

CHAPTER 2: ALTERNATIVES

Introduction

This chapter describes and compares the alternatives considered for the travel management plan (TMP). This section also presents the alternatives in comparative form, defining the differences among the alternatives and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decision-maker and the public. Chapter 3 will present the current condition and effects of the alternatives in detail.

Included in this chapter is a discussion of:

- How alternatives were developed;
- Features of each alternative, including the no action alternative;
- Alternatives that were considered but eliminated from detailed study;
- How alternatives compare to one another; and
- Which criteria varied among alternatives.

Development of Alternatives

The process begins when the decision-maker determines there is a need for action. A proposed action is developed to meet the purpose and need for change. In this case there is a need to update and establish the travel management system for the White River National Forest (see Chapter 1, Purpose and Need, Proposed Action). Once a proposed action is presented, comments are solicited to determine if there are issues and alternatives to the proposed action that can meet the purpose and need. This gives the decision-maker options to select from.

From all the public involvement efforts, the White River National Forest was able to develop alternatives (see Chapter 1, Public Involvement) to address primary issues. Based on comments received on the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), a preferred alternative, along with a no action alternative and a minimal action alternative, was derived for this supplemental DEIS (SDEIS). This effort is a continuation and compilation of all efforts before and is being presented to the public for comment.

Important Points Shared By All Alternatives

The travel management plan will:

- Provide for multiple uses and sustainability in an environmentally acceptable manner;
- Emphasize cooperation with individuals, organizations, and other agencies in coordination with planning and project application;
- Strive to improve the financial efficiency for travel management;
- Meet forest-wide goals and objectives and a set of standards and guidelines that ensure protection of forest resources;

- Comply with applicable laws; and
- Help meet the desired conditions laid out in the forest plan.

A number of designations and activities will not change in the travel management plan. These include:

- Existing permitted use, including ski resort developed areas and infrastructure;
- Existing developed recreation sites, utility corridors, and electronic/utility sites;
- Existing rights-of-way;
- Current designated national scenic and recreational trails and byways;
- Motorized and mechanized use is not allowed in designated wilderness areas; and
- Any federal, state, tribal, or local official in the performance of official duty could receive permission to enter restricted areas or use restricted types of vehicles by Forest Service personnel.

Updated data and analytical procedures, as well as evolving scientific knowledge, have been incorporated into all alternatives.

Common Elements Under All Alternatives

Terminology

The following are commonly used terms in the document that are listed here to help the reader understand how they are used. See the glossary for the definitions of other words commonly used throughout the document.

System roads and trails are those that are under the jurisdiction of an individual or government entity. These are legally defined as to their existence, allowable uses upon them, and responsibility for maintenance. These make up the designated travel system.

Unauthorized roads and trails are roads or trails on National Forest System lands that are not managed as part of the forest transportation system, such as unplanned roads, abandoned travelways, and off-road vehicle tracks that have not been designated and managed as a road or trail; and those roads that were once under permit or other authorization and were not decommissioned upon the termination of the authorization. Synonyms: *non-system road, non-system trail, user-created and way*.

User-created roads and trails are those that have not been claimed by an owner. Other terms used in the past include ways, and ghost roads and trails. These also include old roads and trails that may have been missed during past travel management inventory processes, or roads and trails that were once on the system and never properly closed or added. User-created is also used in this document to represent routes not on the system.

Roads and trails that are on the system but are no longer needed are decommissioned.

Roads and trails that are user-created and need to be returned to a natural state are rehabilitated.

Decommissioned and rehabilitated are terms used to ‘remove routes from the landscape and return them to a natural state’. See the glossary for further explanation of these terms.

Regulatory

- The following statement of exemption will be stated in the final travel order and motor vehicle use maps (MVUM): Except in wilderness and other congressionally designated special areas, the following may be exempt from prohibitions when granted by the forest supervisor:
 - a) Limited administrative use by the Forest Service;
 - b) Use of any fire, military, or law enforcement vehicle for emergency purposes;
 - c) Authorized use of any combat or combat support vehicle for national defense purposes;
 - d) Law enforcement response to violations of law, including pursuit; and
 - e) Use and occupancy of National Forest System lands and resources pursuant to a written authorization issued under federal law or regulations. Note: emergency access and law enforcement pursuit does not necessarily require permission from the forest supervisor.
- In designated wilderness the following persons may be exempt from prohibitions:
 - a) Persons with a Forest Service permit specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission; and
 - b) Any federal, state or local officer, or member of an organized rescue or firefighting force, in the performance of an official duty.
- The forest supervisor has the authority to issue special orders limiting or changing access for protection of the natural resource, wildlife, or safety.
- Off road parking for dispersed camping is 300 feet from any road open for motorized use or as determined by the responsible official, i.e. camping and off road travel through a special order are restricted to designated camping sites only. No off road travel will be allowed for game retrieval. Off road parking for special uses such as forest product gathering will be specified and issued by special use permit. Off road camping and parking must not damage the land, vegetation, or streams and no live trees may be cut (FSM 2355.30, 36 CFR 212).
- Nothing in this plan precludes future project-specific environmental analysis from proposing the construction of new system roads and trails.

