

SUMMARY

This travel management plan (TMP) and supporting environmental impact statement (EIS) will develop a travel system across the entire White River National Forest to accommodate and balance the transportation needs of the public and to provide adequate access for forest and resource management, while still allowing for protection of natural resources.

The purpose of this initiative is to identify the transportation system with the goal of balancing the physical, biological, and social values of the forest. It responds to several needs noted below.

This action is needed to address the concerns noted below:

- Identify an official designated travel system on the White River National Forest;
- Identify what is not on the official designated travel system on the White River National Forest and be able to restore lands back to their natural state; and
- Designate a travel system that is aligned with the Forest Service mission, including the need to manage the land by providing a system that attempts to balance social and resource demands.

The objectives of the travel management plan are to:

- Bring summer and winter transportation systems into compliance with laws, regulations, agency or national direction, and the forest plan;
- Designate the forest road and trail system and eliminate through rehabilitation those that are not part of the system;
- Provide a travel plan that defines modes of travel across the forest by area and by route; and
- Identify resource solutions to impacts due to the transportation system, including routes identified for decommissioning.

This effort is an extension of earlier work to update travel management along with the forest plan. The draft forest plan, released for public comment in August 1999, contained a detailed travel management plan. Planners decided to separate the two decisions based on public comment about the difficulty in reviewing both the travel management plan and forest plan decisions simultaneously and the desire for more time to review travel management. Planning information from the initial effort, including site-specific comments received during the comment period on the draft forest plan, was brought forward for consideration in this travel management plan.

The Notice of Intent (NOI) for the travel management plan was published in the *Federal Register* on August 27, 2002. The NOI asked for public comment on the proposal from August 27, 2002 to October 31, 2002.

The White River National Forest prepared and released for comment a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) with alternatives for the proposed Travel Management Plan in June 2006 for a 90-day comment period. Since that time comments were received and read, and responses prepared. Although the DEIS did incorporate the Travel Management: Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use (travel rule),

clarification on implementation of the travel rule has now been more formalized both nationally and regionally.

Based on the original DEIS range of alternatives, the ability to further incorporate the travel rule, and all the public comments received, the White River National Forest developed a preferred alternative for the Travel Management Plan. The decision-maker felt it was important to present the preferred alternative in a supplemental DEIS (SDEIS) for a 60-day public comment period.

Key issues still remain as:

- Volume and type of recreation access;
- Resolution of recreation conflict; and
- Protection of natural resources.

These issues led the agency to develop alternatives to meet the purpose and need. Alternatives for the travel management plan are based on thematic applications of issues generated by public comment.

The preferred alternative in the SDEIS – Alternative G, is a reflection of a blend of the previously presented alternatives, public comment, and management implication due to the travel rule.

The SDEIS also contains an alternative called minimal action required to be compliant with laws, regulations and the White River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, 2002 Revision, as amended (forest plan). This is now Alternative F; in the previous DEIS this was Alternative B. This alternative has incorporated corrections to the baseline system that were presented by internal and external parties.

The no action alternative, Alternative A, represents current conditions. Although this alternative would not meet the purpose and need or forest plan direction, it is being presented as the required no action alternative to provide a basis for comparison of the effects of the action alternatives.

In order to accurately reflect the changes due to the travel rule and respond to the comments that requested simplification, the document, purpose and need, and legend for both summer and winter uses was revised and simplified. Though the reader will see these types of changes from the DEIS to the SDEIS, the supplement reflects the ideas, concepts, and alternatives presented in the DEIS. The SDEIS is a continuation of the NEPA process to achieve the final Travel Management Plan.

Decisions to be made:

- 1) Designation of the summer road and trail system:
 - a) Defining the designated forest roads and trails;
 - b) Defining what modes of travel are accepted on each road and trail;
 - c) Deciding whether to incorporate or rehabilitate user-created routes; and
 - d) Determining if certain forest routes are no longer needed as part of the system and identifying those for decommissioning.
- 2) Designation of winter uses:
 - a) Designating open areas and routes for motorized use by vehicles made for over-snow travel.

Based on an examination of the decision criteria, current direction, and future projections, Alternative G is identified as the preferred alternative, however the forest will consider all aspects in part or in whole of the other alternatives when formulating the final decision.

The alternative identified as the preferred is draft in nature and does not indicate a final decision. 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 between the draft environmental impact statement and the final decision.