alternative B, but trails in MA B2 (Recommended Wilderness) would be restricted to mechanized vehicles like bicycles. Bicycle opportunities on trails would be reduced on system trails within MA B2. However, few of these trails currently receive much bicycle use due to their tread/clearing condition and grades.

### **Alternative D**

Of all the alternatives analyzed in detail, Alternative D would provide the greatest protection for recommended wilderness character, and for wildlife and water quality/fisheries.

Opportunities for motorized travel on National Forest System Roads would be identical to Alternative C.

Opportunities for motorized travel on National Forest System Trails would be reduced to address Forest Plan goals for wildlife and fish in MA's C1, C6, and C8S, and for recommended wilderness in MA B2. Motorcycle users would be most affected by the changes, but several ATV opportunities including the popular Fish Lake Trail 419 would also be lost. Because of these restrictions, Alternative D would provide the greatest amount of non-motorized trail opportunities.

Bicycle restrictions would be identical to Alternative C.

### **All Action Alternatives**

Alternatives B, C, and D would implement the travel rule. Motorized travel would be permitted only on designated routes, which would reduce motorized opportunities to some extent. Similar seasonal restrictions would be combined, resulting in fewer varieties. A motor vehicle use map would be available to show routes available for summer motor vehicle travel.

The opportunities for motorized travel on National Forest System Roads are nearly identical in Alternatives B, C, and D. Some restrictions would be implemented to protect resources on roads on former DAW Forest Products lands in the upper North Fork area, but this would affect less than 35 miles of roads. Approximately 375 miles of existing roads are considered open to motorized use, but are in fact heavily overgrown and impassable, and would be restricted to reflect their physical condition. There would be little impact on people who use full size vehicles or ATV's on roads.

### **Winter Recreation**

#### **Alternative A**

Alternative A, the existing condition, would provide the most cross-country opportunity for over-snow vehicles, since only non-motorized MA's and a few other small areas currently exclude over-snow vehicles.

#### **Alternative B**

Alternative B would provide the same opportunities for cross-country travel as Alternative A, the existing condition.

#### **Alternatives C and D**

Alternatives C and D would exclude over-snow vehicles from Management Area B2. High-elevation hill climbing and snow play opportunities would be reduced compared to the other alternatives, though not all of the "lost" terrain is actually usable by over-snow vehicles. Opportunities for non-motorized winter recreation would theoretically increase by the same amount, but similarly, not all of it is actually usable by non-motorized recreationists.

### **All Action Alternatives**

Alternatives B, C, and D would increase opportunities for over-snow vehicles on National Forest System roads by eliminating unnecessary over-snow vehicle restrictions on many higher elevation roads, while adding only a few restrictions to roads, primarily in big-game winter range along the Lochsa River. A forest-wide prohibition to over-snow vehicle use from October 1 to November 15 would be implemented. This closure would provide wildlife security during hunting season, but would not affect over-snow vehicle opportunities during the true winter season. The existing over-snow vehicle

grooming program would continue unchanged. A winter use map would clarify opportunities for over-snow vehicles.

Table 2-4 compares the alternatives that were analyzed in detail by significant issue indicators for Motorized/non-motorized Recreation and Wilderness Character.

**Table 2-4: Comparison of Alternatives by Indicator**

Indicator	Alternative Comparisons			
	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
Acres open to OHV cross-country travel	1,372,959	0	0	0
Miles of motorized road routes open either year-round or seasonally	2,972	2,947	2,943	2,943
Miles of motorized trail routes open either year-round or seasonally	696	738	487	370
Miles of motorized trail routes in Inventoried Roadless Areas <sup>1</sup> open either year-round or seasonally	447	454	243	139
Miles of bicycle/mechanized routes on roads open either year-round or seasonally	4,344	4,354	4,354	4,354
Miles of bicycle/mechanized routes on trails open either year-round or seasonally	1,153	1,067	988	988
Acres open to snowmachine travel	1,515,903	1,515,903 <sup>2</sup>	1,319,623 <sup>2</sup>	1,319,623 <sup>2</sup>
Miles of motorized trail routes open seasonally	170	170	191	170
Miles of motorized trail routes open to both ATV's and motorcycles	191	191	185	166
Miles of motorized trail routes open only to motorcycles	506	547	305	203

<sup>1</sup> "Inventoried Roadless Areas" include Recommended Wilderness acres and miles. Recommended Wilderness Areas are Hoodoo (Great Burn), Mallard-Larkins, and Selway-Bitterroot Additions (Sneakfoot, Elk Summit, Storm Creek, and Lakes). The road miles for Inventoried Roadless Areas and Recommended Wilderness Areas are included in the total of acres for the Forest and do not change between alternatives.

<sup>2</sup> Alternative B would include the same number of acres open to snowmachine use as Alternative A, but snowmachine use on all Forest acres would be prohibited in the fall to protect wildlife. Snowmachine use on all Forest acres would be prohibited in the fall for all action alternatives.

## ***EFFECTS ON FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE HABITAT***

The greatest policy difference between the existing situation and the alternatives is that most of the Forest is currently open to summer cross-country OHV use while it is absent in all the other alternatives. The existing condition Alternative A (No Action) generally has more motorized routes in most habitats analyzed than Alternatives D and C, but equal or less than Alternative B.

