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Forest
Service

July 2008



Scoping Report

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Travel Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
Apache, Coconino, Greenlee and Navajo Counties, Arizona

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Full Name	Acronym or Abbreviation
all-terrain vehicle	ATV
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests	ASNFs
Arizona Game and Fish Department	AGFD
Code of Federal Regulations	CFR
environmental impact statement	EIS
executive order	EO
<i>Federal Register</i>	FR
National Environmental Policy Act	NEPA
National Forest System	NFS
National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council	NOHVVCC
Notice of Intent	NOI
off-highway vehicle	OHV
off-road vehicle	ORV
threatened and endangered species	TES
Travel Analysis Process	TAP
Travel Management Rule	TMR
U.S. Department of Agriculture	USDA

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

The Forest Service is preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) for a public motorized transportation system under the Travel Management Rule (TMR) on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNFFs). The ASNFFs contains approximately 2,110,134 acres in east-central Arizona and are managed by personnel in five area Ranger District offices and the Supervisor's Office in Springerville, Arizona.

An EIS is being prepared to analyze and disclose to the public the environmental, social, and economic impacts of designating roads, trails, and areas for motorized public travel within the National Forest System (NFS) lands administered by the ASNFFs. The EIS will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and other associated regulations. This EIS will analyze and establish the Forest Service travel management practices for the ASNFFs in response to current legislation, policies, and the demand to use public land and its resources.

Background

On November 9, 2005, the Forest Service published final travel management regulations governing off-highway vehicles (OHVs) and other motor vehicles on national forests and grasslands. The new regulations amended 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 212 to include Part 295, amended Part 251(b), and amended Part 261(a). These three regulations— 36 CFR Parts 212, 251(b), and 261(a)—are referred to together as the TMR or final rule throughout this document. The TMR was developed in response to the substantial increase in use of OHVs on NFS lands and related damage to forest resources caused by unmanaged OHV use over the past 30 years. The regulations implement Executive Orders (EOs) 11644 and 11989 regarding off-road use of motor vehicles on Federal lands.

The TMR provides for a system of NFS roads, NFS trails, and areas on NFS lands (36 CFR Part 212.1) that are designated for public motor vehicle use. Motor vehicle use off designated roads and trails and outside designated areas is prohibited (36 CFR Part 212.50). Therefore, under the TMR, forests that do not already restrict motorized travel to designated NFS roads, NFS trails, and areas on NFS lands must do so and designate routes and areas on a motor vehicle use map and provide that map to the public (36 CFR Part 212.56).

Many portions of the ASNFFs currently have motorized travel designations and decisions that were made under other authorities. Previous decisions and designations that address motor vehicles use that are consistent with the TMR requirements do not need to be addressed in a new environmental analysis or land management decisions. For example, the Mt. Baldy, Escudilla, and Bear Wallow Wilderness Areas and the Blue Range Primitive Area are excluded from motor vehicle use designation because motorized use has been restricted or prohibited by legislation.

In general, the ASNFSs are legally “open to cross-country motor vehicle use unless posted closed.” Currently, there are nine ASNFSs Special Orders (01-401 through 01-409) that identify motor vehicle travel restrictions by specific geographic area and season. Motor vehicle closures on the ASNFSs have been identified for off-road driving restrictions, areas existing and recommended for protection of the natural ecosystem for research purposes, and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Forest-Wide Standards and Guidelines (year-round and seasonal).

Providing for the long-term sustainability of NFS lands and resources is essential to maintaining the quality of experience for all users of the ASNFSs. Motor vehicles are used for multiple recreational activities on the ASNFSs, such as sightseeing, camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, or collecting firewood or other forest products. Motor vehicles are also used for other administrative and commercial activities, such as logging, grazing permit administration, maintaining utilities, special uses, outfitter and guide services, and other multiple uses. Responsible motorized travel is an appropriate way to use ASNFSs lands for the multitude of purposes identified, and as use on the ASNFSs increases, so does the need for a management strategy for motorized vehicles that is consistent with the unified Federal policy identified in EOs 11644 and 11989.

An integral part of the planning and environmental process is the public participation program, which keeps relevant agencies and the interested public engaged and apprised of the project’s progress. Opportunities for public participation include scoping, public meetings and workshops, project mailings, and hearings. Some of these opportunities have already occurred (e.g., scoping), whereas others will occur at key milestones throughout the process.

Forest Policy

The *Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land and Resources Management Plan* as amended (forest plan) (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA] Forest Service 1987) states that the transportation management goal is to “provide and manage a serviceable road transportation system that meets needs for public access, land management, resource protection, and user safety.” It also states in the Road Maintenance and Management Standards and Guidelines, “Total road densities should average 3.5 miles/square mile or less. Open road densities should average 2.0 miles/square mile or less.”

The ASNFSs contain approximately 2,110,134 acres in Eastern Arizona. There are almost 23,359 acres of designated Wilderness¹ and approximately 187,420 acres of Primitive Area.² An additional 280,724 acres has been identified to be managed as primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized. Over the past 20 years, the ASNFSs have implemented additional off-road driving restrictions and motor vehicle closures through a variety of forest orders. The combined acreage of those areas not subject to closures and restrictions

¹ Wilderness is defined as a wild area that Congress has preserved by including it in the National Wilderness Preservation System and defined as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of Wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements of human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions.

² A Primitive Area is defined as an area that is not a designated Wilderness Area; it is a “primitive area,” which is the most protection the USDA can give an area without an act of Congress.

results in approximately 1,574,813 acres (approximately 75 percent) of the ASNfS that is currently legally open to cross-country motorized travel.

The goal is to implement Forest Service direction established in 36 CFR Part 212.50 and discontinue unlimited and unmanaged cross-country motorized travel while providing and managing for an economically, socially, and environmentally acceptable public motorized transportation system along designated roads and trails and in designated areas. The public motorized transportation system meets the needs for public access, land management, resource protection, and user safety.

Planning Area

Location

The ASNfS are located in east-central Arizona approximately 160 to 220 miles north and northeast of Phoenix, Arizona (Figure 1). The portion of the ASNfS that is above the Mogollon Rim, a large pine-covered escarpment approximately 7,000 feet in elevation lies in three counties: Apache, Navajo, and Coconino counties. The portion of the ASNfS that is below the Mogollon Rim makes up part of two counties: Apache and Greenlee counties. The population centers near the ASNfS are the communities of Heber-Overgaard, Snowflake-Taylor, Show Low, and Pinetop-Lakeside to the west; and Vernon, Springerville-Eagar, Alpine, and Clifton-Morenci to the east and south (Figure 2).

Description

The ASNfS are administered as one National Forest from the Supervisor's Office in Springerville, Arizona. The ASNfS encompass over two million acres of mountain country and plateaus in east-central Arizona. The Apache National Forest was named for tribes that settled and continue to live in the area. The Sitgreaves National Forest was named for Captain Lorenzo Sitgreaves, a government topographic engineer who conducted the first scientific expedition across Arizona in the early 1850s. The ASNfS contain 24 lakes and reservoirs and nearly 400 miles of rivers and streams, which are valuable water resources in a generally arid state. The road system administered by the Forest Service on the ASNfS encompasses approximately 6,000 miles, for which travel management is of vital concern for the health of the ASNfS and the economic vitality of the surrounding communities.

The Apache National Forest ranges in elevation from 3,500 to over 11,000 feet above mean sea level. The Sitgreaves National Forest ranges in elevation from 5,000 to 7,600 feet above mean sea level. Wildlife and fish, also valuable resources on the ASNfS, include game species, such as elk, deer, bear, turkey, antelope, and javelina; and Federally listed species, such as Mexican Spotted Owl, Apache trout, loach minnow, Chiricahua leopard frog, Mexican gray wolf, and others.

