

TRANSPORTATION

One issue was identified that pertains to the effects of travel management on the transportation network of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District.

EFFECT ON MANAGEMENT OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL (CDNST)

Motorized travel and the determination of the final designated route location appear to be the two most important issues in relation to management of the CDNST on the Lewis and Clark National Forest. The amount of CDNST mileage open or closed to motorized travel will be addressed in this analysis by alternative.

The issue of the permanent location of the CDNST within the project area is not considered to be within the scope of this analysis and will not be addressed here. A separate environmental analysis related to the permanent location of the CDNST will need to be completed at some time in the future. However, it is recognized that the decision resulting from the analysis in this EIS may have an effect on the future location of a permanent CDNST route.

1. EXISTING CONDITION

a. Past Events and Conditions

The 3,100 mile long Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) was designated by Congress in 1978. The Secretary of Agriculture has overall responsibility for the management and administration of the trail in coordination with other federal and state land management agencies. In addition, two non-governmental organizations exist that focus on issues relating to the development, management and maintenance of the CDNST. These organizations are the Continental Divide Trail Society formed in 1978 and the Continental Divide Trail Alliance established in 1995. A Comprehensive Plan guiding the management and administration of the CDNST was completed in 1985. The present location of the CDNST on the Lewis and Clark National Forest follows existing Forest Service System trails on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District.

Approximately 136.6 miles of the CDNST traverse the Lewis and Clark National Forest. An approximate 95.9 miles of the CDNST on the Lewis and Clark Forest traverses the Scapegoat and Bob Marshall Wilderness areas and is not considered or included within the scope of this analysis as these trail segments are outside of the project area.

Approximately 40.7 miles of the CDNST does fall within the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Access and Travel Management Plan EIS project area. Most of this mileage is within that portion of the Rocky Mountain Ranger District commonly known as the Badger-Two Medicine area. Of the mileage within the Badger-Two Medicine area, most of this route is on an interim or temporary route location, not the permanent preferred route. The “interim” CDNST route location is considered to be a temporary location for the trail to be utilized until such time that the feasibility of the preferred (permanent) route location is established through a site-specific NEPA analysis. Approximately 7.0 miles of the CDNST also falls outside of

the Wilderness boundary in the Benchmark area of the District along the South Fork of the Sun River and is within the EIS project area.

Table III-78. Mileage of CDNST on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District

Location	Miles of Trail*
Total CDNST mileage on Ranger District	136.6 miles
District CDNST mileage within Wilderness	95.9 miles
District CDNST mileage within Analysis Area	40.7 miles

*All mileage shown is approximate.

b. Desired Condition

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan (USDA 1985) describes a number of desired conditions for the CDNST. It describes a trail that is located in the vicinity of the geographic Continental Divide. It describes a trail that is essentially non-motorized with an emphasis on foot travel while providing for horse use. However, the CDNST Comprehensive Plan (USDA, 1985) does allow for a continuation of motorized use on the CDNST where it has been permitted in the past and is considered appropriate in the management direction for the overall management area. It also goes on to state that the presence or proposed location of the CDNST route will not be an acceptable reason for prohibiting motorized or other specified uses in an area where such use was established prior to the formal location of the trail. An internal memo (USDA, 1997) dated July 3, 1997 clarifies the USDA Forest Service position relating to motorized use on the CDNST. This memo states that "...it is the intent of the Forest Service that the CDNST will be for non-motorized recreation." "As new trail segments of the CDNST are constructed to link existing non-motorized trail segments together, and to reroute the CDNST off of primitive roads or other routes where motorized travel is allowed, motorized use should not be allowed or considered."

2. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

a. Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

1. Direct and Indirect Effects

Under the No Action Alternative approximately 32.5 miles of the CDNST route in the Badger-Two Medicine area would remain open to the existing types of motorized travel in the summer and 14.5 miles of the CDNST route would remain open to snowmobile travel in the winter. This alternative would retain the highest number of CDNST interim route miles open to motorized travel yearlong.

Under Alternative 1, three trail segments of the CDNST interim route totaling approximately 7.7 miles follow an old seismic road prism. Users will continue to have the experience of traveling on a primitive road as opposed to a single-track foot and stock trail that is characteristic of the balance of the CDNST on the Lewis and Clark National Forest.

2. Cumulative Effects

None of the factors to consider for cumulative effects relating to the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel plan (listed in Appendix M) are expected to have an effect on the future management of the CDNST. No past or foreseeable actions are expected to influence the future location of the CDNST or the number of miles that are open to motorized travel.

b. Action Alternatives 2-5

1. Direct and Indirect effects

Maps 21 and 22 display how the five alternatives effect the motorized and non-motorized segments of the CDNST during the summer and winter. The following table displays a summary of summer season CDNST mileage open or closed to motorized travel by alternative.