Mode of Travel

- **Air travel:** All aircraft including but not limited to airplanes, helicopters, hang gliders, para-gliders, balloons, and ultralights, will be required to have a special use permit for take-off and landing locations on White River National Forest lands or waterways (36 CFR 261.58).
- **Boat travel:** Motor boats with gas or electric motors are allowed only on Dillon Reservoir, Green Mountain Reservoir, Ruedi Reservoir, Homestake Reservoir, and Shoshone Forebay. Boats with electric motors also are allowed on Heart Lake, Deep Lake, Meadow Lake, Sweetwater Lake, Chapman Reservoir, and Crescent Lake. All other bodies of water—lakes, streams, and reservoirs—are limited to non-motorized boating. Human contact is prohibited in Dillon Reservoir. Human contact or boating of any kind is prohibited on Maroon Lake and Hanging Lake (36CFR 261.58).

Travel Opportunities

The travel management plan maps and subsequent orders are separated into two seasons. The summer and winter map do not overlap. When one ends the other begins. It is expected therefore that all summer motorized and mechanized uses end on the date specified and transition to allowable winter motorized uses, then reverse back on the date specified.

Summer Season

Summer season is considered the snow-free season. Summer season begins Thursday 0000 midnight before Memorial Day and ends 1159:59 the second Sunday in November.

During the summer season all motorized and mechanized travel is restricted to routes designated for each particular use type—full-sized vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, motorcycles, mountain bikes, and all other mechanized vehicles used for human transport. Other designations include pack and saddle, and foot.

Some roads and trails may remain closed beyond the end date or be closed prior to the opening date when ground conditions are not sufficient to allow traffic without causing resource damage. Some roads and trails may remain open prior to the opening date and after the closing date on a site-specific basis, only when the authorizing official determines there is a public need and ground conditions are sufficient to allow the activity. Any exceptions to the listed dates will be made through a line officer's special order and posted at the specific location.

Winter Season

Winter season is considered the snow season. Over-snow motorized travel begins 0000 midnight second Monday in November. The over-snow motorized travel ends Wednesday 1159:59 before Memorial Day.

An over-snow vehicle is defined as a vehicle that is designed for use over snow and runs on a track or tracks and/or ski or skis while in use over snow (36 CFR 212.1). These are vehicles primarily designed for winter use, not retrofitted with skis, tracks, chains, and/or other equipment for winter operation. Any other vehicle other than defined by 36 CFR 212 for winter use, including wheeled vehicles such as full-sized vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, motorcycles, mountain bikes, and mechanized vehicles, are prohibited, unless on a plowed road.

Under certain conditions over-snow vehicle use may remain open prior to the opening date and after the closing date on a site-specific basis, only when the authorizing official determines there is a public need and ground conditions are sufficient to allow the activity. Any exceptions to the listed dates will be made through a line officer's special order and posted at the specific location.

All grooming operations on winter trails require a permit or other authorization. On National Forest System lands where groomed motorized winter trails are provided by the Forest Service, or through other approved providers, travel is restricted to snowmobiles and non-motorized/non-mechanized uses only. Machines such as snowcats or other tracked vehicles designed specifically for over-snow winter travel are prohibited from these groomed trails unless equipped with and operating a grooming implement that is designed to groom the trail behind the machine. On groomed non-motorized winter trails, travel is restricted to non-motorized/non-mechanized uses only, unless granted through permit or other authorization. The intent of this provision is to maintain the integrity of

the groomed snow surface and to protect the investment made in maintaining these winter routes for their intended purpose.

Legend Categories

Categories used to depict allowed uses for summer and winter and the time of year these are in affect are listed below. (Note: this also represents the legends used on the summer and winter maps; these reflect what will become the site-specific regulatory travel management categories and decisions.)

Winter

Dates: Begins 0000 midnight second Monday in November – ends the Wednesday 1159:59 midnight before Memorial Day

- Open motorized areas
- Restricted motorized areas with motorized routes only
- Prohibited motorized areas
- Total closure to all uses

Note: Motorized is for winter motorized (tracked) vehicles only. No wheeled vehicles will be allowed off of plowed roads and parking lots unless under special use permit.