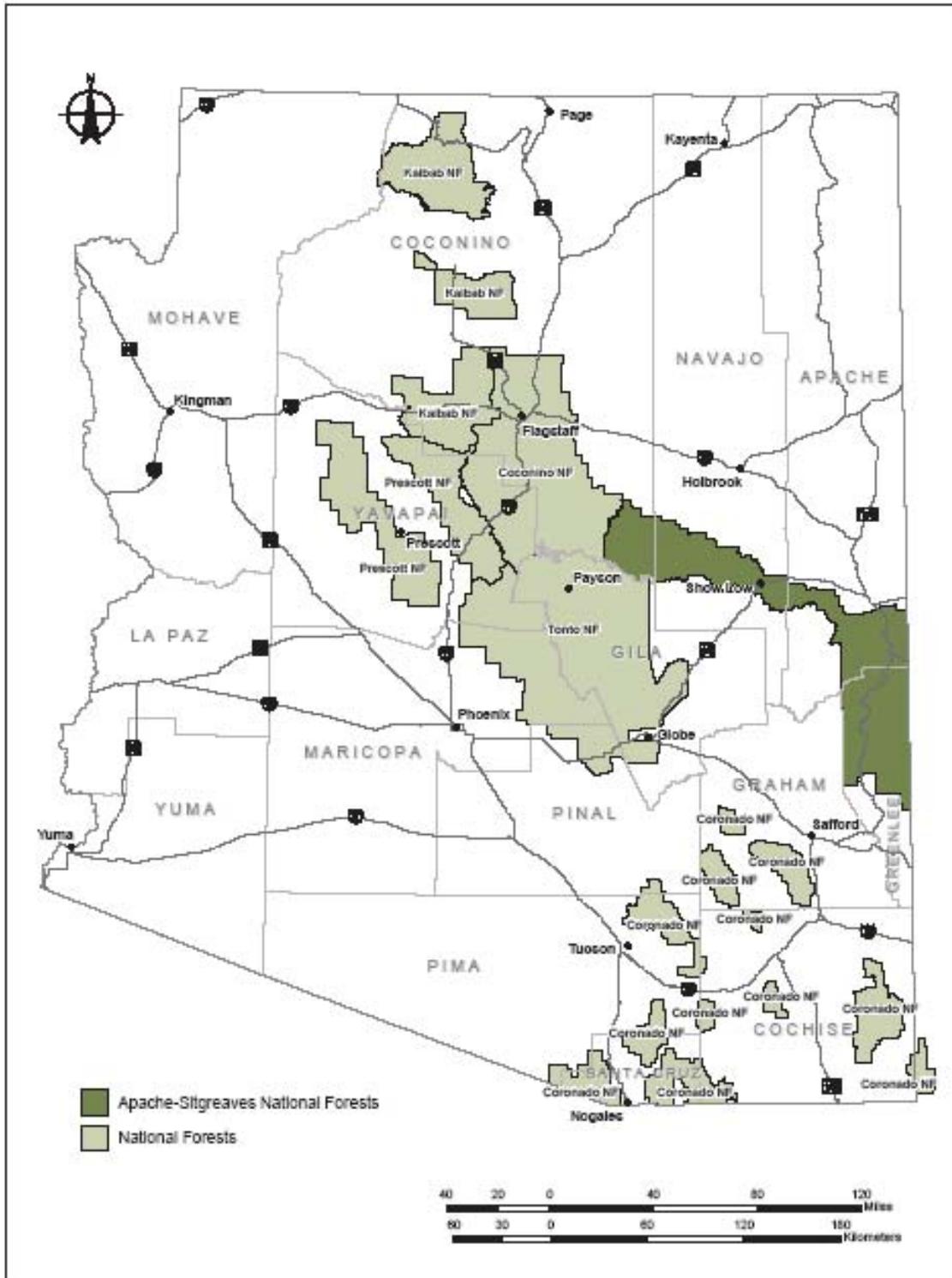


Figure 1. Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

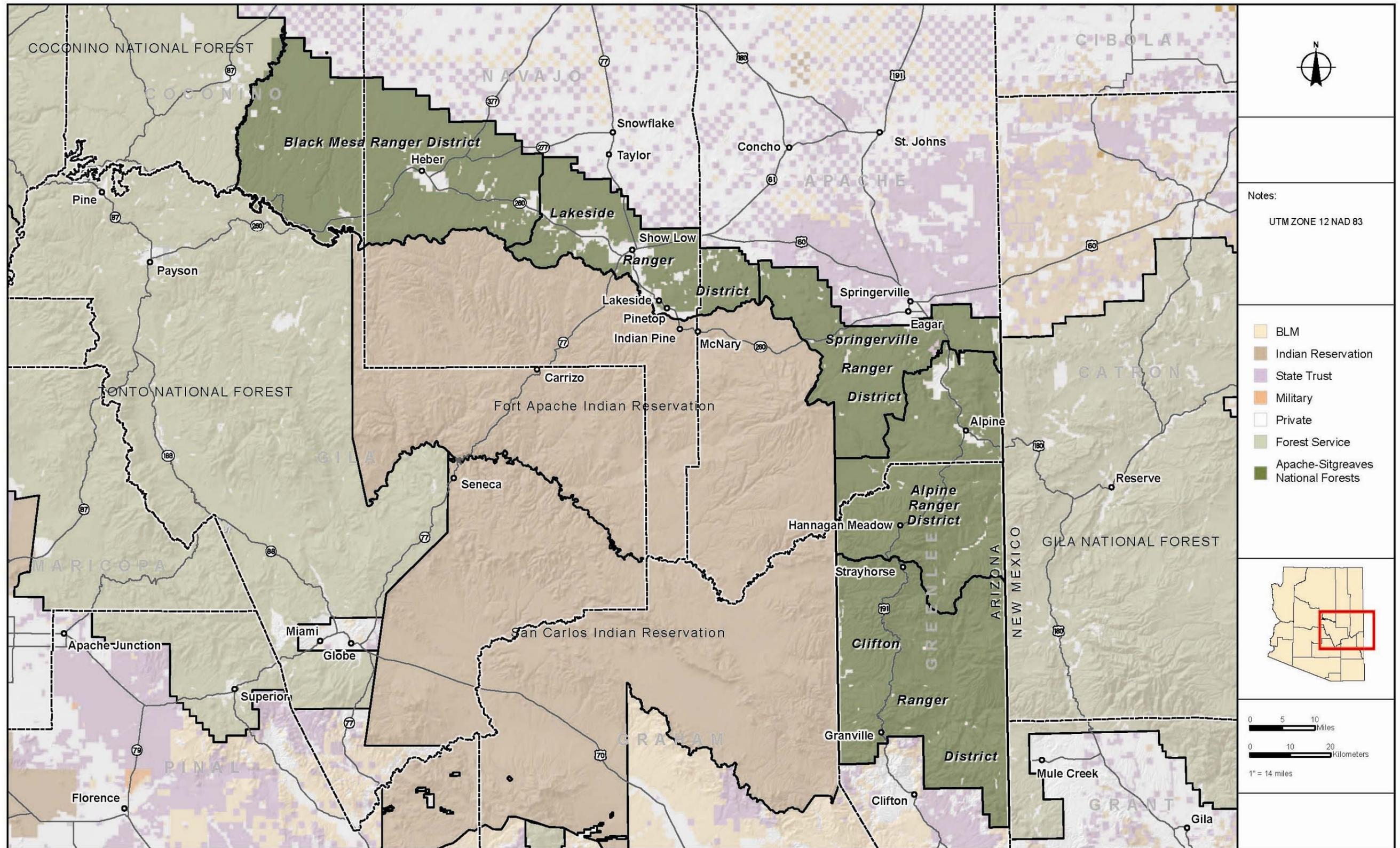


Figure 2. Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Including Ranger Districts.

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SCOPING PROCESS

This section describes the objectives of the scoping process and the scoping process itself, identifies the techniques that were used to notify the public about the opportunity to be involved in scoping, and gives a brief summary of the public scoping meetings.

Objectives

Scoping is the first step and an integral part of the EIS process. It is an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action (40 CFR Part 1501.7). The objectives of the scoping process are as follows:

- engage State, local, and Tribal governments and the public in the early identification of concerns, potential impacts, and possible alternative actions;
- determine the scope and the significant issues to be analyzed in depth in the EIS;
- identify potentially significant issues related to the proposed action, as well as identifying and eliminating issues that are not significant or that have been covered by prior environmental review;
- identify the scope of issues to be addressed and integrate analyses required by other environmental laws (e.g., Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act); and
- identify technical studies needed to adequately address potential impacts of the project.

Description of the Scoping Process

While an EIS public scoping process typically begins after publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* (FR), the Forest Service initially began a scoping process to comply with the new TMR from a forest-wide Travel Analysis Process (TAP), published in 2006. The intent of the TAP was to help the ASNFs determine the minimum transportation system necessary to provide safe, efficient travel and for administration, use, and protection of NFS lands (36 CFR Part 212.5(b)).

Key to the process, the sASNFs hosted approximately 26 public collaboration meetings from 2005 to 2007 in order to collect ideas regarding motorized travel from local citizens, ASNFs users, state, county, local and tribal governments, and other Federal agencies. The National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council (NOHVVCC), in cooperation with the ASNFs, conducted OHV Route Designation Workshops for agency personnel and the public from November 16–19, 2006, in Show Low, Arizona. The purpose of these workshops was to assist the Forest Service and public in effective implementation of the TMR. This preliminary, pre-NEPA input was valuable in helping the ASNFs to develop the initial proposed action.

On October 10, 2007, the FR published an NOI to prepare an EIS for the Motorized Travel Management Plan on the ASNFs (FR 72:57514–57517). The NOI identified the purpose and need for the action and the scoping process and summarized the proposed action. On October 31, 2007, the FR published a corrected NOI for that document

(FR 72:61607), indicating that transportation system maps would be available prior to public meetings on the Forest Service website. The ASNfFs then hosted five public meetings in five locations in November 2007 to introduce the initial proposed action for designing a public motorized transportation system.

Based on input received from these meetings, it was apparent that a significant number of comments received through the public collaboration process had inadvertently not been considered during the development of the initial proposed action. As a result, the Forest Supervisor determined that the ASNfFs would take additional time to ensure that all comments were considered and then modify the proposed action as necessary.

The FR published the revised NOI on February 29, 2008 (FR 73:11088–11091). The NOI initiated another round of public meetings in early March 2008, with a comment period end date of March 14, 2008. Comments received within this period, as well as substantive comments received following the comment period end date, were used to compile this scoping report.

Announcements

The EIS and scoping meetings were announced through the FR, a newspaper article, media releases, and the Forest Service website. The public was also notified by email and US postal services.

Federal Register

The ASNfFs Travel Management Plan EIS and public scoping process officially began on October 10, 2007, with the publication of the NOI in the FR. However, the proposed action was modified, and the scoping process was re-initiated on February 29, 2008, with the publication of the NOI in the FR (Appendix A).

Newspaper Article

The Forest Service submitted an article to the *White Mountain Independent*, which was published on March 28, 2008. The article was entitled “The Travel Management Rule—Fact and Fiction” and was submitted by the ASNfFs Acting Forest Supervisor.

Media Releases and Public Service Announcements

The Forest Service prepared media releases and public service announcements (Appendix B) to introduce the project, announce scoping meetings and locations, and provide status updates on the travel management planning process. The following list provides a representative sample of the entities that received the media release:

Newspapers

- White Mountain Independent
- Holbrook Tribune
- Copper Era
- Mogollon Connection
- Eastern Arizona Courier
- Payson Roundup
- Pioneer
- Navajo Times

- Maverick (a monthly periodical)
- Arizona Media Vision (media outlet)
- 2020 Group in Pinetop/Lakeside (a citizen's advocacy group)
- Associated Press
- Tanner News Service

Radio Stations

- KVWM
- KSNX
- KVSL
- KZUA
- KDJI
- KTHQ
- KQAZ
- KNAU (Flagstaff Public Broadcast System affiliate)

Television Station

- Channel 4 TV (closed circuit)

Website

The Forest Service maintains a website specifically related to motorized travel management.³ The website includes national information in an introductory video to NFS roads and a description of the National Route Designation Process, and for ASNfs, the final TAP report, news releases, the NOI, the proposed action, and project maps.

Public Scoping Meetings

Following the release of the original proposed action in October 2007, the Forest Service hosted five public meetings, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Public Scoping Meeting Dates, Original Proposed Action

Meeting Location in Arizona	Meeting Date in 2007	Number of People in Attendance
Lakeside	November 6	90
Eagar	November 7	95
Clifton	November 8	8
Heber/Overgaard	November 13	200+
Alpine	November 14	50

For each meeting, from 5 p.m. until 6:30 p.m., the meetings were conducted in an open-house format in which the public was able to view the proposed travel maps and offer

³ The web address is <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf/projects/travel-management.shtml>.

comments to agency officials in a one-on-one setting. At 6:30 p.m., a presentation on the proposal was made, after which comments and questions from the public were addressed. Following the release of the modified proposed action on February 29, 2008, the Forest Service conducted the public meetings shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Public Scoping Meeting Dates, Modified Proposed Action

Meeting Location in Arizona	Meeting Date in 2008	Number of People in Attendance
Show Low	March 6	85
	March 8	
Springerville	March 6	110
	March 8	
Clifton	March 6	40
Safford	March 8	40
Heber	March 6	150
	March 8	
Alpine	March 6	20
	March 8	

The meetings in Table 2 were conducted at various times throughout the day in an open-house format (i.e., there were no formal presentations).

A comment form (Appendix C) was distributed at the March 2008 public meetings that requested input on four major topics: dispersed camping, big-game retrieval, forest access, and all-terrain-vehicle (ATV) trail policies. There was also an opportunity on the form for commentors to provide input on other issues.

Comments were encouraged to be submitted at the meetings, via U.S. postal service, or via email through the project website.

Collaborative Planning

The term ‘collaboration’ may be used to describe a wide range of external and internal working relationships. The collaborative process essentially allows the community to communicate to the Forest Service how public lands should be managed from the public’s perspective. The final goal of the process should be that communities and agencies work together toward a common understanding on the future management of the public lands.

Agency coordination is an important step in a successful collaborative process for several reasons. First, early involvement with other Federal, Tribal, State, and local governments establishes a solid working relationship with each agency. Next, it also builds trust and credibility among agencies that then can be transferred to the public. Finally, it helps to ensure that the Forest Service develops land use decisions that are supported by other interested agencies.

Active involvement by the public early in the process helps to ensure alternatives are considered that address the diversity of public interests, build trusts between the Forest Service and the public, create public understanding and acceptance of the eventual travel management decisions, and develop a working relationship that will carry into the shared implementation of those travel management decisions.

Cooperating Agencies

As part of initiating this travel management process, the Forest Service compiled a list of Federal, State, County, and local agencies and Native American tribes that may have a relevant interest in the travel management planning process. A letter was sent to the agencies listed below under *Agency Coordination* that offered recipients an opportunity to become a cooperating agency during this planning effort.

