

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF PAST CLOSURES ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOTORIZED RECREATION.

There is a concern that the Forest Service has significantly reduced the opportunities for motorized recreation throughout the Region. Some people believe that the agency is trying to eliminate motorized recreation on all National Forest System lands, or at the very least to concentrate motorized use onto a small fraction of existing roads and trails. They believe the Lewis and Clark National Forest already has plenty of places for non-motorized travel, including the Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat Wilderness areas and Glacier National Park. They believe most of the Jefferson Division should be available for motorized recreation travel that allows visitors to enjoy the same opportunities to view scenery, fish and hunt in remote areas, and travel through wild country. They feel this is especially true for an aging population that may not have the physical stamina to reach remote places without motorized means. They also believe this is true for citizens that do not have the financial resources to own or hire saddle horses and pack stock, or vacation time needed to devote more than a weekend to visit the backcountry. By contrast, other people believe that motorized OHVs have taken over the landscape, and there are few opportunities to enjoy National Forests in Montana in an environment undisturbed by OHVs.

1. EXISTING CONDITION

a. Natural Characteristics

The 2001 Three-State OHV decision prohibited all cross-country travel by motorized wheeled vehicles on all National Forest and BLM lands in Montana, North Dakota, and part of South Dakota. The 2001 OHV decision also directed all Forest Supervisors to evaluate “existing” roads and trails and designate a system of roads and trails that would be open to OHVs and other types of travel. Similarly, in 2004 the Forest Service proposed to modify existing Federal Regulations to prohibit all cross-country motorized travel on all National Forests, and to also have all National Forests designate which roads and trails would be managed for OHV travel. Consequently, the issue of cumulative effects on opportunities for motorized recreation is nationwide in scope, and involves all public lands.

David Havlick (2002) summarized road mileage data from four Federal agencies as shown in the following table:

Table III-13. Road Miles on Federal Public Lands

Agency	Paved Road	Unpaved Road	Other	Total
U.S. Forest Service	28,000	357,570	60,450	446,020
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	500	5,400	3,100	9,000
National Park Service	5,140	2,990	n/a	8,130
Bureau of Land Management	1,700	81,300	n/a	83,000
Total Agency Road	35,340	447,260	63,550	546,150

Source: Havlick, D. 2002. “*No Place Distant*” Washington, D.C.: Island Press. pg. 5.

Considering that these Federal agencies are responsible for managing over 600 million acres of land (Havlick, 2002), there is an average of about 0.6 miles of road per square mile of public land across the United States.

To put this in perspective, there are currently about 124 miles of road (both open and closed) on 391,700 acres of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District outside the wilderness boundary, or about 0.2 mile of road per square mile of non-wilderness land managed by the Rocky Mountain Ranger District. On the Jefferson Division's three mountain range travel plan analysis area, there are approximately 1,350 miles of road presently open all or at least part of the year on approximately 923,000 acres of land, or about 0.9 miles of road per square mile.

b. Past Events and Conditions

In the early 1960s, there were no restrictions on motorized vehicles. Every road and trail was open to motorized travel, and a person could drive any type of vehicle cross-country on any type of terrain they chose to drive upon; but people were beginning to object to the damage caused by unconstrained motorized travel on public lands throughout the West, including Montana. In 1964, Congress passed the Wilderness Act and created the Bob Marshall Wilderness. In 1972 the Scapegoat Wilderness was added to the complex in the Rocky Mountain Division. Also in 1972, President Nixon issued an Executive Order that directed public land managers to designate areas where vehicles would or would not be permitted. In 1976-77 the Lewis and Clark National Forest issued its first travel plan for the Rocky Mountain and Jefferson Divisions.

Specific routes and areas needing protection from motorized vehicles were identified, and restrictions on motorized travel were imposed on areas. The 1976-77 travel plan for the Jefferson Division was first issued on February 15, 1977, and modified on March 1, 1978. In 1978 the Bob Marshall Wilderness Addition was created by Congress, eliminating motorized use on 51 miles of trail in the Birch-Teton area. To mitigate effects of the 1978 Wilderness Addition on motorized access, a new travel plan was developed in 1984 that removed restrictions on some trails in the Rocky Mountain Division. Likewise, motorized travel within the Jefferson Division was also changed under the 1984 travel plan.