### **Wildlife**

Table 2-5 summarizes alternative comparisons by the indicators relevant to wildlife species and habitats.

**Table 2-5: Comparison of Alternatives by Indicator Relevant to Wildlife Species**

Indicator	Alternative Comparisons			
	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
Acres open to OHV cross-country travel	1,372,959.	0	0	0
Miles of motorized routes	3,668	3,685	3,430	3,313

Indicator	Alternative Comparisons			
	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
Acres of habitat security	1,019,908	1,016,599	1,055,004	1,075,115

### **Fisheries**

Tables 3-66 through 3-67 in Chapter 3 summarize alternative comparisons by the indicators relevant to fisheries and watershed resources. Fisheries and watershed indicators were measured at the HUC4 (Hydrologic Unit Code) Sub-Basin scale. The indicators are:

- Road Densities Open to OHV's, in miles per square mile (Table 3-66)
- Trail Densities Open to OHV's, in miles per square mile (Table 3-67)
- Motorized and Non-Motorized Road Miles Within Riparian Areas (Table 3-68)
- Motorized and Non-Motorized Trail Miles Within Riparian Areas (Table 3-69)
- Stream Crossings in Management Area C6 (Table 3-70)

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT STUDIED IN DETAIL**

NEPA requires the Forest Service to analyze a reasonable range of alternatives. It would not be possible to analyze all possible alternatives for motorized travel on the Clearwater National Forest, nor is the Forest Service required to do so. The decisionmaker considers the action alternatives that are analyzed in detail in this DEIS to be an adequate range of alternatives to address the purpose and need for action, and to move toward Forest Plan goals and objectives for a variety of resources, while addressing public comments that were received in response to the proposed action that was advertised for scoping. This section of the DEIS briefly describes other alternative scenarios that were considered by the decisionmaker, but were not chosen to be analyzed in detail.

The Travel Rule requires National Forests to consider the existing road and trail systems and designate routes that would be open for motorized travel. The results of this process will not constitute the ultimate or final transportation system for the Clearwater NF. Over time, after this initial route designation is made, and the MVUM is published, routes may be added to or removed from the system and additional designations of motorized routes may be considered. Future proposals to change the designated system would require site-specific analysis. Future changes to the system would also need to be consistent with the Clearwater Forest Plan.

## **ROAD AND TRAIL CONSTRUCTION, RECONSTRUCTION, DECOMMISSIONING, OR OBLITERATION**

Because of the potential resource impacts that can result from the construction of new roads and trails, or the reconstruction of existing routes, those activities would be better analyzed in detail at the site-specific level. The decisionmaker chose not to include construction, reconstruction, decommissioning, or obliteration in the alternatives that were analyzed in detail.

The Travel Rule requires National Forests to consider the existing road and trail systems and designate routes that would be open for motorized travel. The results of this process will not constitute the ultimate or final transportation for the Clearwater NF. Over time, after this initial route designation is made, and the MVUM is published, routes may be added to or removed from the system and additional designations of motorized routes may be considered. Each proposal to add to or subtract from the designated system would require site-specific NEPA analysis including public scoping, comment and a decision subject to administrative appeal. Future changes to the system would also need to be consistent with the Land and Resource Management Plan (The “Forest Plan”) for the Clearwater NF.

Prior to and during scoping for this project, many people offered proposals for new routes including short links to connect existing routes to create loop opportunities. These proposals could not be considered in the Travel Plan which is concentrating on designation of routes, not their construction or reconstruction. Ideas for new system routes can be considered in future projects focused on smaller geographic areas. Projects of this scale, similar to many completed in the past, are far better able to consider the site-specific effects of trail construction or reconstruction and evaluate effects on things like threatened, endangered or sensitive species, heritage resources. The Forest Service is committed to considering public suggestions to improve or modify the motorized system in the future, consistent with the Forest Plan, and as budgets, available personnel and time permit.

## **SUMMER CROSS-COUNTRY TRAVEL AREAS**

The 2005 Travel Management Rule allows National Forests to designate areas where summer cross-country motorized travel would be allowed. However, because no suitable areas for this kind of activity were identified by the IDT, the decisionmaker chose not to include cross-country travel in the alternatives analyzed in detail.

## **NO OFF-ROUTE EXCEPTIONS**

The decisionmaker considered allowing motorized travel on designated routes only, with no exceptions. However, to allow for dispersed camping and off-route parking, and to be consistent with the anticipated travel management decisions that have been or will be made on adjoining National Forest lands, the decisionmaker chose to include the off-

route motorized travel exceptions described earlier in this chapter under “Actions Common to All Action Alternatives.”

***ROAD RESTRICTION CHANGES OTHER THAN THE “DATE COMBINATION PACKAGE”***

Road restriction changes would be better addressed at a more site-specific scale, so the decisionmaker chose not to consider additional road restriction changes beyond the “Date Combination Package” that is common to all action alternatives, at this time. Site-specific road restrictions will be reassessed in future, smaller-scale project-level analyses.

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