

Transportation Mgmt Record of Decision

RIO GRANDE NATIONAL FOREST

TRAIL ALLOCATIONS

MOTORIZED AND NON-MOTORIZED

RECORD OF DECISION

This Record of Decision describes my decision to modify the trail designations (as motorized or non-motorized) for the Rio Grande National Forest. The purpose of the modification is to offer a balanced range of trail related recreation opportunities in the Backcountry and other areas of the Forest that is consistent with the land allocations adopted in the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan which will be implemented beginning December 20, 1996.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most controversial aspects of the Forest Plan Revision has been a debate about how many and what trails should be available for motorized and non motorized use outside designated Wilderness. The District Rangers have been conducting Environmental Assesments to open or close trails for quite some time. It is difficult to get a clear picture of trail status using the current outdated Forest Visitor Map. This Record of Decision will acknowledge all the previous decisions and finalize additional decisions so that the trail system can be understood in its entirety.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) does a good job of portraying both the cumulative effects and site specific considerations for the trails system. Covering the entire system with one NEPA document and decision is the most effective way to assure long term continuity in trail management and use.

The Travel Management issue focused on the disposition of trails outside of the Wilderness, particularly in the period of time between the publication of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Forest Plan and the FEIS and Revised Forest Plan. Many people that enjoy motorized recreation opportunities asked that we offer a variety of experiences and maintain motorized access to several corridors crossing the Forest from east to west and north to south. Many other people that prefer a nonmotorized experience asked that we limit motorized us to a handfull of locations. My decision offers a balance between the uses and is not intended to satisfy everyone.

During the Revision of the Forest Plan, each trail was carefully scrutinized by the Interdisciplinary

team and field going personnel from the Ranger Districts. Resource Concerns included items like Wildlife, TES species, Riparian areas, sensitive soils and steep slopes. Access Issues included alternative route availability, private access concerns, Wilderness proximity, and existing motorized/nonmotorized status.

THE DECISION

My decision is to adopt the trail allocations as shown on the map of Alternative G (the Selected Alternative).

The system as mapped will offer a variety of motorized/nonmotorized use across the Forest in an environmentally acceptable way. The map clearly describes where people can go to either enjoy or avoid motorized activities.

The following trails will be designated as motorized.

FOREST DEVELOPMENT INVENTORIED MOTORIZED TRAILS

Conejos Peak District

#703Alamosa Rock
#704Silver Mountain
#706Big Lake
#708Hot Creek
#715Saddle Creek
#716Lake Fork
#717Valdez
#720Roaring Gulch (East of FDR 250)
#734Hidden Lake
#737Willow Mountain
#739Acascosa
#740West Fork Rio Chama
#741Archuleta Creek
#742Empedrado
#759Sawmill Gulch

Divide District

#700Dry Creek Stock Driveway
#702South Rock
#709Bear Creek

#761Palisade
#786Benino
#787LaGarita Crk Stock Driveway
#787Lagarita Crk Stock Driveway
#791Salt Canyon
#792Embargo
#793LaGarita Creek
#793ALaGarita Creek Cutoff-A
#793BLagarita Creek Cutoff-B
#794Cathedral
#795Groundhog Creek
#796Perry Creek
#797Middle Alder
#798West Alder
#803Miners Creek
#812Cross Creek
#813CDNST (Spring Crk Pass to Rat Crk)
#813CDNST (Pole Creek)
#815Fern Creek
#820Pole Creek
#821Lost Trail
#822West Lost Trail
#831Trout Creek (Trout Mtn)
#833Beaver Mountain
#842Tewksberry
#844Handkerchief Mesa(Willow Crk to CDNST)
#845Big Park
#846Castle Rock
#847Main Beaver
#849Wolf Creek
#850West Frisco Creek
#854Deadman Loop
#872Bennett
#873Burro
#874Munger Canyon
#885Fremont's Camp
#894Frisco/Fitton
#898Shady Creek
#916East Fork Middle Pole Crk
#917Middle Pole Crk
#932West Bear
#934Schrader Crk

Saguache District

#764Antoro Meadows
#788Miners Creek
#796Perry Creek
#813CDNST (LuJan Pass to Sargents Mesa)
#813CDNST (Tank Seven Creek to Windy Peak)
#909Bowers

The remainder of the trails outside Wilderness have been designated as Nonmotorized. The trail Number and name for nonmotorized status follows:

Nonmotorized Trails

Conejos Peak Ranger District

Treasure Trail
#707Trail
Notch Trails
#731Elk Creek Trail
#732Duck Lake Trail
#733La Manga Trail
#738East Fork of Rio Chama
#740West Fork of Rio Chama
#813CDNST (from Wolf Crk to Elwood Pass and from Flat Mtn. to the New Mexico Border)

Divide Ranger District

#700Dry Creek Stock Driveway
#701North Fork Rock Creek
#787Phoenix Park
#789Upper End of Inspiration
#801Farmers Creek
#804Sawmill Gulch
#806Deep Creek
#811Trout Creek
#813CDNST(Kite Lake to Hunchback Pass)
#813CDNST (Kitty/Ruby Crk Section)

#813CDNST (Cataract Lake to Carson)
#815Fern Creek
#823Heart Lake
#830Raspberry Gulch
#833Elk Creek
#848East Fork of San Francisco Creek
#871West Bellows Creek
#876Little Bennett Creek
#879Middle Fork San Francisco Creek
#881Willow Creek
#896Red Mountain Creek
#897Shallow Creek
#918Pole Creek
#933South Fork Guard Station to Church Creek