By 1988 the need to provide additional protection for critical resources such as wildlife habitat, water quality, and endangered species habitat again resulted in a new travel plan that imposed additional restrictions on motorized travel. In 2001 all motorized vehicles were restricted to "existing" roads and trails, and unconstrained cross-country travel by motorized wheeled vehicles was prohibited on all National Forest and BLM lands in a three-State area. By 2002 better inventories of "existing" roads and trails revealed that motorized travel was occurring on more miles of roads and trails than managers on the Lewis and Clark National Forest had thought.

c. Historical Trend on Rocky Mountain Division of LCNF

The Rocky Mountain Ranger District's past travel plans were analyzed in detail to determine trends for past travel planning on the forest, and general trends over time in the treatment of motorized opportunities. The analysis for the Rocky Mountain Division generally reflects the trends on the Jefferson Division.

To help establish the historical status of roads and trails that currently exist upon the Rocky Mountain Ranger District landscape, the Forest Service reviewed old maps and files to determine when roads and trails were recognized as existing.

The following table summarizes the historical management of roads and trails on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District.

**Table III-14. Historical Motorized and Non-Motorized Travel Opportunities
On Rocky Mountain Ranger District**

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT	1960's	1976 TRAVEL PLAN	1984 TRAVEL PLAN	1988 TRAVEL PLAN (Current Management)
MOTORIZED OPPORTUNITIES <small>(OUTSIDE WILDERNESS BOUNDARY)</small>	147 mi. road <u>463 mi. trail</u> 610 mi. total	131 mi. road <u>262 mi. trail</u> 393 mi. total	112 mi. road <u>315 mi. trail</u> 427 mi. total	122 mi. road <u>395 mi. trail</u> 517 mi. total
NON-MOTORIZED OPPORTUNITIES <small>(OUTSIDE WILDERNESS BOUNDARY)</small>	0 mi. road <u>0 mi. trail</u> 0 mi. total	1 mi. road <u>226 mi. trail</u> 227 mi. total	3 mi. road <u>151 mi. trail</u> 154 mi. total	2 mi. road <u>153 mi. trail</u> 155 mi. total
Total Miles Roads & Trails	610 mi.	620 mi.	581 mi. <small>(reduction due to Wilderness Addition covering 51 mi. of trail)</small>	672 mi.

The preceding data show there were about 610 miles of roads and trails open to motorized travel in the Rocky Mountain Division after the Bob Marshall Wilderness was established in 1964. The first attempt to manage motorized use in 1976 resulted in a 36 percent reduction in miles of roads and trails open to motorized vehicles, but over the next 12 years there was a gradual increase in mileage open to vehicles. Currently, there are 517 miles of roads and trails open to motorized travel, which is about 85 percent of the mileage available in the 1960s.

d. Little Belt, Crazy, and Castle Mountains Statistics

Mileages of roads and trails currently open or closed to motorized travel in the Little Belt, Crazy, and Castle Mountains were shown previously in Tables III-2 and III-3. Alternative 1 reflects the existing condition. Mixed roads are those roads that allow a mix of road vehicles and OHVs that are either not street legal or are not operated by licensed drivers. Street legal OHVs operated by licensed drivers can also use these mixed roads.

The three mountain range analysis area has more than ten times the roads located on the Rocky Mountain Front. Additionally, motorized use is currently allowed on nearly 90 percent of all trails in the analysis area.

e. Desired Future Condition

The “Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960” (summarized in the project file) directs “the National Forests to be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed and wildlife and fish purposes.” It is the responsibility of the Forest Service, as a multiple-use agency, to determine the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these purposes to best meet the needs of the American people. In regard to recreational activities on National Forest System lands, it is the policy of the Forest Service to maintain opportunities for a variety of motorized and non-motorized activities, and to manage OHV recreational activities within the capability and suitability of the resources (FS Manual-2355.03). The Forest Service attempts to find a balance between competing interests to maintain a mix of opportunities to enjoy the National Forest.

f. Eastside-Montana National Forest Statistics

Table III-15 contains information on the mileage of motorized and non-motorized roads and trails on National Forest System lands in eastern Montana. It includes the alternatives of the Jefferson Division Travel Plan.

Table III-15. Inventoried Road and Trail Mileage on Five National Forests and Project Alternatives.