Summer

Dates: Begins Thursday 0000 midnight before Memorial Day – ends 1159:59 midnight second Sunday in November

- Licensed motorized on designated route
- Licensed and unlicensed allowed on designated route
- Motorized vehicles less than 48 inches in width on designated route
- Two-wheeled (motorcycle) vehicles on designated route
- Mechanized (bicycles) on designated route
- Animal (horse) and foot (hike)

Note:

- All motorized and mechanized modes of travel must be on designated routes.
- All motorized categories generally allow mechanized (bike), animal (horse), and foot (hike) unless otherwise specified.*
- All mechanized will allow animal (horse) and foot (hike) unless otherwise specified.*
- Animal (horse) and foot (hike) are allowed to travel across country and generally on all routes. There are some routes that may limit animal (horse) use for safety reasons.*

*There may be some routes that are specific to a particular use that does not fit the above legend. These will be specifically noted (tabular).

Other categories may include closed to public and special-use by permit only.

All Seasons

At no time may any transportation use take place that will cause resource damage.

Additional site-specific closures and seasonal restrictions may be implemented either annually or on a case-by-case basis for management, wildlife, and resource protection through authorized travel orders. These site-specific travel restriction modifications will override the base summer and winter travel maps.

Special Areas and Permits

- Access for permitted activities (such as livestock operations, mineral exploration and development, maintenance of water developments, utility maintenance, timber management, ski area management, outfitter and guide operations, and special events) on National Forest System land is independent of general public access. Individuals or groups with special permits are allowed to conduct their business according to conditions outlined in their permits. If a permit does not stipulate exemptions to the forest's general travel regulations, the general travel regulations will apply.
- The Golden Horseshoe area on the Dillon Ranger District is designated intermix 7.1 management area in the forest plan. These areas stress collaborative management with local governments and user groups. An inter-government cooperative task force along with public group participation has been created to work on the management direction for the recreation uses within this area. The DEIS travel management plan presented the maximum amount of roads and trails in the Golden Horseshoe area for analysis purposes. Presenting the maximum number of roads and trails analyzes the maximum resource impacts this area would see. The SDEIS contains the roads and trails that are currently ready to be incorporated into the travel system. The task force will continue to design a system that projects the future roads and trails along with those that need to be decommissioned. The final system will be reviewed for incorporation into the final travel management plan. The public is encouraged to work with the task force to help the group design the final transportation system for this area.
- Ski areas are treated as year-round special areas in the travel management plan. The roads and trails dedicated to the ski area operation will be considered designated permitted routes under the ski area permit. The ski areas will be responsible for the management, operation, and maintenance of these routes. There are currently 211 miles of roads and trails under the ski area special use permits. Winter uses are controlled and managed by the ski areas as stated in their permits. Nordic centers are designated as special areas for winter operations. Any modifications to the baseline summer or winter operations presented in this document will be accomplished under the permit, through appropriate NEPA process and operating plan implementation.

The Alternative Development Process

Development of a travel management plan is a large and complex process. The White River National Forest decided to undertake developing a plan for the entire 2.3 million acres so that a consistent updated plan could be implemented.

This plan revision process started with the determination that there is a need to change the 1984 forest management plan travel management strategy, described in the travel map of 1985, because of changes in circumstances, legal mandates, societal uses, and societal

values. The White River National Forest presented a draft travel management plan in the forest plan DEIS. A decision was made to separate the efforts and develop the travel management plan after the finalization of the forest plan.

The White River National Forest initiated the development of the travel management plan in August of 2002. By implementing the initial inventory and scoping process both internally and externally, the White River National Forest developed the DEIS for release in June of 2006. The DEIS is incorporated into the SDEIS. The SDEIS is part of and a continuation of the overall process for development of the travel management plan as regulated by NEPA.

In the DEIS the White River National Forest updated the inventory and presented alternatives for the travel management plan. When looking at the number of features and decisions to be made, there is an infinite number of permutations and combinations that could be developed into alternatives. Therefore the Forest Service developed a strategy to limit the number of alternatives to study in detail while obtaining a range and providing a clear basis of choice. This strategy was to use the key issues and develop alternatives to examine ways to address these key issues. In the DEIS, comments on issues, preferences, and general direction were used to formulate the alternative themes. Scoping issues brought forward were further categorized into concerns such as: alpine protection, amount of decommissioning, maintenance costs, loop opportunities, access points, addition or elimination of unauthorized routes, social interaction of users, effects on watersheds and wildlife, spread of noxious weeds, separation of users, riparian and cultural resource protection, commodity access, special use access, administrative access, and others.

All these and others were categorized into three key issues: volume and type of access, resolution of resource conflict, and protection of natural resources. These then were used directly to form the action alternatives under consideration: optimizing recreation opportunities, providing for separation of recreation uses where possible, and emphasizing natural resources and habitat values while still providing for recreation. These focused themes allowed for the range of alternatives to be presented.