Saguache Ranger District

#744Upper Middle Fork
#755Luders Creek
#766Indian Creek
#767East Middle Creek
#768Middle Creek
#772Wagon Wheel Cutoff
#774Fourmile Creek
#776Saguache Creek
#778Bear Creek
#779Deep Creek
#785Miners Creek
#906California Gulch
#908Wannamaker Creek
#787La Garita Wild. to Trl #908*
#915Coyote*
#769Lower Sheep Creek*
#924Cottonwood Creek*
#770Sheep Creek*
#771East Sheep Creek*
#765Antora Creek*
#762Brewery Creek*
#763Flagstaff*
#923Kelly Creek*
#925Elkhorn Gulch*

*These trails are not included in the assessment done in FEIS Table 3-96, but have been managed as nonmotorized. These trails are included in the formal designation of the trails by this decision document.

Refer to FEIS, Table 3-96 (page 3-410 - 3-412) for the reasons for nonmotorized designation.

SUMMARY OF TRAILS

Nonmotorized Trails:

Within Wilderness	470 miles
Outside wilderness	650
	=====
	1,120 miles

Motorized trails/Primitive Roads:

MOTORIZED TRAILS	380 miles
4X4 ROADS	1,795 miles
	=====
	2,175 miles

OBJECTIVES SHARED BY ALL ALTERNATIVES

All alternatives meet the objectives established in the Rocky Mountain Regional Guide. These include:

- *Protect the basic soil, air, and water resources.
- *Provide for multiple uses and sustainability in an environmentally acceptable manner.
- *Provide for a variety of life through management of ecosystems.
- * Provide for scenic quality and a range of recreation opportunities that respond to our customers and local communities.
- *Emphasize cooperation with individuals, organizations, and other agencies in coordination of planning and project implementation.
- *Promote rural-development opportunities.
- *In cooperation with other landowners, strive for improved landowners and access patterns, to the mutual benefit of both public and private landowners.
- *Improve the financial efficiency of all programs and projects.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The FEIS for the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan examines a range of Alternatives that address varying schemes of motorized and non-motorized trail access to the Forest. These are summarized below.

All alternatives meet the management requirements of 36 CFR 219.17, as well as all other legal and regulatory requirements.

Alternative A

Alternative A includes the recommendation of all unroaded areas (5,000 acres and greater) as proposed Wilderness. For this reason the majority of trails are nonmotorized. Motorized recreation opportunities are limited to the areas of the Forest that are not designated Wilderness or Proposed Wilderness.

Alternative B

This Alternative features a mix of motorized and nonmotorized recreation because of the use of Backcountry Motorized or Backcountry Nonmotorized Management Prescriptions. The Alternative favors motorized recreation use on the majority of Forest Trails.

Alternative D

This Alternative features a more balanced mix of motorized and nonmotorized recreation opportunities through the use of Backcountry Motorized or Nonmotorized Management Prescriptions. Recreation use is segregated in the Backcountry according to the Management Prescriptions used.

Alternative E

Alternative E includes the recommendation of selected Unroaded Areas for proposed Wilderness. The Alternative also features a mix of Backcountry Motorized or Nonmotorized recreation depending on the Management Prescriptions that are applied. The Alternative offers more nonmotorized recreation due primarily to the inclusion of Wilderness recommendations.

Alternative F

Alternative F favors nonmotorized recreation over motorized in most areas of the Forest. Recreation use is limited in Core Reserve Areas, Corridors and Limited Use Areas in order to offer protection to biological resources. The Alternative also includes the recommendation of selected unroaded areas for Wilderness designation.

Alternative G (Selected)

Alternative G is different from the other alternatives because it employs a non segregated Backcountry Prescription. What this means is that a Backcountry Prescription has been applied to the majority of the unroaded areas on the Forest. Forest trails were screened according to certain biological criteria identified in the FEIS and designated as motorized or nonmotorized as shown in the Tables above and on the Alternative G map that is included in the FEIS.

Alternative NA

Current management of the trail system would continue with no changes under this alternative. Motorized use of the trail system is emphasized.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

As the Forest Supervisor (Deciding Officer), I have considered the multitude of statutes governing management of the Rio Grande National Forest, and I believe that this decision represents the best possible approach relative to harmonizing and reconciling the current statutory duties of the Forest Service.

This decision is in compliance with the Clean Water Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Clean Air Standards Act because of the conclusions presented in Chapter III of the FEIS for the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan.

MITIGATION AND MONITORING

All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the proposed designation of trails in Selected Alternative G have been adopted. The specific mitigative measures and practices may be found in the FEIS for the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan, Chapter III.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

I consider Alternative E to be the environmentally preferred alternative. I have not selected this Alternative for implementation because of the reasons cited in the Record of Decision for the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Implementation of this decision will occur seven calendar days following the publication of the legal notice of the decision in the Federal Register (December 13, 1996).

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, Content of Notice of Appeal, including the reasons for appeal and must be filed with:

Elizabeth Estill, Regional Forester, R-2
USDA-Forest Service
740 Simms Street
Golden, Colorado 80401-4720

within 90 days from the date the legal notice is published in the Federal Register (December 13, 1996).

Date: December 5, 1996
JAMES B. WEBB
Forest Supervisor