AREA	Acres of NFS lands	Miles Road Open to Vehicles/OHVs	Total Miles Inventoried Road	Miles Trail Open to OHVs	Total Miles Inventoried Trail
6 National Forests eastside-Montana*	9,183,000	9,376 (72%)	12,949	3,026 (36%)	8,414
Lewis & Clark National Forest	1,999,000	1,570 (86%)	1,830	740 (43%)	1,700
Jefferson Division Analysis***					
Alternative 1	923,562	1,359 (71%)	1,907	639 (89%)	715
Alternative 3	“	1,003 (73%)	1,378	524 (86%)	610
Alternative 4	“	939 (67%)	1,392	134 (22%)	599
Alternative 5	“	915 (66%)	1,393	314 (57%)	548

* Data includes the Beaverhead-Deerlodge, Helena, Gallatin, Custer, and Lewis and Clark National Forests.

Table III-16 contains acreage information on wildernesses and recommended wildernesses. Approximately 20 percent of eastside Montana National Forests are wilderness, while 6-10 percent are wilderness study areas, and 3 percent are recommended wilderness in Forest Plans. Any area recommended for wilderness in Forest Plans must be approved by Congress. This has not occurred in Montana for about 20 years.

Table III-16. Acreage of Wilderness and Lands Being Considered for Wilderness on Six eastside-Montana National Forests

AREA	Acres of NFS Lands	Wilderness	Wilderness Study Areas	Forest Plan Recommended Wilderness	Further Planning	Inventoried Roadless Area
6 National Forests* eastside-Montana	9,183,000	1,778,000 ac. 19%	565,000 ac. 6%	292,000 ac. 3%	4,000 ac. <1%	4,130,000 ac. 45%
Lewis & Clark NF	1,862,000	384,000 ac. 21%	190,000 ac. 10%	52,000 ac. 3%		1,004,000 ac. 54%
Rocky Mountain Ranger District	775,000	384,000 ac.	0 ac	52,000 ac.	42,000 ac.	352,000 ac.
Little Belt / Castle and Crazy Mtns.	1,087,000	0 ac.	82,000 ac.	0 ac.	0 ac.	417,000 ac.

* Data includes the Beaverhead-Deerlodge, Helena, Gallatin, Custer, and Lewis and Clark National Forests. Source: USDA Forest Service. 2004. Eastside Forests, Analysis of the Management Situation. Draft report,.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

a. Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

1. Direct and Indirect Effects

Under Alternative 1 about 1,359 miles of road, or 71 percent of the existing system roads, are open for motorized use by road vehicles and street legal OHVs with licensed operators. The remaining 29 percent are closed for various reasons to protect resources. There are more open road miles in Alternative 1 than in any other alternative.

Three Hundred-twenty six of the open road miles are contributed by undetermined roads, i.e. roads that are not on the system and whose origin could not be identified, but which were assessed as system roads in Alternative 1 for use as motorized routes. These 326 miles of undetermined roads typically have poor alignments, may be erosive, and may parallel existing routes. Most undetermined roads were not adopted in Alternatives 3, 4, and 5.

2. Cumulative Effects

Roads and trails open to motorized use are typically not affected by actions on other National Forests, except where boundaries abut other Forests, and where similar travel plan management on these adjacent acres is needed from a clarity and law enforcement standpoint. Outcomes of travel planning on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District may affect travel planning on the Jefferson Division. Recreation emphasis on the Rocky Mountain Front will likely be towards mostly non-motorized use on existing trails. If that happens when final travel planning decisions are made, then the Jefferson Division will likely continue to have a motorized emphasis. This will help create more balance of recreation use opportunities on the Forest, as a whole.

b. Action Alternatives 2-5

1. Direct and Indirect Effects

The best data available on miles of roads and trails closed to motorized travel comes from the adjacent eastside-Montana National Forests, as well as the Lewis and Clark National Forest. Data from National Forests in western Montana are not available, and data from other public land management agencies are limited and not meaningful to the analysis.

In looking at data from the Beaverhead -Deerlodge, Custer, Gallatin, and Helena National Forests in Table III-15, it appears that about 72 percent of the road system is open to motorized vehicle travel, and about 36 percent of the trail system is open to OHV travel. By comparison, on the Lewis and Clark National Forest's three mountain range analysis area, about 71 percent of the road system is open to motorized vehicle travel, and about 89 percent of the trail system is open to OHV travel. All of the action alternatives being assessed impose additional restrictions on motorized travel. Alternative 3 would result in the least reduction of motorized recreation opportunities, and Alternative 4 would have the most reduction for motorized opportunities on the Lewis and Clark National Forest. Alternative 5 would be in the middle.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) acreages for all eastside-Montana National Forests are presented in Table III-17 below. The data indicates about 64 percent of National Forest System (NFS) lands on six eastside National Forests are affected by motorized travel during

the summer, and about 36 percent of the NFS lands are not open to motorized travel. This indicates that the majority of NFS lands in eastern Montana allow, and are influenced by motorized wheeled vehicles during the summer months.