As of the date of this report, the Forest Service has set up a consultation agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. No agencies have requested to participate as a Cooperating Agency.

Agency Coordination

Although no specific agency scoping meetings were held, the Forest Service has contacted key Federal, State, County, and local agencies, as well as Native American Tribes, to initiate coordination throughout the EIS process. As of the date of this report, contact has been made with the following agencies:

Federal

- Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fort Apache Agency, Superintendent
- Bureau of Indian Affairs, Navajo
- Bureau of Indian Affairs, San Carlos Agency, Superintendent
- Bureau of Indian Affairs, Western
- Bureau of Land Management
- Coconino National Forest, Planning, Forest Supervisor
- Coronado National Forest, Planning, Forest Supervisor
- Department of Agriculture, Arizona
- Department of Energy, Western Area Power Administration, Desert Southwest Region
- Drug Enforcement Agency
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Farm Bureau
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- Federal Highway Administration
- Gila National Forest, Forest Supervisor
- Kaibab National Forest, Forest Supervisor
- National Park Service, National Director
- National Resources Conservation Service, Springerville
- National Weather Service
- National Resources Conservation Service, Flagstaff Service Center
- Petrified Forest National Monument

- Prescott National Forest, Forest Supervisor
- Tonto National Forest, Forest Supervisor
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- U.S. Customs and Border, America's Frontline
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- U.S. Department of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

State

- Arizona Cooperative Extension
- Arizona Department of Commerce
- Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
- Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Arizona Smoke Management
- Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Larry Stephenson
- Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Nonpoint Source Unit
- Arizona Department of Public Safety
- Arizona Department of Transportation, Globe District
- Arizona Department of Transportation, Show Low
- Arizona Department of Transportation, Springerville
- Arizona Department of Transportation
- Arizona Department of Water Resources
- Arizona Game and Fish Department
- Arizona Public Service
- Arizona State Homeland Security
- Arizona State Land Department
- Arizona State Parks
- Department of Mines and Minerals
- Farm Services Agency, Arizona
- Homolovi Ruins State Park
- National Resource Conservation Service
- New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
- Northern Arizona Council of Government
- Office of the State Forester
- Salt River Project
- State Historic Preservation Office

County

- Springerville-Eager Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Apache County Cooperative Extension Office
- Apache County Development and Community Services
- Apache County Economic Development
- Apache County Natural Resource Conservation District

- Apache County Planning and Zoning
- Arizona/New Mexico Rural Counties, Coalition Stable Economic Growth
- Coconino County Cooperative Extension
- Coconino County Planning and Zoning
- Coconino Natural Resource Conservation District
- Eastern Arizona Counties Organization
- Greenlee County Road Department
- Navajo County
- Navajo County Cooperative Extension Agent
- Navajo County Extension

Local

- Alpine Water System
- City of Show Low
- Clay Springs-Pinedale Fire Department
- Forest Lake Fire District
- Forest Lakes Domestic Water Improvement District
- Forest Lakes Fire Department
- Greer Fire Department
- Greer Fire District
- Heber-Overgaard Chamber of Commerce
- Heber-Overgaard Fire Board
- Joseph City Irrigation District
- Lakeside Fire Department
- Linden Fire Department
- North East Arizona Fire Chief's Association
- Nutrioso Community Association
- Pinetop Fire Department
- Pinetop-Lakeside Chamber of Commerce
- Pinetop-Lakeside Police Department
- Pinetop-Lakeside Sanitary District
- Show Low Chamber of Commerce
- Show Low Fire Department
- Show Low Police Department
- Town of Pinetop-Lakeside
- Town of Pinetop-Lakeside, Parks and Recreation Department
- White Mountain Fire and Rescue
- White Mountain Lake Fire Department
- White Mountain Regional Development Corporation
- Woodruff Irrigation District

Other Organizations

- Alpine Action Alliance, Arizona
- Corvallis Forestry Laboratory
- Forestry Sciences Lab, Missoula
- Rocky Mountain Research Station, Natural Resources Research Center
- Salt-River Maricopa Community

Tribal Consultation

As of the date of this report, the ASNfS have not yet conducted tribal consultation; however, tribal consultation is expected to occur between the ASNfS archeologist and the appropriate Tribe or Tribes.

Public Interaction

The ASNfS hosted approximately 26 public collaboration meetings from 2005 to 2007 in order to collect ideas regarding motorized travel from local citizens, ASNfS users, State, County, local and Tribal governments, and other Federal agencies. NOHVVCC, in cooperation with the ASNfS, conducted OHV Route Designation Workshops for agency personnel and the public from November 16–19, 2006, in Show Low, Arizona. The purpose of these workshops was to assist the Forest Service and public to effectively implement the TMR. This preliminary, pre-NEPA input was valuable in helping the ASNfS to develop the initial proposed action.

Scoping meetings were conducted when the original proposed action was completed in fall 2007 and again in spring 2008, when the modified proposed action was published. The meetings were well attended by a diverse public that included several conservation and user groups as well as various agencies.

Public involvement remains critical to the success of this travel management process. The Forest Service now has thousands of individuals on its mailing list, and the list is expected to continue to grow.

COMMENT SUMMARY

Introduction

For this scoping report, comments received following the publication of the NOI on October 10, 2007, in the FR have been considered and analyzed. The ASNfS requested that comments on the proposed action be submitted by March 14, 2008; however, the ASNfS accepted comments on the proposed action until June 20, 2008.

During scoping, the ASNfS received 7,261 comment letters, emails, and comment forms. The Forest Service also took note of comments made during public scoping meetings.

Comment Compilation

All the comments were organized, reviewed, and analyzed to identify the preliminary issues that will be addressed during the preparation of the EIS. The comment letters and each comment were entered into an electronic database system that facilitated organization, sorting, and management of the comments in several different ways, such as topic of concern, specific road locations, and location of comment (a specific portion of the ASNfS or forest wide).

The majority of the comment letters are attributed to two sources: a comment form distributed by the ASNfS during public meetings that could also be submitted

through the ASNFs website; and a letter received from individuals associated with an environmental organization.

The Forest Service comment form was submitted by 1,339 individuals (about 18 percent of all submittals) and primarily focused on four specific topics: dispersed camping, big-game retrieval, adequate forest access, and ATV trails. The comment form asked whether there were enough designated dispersed camping sites identified in the proposed action, whether the big-game retrieval policy is satisfactory, whether the proposed forest access is adequate for planned activities, and whether the proposed ATV trail policy proposing an ATV width of 50 inches on designated trails is adequate. There was also an opportunity on the form for individuals to include other issues of concern. A copy of this form is included in Appendix C.

The other letter, which consisted of 5,025 identical letters submitted by members of a national environmental organization (about 69 percent of submittals), urges the ASNFs to “be fiscally responsible and designate the minimum road and motorized trail system that protects natural resources; preserve and restore wildlife habitat, and ecologically sensitive areas; and set aside roadless areas and other unroaded, natural quiet landscapes for non-motorized recreation, which would minimize user conflict and give non-motorized, quiet recreationists a place to go.” In addition, the letter indicates that the ASNFs’ current proposal to allow cross-country driving to retrieve downed big-game species and to engage in motorized dispersed camping is harmful.

In addition to these relatively large submittals, there were five other Forest Service comment forms, totaling 46 individual submittals; 40 identical postcards; 490 personal letters and emails; 250 comments received at public meetings; two form letters, totaling 45 submittals; and 26 letters submitted by agencies or other organizations. The names of the agencies and other organizations that submitted comments are listed below. (Please note that in some cases more than one letter was sent to the Forest by an agency or organization.)

Federal

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9
- United States Senator Jon Kyl

State

- Arizona Game and Fish Department

Local

- State of New Mexico, Catron County Commission
- State of Arizona, County of Greenlee
- Navajo County Board of Supervisors
- Springerville-Eagar Chamber of Commerce

Organizations and Interest Groups

- Center for Biological Diversity
- White Mountain Conservation League
- ATV Roughriders Club
- Central Arizona Board of Realtors

- Three-Up Outfit
- White Mountain Open Trails Association, doing business as Navajo County ATV Roughriders
- White Mountain Association of Realtors
- Jeep Trail Group
- Howard County Bird Club
- Maricopa Audubon Society
- Collaborative letter representing the following nine organizations: Center for Biological Diversity, Grand Canyon Wildlands Council, White Mountain Conservation League, the Arizona Wilderness Coalition, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Sky Island Alliance, Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, and Wild Earth Guardians.

Summary of Public Comments

Issues identified were categorized according to three major topic categories: action and alternatives, environmental impacts, and process concerns. These three categories and the subordinate 22 main categories are noted below:

Actions and Alternatives: Includes comments about various activities on the ASNFs, as well as suggestions for and concerns about alternatives or decisions that people feel should be considered in the EIS. Topic categories include the following:

- Big-game retrieval
- Dispersed camping
- Cross-country travel
- Access
- Motorized use
- Enforcement
- Fire prevention/protection
- Logging
- Maintenance
- Safety
- Road density
- Education
- Non-motorized trails

Environmental Impacts: Includes comments about the proposed action's potential impacts on natural and human resources and about social and economic concerns that people feel should be addressed in the EIS. Topic categories include the following:

- Biological resources (vegetation, wildlife, environmental damage)
- Water resources
- Specially designated areas (Wilderness and Primitive Areas, Inventoried Roadless Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Research Natural Area)
- Noise
- Air quality
- Economics
- Scenery/visual
- Grazing and ranching

Process Concerns: Include comments about the way in which the Forest Service is conducting the EIS process.

- Scoping activities

Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of comments received in each of the 22 categories. As illustrated in this figure, people mentioned biological resources most often, followed closely by water resources. One category, entitled “miscellaneous,” captures the very few comments received about fairness, “historical” (which captured those commentators who cited a long history of forest use), global warming, and archaeology. It is important to note that the importance of comments submitted to the Forest Service is not influenced by the frequency of a comment, i.e., if an individual submitted multiple comments about a topic and another individual submitted one comment about a topic, the comments have equal weight.

Actions and Alternatives

Motorized Dispersed Camping

The majority of the comments received about designated dispersed camping did not support the proposed action and urged the Forest Service to make no changes to the current policy on camping. Many commentators noted that additional camping areas were needed primarily as a result of more people using the ASNFFs and wanting to experience the ASNFFs without other campers nearby. In most cases, when a commentator mentioned the proposed 300-foot corridor on either side of a road, it was not considered an acceptable policy. Several commentators noted that providing signage in areas where camping was not allowed would be appreciated to protect sensitive habitat and to ensure the no trespassing on private property occurred. Several commentators noted specific areas in which additional camping would be preferred, as well as areas in which camping should not be dispersed but designated within Inventoried Roadless, Primitive, or Wilderness areas.

Representative Quotations

“I camp in the woods, not in camp sites. I camp to get away from everyone.”

“I go into the woods to be secluded from other campers; designated camping spots do not allow this. Keep the whole forest open to everyone!”

“Your designated campsites [sic] are too few. What you propose will concentrate all camping activity into a small footprint. Your proposal will unacceptably [sic] increase damage to these sites. A dispersed camping site plan will cause less damage and increase the user experience.”

“There are not enough designated camp sites. There needs to be more so that it will encourage campers to not camp all over the forest. This will help to preserve our forest for the future.”