Once the alternative themes were established, the alternatives were developed by examining each road, trail (whether system or non-system), and winter use area. Based on site-specific comments, on the ground knowledge, and discussions with the public, the ranger district staffs evaluated and proposed a management strategy for each feature based on the alternative themes for C, D, and E. These were analyzed and presented in the DEIS.

The SDEIS has been developed in response to the comments received on the DEIS, which examined these three action alternatives and the minimal action alternative in detail. Several people commented that they had difficulty in sorting through all the details that make up the three action alternatives presented in the DEIS. The DEIS also stated “the final decision may result in the selection of any of the alternatives, a combination of alternatives, and /or from additional information and comments received . . .” In response, this SDEIS is being presented to the public for comment, to allow for the opportunity to review the full effort thus far in a concisely focused action alternative. This action alternative along with the minimal action and no action alternatives was developed from the previous DEIS effort including the incorporation of public comment, on the ground knowledge, and regulatory requirements.

Further Incorporation of the Travel Rule

In the travel rule, the agency acknowledges the need to mix highway legal (licensed) and non-highway legal (unlicensed) traffic on some National Forest System roads at maintenance levels 3, 4, and 5. These designation decisions will be advised by professional engineering study and analysis, as appropriate. Guidelines for Engineering Analysis of Motorized Mixed Use on National Forest System roads (USDA Forest Service 2005) outlines the procedures to be undertaken and factors to consider while analyzing the safety risks of authorizing highway legal vehicles and non-highway legal vehicles to operate on the same road (motorized mixed use). Safety and engineering considerations are to be evaluated while conducting the motorized mixed use analyses.

During 2006 and 2007, motorized mixed use analyses (professional engineering studies) were conducted on Maintenance Level (ML) 3–5 roads by the White River National Forest engineering department. These roads are the National Forest System arterials and collectors and the main access routes that the public uses to get to the forest. Studies include an evaluation for the potential for crashes as well as the severity of an accident should a crash occur. The crash potential rating is based on roadway factors such as traffic volume & type, surface type & condition, sight distances, driving speeds, and roadway alignment (horizontal & vertical curves). Crash severity ratings are based on roadside conditions (natural ground slopes, slope/height of embankments, and large unyielding features next to the road), speed, and traffic types (the larger the difference in size of vehicles, the greater the severity).

Motorized mixed use analyses were not conducted on ML 2 roads as these roads usually have rough uneven driving surfaces, slower driving speeds, and minimal use, and can safely accommodate the mixing of highway legal and non-highway legal vehicles. ML 3–5 roads usually have better driving surfaces, higher driving speeds, and greater volumes of traffic. ML 5 roads were excluded from the analysis as these roads, mostly paved, were determined to be unsafe for designation due to poor handling characteristics of OHVs on paved surfaces. ML 3–4 roads that access or move people around recreational facilities (campgrounds, picnic areas, scenic overlooks, boat docks, fishing areas, etc.) were also deemed unsuitable for OHV use in light of the recreational experiences users expect and the experiences the forest is trying to provide. Some ML 3–4 roads were excluded from analysis due to known heavy traffic volumes and unsafe road characteristics. Other ML 3–4 roads were excluded from the analysis as OHV use was inappropriate given forest plan direction for the area the road accesses.

District personnel requested motorized mixed use analysis on approximately 246 miles of roads being considered for designation, and these analyses concluded that approximately 132 miles could be designated for motorized mixed use without increasing the safety risk to the public. Of the 114 miles determined to have an increased risk to public safety, approximately 60 miles included management options that could be implemented to reduce that risk to a manageable level.

Some roads with mixed use may have the designation temporarily suspended due to forest management activities such as timber sale and natural gas exploration & development, and will have the designation restored once the commercial activities have been completed.

The DEIS presented a list of maintenance level 3, 4, and 5 roads that would likely allow and not likely allow mixed motorized use (Appendix I, DEIS). The SDEIS incorporates the engineering studies and their effects into Alternative G. Alternatives A and F present all 3, 4, and 5 routes as open mixed use, as they are today.

Description of the Alternatives

Each alternative for the travel management plan is presented in the same format, with the following components:

Background—The background to development of the alternative.

Theme—The emphasis of the alternative.

Relationship issues—How specific elements of the issues are incorporated into the alternative. In this discussion, the terms low, moderate, and high are used to compare levels of outputs or the relative degree of environmental impacts. No absolute measures are intended by these terms. For example, if an alternative calls for the highest level of road closure, it simply means that more roads will be closed under this alternative than under any other, not that a maximum possible number of roads will be closed. The words more and less are used in a specific context.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

Federal agencies are required by NEPA to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14).

The interdisciplinary team originally considered five different alternatives during scoping. The original alternatives—B, C, D, and E—were analyzed and disclosed in the DEIS. The action alternatives represented a reasonable range of alternatives for consideration. The SDEIS utilizes all the DEIS alternatives, public comment including corrections, and current regulations.