Jefferson analysis area action alternatives would change the total amount of existing summer ROS setting in the six eastside-Montana forests by very little as shown below in acres and per cent of the specific setting. Note that larger reductions in motorized ROS settings create even larger increases in non-motorized acres. Alternative 4 would have the greatest effect, increasing non-motorized ROS settings by 6 percent. (See Table III-1 in the recreation issue on “Opportunities for a Wide Spectrum of Non-winter Recreation Activities.”)

Alternative 3

- Motorized ROS Settings -15,620 A’s <-1%
- Non-motorized ROS Settings +15,620 <+1%

Alternative 4

- Motorized ROS Settings -179,532 A’s -3%
- Non-motorized ROS Settings +179,532 +6%

Alternative 5

- Motorized ROS Settings -95,018 A’s -2%
- Non-motorized ROS Settings +95,018 +3%

Table III-17. Summer ROS Acres by Forest as of 2003

National Forest	Primitive	Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	Semi-Primitive Motorized	Roaded Natural	Roaded Modified	Rural	Urban
Beaverhead	125,303	661,856	800,100	270,278	7,606	10,968	0
	7%	35%	43%	14%	<1%	1%	0%
Deerlodge	33,856	193,851	341,602	352,167	236,959	39,777	349
	3%	16%	29%	29%	20%	3%	<1%
Custer	324,166	180,135	368,267	227,695	39	60,773	0
	28%	15%	32%	20%	<1%	5%	0%
Gallatin	717,952	171,976	559,623	78,915	261,833	36,623	5,705
	39%	10%	31%	4%	14%	2%	<1%
Helena	98,214	193,925	168,578	311,806	180,825	10,526	0
	10%	20%	17%	32%	19%	1%	0%
Lewis & Clark	443,242	83,031	714,351	513,626	103,909	0	0
	24%	4%	38%	28%	6%	0%	0%
Total	1,742,733	1,484,774	2,952,521	1,754,487	791,171	158,607	6,054
%	19%	17%	33%	20%	9%	2%	<1%

Source: USDA Forest Service. 2004. Eastside Forests, Analysis of the Management Situation. Draft report.

2. Cumulative Effects

Data for the Lewis and Clark National Forest indicate a trend in imposing restrictions on motorized travel since the 1960s. It is logical to believe that similar trends occurred on the five other eastside-Montana national forests, resulting in their current restrictions. No doubt these restrictions have reduced the opportunities for motorized recreation on a state and local level.

Roads and trails open to motorized use are not affected by travel planning actions on other National Forests, except where boundaries abut other Forests, and where similar travel plan management on these adjacent acres is needed for clarity and ease of enforcement. Travel planning on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District will affect travel planning on the Jefferson Division. Recreation emphasis on the Rocky Mountain Front will likely be towards mostly non-motorized use on existing trails. If that happens when final travel planning decisions are made, then the Jefferson Division will likely continue to have a motorized emphasis. This will help create more balance of recreation use opportunities on the forest, as a whole.

Selection and implementation of any action alternative will result in further reductions in opportunities for motorized recreation. This environmental analysis addresses the effects on various natural resources of Alternative 1 - No Action, as well as the effects of imposing further restrictions on motorized travel as prescribed by Alternatives 3-5. Most people are willing to accept restrictions on motorized travel in order to protect natural resource values such as water quality, wildlife habitat, and vegetation. However, imposing restrictions to resolve social conflict is much more debatable, and less acceptable to people whose activities are being restricted. Imposing restrictions for social reasons is one of the challenges of travel planning. The selected alternative will attempt to strike the best balance between resource protection needs and the needs of recreationists, including addressing social conflicts and the need to provide a broad spectrum of recreation settings across the Forest.

Table III-18 compares the effects of the four Jefferson Division alternatives on opportunities for motorized recreation on five other eastside National Forests plus the portion of the Jefferson Division being analyzed if the least additional restrictions were imposed versus the most additional restrictions.