“How can you expect the entire population of people to truly appreciate and enjoy in limited areas. The Forest has much more to offer than 300 feet from a few roads. If we limit the people rights to use we are not only punishing those who have for a lifetime enjoyed the free land, without worry of a permit or limited access but the generations to

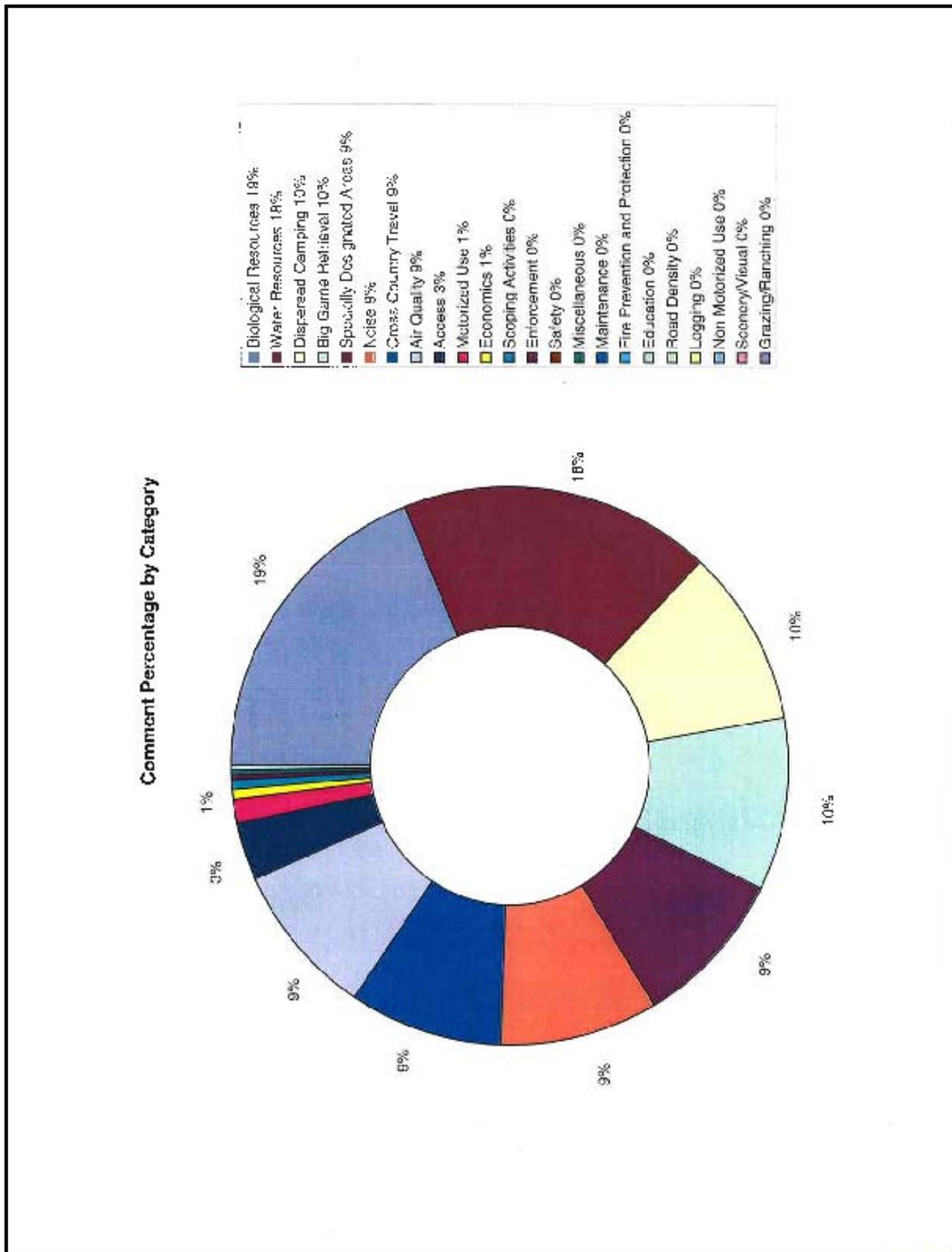


Figure 3. Comment Percentage by Category.

come who will find it too difficult and un-enjoyable to bother with the time it takes to really enjoy the magnificent creations of the National Forest Land.”

“Please do not close the roads and campsites to our National forests. There have got to be some remaining places where we can get more than 300 feet away from the roads/cities/people/smog/government.”

“I am opposed to any road closures in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest. I believe [sic] that our forests should be taken care of as pertaining to camping but let people camp where they want to as long as they don’t tear up the forest. I am not opposed to levying fine to enforce this either.”

“There never have been sufficient campgrounds in the 50+ years I have been camping to meet the needs of the people who want to enjoy the outdoors. My family has always had to use the dispersed camping option, and over time as the overcrowded, overused campgrounds got more noisy, smelly and rowdy, the dispersed camping option became infinitely preferable for our family.... We have rarely seen any forest service people on our dispersed camping trips. Therein lies the major fault and weakness of your plan. It is unenforceable, and will increase rather than decrease the damage to the environment.”

“A 300 foot corridor on each side of road is absolutely excessive as it allows for the proliferation of new user created roads when we already have an excessive number of those. Additionally such motorized corridors in and/or adjacent to Inventoried

“Roadless Areas would violate the Roadless Conservation Rule by allowing new roads to be created where they are supposed to be prohibited!”

Motorized Big-Game Retrieval

Scoping comments ranged on this issue from stating that the proposed change to big - game retrieval was unreasonable to supporting the change in policy. The majority of commentors did not support a change in the big-game retrieval policy. Conditions mentioned for allowing the big-game retrieval policy to remain as currently regulated included hunters with disabilities, elderly hunters, and the general inability of hunters to collect a downed animal in a timely manner if the hunters have to carry the animal out instead of using motorized retrieval. There was also some concern over how hunters would know whether they were in a restricted travel area for big-game retrieval under the proposed action and that limiting the areas may be a safety concern.

Representative Quotations

“Any hunter that has a valid hunting permit and Big Game Tag should be allowed to access the Big Game for Retrieval for a tagged animal. Without the ability, the Forest Service would be in violation of ADA and UFAS. The forest and its facilities are already mostly inaccessible to the disabled and those with mobility impairments.”

“A person needs to be able to take an ATV or truck to retrieve a down [sic] animal.”

“It would be a shame if a legally taken big game animal could be allowed to rot because it could not be recovered. Also non resident sports people would abandon Arizona as not worth the hassle and money.”

“If my area is not open for vehicles, I must carry it out on my back! Get real.”

“Cite individuals for damage—DO NOT make criminals of those acting reasonably. Allow cross country travel for game retrieval always.”

“Leave the rule alone. Some of us are getting old.”

“I just wonder how many game are going to know to conveniently be close enough to a designated Rd [sic]?”

“First you charge for the permit to hunt then you want to charge again for retrieval.”

“Other than allowing some limited provisions for mobility-impaired hunters, motorized game retrieval is unnecessary, unenforceable, and disruptive to wildlife and other hunters.”

“I am a 71 year old hunter and need to drive into the forest to recover game animals. The plan needs changing so it is more friendly to the public, elderly and handicapped.

“Being an avid hunter, both rifle and bow, I feel all roads should be available to retrieve game during the hunting seasons. Cutting down on available area to hunt will put too many hunters in close proximity and may lead to accidents.”

Motorized Cross-Country Travel

Comments received on cross-country travel focused primarily on impacts of cross-country travel to natural resources. Some commentors expressed the belief that cross-country travel should be allowed for hunting, firewood collection, or camping; others expressed the belief that cross country travel should not be used for those activities. Several commentors identified specific areas in the forest in which cross-country travel may impact sensitive drainages/watersheds.

Representative Quotations

“Public lands should not be sacrificed or be degraded by intensive cross-country travel by motorized vehicles. Indiscriminate cross-country travel is known to degrade wildlife habitat, damage archeological sites, destroy vegetation, and promote soil erosion.”

“The forest’s current proposal to allow cross-country driving to retrieve downed big-game species and to engage in motorized dispersed camping is harmful. Instead, designate routes of spurs that provide access to camping or allow camping adjacent to designated routes.”

“The ASNf should adequately consider the ecological, aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, and health impacts of allowing cross country travel areas.”

Access

The topic of access elicited a very strong response from some commentors, who stated access to the ASNfs should not be limited in any way. The proposed action was deemed too restrictive for most; however, there were some commentors who favored limited access in support of protecting and preserving the ASNfs’ natural resources. Unrestricted access to the ASNfs for camping, hunting, firewood (fuelwood) collection, reaching private property, and concerns over elderly and/or disabled people’s access to the forest were primarily mentioned. Some commentors were in favor of limited access to Wilderness Areas, especially to ATV users, in support of protecting sensitive habitats.

Others expressed the belief that access should not be changed if the Forest Service could enforce existing regulations.

There was significant concern about closing roads that impacted access to private property or limited motorized use, hunting, or collection of firewood. Some commentors believed that closing roads would cause traffic congestion on ASNFs lands and cause safety issues or accidents.

There was also concern about opening roads that may impact threatened and endangered species, sensitive species, and the ASNFs ecosystem, as well as opening roads in Inventoried Roadless Areas and in the Blue Range Primitive Area.

Commentors also provided specific information to the Forest Service regarding which roads they wanted closed or open. This information will be considered when developing alternatives.

The collaboration letter authored by nine environmental organizations provided their recommended criteria for closing a road. In summary, it includes threatened and endangered species habitats, sensitive wildlife habitat, areas with severe soil erosion hazard, proposed wilderness areas, proposed wildlife habitat areas, current seasonally closed quiet areas, zones of dispersal (areas that represent the best passage for large mammals across major highways).

Representative Quotations

“If you catch me doing harm to the environment fine me, but please don’t fence me out. I need to see what my taxes go for thank you.”

You (U.S.F.S.) need to realize that you do not own the forest. You are stewards only. We (U.S. citizens) own the forest. You are infringing on our rights when you attempt to deny us access to that which is ours. Your plan would make criminals out of people who wish to access that which they own. This is un-American and unacceptable.”

“I would like to see access to firewood open on the entire forest as long as road and ground conditions are not bad. I rely on firewood to heat my home in the winter.”

“Firewood already “on the ground” should be allowed at all times. Keeps fire fuel down.”

“All forest lands should remain open. Public land for public use.”

“Why should the American public not be able to travel on all Forest Service roads. I am a long time Arizona resident and feel strongly that as a responsible citizen should be not limited on which Forest roads I can travel on.”

“We, the people, pay for our Forests. We should have easy access to wherever and whatever we want.”

“Leave access to the forest the way it is. Close off areas for a limited time so the land can rejuvenate and for the protection of endangered species and plants. Another[sic] words, do what the people hire you to do, manage the forest and don’t lock us out of it.”

“It is unconstitutional to limit the use of our federal public land. It will affect our local economy if people can’t enjoy the forest they have enjoyed it for many generations!!!”

“Any further closures will hamper use by elderly and handicap visitors which is the majority of today’s Americans.”

“Do not change the access to the forest. Enforce existing laws involving roads and ATVs.”

“Every hunter pays their tag permits and should be allowed access to all land.”

“[You are] Taking our rights away from us. How are we supposed to scout for hunting if we have to stay on a main road. It’s also illegal to hunt off main road during hunting.”

“Proposed plan would limit access to people with disabilities....”

“I fully support the Forest Service’s plan to limit access by motorized vehicle and close most of the roads. The current situation is out of control, and is harming wildlife habitat, as well as plant life in the forest. With more people coming every year, we need to shift emphasis to lower impact. Walk or ride your bike to enjoy the forest.”