The following represents the action alternatives that were studied in detail in the DEIS.

Action Alternative C

Background

Alternative C responds to the issues of volume and type of recreation access.

Theme

Alternative C considers the forest's travel system. It takes advantage of accommodating recreation for more users where possible. It emphasizes shared use and optimization of available facilities, thus providing for a greater capacity for recreation across the forest.

Relationship Issues

Under Alternative C, key considerations are:

- Optimization of road and trail opportunities;

- Mostly hierarchical¹ recreation use on roads and trails;
- Likely to have fewer exclusive use roads and trails;
- Creation of more opportunity for people to disperse;
- Creation of the most miles available for a particular use (non-exclusive);
- Likely to have the highest recreation capacity;
- Identification of more loop opportunities;
- Likely to add more unauthorized routes and have less decommissioning of system roads and trails.

Action Alternative D

Background

Alternative D responds to recreation user conflict issues.

Theme

Alternative D considers the experience of the recreational user. It emphasizes reducing recreation conflicts among users and a more sustainable recreation program in the long term.

Relationship Issues

Under Alternative D, key considerations are:

- More separation of use, even consideration of some exclusive use;
- Does not necessarily follow hierarchal use of roads and trails;
- Individual decisions are made on the appropriateness of each type of use on each route;
- Main objectives are reduction of user conflict and long term recreation program sustainability;
- Identification of loop opportunities;
- Creation of more designated routes and play areas in winter;
- Likely to have fewer total miles or areas available to a particular use, but more miles available for shared uses on routes;
- Likely to add more unauthorized routes and have less decommissioning of system roads and trails.

¹ Hierarchical is a system in recreation describing allowable uses. The uses described are—from least restrictive to most—high-clearance vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles (mechanized), horse and pack animals, foot (hiking). Under the hierarchal system, the uses listed after the specified allowed use for a route would also be allowed on that route. For example, if high-clearance vehicles are allowed on a road, then so is every other use; if a trail is open to motorcycles it is also open to mountain bikes, animals, and foot traffic.

Action Alternative E

Background

Alternative E responds to the issues of managing recreation use to reduce the impacts on natural resources and wildlife caused by recreation.

Theme

Alternative E considers emphasizing natural resource and habitat values while still considering recreation utilization.

Relationship Issues

Under Alternative E, key considerations are:

- Designate travel systems to reduce impacts on habitats (wildlife) and natural resources;
- Mostly hierarchical recreation use on roads and trails;
- Likely to have more shared recreation use on a limited system;
- Likely to have fewer roads and trails to maintain and be more sustainable from an economic standpoint;
- Likely to cluster recreation in some areas;
- Allowance for more primitive, non-motorized recreation experiences;
- Identification of fewer loop opportunities;
- Likely to add the fewest unauthorized routes and have the most decommissioning of system roads and trails.

Several factors contribute to the reasons why C, D, and E are not re-examined in detail in the SDEIS:

The SDEIS is being developed to show progression to date, to go forward, and present where the forest is heading with the travel management plan.

These alternatives were already fully examined in the DEIS, and that study is still relevant and useful as part of the process to determine the final travel management plan. The objective of the SDEIS is to take this information, public comment, including corrections and updates, and develop a comprehensive, focused version of the travel management plan. This includes simplifying the legend, making corrections, and focusing on the desired travel management plan.

The decision-maker, along with Forest Service staff, was able to utilize the information presented in the DEIS to develop the alternatives presented in this SDEIS. To try and update the C, D, E alternatives and re-present them would not allow for a focused review, rather it would add to the complexity. It would not show the progress made to date. These alternatives were already commented on and decisions toward reaching the end goal for the travel management plan were made based on this. It would not be fair to the public to re-examine these again, as a lot of time and effort was put in by the public and the staff on these alternatives. This SDEIS displays the results from this detailed examination. It moves ahead.

Therefore, Alternatives Considered in Detail in the SDEIS is based on the all that has occurred thus far so the White River National Forest can achieve creating the final travel management plan.

Alternatives Considered in Detail

No Action–Alternative A

Background

NEPA regulations at 40 CFR 1502.14 state that “agencies shall: (d) include the alternative of no action.” Guidance from the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) clarifies that the no action alternative be based on no change from current management.

The DEIS had Alternative A, current condition, as an alternative that was not considered in detail because it did not meet the purpose and need, and current forest plan direction. The SDEIS still recognizes the flaws of this alternative; however this alternative will be examined under Alternatives Considered in Detail in the SDEIS as the no action alternative.

As current conditions were analyzed, it became clear that significant changes had occurred in the known inventory. A large number of additional unauthorized routes were brought to the attention of the interdisciplinary team during the scoping process. Alternative A, although infeasible to implement, serves as a context for current condition for environmental analyses. The current resource conditions on the forest described in the affected environment sections of each resource reflect that “snapshot” in time.

