



# Travel Management Proposal Summary of Public Comments

July 2008

## ***Special points of interest:***

- The Forest received **4492** responses.
- **750** were duplicates, the same comment submitted by the same person multiple times.
- **3021** letters were identified as "forms," containing language from organized response campaigns
- **721** letters were comprised of unique content.

## **Origin of Comments**

Comments were received from all 50 states. Individuals from states in the immediate vicinity submitted the most comments.

Washington	779
Idaho	588
California	509
Oregon	471
Montana	398
Other States	817
Unknown	930

Note: Addresses were not submitted with each comment.

## **Background**

On November 28, 2008, the Clearwater National Forest issued a proposed travel management plan and initiated a formal review and comment period.

The proposal was developed in response to the agency's travel management rule.

That rule required all national forests to formally designate roads, trails and areas where motorized travel will be permitted, and to display those routes and areas on a motor vehicle use map.

The comment period ended February 29, 2008. When the last submission was logged in the Forest had received nearly 4500 comments.

## **What happened to my comment?**

All comments received during the comment period were managed using a process known as "content analysis."

Content analysis involves both qualitative and quantitative methods.

When received, comments were given a unique identifying numbers so they could be tracked throughout the process.

Each response was read multiple times by Forest Service employees. Content was isolated by topic and entered into a database. This allowed the Forest to group similar ideas and concerns.

Database reports were



organized into a 240-page summary of comments written for the decision maker, interdisciplinary team and public.

The document provides a snapshot of the diversity of public opinion, the passion associated with the topic of travel management and the complexity of travel-related issues.

It is posted on the Forest's website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/clearwater/>.

## **Policy and Process**

Generally, respondents agreed on one main point: They want a fair and transparent travel planning process. They also want an opportunity to shape the outcome.

People were concerned about:

- The Forest's authority to prohibit motorized and mechanized uses in recommended wilderness
- The proposal's consistency with laws, rules and policies
- Potential influences on decisionmaking
- Public involvement methods
- Sources of "best available science"
- Funding for travel management and maintenance of travel routes

# Environmental Analysis and Documentation

Many opinions were expressed about the proposal and analysis needed to support travel planning.

People were concerned about:

- The scope of the travel planning proposal (some believed it should

encompass more; others desired to have it scaled back)

- The relationship between travel planning, development of the Idaho roadless rule and forest plan revision.
- Quality of maps (accuracy and

readability)

- Meaning of some terms
- Level and types of analysis required
- Development of a range of alternatives

# Natural Resource Management

Commenters presented a variety of beliefs about the impacts of motorized uses on natural resources.

Some believed motorized recreation had negative environmental consequences. Others contended the impacts were negligible.

People were concerned about:

- The impacts of motorized uses

(including snowmobiles) on wildlife and wildlife habitat

- The impacts of motorized uses on water quality and fish
- The role of motorized uses in spreading noxious weeds
- Inadequate Forest Service law enforcement

## Places Commonly Mentioned

- Recommended Wildernesses
- Inventoried Roadless Areas
- Cayuse, Kelly, Weitas, Fourth of July, Fish and Hungrey Creeks

# Transportation System

People had a variety of opinions about the desired transportation system on the Clearwater Forest. Comments ranged from “remove all motorized restrictions” to “do not allow motorized recreation on federal lands.”

People were concerned about:

- The proposed restriction of

motorized and mechanized vehicles in recommended wildernesses

- The proposed inclusion or restriction of motorized vehicles in inventoried roadless areas
- The proposed inclusion or restriction of motorized vehicles in certain drainages

- The proposed reduction in the miles of motorcycle trails.

- Designation of user-created routes

Many site-specific suggestions for route designation, restriction and construction are included in the full content analysis summary.

# Recreation and Socio-economic

Respondents all wanted one thing: a quality recreation experience. There is major disagreement about what constitutes a “quality” experience.

People were concerned about:

- A fair mix of opportunities for

motorized and non-motorized users

- A diverse mix of opportunities for motorized and non-motorized users
- Availability of loop trails and trails of varying challenge levels for motorized users

- Motorized access for individuals with disabilities

- Motorized and non-motorized opportunities for traditional family activities

- Economic ramifications of the proposal on specific communities