“Close no roads. Leave them as they are.”

“I am deeply concerned about any actions being taken to close access. I visit these forests often. The places that I visit with any of your proposals would force all motorized vehicles onto just a few roads and the camping would be along these few main roads to the point that it would cause congestion along these roads. This would increase accidents among motorized vehicles in the forest.”

Motorized Use

The topic of motorized use includes consideration of ATVs, OHVs, and off-road vehicles (ORVs). Commentors provided feedback on the current policy vs. the proposed policy, safety, impacts to wildlife and sensitive habitats, and appropriate roads for motorized travel and specifically responded to a question on one of the Forest Service comment forms regarding whether “the proposed ATV trail (width less than 50 inches) system is adequate.”

Commentors are generally polarized regarding keeping all the forest roads open to motorized use or closing all forest roads to motorized use. However, there are some commentors who expressed a middle ground position in which a minimum number of roads should be designated for motorized use in order to protect natural resources.

Safety is an issue brought up by some commentors with regard to motorized and non-motorized (hiking, biking) use of the same roads, the need for wider than 50-inch trails so ATVs can pull off, pass, turn around, or stop to make repairs, and the need for well-marked ATV trails.

Commentors recommended a decrease in motorized trails to discourage the use of fossil fuels to address global warming concerns, disruption to other people (noise, dust) and wildlife/sensitive habitats, and forest destruction (driving on muddy roads, litter).

Commentors recommended an increase in motorized trails to increase property values, use as fire breaks, reduce congestion, benefit the local economy, and access areas for firewood collection, hunting, fishing, and logging.

Many commentors indicated that enforcing the regulations associated with motorized travel would benefit the ASNFs and solve a lot of problems. Also, there were several commentors who encouraged the use of permits and user fees for motorized forest use.

Representative Quotations

“I am happy with the present policy and oppose any road closure.”

“Leave trails as they are.”

“Close roads to ATVs. Protect the forests from off road vehicles.”

“There are too many ATV trails. They don’t stay on the trails anyway.”

“Restricting the use of OHVs to certain roads and areas is a good idea. However, unless there are clear signs as to where they can be used and enforcement of this restricted use the program will fail.”

“OHV use needs to be regulated—as licensed drivers, particular use area (not all over the forest), and required to stay on regulated trails to prevent forest destruction. This way, both OHV users and hikers, bikers and horses can all enjoy our forests. However, their paths should be separated.”

“This should not be restricted. The current rules are good enough. They just need to be enforced.”

“I do not want to see additional ATV trails. There are air quality issues, noise issues, and disturbance to wildlife that need to be considered.”

Proposed ATV trail width “not safe.”

“We would like to keep areas open for ATV fun, but we don’t want the roads torn up! We live right next to the forest and we love the quiet and we want to be able to have fun. We are 75 and 76 years old.”

“The 50" width seems okay, but more trails would be a better answer to that users would have more choices and be more likely to use them instead of random riding.”

“I do not like ATVs for several reasons of [sic] which I am sure you agree with. They are WAY too noisy and need mufflers. They destroy the environment. They scare the wildlife away. They ruin my peaceful enjoyment of the outdoors. Why should anyone be allowed to do this in our National Forest?”

“A lot of new ATVs are wider than 50 inches and wouldn’t be able to pull off to pass, turn around, stop to repair etc.”

“Please reduce, not increase, potential habitat available to motorized vehicles. The waste of fossil fuel must be discouraged, not promoted. Nothing less than the future of civilization most likely hangs in the balance of global warming.”

“Not enough miles of trails and loops are planned.”

“We agree with your proposal(s); appreciate you as stewards of our National Forests.”

“Please do not close or restrict the roads for all road recreation use or hiking privileges. We love how they are with the ability to enjoy the forest and wildlife.”

Enforcement

Scoping comments regarding enforcement reflect a belief that the proposed action is a punishment being exercised by the Forest Service because of the irresponsible actions of a small percentage of forest users. The common thought is that if the current laws and regulations are enforced, the ASNFFs' current travel management situation will be adequate and no changes to the travel management regulations will be required.

Ideas proposed for dealing with managing irresponsible ASNFFs users include establishing a permit system, charging a user or licensing fee, ticketing lawbreakers, mandating a training class on appropriate behavior in the ASNFFs, pay stations, a tax when issuing tags to ORVs to subsidize a cleanup committee, and establishing a hotline to report illegal activities.

Enforcement of campers, big-game hunters, and ATV users is commonly mentioned. In general, the commentors expressed the belief that anyone who abuses the ASNFFs should be ticketed. The "leave no rut law" is also mentioned as needing to be enforced.

There are also comments that indicate that the Forest Service needs to hire more enforcement personnel. Concern is also expressed that the Forest Service will be unable to enforce the proposed travel management proposal and that people would like to see the enforcement strategy explained in the EIS.

Representative Quotations

"Why are you going to punish all the responsible "good" ATV riders??? Why not just put more enforcement out in the "woods" to catch the jerks that trash campsites, shooting areas, and go off trails??? Please don't punish 100% of the people for the 5% jerks!!!"

"I can't get over the feeling that responsible users of the forest are being held hostage but the "few" who think it's theirs to tear up. I'm a lot more in favor of licensing fees, mandatory training classes, and heavy fines than I am in blanket restrictions on forest use."

"You need to enforce the laws you already have and cite the violators of the laws."

"Improve your law enforcement—do not restrict ATV trails. Violators need to be cited."

"I feel the forest needs attention instead of neglect. Sure there will be trashy campers they should be prosecuted but don't pick every body [sic] off the mountain [sic] this restriction is very unnecessary."

"Who's going to oversee/monitor/regulate your implementation of the plan, now and in the future?"

Fire Prevention/Protection

Concerns about fire prevention and protection are related to road closures and fuelwood collection. Comments indicate that an increase in roads or not closing roads would be beneficial for controlling fires because the roads serve as fire breaks. Closed roads are also cited as barriers to fighting fires because they may delay fire-suppression activities. In contrast, several comments indicate that closing roads prevents fires because it limits

the number of people on the ASNFFs and decreases the chance of human-created forest fires.

Several individuals indicated that they would be in favor of restrictions on the ASNFFs if the restrictions intended to limit access to areas with severe fire potential.

Fuelwood collection of downed trees is cited as a method of preventing the spread of fires should they occur.

Representative Quotations

“Unrestricted access to forest lands affects the environment and increases the potential for fires; known fact.”

“Dispersed camping should be restricted unless there are severe fire restrictions.”

“Almost all of these roads and trails can be used as fire breaks and access to get equipment in, if a fire should start.”

“Manage the forests—do not restrict access to them. We must be able to clean diseased and dead trees to protect forest fires.”

Logging

Few comments were received regarding logging in the ASNFFs. Comments associated with logging include wanting to begin commercially harvesting logs for timber sales to benefit the ASNFFs’ budget (money to maintain roads), improving forest health with tree thinning, and the possibility of maintaining roads for future timber sale access.

Maintenance

Few comments were received regarding maintenance. Comments included encouraging the ASNFFs to maintain existing roads and trails, to decommission roads that may no longer be needed or maintained due to budget constraints, and to consider the congestion and increased maintenance that may occur if the quantity of open roads is reduced.

There was one comment received that indicated that maintenance did not appear to have occurred on the ASNFFs for years and that the roads were still in good shape. In contrast, others indicated that road maintenance is a valid issue and noted budget constraints as an issue. Areas where road maintenance was needed were identified.

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) provided comments indicating which specific roads they would like access to in order to maintain their properties or improvements.

Representative Quotations

“The Forest Service has not maintained many of the roads for many years and yet they are in good shape. Keep open present road system. You say that you don’t have money to maintain roads but yet you have money to make ATV trails. Does not make sense.”

“I am concerned that the reduced number of roads will only create more condensed traffic. The same number of vehicles will travel on less roads, this will require wider roads and more road grading to maintain the roads. Most of the roads you are closing are rarely maintained. Condensed traffic will make people drive on shoulders in narrow

sections and you will be asked to widen the roads.... If you improve your maintenance of the reduced roads you will encourage more people to drive on them.”

Safety

The issue of safety was mentioned in a few comments with regard to a variety of topics: access, mixed trail use, an individual suing someone due to an accident with a motorized vehicle, the proposed action restriction requiring parking within a vehicle length of a road, which roads are unsafe for ATV use, camping near roads being a possible safety hazard, the proposed 50-inch ATV width being unsafe.

Safety was mentioned with regard to access, requesting that there be no road closures or restrictions to forest access unless there is a safety or environmental concern, stating that limiting hunting areas or open roads could cause congestion that might involve a hunting accident, and requesting that roads be evaluated for steepness or other conditions that might make them unsafe for use.

To address safety on the ASNFs, individuals suggested posting warning signs at roads where travel may not be safe, maintaining roads for safety's sake, separating motorized and non-motorized trails with adequate signage, making ATV trails wider, and identifying specific alternate routes that may be safer for travel than existing routes.

Representative Quotations

“We need access to all the forest unless there is a major safety issue or a real environmental issue. DO NOT CLOSE.”

“Here is what I see happening if the Travel Management Project becomes reality: 1) More hunting accidents, 2) More ATV accidents. Same amount of people on fewer roads equals accidents, 3) Altercations between campers. Forcing people who are trying to “get away” to camp in designated areas next to someone else asking for trouble, 4) Higher crime. Designated areas for camping makes easier pickings for criminals. You better be ready to lift your ban on concealed carry so campers can protect themselves, 5) lawsuits against the forest service for accidents and crime. You better have enough people to maintain the trails because they are going to take a beating. Also, you better have enough officers to police that problems that will arise.”

“My desire is for the preservation of quiet in our forest. Protection of wildlife is also important. Can you imagine elk, deer, birds, turkeys staying when the roar of the OHV comes near? I would also fear for my life when I am hiking a trail and an OHV comes zooming up.”

“...to limit camping to within one-vehicle-length from a designated roadway would subject campers to dangerously close traffic from other forest users.”

“There is no need to create new ones [ATV trails] or eliminate roads that have been in use for years. They would be a little bit wider, for safety. All we need is more enforcement and regulations.”

Road Density

Few comments on road density were received. The AGFD recommends that road densities in a specific area are not exceeded any more than what is proposed; a letter from

a collaboration of environmental organizations advocates for a road density on the ASNFs of 1 mile per square mile based on general forest lands and not include Wilderness or Inventoried Roadless Areas. A request was also made that the Forest Service use the known user-created routes when calculating road density.

Representative Quotations

“...scientific research indicates that in order to provide quality habitat for most wildlife species, motorized route densities should not exceed 1 mile per square mile.”

Education

Comments received regarding education were few, but did express that the Forest Service should educate forest users to respect the forest, about dispersed camping, minimum-impact camping, and building campfires, how to use forest lands, and how to use roads properly (do not drive in wetlands) and should educate ATV users about ATV-specific regulations, especially regarding preventing environmental damage.

There was also a recommendation to develop an educational program to explain travel management and to establish a community trail maintenance and building projects program in which the public could become involved.

Representative Quotations

“How about educating people how to camp and build camp fires and how to put them out and leave the forest the way it is—for the people!”

“I have seen lots of Forest Service Roads closed in the last 10 to 15 years. I think it is time to stop restricting access to our Forests. However we do need to educate people on how to use the roads properly and not go off road unless absolutely necessary.”