Alternative A does not address the purpose and need and is not compliant with forest plan direction.

Theme

Alternative A considers the current condition for travel management on the White River National Forest. Alternative A is the no action alternative.

Relationship Issues

Under Alternative A, key considerations are:

For summer:

- The current condition is the current designated system routes with their current legal uses; motorized and mechanized uses can only occur (legally) on these routes;
- User-created routes are not legal to use by motorized or mechanized vehicles;
- Horse and hike use is allowed everywhere on the forest unless restricted by special order;
- Because it is current condition, user-created routes would not be rehabilitated (as rehabilitation is an action);
- No routes are adopted. No routes are decommissioned;
- Changes are not made to consider motorized mixed use per the travel rule, so no National Forest System routes are changed to licensed motorized only; and

- Changes to uses on routes are not changed to meet forest plan direction (as the forest plan did not address roads and trails site-specifically) or other regulations; rather they remain as is.

For winter:

- The current condition is equal to that of Alternative F because the forest plan did, through standards and guidelines, dictate where open, restricted, and prohibited areas of winter motorized activity can occur. Note that the forest is open to foot and other non-mechanized winter travel such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.
- The forest plan did not designate any specific routes or play areas in the restricted prescriptions. These need to be designated in the action alternative. Therefore this alternative and Alternative F have no motorized routes or open play areas in the restricted management area prescriptions.

Alternative F

Background

Alternative F represents the original Alternative B in the DEIS, with corrections made based on public comment.

Theme

Alternative F considers the minimum actions needed to bring the forest travel system into compliance with forest plan direction.

Relationship Issues

Under Alternative F, key considerations are:

- Standards and guidelines in the forest plan would guide management of the forest travel system.
- There would be no consideration of user-created routes for system designation. No user-created routes are adopted. All user-created routes are rehabilitated.
- All designated Forest Service system routes are carried forward in this alternative. Any Forest Service system routes currently out of compliance with the direction in the forest plan would be brought into compliance or decommissioned.
- All modes of travel will be compliant with forest plan direction.
- Changes are not made to consider motorized mixed use per the travel rule, so no national forest system routes are changed to licensed motorized only.
- Winter motorized use is dictated by forest plan management area and recreation opportunity spectrum direction. Management area prescriptions that are restricted to routes and play areas under this alternative would be non-motorized. The forest plan did not designate any specific routes or play areas in the restricted prescriptions. These need to be designated in the action alternative. Therefore this alternative and Alternative A have no motorized routes or open play areas in the restricted management area prescriptions.

Action Alternative G – Preferred Alternative

Background

Alternative G is a culmination of the travel management planning process. This alternative utilizes all the alternatives presented in the DEIS, public input, and further incorporation of the latest regulations for travel management.

The alternative was not built arbitrarily, rather it was built by considering the key issues and how to best address them. Consideration was given to how much can be provided, where to emphasize certain use types, and what improvements should be done to improve the landscape. Each comment was read and considered. Some comments are able to be met and some will not, as the forest cannot accommodate all uses everywhere and meet the goal of sound land management along with the need to provide for some separation of use.

The approach was to first look at the forest plan and regulations that guide travel management. Then, by looking at public input, forest needs, forest resources, and forest natural environment, design a system that is logical and manageable while serving access and recreation needs. The strategy included looking at the forest as a whole and identifying where certain uses could be best accommodated and provide quality experiences for publics. From there, site-specific systems were developed from past alternatives and site-specific comment input. This included adding user-created routes that enhance the system and removing those routes, either system or user-created, that do not enhance the system or are not sustainable. Overall, the forest had to consider how much it would be able to provide and manage.

Theme

Alternative G is the preferred alternative. This alternative strives to balance the public transportation needs, including recreation uses, with natural resource protection and enhancement. The alternative was designed to best meet the public desire to access and recreate on the national forest in a natural setting.

Relationship Issues

Under Alternative G, key considerations are:

- Meeting forest plan and regulatory guidance for travel management;
- Consideration of the alternatives and information presented in the DEIS;
- Consideration of all public input from scoping and DEIS comments;
- Consideration of the mixed use safety studies and application of these into network planning;
- Presentation of the summer roads and trails system and uses for each route;
- Consideration of user-created routes for adoption or rehabilitation;
- Presentation of system routes no longer needed to be decommissioned; and
- Presentation of where motorized over-snow travel is authorized, restricted, and prohibited during the winter season. Includes presentation of over-snow motorized designated routes in restricted motorized areas.

Comparison of Alternatives

This section provides a summary of each alternative.