Table III-79. Summer Season Motorized / Non-motorized Mileages on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) by Alternative

CDNST Summer Season Travel*	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
CDNST – Summer Non-motorized	8.2	18.9	40.7	33.5	40.7
CDNST – Summer Motorized	32.5	20.0	0.0	7.2	0.0
CDNST – Closed (Decommissioned)	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
CDNST -- on Old Road Prism	7.7	5.9	7.7	7.7	7.7
Total CDNST -- in Project Area	40.7	38.9	40.7	40.7	40.7

*All mileage shown is approximate.

The following table displays a summary of winter season CDNST mileage open or closed to motorized travel by alternative.

Table III-80. Winter Season Motorized / Non-motorized Mileages on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) by Alternative

CDNST Winter Season Travel*	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
CDNST – Winter Non-motorized	26.2	21.7	40.7	21.7	40.7
CDNST – Winter Motorized	14.5	19.0	0.0	19.0	0.0
Total CDNST -- in Project Area	40.7	40.7	40.7	40.7	40.7

* All mileage shown is approximate.

Alternative 3 and Alternative 5 would both restrict motorized travel yearlong on the present CDNST route in the Badger Two-Medicine area. With these two alternatives the entire Lewis and Clark National Forest portion of the CDNST would become a non-motorized route.

Motorized users who have traditionally recreated on these trail segments would be displaced from this area to other locations yearlong. Trail users who have been concerned about motorized use occurring on the interim route of the CDNST would experience a motor free route. These two alternatives would have the least amount of the CDNST interim route open to motorized travel yearlong.

In Alternative 2, motorized travel would be permitted on approximately 20.0 miles of the CDNST interim route in the Badger Two-Medicine area for the summer season. During the winter season, access by snowmobile would be permitted on approximately 19.0 miles. This would result in an overall reduction in the number of miles available to motorized users on the CDNST but would still allow for some level of motorized recreation in locations where it has traditionally taken place in the past. In this alternative trail #133 from Summit Campground to the junction with trail #137 would be removed from the summer trail system and closed. This would displace all users from this trail segment and would require an alternate route to be designated or constructed to connect the CDNST interim route to U.S. Highway 2 at Marias Pass. This alternative would have the second highest number of CDNST interim route miles open to motorized travel during the summer. During the winter, this alternative would share the highest level of CDNST mileage open to motorized travel with alternative 4.

Alternative 4 would allow for continued motorized travel on approximately 7.2 miles of the CDNST in the Badger-Two Medicine area in the summer season. During the winter season, access by snowmobile would be permitted on approximately 19.0 miles. This would result in an overall reduction of trail remaining open to motorized travel on the CDNST interim route during the summer travel season. This alternative would have the third highest number of CDNST interim route miles open to motorized travel in the summer. During the winter, this alternative would share the highest level of CDNST mileage open to motorized travel with alternative 2.

2. Cumulative Effects

None of the factors to consider for cumulative effects relating to the Rocky Mountain Ranger District Travel plan (listed in Appendix M) are expected to have an effect on the future management of the CDNST. No past or foreseeable actions are expected to influence the future location of the CDNST or the number of miles that are open to motorized travel.

c. Effects Common To All Alternatives

1. Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

The segment of the preferred CDNST route along the South Fork of The Sun River in the Benchmark area on trail #202 is designated as a non-motorized trail yearlong in all alternatives within this DEIS. This portion of the CDNST would not be considered further in this analysis as there would be no change to this segment in any of the alternatives

The short segment of the CDNST on trail #147 between Beaver Lake and Badger Pass is designated as a non-motorized trail yearlong in all alternatives. This portion of the CDNST would not be considered further in this analysis as there would be no change to this segment in any of the 5 alternatives.

It is assumed in this analysis that the route displayed and analyzed in the DEIS is predominantly an “interim” or temporary CDNST route through the Badger Two-Medicine area and not necessarily the permanent location of the CDNST within the project area. The

interim route as described is marked on the ground with triangular CDNST blazers and directional signing at trail junctions. Presently, the Marias Pass Historical Site parking area serves as the primary trailhead for CDNST users heading south from U.S. Highway 2. The Summit Trailhead also serves as a trailhead for CDNST users and is the only trailhead available in this area for CDNST users traveling with stock. A separate environmental analysis to establish a permanent CDNST route location would likely be needed to determine the location and design of a CDNST trailhead facility adjacent to U.S. Highway 2 in the Marias Pass area.

d. Effects Common To All Action Alternatives

1. Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

Under Alternatives 3, 4 and 5, three trail segments of the CDNST interim route totaling approximately 7.7 miles follow an old seismic road prism. Likewise, in Alternative 2 there are 5.9 miles of trail that are on old seismic road prism. Even in those alternatives that eliminate motorized travel from these segments of trail, users will continue to have the experience of traveling on a primitive road as opposed to a single-track foot and stock trail that is characteristic of the balance of the CDNST on the Lewis and Clark National Forest.