**Table III-18. Potential Cumulative Effects on Motorized Recreation
in eastern Montana**

Jefferson Division Travel Plan Alternative	Motorized Recreation Opportunities Available in 5 eastside Montana National Forests plus the Jefferson Division Analysis area as affected by Jefferson Travel Planning Alts.
Existing Condition On the 5 Forests (not including the LCNF)	9,376 mi. road (72%) open to vehicles 3,026 mi. trail (36%) open to OHVs
Existing Condition plus Alternative 1 (Existing Condition on LCNF)	10,735 mi. road (72%) open to vehicles 3,665 mi. trail (40%) open to OHVs
Existing Condition plus Alternative 3 (least additional restrictions)	10,379 mi. road (72%) open to vehicles 3,550 mi. trail (39%) open to OHVs
Alternative 4 (most additional restrictions)	10,315 mi. road (72%) open to vehicles 3,160 mi. trail (35%) open to OHVs

The existing condition (Alternative 1), if added to the acreage of the other five eastside forests, would actually increase motorized trail opportunities by 4 percent, while roads open to vehicles would remain at 72 percent. Alternative 3, the least restrictive on motorized use, would actually reduce miles of trail open to OHVs by 1 percent while roads open to vehicles remains the same as for Alternative 1. Alternative 4 places the most restrictions on motorized trails, and decreases miles of trail open to OHV's to 35 percent. When considering the Jefferson Division analysis area plus the other five National Forests, selection of the most restrictive alternative would result in a drop of available motorized trails from the existing 40 percent to 35 percent.

c. Effects Common To All Alternatives

1. Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

The Lewis and Clark National Forest does not have the data needed to determine how many roads and trails have been closed to motorized travel on all public lands throughout the nation. We doubt that knowing that information would have any meaningful affect on the decision to be made for this project. Public lands are managed for a variety of resources and values, not just motorized recreation. We believe that every public agency manages their lands to fulfill their assigned responsibilities, and that agencies make reasoned decisions in regard to road and trail management.

It is beyond the scope of this analysis to assess the effects of past designations of Wilderness areas in Montana, or to assess the effects of past decisions to restrict travel on other National Forests or other public lands in Montana. Likewise, it is beyond the scope of this analysis to account for travel management plans currently under consideration on other National Forests and other public lands in Montana. Each public agency is going through a public process to reach a "reasoned" decision on how to best manage the roads and trails under their jurisdiction.

Nonetheless, motorized recreation enthusiasts would argue that the effects of Wilderness designation and a trend of restricting motorized travel on more and more routes are having a significant cumulative effect on their ability to enjoy public lands. Data on the acreage of designated Wilderness and acreage being considered for wilderness in eastside National Forests are presented in Table III-16. The table shows that about 28 percent of NFS lands in eastern Montana are either designated for Wilderness, or are in some category of study, planning, or recommendation for wilderness. An equal amount or about 27 percent of NFS lands are not being considered for wilderness, and are not within inventoried roadless areas. There is relatively little social conflict about motorized travel in the 27 percent of the NFS lands that are more developed. The biggest social debate about motorized versus non-motorized recreation appears to be occurring in the 45 percent of the NFS lands that are within Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs). The future management of roads and trails within the IRAs is likely to have the biggest cumulative effect on the opportunity for motorized recreation.

There is no reliable method to predict the outcome of on-going travel management planning occurring on all eastside National Forests. It is most likely that all eastside National Forests would impose additional restrictions on motorized travel, but the extent of such restrictions is pure speculation. Table III-19 provides a range of scenarios that might occur on a broader area such as eastern Montana. It was assumed that the existing road infrastructure is needed

to access the NFS lands, and relatively little reduction in miles of open road would occur under all scenarios.

Table III-19. Potential Scenarios for Motorized Recreation in eastern Montana

Potential Changes in Motorized Recreation Opportunities	Potential Motorized Recreation Opportunities Available in 6 eastside Montana National Forests.
No Change	9,376 mi. road (72%) open to vehicles 3,026 mi. trail (36%) open to OHVs 5,662,800 acres (64%) motorized ROS – summer 6,313,300 acres (69%) motorized ROS – winter
Assume 25% Reduction on six National Forests from existing condition	9,070 mi. road (70%) open to vehicles 2,270 mi. trail (27%) open to OHVs 4,247,100 acres (48%) motorized ROS – summer 4,735,000 acres (52%) motorized ROS – winter
Assume 75% Reduction on six National Forests from existing condition	8,600 mi. road (60%) open to vehicles 760 mi. trail (9%) open to OHVs 1,415,700 acres (16%) motorized ROS – summer 1,578,300 acres (17%) motorized ROS – winter

d. Effects Common To All Action Alternatives

1. Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

There are no known direct, indirect, or cumulative effects common to all action alternatives.