Non-motorized Trails

Few comments were received specifically regarding non-motorized trails. Those submitting comments focused primarily on hiking and equestrian uses. The comments indicated that there should be an equal number of hiking-only trails as there are ATV trails on the ASNFs. In addition, separating trail systems (motorized vs. non-motorized) and using signs to designate trail use were mentioned as important points to consider in travel management planning.

Representative Quotations

“There needs to be signs posted showing what trails are hiking only (preferably with a hiker pictured) and sanctuary signs at water tanks for wildlife benefit. PLEASE.”

“...I think the number of hiking trails should equal the number of ATV trails, dedicated to that use. The number of people using ATVs has skyrocketed and given dedicated riding trails, I believe there will be less trail “creation”. Based upon what I see, there are at least as many ATV users as hikers and it is in the Forest Service’s job to meet that need...not close roads.”

Environmental Impacts

Biological Resources

Comments regarding biological resources formed the majority of comments received. Biological resources identified during scoping consisted of threatened and endangered species (TES), sensitive species, impacts to vegetation, impacts to wildlife, invasive weeds, and environmental damage in general.

Activities or aspects of the proposed travel management plan were identified as having potential impacts and commentors felt should be addressed in the EIS included the following:

- establishing new roads/trails and larger camping corridors should take into account wildlife habitats, including TES, sensitive species, vegetation, and encroachment of invasive weeds;
- trails closures should be considered in those areas where sensitive habitats (i.e., breeding or fledgling areas) are located, where impacts to water quality are or have the potential to occur;
- a big-game retrieval policy that allows all hunters motorized access to retrieve game, not protective of wildlife; and
- re-evaluate road density calculations to provide quality habitat for wildlife and decrease habitat fragmentation.

The AGFD and a collaboration letter representing nine environmental organizations provided a list of areas where wildlife areas are located and recommendations for changes to the proposed action to protect or avoid those areas.

Most commentors indicated that they believed that ATV/OHV use in the forest was generally disruptive to wildlife and wildlife habitats. When describing the effects of ATV/OHV use on forest lands, terms such as “harm,” “tear up,” “trash,” “ruin,” “make a mess,” “destroy,” “damage,” “drastically impact,” “negatively impact,” “degrades,” and “disrupt” were used; therefore, individuals were in support of closing roads and trails to protect the wildlife.

Representative Quotations

“I approve of the restrictions you are about to put into place. It will be more enjoyable if we can have quiet and not have to dodge the bullies in ATVs and fast trucks. We will also be protecting our forest and wildlife from careless people.”

“While it is possible to accommodate some ORV trails on the Forest, they certainly should not negatively affect sensitive wildlife habitat or out wilderness and roadless lands.”

“There is a growing problem with the colonization and spread of invasive and noxious weeds. These weeds may change fire regimes and increase the risk of converting native vegetative communities into invasive alien grasslands. Motorized recreation plays an important role in this problem, especially when vehicles leave existing routes and go cross-country. Please recognize that limiting motorized recreation is one of the best

methods to begin to get ahead of this growing problem, and start on the process of solving it.”

“The [proposed] plan creates new off-road trails near wilderness areas, opens new areas to cross-country off-roading on sensitive lands, and disturbs designated critical habitat for threatened and endangered species, such as Mexican spotted owl and Apache trout, and important habitat for the black bear and mountain lion.”

Water Resources

Some of the specific concepts included in the water resources category include a consideration of watershed, water quality, and soils/riparian impacts. Some of the specific concerns and comments were associated with opening new trails in high-elevation habitats and expressed concern that this would increase damage in sensitive riparian areas; others stated that an evaluation of watersheds should be considered when designating cross-country travel and that the ASNFs should be divided into subunits using watersheds to evaluate impacts. Still others noted that some motorized trails were located adjacent to creeks, thereby potentially affecting water quality. There were also comments making a connection between soil erosion and the effects of water quality due to an increase of erosion from trails near water bodies.

Some comments specifically identified creeks, perennial water sheds, or areas where ATV or ORV use has already or could potentially impact water resources. Comments encourage the Forest Service to designate minimum road and trail systems that protect natural resources, including water quality.

Representative Quotations

“I feel strongly that the Forest Service must minimize their road and motorized trail system to protect and restore forest health including wildlife habitat and water quality as well as to provide for quiet experiences. Because of the noise, erosion, air pollution, and other damage from off-road vehicles, areas used by ORVs are not attractive to the quiet, nature-based recreationists, which comprise a majority of recreational visitors to your forest.”

“Little Creek is a connecting route from Terry Flat to the Alpine Region. This route travels through a drainage off to Terry Flat for its entire length. For much of the length, the trail directly impacts the creek as the creek is within 100 feet of the trail. This close proximity leads to a higher level of watershed impact. Further, the trail is a migration route for game animals from the lower elevations up to the high country of Terry Flats.”

“Indiscriminate cross-country travel by motorized vehicles degrades wildlife habitat, damages archeological sites, destroys vegetation and promote soil erosion.”

“Severe erosion and route degradation has occurred from ATV and truck use. The grade is steeper than 8% at the top end, and no gravel base is intact there.”

“Roads can significantly affect water quality, stream/wetlands processes, fish, and wildlife. EPA believes reductions in road density, improvements in road drainage, and reductions in sediment delivery from roads are important components for improving aquatic health streams, as well as reducing other resource impacts.”

Specially Designated Areas

The term “specially designated areas” refers to areas on the forest that have special recognition and in most cases have different land use considerations/restrictions than the rest of the ASNf lands. These areas include Inventoried Roadless Areas, Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-motorized Areas, Research Natural Areas,⁴ Designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Wilderness Areas.

The majority of the comments associated with specially designated areas encouraged the Forest Service to consider the aforementioned special areas when making decisions about travel management. Other comments noted specific locations on the ASNfs mentioned in the proposed action where the Forest Service may be in violation of land use restrictions.

Representative Quotations

“Creation of 155 miles of new ORV trails is inconsistent with the intent of the rule and will harm wilderness values.”

“Keep our Inventoried Roadless areas roadless! Many of the dispersed camping corridors proposed on the Clifton Ranger District are adjacent to Inventoried Roadless Areas. These routes would be illegal in that it would allow user created roads to expand into the Roadless Areas. Additionally some currently closed roads within the Inventoried Roadless Areas are proposed to be opened in the Clifton RD. This too is prohibited by the Roadless Conservation Rule.”

Noise

Comments regarding noise were primarily associated with motorized vehicle use in the forest. ATVs or ORVs on the ASNfs were cited as being too noisy and did not provide for quiet recreationists’ needs on the ASNfs. The term “quiet recreation” was used by commentors to describe a major use of the ASNfs. The issue of too much noise in the wilderness was usually mentioned in conjunction with disturbing wildlife.

Representative Quotations

“I do not want to see additional ATV trails there are air quality issues, noise issues and disturbances to wildlife that need to be considered.”

“I think fewer ATV trails would be ok with me. They create too much noise and tear up the forest.”

“The travel plan should preserve our quiet recreation activities. According to a 2002 ASNf survey, less than 11% of forest visitors participate in motorized recreation, while over 80% participate in activities associated with quiet recreation including hiking, wildlife viewing, etc.”

⁴ Research Natural Areas are areas that the Forest Service has designated to be permanently protected and maintained in natural condition. These protected natural areas include unique ecosystems or ecological features; rare or sensitive species of plants and animals and their habitat; and/or high-quality examples of widespread ecosystems.

Air Quality

Air quality concerns were mentioned in correlation with ATV and ORV use in the forest. The basic comment identifies ATV or ORV use as the cause of air quality issues, including dust, on the ASNfFs.

Representative Quotations

“...Because of the noise, erosion, air pollution and other damage from off-road vehicles, areas used by ORVs are not attractive to quiet, nature-based recreationists, which comprises a majority of the recreational visitors to your forest.”

“All proposals make sense: less noise, dust; air and soil pollution. Restricting off road travel lowers fire hazards and damage to natural terrain.”

Economics

Scoping comments received regarding economic issues centered mainly on how ASNfFs visitors (locals, tourists, hunters, etc.) bring economic benefits to surrounding communities and stated that the travel management plan should take any road/area closures and access restrictions (i.e., proposed big-game retrieval policy) into consideration.

Representative Quotations

“The focus of the U.S. Forest Service with this interest in redefining the fundamental nature of our national forests and the public’s right to access them should be as attentive to the potential economic impact of this type of change as much as the focus on protected wildlife, plants and habitat. This is particularly an existing problem for Arizona’s small communities in rural Arizona where recreational tourism is our lifeblood for small businesses and housing.”

“Don’t close the forest roads. Many people will be affected by this. The economies of the White Mountains will be eroded....”

Scenery/Visual

The few comments received on the topic of scenery are primarily related to concerns that too many roads and ORVs ruin the beauty of the ASNfFs. Individuals note that wildlife viewing contributes to the visual resource/beauty of the ASNfFs.

Grazing and Ranching

Grazing and ranching was mentioned a few times in the context of proposed ASNfFs access restrictions and how these will limit grazing and ranching activities on the ASNfFs.

Process Concerns

Scoping Activities

Comments received on the scoping activities included the following:

- the travel management planning process is confusing to follow,
- Forest Service maps were difficult to read (information needed to be clarified),

- an untimely meeting notice was sent out,
- meetings should be held in the Phoenix area,
- there are problems getting data from the website,
- the comment form was difficult to use,
- and press releases were biased.

The Forest Service was complimented on the format of the scoping meetings (open-house style).

Representative Quotations

“Has there been any scheduled meetings in the Phoenix Metro Area regarding the travel plan issue? It seems that people living in or near the Apache-Sitgreaves were the ones who were more easily accommodated. But then I might be wrong.”

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED ISSUES

ISSUES IDENTIFIED FROM PUBLIC SCOPING

The following summarizes the comments and concerns that were expressed by the public during the scoping process. These were evaluated for application as an issue to generate alternatives to the Proposed Action. Not all of the comments and concerns expressed are relevant to the analysis of the Proposed Action, but those that are will be carried forward in the environmental analysis. Each issue is further defined as a key issue, a design issue, or an issue beyond the scope of the analysis. A key issue is *a point of disagreement, debate, or dispute* with a specific proposed action based on some anticipated effect. Key issues are used to develop alternatives to the Proposed Action. A design issue is a concern expressed by a resource specialist or the public that can be addressed by a refinement of the Proposed Action or through other measures, such as best management practices, applied during project implementation. Comments that are not “key” or design issues do not result in the formulation of alternatives to the Proposed Action.

To be considered a “key” issue and therefore considered in the environmental analysis, a comment must generally meet five criteria:

1. Be within the scope of the proposed action,
2. Not already decided/required by law, regulation or previous decision,
3. Be relevant to the decision to be made,
4. Not be distinctly limited in extent, duration and intensity,
5. Be amenable to scientific analysis rather than conjecture.

Following each issue is a statement on whether that issue has been identified as key, design, or beyond the scope of analysis. Key and design issues will be addressed in the EIS regardless of how many comments were received about each.

Issue Determination

Actions and Alternatives

Motorized Dispersed Camping

- Are proposed camping policies (300-foot corridor) acceptable or excessive?
- Are there enough dispersed camping sites?
- How can we ensure Inventoried Roadless, Primitive, or Wilderness Areas are not impacted by camping area designations and associated access roads?

Issue Determination: Key issue.