Table 2.1—Summary of summer travel management by miles on the White River National Forest

Legend	Alternative A	Alternative F	Alternative G
Licensed motorized only	15	15	585
Licensed and unlicensed allowed	1724	1724	850
Motorized vehicles < 50" in width	109	109	143
Motorized two-wheeled vehicles	43	43	67
Mechanized (bicycles)	740	737	596
Foot and horse (pack animal)	1339	1344	1440
Managed under special use permit	126	125	212
Roads in storage (not open to motorized use)	60	59	32
Routes not added to the system, but not decommissioned or rehabilitated	1252	0	0
Routes to be/or already decommissioned or rehabilitated	0	1252	1483
Total	5408	5408	5408

Description of the summer legend:

Licensed motorized only: motorized vehicles must have a license plate recognized under Colorado state law; this category also generally allows mechanized, foot, and horse travel

Licensed and Unlicensed allowed: all motorized, mechanized, foot, and horse travel is generally also allowed

Motorized vehicles < 50" in width: all motorized vehicles with a wheel base of < 50" in width; mechanized, foot, and horse travel is generally allowed

Motorized two-wheeled vehicles: all motorized vehicles with a maximum of two-wheels (generally motorcycles), mechanized, foot, and horse travel is allowed

Mechanized: no motorized; mechanized, foot, and generally horse travel allowed

Foot and Horse: only foot and generally horse (pack animal) allowed

Managed under special use permit: roads or trails under special use permit such as outfitter guides, range, natural gas, minerals, private, and other commercial uses; does not include the 211 miles under ski areas

Closed to the public but still on the system: maintenance level 1 roads (in storage that are not being maintained to allow a pathway for a particular non-motorized use, rather being allowed to return to nature until needed again), historic roads (such as Camp Hale)

Routes not added to the system, but not decommissioned or rehabilitated: roads and trails not on the system, where no action is taken to actively decommission or rehabilitate them

Routes to be/or already decommissioned/rehabilitated: roads and trails either already or to be decommissioned (system) or rehabilitated (user-created). Some roads and trails may have already been decommissioned or rehabilitated, however these closures may not have been effective and these footprints remain, therefore further action may be required.

Note: generally allowed means that in most cases the other use types listed are generally allowed, exceptions may apply such as hiking only, mechanized and hiking only, etc. (see use type table)

Table 2.2—Summary of summer use type (what is available to the public by each travel mode) by miles on the White River National Forest

Legend	Alternative A	Alternative F	Alternative G
Licensed motorized full-size vehicle	1739	1739	1435
Licensed and unlicensed full-size vehicle	1724	1724	850
Licensed motorized two-wheeled vehicle (motorcycle)	1891	1891	1645
Motorized vehicles < 50" in width (ATV)	1833	1833	993
Motorized two-wheeled vehicles (licensed and unlicensed motorcycles)	1876	1876	1060
Mechanized (bicycles)	2631	2629	2233
Pack animal (horse)	3966	3967	3629
Foot (hike)	3970	3972	3681
Total miles open public routes	3970	3972	3681

Table 2.3—Summary of roads and trails to be added or to be or already decommissioned/rehabilitated

Legend	Alternative A	Alternative F	Alternative G
System roads or trails to be or already decommissioned	157	157	668
Non-system roads and trails remaining as a footprint but illegal	1095	0	0
Non-system roads and trails to be rehabilitated *	0	1095	815
Total miles to be decommissioned/rehabilitated	0	1252	1483
Non-system routes to be added to the system	0	0	281

*132 miles have had some rehabilitation, yet more may need to be done

Table 2.4—Summary of winter opportunities on the White River National Forest

Legend	Alternative A	Alternative F	Alternative G
Open motorized areas (acres)	772,489	772,489	706,497
Restricted-motorized on routes only (acres)	441,336	441,336	507,327
Motorized prohibited areas (acres)	1,017,739	1,017,739	1,017,739
Special use permit (acres)	54,908	54,908	54,908
Designated motorized routes within restricted areas (miles)	8	8	237

Table 2.5—Comparison of effects by alternative

Indicator (key issue)	Alternative A	Alternative F	Alternative G
Meets laws, regulations, and forest plan	Does not meet	Meets forest plan, does not meet the full intent of the travel rule	Meets all laws, regulations, and forest plan
Volume available for use	Has the most for summer, equal to F for winter	Has most mixed use, does not add any user-created	Has the least in summer, but higher quality as some user-created (highly sought) are added, more winter motorized available as routes are designated
Opportunities for separation of use	The least, as it retains the hierarchy and does not add any user-created for certain uses. See Alternative F for winter.	Still low, but does close some routes to motorized based on the forest plan. Winter is either open or closed to motorized, separated, but does not place motorized in desired locations (further out open areas) as there are no routes through restricted areas to get there. As a result, may lead to more overlap of users closer to access points.	The most, as it allows for changes in designation and adds user-created routes that were nominated by certain user groups. Winter is about equal, to A and F, routes through restricted areas allow for motorized to go from open area to open area without disruption to the whole restricted area.
Land and resource protection	The least, as no routes are rehabilitated. Routes are not added where needed, nor taken away where not needed.	Rehabilitates all user-created routes. Does not exchange routes or add/take away routes where necessary for resource protection needs.	Selects a system that considers resource needs, including removing and rehabilitating routes no longer needed, and adding some that may be better on the landscape. Alternatives F and G are close in most analyses when it comes to resource protection.

Monitoring

Monitoring

The travel management plan is tiered to forest plan desired conditions, goals, and objectives and follows all standards and guidelines. The forest plan monitoring strategy evaluates the desired conditions, goals, objectives, and effectiveness of standards and guidelines. Monitoring questions related to travel management and resource conditions are listed in the forest plan monitoring strategy. These questions link to monitoring items that answer whether travel management is being effectively managed on the forest. The forest plan monitoring report and the annual accomplishment report provide the information to determine if travel management goals are being met. Monitoring of motorized uses as part of the forest's land management plan is required in 36 CFR 212.57.

The monitoring plan is not a decision to be made; rather it is a tool to assure that the travel plan decisions are carried out (40 CFR 1505.2(c) and 1505.3).

Under the monitoring protocols, the recreation department has been surveying and interviewing users across the forest. This study, national visitor use monitoring (NVUM), is conducted every five years, and has provided statistical information on the amount of use, type of use, and location of use across the forest. This effort is expected to continue.

Other tools to help the forest monitor the effectiveness of the travel management plan include field reconnaissance by ranger district and forest personnel including backcountry rangers, wilderness rangers, snow rangers, engineers, recreation managers, and any other forest personnel that are in the field. Citizens who report findings also help to identify issues that need to be remedied.

Law enforcement observations and database recordings will help identify problem issues and areas that need attention and/or corrective measures.

Implementation

The roads and trails that are to be part of the National Forest System will be designated through this plan. These roads and trails will need to be maintained, or in some cases brought up to standard, including those user-created routes that are added to the system. A plan for how, where, and when to implement work on the ground to reinforce the decision to decommission or rehabilitate roads and trails will be established by the White River National Forest. The forest will dedicate funding toward accomplishing the goals set in this plan. Additional site-specific analyses including biological and archeological clearances may be required to identify the best methods to be used for bringing roads and trails to standard or decommissioning and rehabilitation efforts. The additional analyses are not to revisit the decision as to whether the road or trail should exist or not, rather they will focus on the best methods meet resource needs.

The forest is updating its sign plan in concert with regional direction. The forest will continue to sign for travel management across the forest. The sign plan will help provide consistent sign usage across the forest. The forest is dedicating time and money to install educational, informational, and regulatory signing across the forest.

Travel use map(s) will be available for public distribution. Motor vehicle use maps, as required by the rule, will also be available for public distribution. Forest-wide travel order(s) and MVUM will be in place to provide the mechanism to enforce any strategies.

The forest will develop an enforcement strategy that will include a focus on public education. The forest hopes to create an environment where users are encouraged to follow the strategies outlined in the travel management plan by working with user groups and individuals, utilizing the internet, press releases, maps, and signs.

Law Enforcement

The forest at full staff has three full time law enforcement officers. These officers are supervised by a zone special agent. The forest also trains several of its field staff to serve as protection officers. Protection officers mainly can observe and write tickets for minor violations. Any major violation must be handled by the law enforcement officer.

The current travel management restrictions that govern the use of roads and trails are a complex mix of regulations, special closures, and a large number of seasonal restrictions. These are not easily displayed on a map or written document. The travel management plan will attempt to simplify some of this confusion by limiting the variety of seasonal

restrictions where possible, creating readable maps, utilizing the latest technology communication tools available on the web, posting information in key locations, and educating users.

Forest recreation professionals and law enforcement officers have noted enforcement hot spots and certain times of year where higher levels of violations occur. Law enforcement efforts will focus on areas of greatest concern or potential for resource damage.

The travel management plan final decision for site-specific use will consider ways to discourage illegal use. These considerations include developing networks that satisfy the intended use. This means that a road or trail that is too short or isolated to provide what the user is looking for or dead-ends where the use is not allowed, will likely not include that use on the route. This is just good network planning. The forest wants to provide what the user needs for a satisfying, quality experience. With a limited law enforcement staff, the ability to allow law enforcement to focus its efforts rather than spread the efforts on every acre makes their job more efficient and effective.

Also under the rule, driving off of designated routes for motorized use is considered a general prohibition. This means that the user is responsible for understanding and following the law, which also means knowing where he/she can or cannot ride or drive.

Implementation of the travel management plan will include a strategy for educating the user, utilizing law enforcement efficiently, and developing tools for communication to inform visitors of the forest.