Motorized Big-Game Retrieval

- Will a change in the retrieval policy impact the number of hunters?
- Will the proposed policy impact a hunter's ability to retrieve downed game in a timely manner?
- Will limiting areas for big-game retrieval become a safety issue?
- How will designations affect disadvantaged populations?

Issue Determination: Key Issue.

Motorized Cross-Country Travel

- How will cross-country travel impact natural resources?
- How can cross-country travel be managed to protect sensitive drainages and watersheds?
- How will cross-country forest advocates remain outside specially designated areas (Roadless, Primitive, Wilderness Areas)?

Issue Determination: Beyond the scope of this analysis – already decided by law, regulation or previous decision.

Motorized Access

- Is there a balance between user groups that want the entire forest open and those that favor closures in order to protect natural resources?
- How can private property owners near or adjacent to the forest protect their land from trespassers?
- How will designations affect disadvantaged populations?
- How will the proposed policy affect safety and impacts to wildlife and sensitive habitats?
- Will the proposed 50-inch limit on ATV width be adequate on designated trails?
- Will there be seasonal limits for ORV/ATV use?
- Will designated ORV/ATV use areas be established?
- How will designations affect disadvantaged populations?

- Is a system of permits and user fees for motorized vehicles use in the forest appropriate?

Issue Determination: Key Issue. However, evaluation of permit systems and user fees is outside the scope of this analysis.

Enforcement

- How will the TMR be enforced to ensure that there is no use in off-limit areas?
- Will ASNFs hire new law enforcement officers specifically to patrol these areas?

Issue Determination: Design Issue. Enforcement will be analyzed in the Travel Management and Infrastructure chapter of the EIS.

Fire Prevention/Protection

- How will designations affect access for firefighters to combat wildfires?
- How will designations affect forest-thinning and prescribed fire activities?
- Will open access across the forest be allowed for fuelwood gathering?

Issue Determination: Beyond the scope of this analysis - already decided by law, regulation or previous decision. Regulation 36 CFR 212.51(a) states a list of vehicles that are exempted from motorized travel restrictions. Pertinent to this issue is the exemption of any fire, military, emergency, or law enforcement vehicle for emergency purposes. Included in these exemptions is motor vehicle use with written authorization from the Forest Service which includes firewood cutting and gathering of forest products.

Logging

- Will logging/timber sales be re-opened on the forest as a source of federal income, possibly to continue road maintenance activities?
- Would designations affect access for timber sales?
- Would there be restrictions (for safety) during harvesting, if it occurs?

Issue Determination: Beyond Scope – not within the scope of the proposed action. While the Travel Management Rule includes a discussion about timber sales contracts and how they should be handled in National Forests, the ASNFs has not included motorized use associated with logging or timber sale contracts in the Proposed Action.

Maintenance

- Would the designations require more road maintenance?
- Can the Forest Service manage budget constraints to conduct maintenance activities?

Issue Determination: Design Issue - already decided by law, regulation or previous decision. Maintenance will be analyzed in the Travel Management and Infrastructure chapter of the EIS. The Travel Management Rule requires that proposed designations should be evaluated against several criteria in Section 212.55. One of these criteria includes the need for maintenance of National Forest System roads, trails, and areas.

Safety

- How will proposed changes (camping near roads, congested hunting areas) affect safety on the forest?

Issue Determination: Design Issue - already decided by law, regulation or previous decision. Safety will be analyzed in the Travel Management and Infrastructure chapter of the EIS. The Travel Management Rule requires that proposed designations should be evaluated against several criteria in Section 212.55. One of these criteria includes public safety.

Road Density

- How will designations affect road density recommendations?

Issue Determination: Beyond Scope - already decided by law, regulation or previous decision. The August 1987 ASNFFs Land and Resource Management Plan as amended identifies “total road densities should average 3.5 miles/square mile or less. Open road densities should average 2.0 miles/square miles or less”.

Education

- How will education programs improve the use of forest lands?
- Is establishing an educational program for the forest worthwhile?

Issue Determination: Beyond Scope – not relevant to the decision to be made.

Non-motorized Trails

- How will designations affect non-motorized recreation (hiking, fishing, hunting, etc.)?
- How will designations affect disadvantaged populations?

Issue Determination: Design Issue. Trails will be analyzed in the travel Management and Infrastructure chapter of the EIS

Environmental Impacts

Biological Resources

- How would the ASNFFs mitigate impacts to vegetation?
- How will designations change road densities and access?
- Should some roads be closed seasonally to protect wildlife and their habitat?
- How would the ASNFFs mitigate impacts to wildlife and their habitat?
- Would designations affect any Mexican Spotted Owl or other special status species habitat?
- What mitigation measures would be adopted for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species?
- How will designations affect the introduction and/or encouragement of invasive plants?
- How will ASNFFs manage these invasive plants?

Issue Determination: Design Issue. Biological resources will be analyzed in the Biological Resources chapters in the EIS.

Water Resources

- Would some roads in riparian areas be closed?
- How will road density affect watersheds?
- How would the ASNFFs mitigate impacts to water bodies (e.g., oil spills, gasoline spills, sediment, etc.)?
- How would off-road use impact soils (i.e., compaction, erosion, etc.)?
- Would there be any mitigation strategies to minimize adverse impacts?

Issue Determination: Design Issue. Water resources will be analyzed in the Water Resources chapter in the EIS.

Specially Designated Areas

- Would currently existing closed road be designated in inventoried roadless areas?
- Could some existing roads be decommissioned to expand roadless areas?
- How much distance needs to be between areas open to motor vehicles or cross-country travel and wilderness areas?

Issue Determination: Key Issue. Specially designated areas will be analyzed in the Wilderness, Roadless Area, and Cross Country Travel chapters in the EIS.

Noise

- How will designations impact other recreation and/or wildlife?
- How will designations affect nearby sensitive receptors?
- Will noise levels be considered when designating areas for use?
- Will there be any noise mitigation?

Issue Determination: Design Issue. Noise will be analyzed in the Noise chapter in the EIS.

Air Quality

- How will designations impact the amount of emissions/dust?
- How will designations add to emissions/dust in nearby population centers?
- How will designation affect climate change/global warming?

Issue Determination: Design Issue. Air quality will be analyzed in the Air Resources chapter of the EIS.

Economics

- How would designations affect the economies of local communities?
- Would road closures result in less tourism revenue?
- How will designations impact land value of adjacent land?

Issue Determination: Key Issue. Economics will be analyzed in the Socioeconomics chapter in the EIS.

Scenery/Visual

- How will designations impact scenery?

Issue Determination: Design Issue. Scenery/visual concerns will be analyzed in the Visual Resources chapter in the EIS.

Grazing and Ranching

- How will designations affect grazing permittees?

Issue Determination: Beyond Scope – already decided by law, regulation or previous decision. Grazing and ranching permit holders are made aware of the travel management process and their input is requested; however, motorized travel off designated road systems by grazing permit holders is based on need and must be in compliance with the terms and conditions of Term Grazing Permits.

Archaeological Resource Protection

- How will designations impact Tribal Use Areas/ Traditional Cultural Properties?
- How will designations affect National Register of Historic Places–eligible sites?

Issue Determination: Design Issue - already decided by law, regulation or previous decision. The USFS Region 3 travel management protocol with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office provides for consistency between the forests, grasslands, and streamlines the process for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Where roads and motorized routes and areas are already authorized, no Section 106 compliance is needed. New routes, corridors, and areas to be designated must go through the Section 106 compliance process. In many cases, archaeological surveys will not be required or can be conducted at less than 100 percent coverage; however, 100 percent surveys are required in high site density areas or where the potential to impact sites is high.

Process Concerns

Scoping Activities

- Ensure project materials are easy to read and accessible
- More public meetings in locations near potentially affected forest users
- Timely meeting notification

Issue Determination: Beyond Scope- not relevant to the decision to be made. While this issue is beyond scope, the Forest Service appreciates receiving feedback on the administration of the NEPA process. The Forest Service will address the concerns listed above as the NEPA process moves forward.

Forest Supervisor Concurrence

I concur with the key and design issues/concerns as listed above and direct the ID Team to address them during the NEPA process, and, as appropriate, in the formulation of alternatives. Should further analysis determine that an issue needs to be adjusted or refined, the ID Team may do so with my review and approval.



DERYL JEVONS

Acting Forest Supervisor



Date

Measures to Be Considered

In addition to the key and design issues identified above, the following is a list of proposed measures discussed or suggested that may be considered in the development of the EIS:

- Miles of road by maintenance class and use designation
- Number and type of campgrounds accessible by vehicle
- Acres accessible to off-road travel (e.g., in corridors or available to big-game retrieval)
- Acres, miles, or other metrics of affected habitat for sensitive or management indicator species
- Acres of affected game areas
- Landscape fragmentation metrics (e.g., number of habitat patches)
- Road density calculated at a forest-wide scale, by unit or planning area, or with designated areas excluded (e.g., Wilderness and Primitive Areas)
- Miles of road or acres available to different types of recreational experiences
- Miles of road or other metrics of accessibility for people with disabilities
- Maintenance costs
- Enforcement costs and outcomes
- Number of affected users by type of use (motorized and non-motorized)
- Metrics of noise effect
- Metrics of water quality effect (e.g., measures of proximity between roads and streams)
- Metrics of air quality effect (e.g., visibility impairment on Class I air quality areas)
- Metrics of invasive species effects (e.g., affected acres under dispersion assumptions)
- Numbers or acres of identified or potential cultural heritage sites

- Numbers or acres of identified or potential cultural heritage sites
- Miles of road or acres of affected sensitive or erodible soils
- Metrics describing economic values of routes and route uses to nearby communities
- Metrics of ecological resiliency as measures of adaptability to climate change
- Miles or acres of different types of mitigations (e.g., miles of reclaimed or restored routes)
- Baseline and trend data for resources and values

SUMMARY OF FUTURE STEPS IN THE EIS PROCESS

In considering public comments, the Forest Service will develop a range of preliminary reasonable alternatives that will be evaluated to determine which alternatives should be studied in detail in the EIS.

Once the alternatives have been developed, the studies and level of detail to be addressed for each of the issues will be determined. Data and information will be compiled from existing sources, and, in some cases, new data will be collected. Then, the impacts that could result from implementing any of the alternatives will be analyzed, and measures to mitigate those impacts will be identified. The findings will be documented in a Draft EIS.

The Draft EIS will be made available for public review and is currently scheduled for publication in June 2009. The availability of the Draft EIS will be announced in the FR and advertised in the local and regional media. Public comments will be accepted for a minimum of 45 days, during which public meetings or hearings will be held to receive comments on the adequacy of the Draft EIS. The Forest Service will review the comments and prepare responses to each. The document may or may not be modified based on public comments. In any case, all comments and responses will be incorporated into the Final EIS.

The Final EIS will also be made available for the public to review for a period of 30 days, expected in late 2009. The availability of the Final EIS will be announced in the FR and advertised in local and regional media. Following the 30-day period, the ASNCFs will issue a Record of Decision, also in late 2009 or early 2010. Figure 4 summarizes the EIS process and expected schedule.

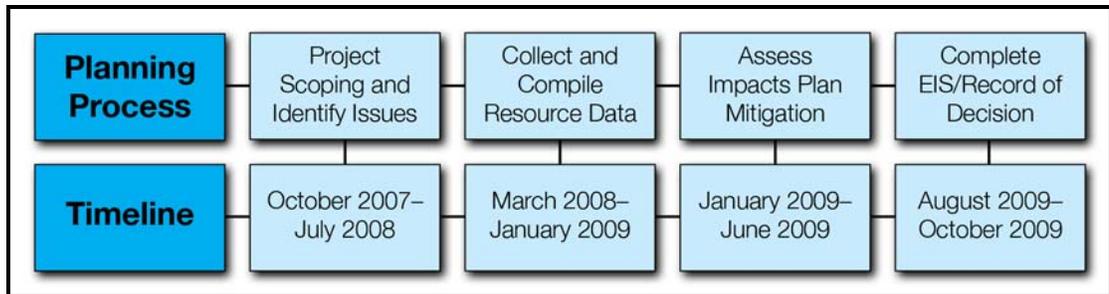


Figure 4. EIS Process and Schedule.

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APPENDIX A

Federal Register Notice of Intent

PR ✓
KP 10/5/07

ACTION: Extension of approval of an information collection; comment request.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's intention to request an extension of approval of an information collection associated with regulations for the payment of indemnity for the voluntary depopulation of captive cervid herds known to be affected with chronic wasting disease.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before December 10, 2007.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by either of the following methods:

- **Federal eRulemaking Portal:** Go to <http://www.regulations.gov>, select "Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service" from the agency drop-down menu, then click "Submit." In the Docket ID column, select APHIS-2007-0093 to submit or view public comments and to view supporting and related materials available electronically. Information on using Regulations.gov, including instructions for accessing documents, submitting comments, and viewing the docket after the close of the comment period, is available through the site's "User Tips" link.

- **Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery:** Please send four copies of your comment (an original and three copies) to Docket No. APHIS-2007-0093, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. APHIS-2007-0093.

Reading Room: You may read any comments that we receive on this docket in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690-2817 before coming.

Other Information: Additional information about APHIS and its programs is available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For information on regulations for the payment of indemnity for the voluntary depopulation of captive cervid herds known to be affected with chronic wasting disease, contact Dr. Dean

Goeldner, Chronic Wasting Disease Program Manager, Ruminant Health Programs, NCAHP, VS, APHIS, 4700 River Road, Unit 43, Riverdale, MD 20737; (301) 734-4916. For copies of more detailed information on the information collection, contact Mrs. Celeste Sickles, APHIS' Information Collection Coordinator, at (301) 734-7477.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Chronic Wasting Disease in Cervids; Payment of Indemnity.

OMB Number: 0579-0189.

Type of Request: Extension of approval of an information collection.

Abstract: The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture regulates the importation and interstate movement of animals and animal products, and conducts various other activities to protect the health of our Nation's livestock and poultry.

In connection with this mission, APHIS established regulations to provide for the payment of indemnity by USDA for the voluntary depopulation of captive cervid herds known to be affected with chronic wasting disease (CWD).

CWD is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy of cervids (elk, deer, and other members of the deer family) and is typified by chronic weight loss leading to death. The presence of CWD in cervids causes significant economic and market losses to U.S. producers.

The regulations in 9 CFR part 55 authorize the payment of indemnity for the voluntary depopulation of CWD-positive, -exposed, or -suspect captive cervids. In order to take part in the indemnity program, cervid producers must apply for participation, must sign a payment, appraisal, and agreement form, and must certify as to whether any other parties hold mortgages on the herd. These requirements involve the use of two information collection instruments: An Appraisal/Indemnity Claim Form (VS Form 1-23) and a Herd Plan Agreement.

We are asking the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to approve our use of these information collection activities for an additional 3 years.

The purpose of this notice is to solicit comments from the public (as well as affected agencies) concerning this information collection. These comments will help us:

(1) Evaluate whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(2) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the burden of the information collection, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(3) Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(4) Minimize the burden of the information collection on those who are to respond, through use, as appropriate, of automated, electronic, mechanical, and other collection technologies, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

Estimate of burden: The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response.

Respondents: Cervid herd owners; State personnel who perform appraisal and herd plan work.

Estimated annual number of respondents: 10.

Estimated annual number of responses per respondent: 1.

Estimated annual number of responses: 10.

Estimated total annual burden on respondents: 10 hours. (Due to averaging, the total annual burden hours may not equal the product of the annual number of responses multiplied by the reporting burden per response.)

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Done in Washington, DC, this 3rd day of October 2007.

Cindy J. Smith,

Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. E7-19883 Filed 10-9-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Apache, Greenlee and Navajo Counties, AZ; Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Public Motorized Travel Management Plan

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service proposes to designate which routes (roads and trails) and areas on federal lands administered by the Forest Service within the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (Forests) are open to motorized travel. In doing so, the agency will comply with the requirements of the

Forest Service 2005 Travel Management Rule. The Forest Service will produce a Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) that reveals those routes and areas on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests that are open to motorized travel. The MVUM will be the primary tool used to determine compliance and enforcement with motor vehicle use designations on the ground. Existing routes, user-created routes and areas not designated as open on the MVUM will be legally closed to motorized travel except as allowed by permit or other authorization. Cross-country motorized travel will be prohibited except by special permit. The decisions on motorized travel do not include over-snow travel or existing winter-use recreation.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received by January 11, 2008. The draft environmental impact statement is expected to be released in September 2008, and the final environmental impact statement is expected in December 2008.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Travel Management, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, P.O. Box 640, Springerville, AZ 85938. Electronic comments may be sent to *comments-southwestern-apache-sitgreaves@fs.fed.us* with "Travel Management" in the subject line. Electronic comments must be readable in Microsoft Word (.doc), rich text (.rtf), Portable Document Format (pdf), text (.txt), or hypertext markup language (.html).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jim Copeland, Team Leader at (928) 333-4301/(928) 339-4384.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of this action is to improve management of motorized (36 CFR 212.1, *Motor Vehicle*) vehicle travel on National Forest System (NFS) lands within the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (Forests) in accordance with provisions identified in 36 CFR parts 212, 251, 261, and 295 *Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use; Final Rule*. Currently, wheeled motorized vehicle travel by the public is not prohibited off designated routes except by signed Forests Orders. The number of user created routes continues to grow each year, with many routes having environmental impacts and safety concerns that have not been addressed. Therefore, there is a need to manage the Forests' transportation system in a sustainable manner through designation of NFS roads, motorized NFS trails, and areas for motor vehicle use, and the

prohibition of motorized cross-country travel (except by permit or special order).

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to designate roads, trails, and areas open to motorized travel on lands administered by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (Forests). Where it is appropriate and necessary, the designations will also specify seasons of use, type of vehicle(s) permitted, and types of use for those roads, trails, and areas. In doing so, the Forests will comply with requirements of the Forest Service 2005 Travel Management Rule (36 CFR part 212). As a result of these travel management decisions, the Forests will produce a Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) depicting those routes and areas on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests that are open to motorized travel. The MVUM will be the primary tool used to determine compliance and enforcement with motor vehicle use designations on the ground. Existing routes, user-created routes and areas not designated as open on the MVUM will be legally closed to motorized travel except as allowed by permit or other authorization. Cross-country motorized travel will be prohibited except by special permit.

In order to implement the proposed action, it would be necessary to amend some existing direction and terminology in the 1987 *Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Plan*, as amended. These changes to the Forests Plan direction would be enduring changes and would apply to this decision and all subsequent project decisions unless and until further modified.

Proposed travel management-related changes to the Forests Plan are based on elements of the travel management rule, public meeting comments, District and Core Travel Management Team recommendations, and Forests Leadership Team decisions. The goal is to provide a transportation system that is within the Forests' ability to manage (operate and maintain) and provide a variety of users with a diverse experience while minimizing impacts to natural resources.

The Forests transportation system open to motorized travel under this proposal would be approximately 2,892 miles. This is a change of approximately 56 miles from the existing condition of approximately 2,948 open miles. In addition, hundreds of miles of currently used closed roads (roads identified as closed in the Forests' database) and user created roads not identified as open under this proposal would no longer be open to motorized use. New project

decisions, subsequent to this decision could change this system without amending the Forests Plan.

The proposed transportation system was developed with extensive public input and addresses a variety of concerns, including access to private lands within the National Forests boundary, funding, and access to the Forests for motorized and non-motorized recreation. Specifically, this proposed transportation system would allow for a balance between various recreational and commercial uses of the Forests. It would provide for various forms of reasonable motorized use on a designated system of routes in a responsible manner that addresses multiple resource concerns.

The proposed transportation system is depicted in detail on the *Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Travel Management Plan Proposed Action Map* located on the Forests Web Site:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/asn/projects/travel-mangement.shtml>. In addition, maps will be available for viewing at:

Supervisor's Office, 30 South Chiricahua St., Springerville, AZ. Alpine Ranger District, Junction Hwy 180 & 191, Alpine, AZ.

Black Mesa Ranger District, 2748 E.

Hwy 260, Overgaard, AZ.

Clifton Ranger District, 397240 AZ 75, Duncan, AZ.

Springerville Ranger District, 165 S.

Mountain Ave., Springerville, AZ.

Lakeside Ranger District, 2022 W. White Mountain Blvd., Lakeside, AZ.

Other existing routes not shown on this map would not be open to public motorized travel. New routes would not be created except by written decision of an authorized Forest Service official. Unauthorized new routes would not be approved for public travel. If this proposal is selected for implementation, the information on this map would become the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) required by regulation and agency policy.

Under this proposal most of the route mileage would occur on existing National Forest System (NFS) routes currently open to the public for motorized travel. This proposal also includes designation of some currently unauthorized routes to connect existing NFS routes.

Approximately 8 miles of NFS roads would be designated for mixed-use as "roads open to all vehicles." NFS roads not considered for mixed-use would be designated as "roads open to highway legal vehicles only" (2,627 miles), or "routes open only to vehicles 50" or "less in width" (257 miles).

This proposal would allow cross-country motorized game retrieval, up to

1 mile from a designated route, of legally harvested elk and mule deer during certain seasons, in certain Game Management Units, during certain times of the day. This proposal would also allow CHAMP permit holders the ability for cross-country motorized game retrieval, up to 1 mile from a designated route, of legally harvested elk, mule deer, and black bear. Cross-country motorized big game retrieval (MBGR) will be subject to other existing regulations intended to protect natural and/or heritage resources. This includes compliance with regulations addressing use of vehicles off roads (36 CFR 261.15), National Forest Wilderness (36 CFR 261.18), and National Forest Primitive Areas (36 CFR 261.21), as well as other applicable laws and regulations. No MBGR will be allowed in Wilderness or Primitive Areas. The intent of this segment of the proposal is to reduce spoilage and waste by providing reasonable access to downed animals that are difficult to move long distances without motorized assistance. Motorized cross-country retrieval of other game animals would not be allowed under this proposal because these animals are small enough to retrieve without motorized assistance. This proposal is consistent with 36 CFR 212.51(8)(b) and the recommendation from Arizona Game and Fish Department.

This proposal would allow forest products gathering, such as firewood and pinyon nuts, following Regional Office guidelines for Forestry Program Activities. Motorized cross-country travel to facilitate the gathering of forest products will be managed by the Forests product permit system. The permit issued for gathering of forest products will specify what, if any, motorized cross-country travel is authorized for the purposes of gathering those products. Removal of lighter forest products such as plants, plant parts, dry cones, grasses, grass seed, pinyon seed, herbs and edibles, mistletoe and mushrooms, would not generally require motorized cross-country travel, and motorized cross-country travel would not generally be authorized. Tribal rights would be honored through free permits.

This proposal would allow dispersed camping off designated routes, in certain areas, under certain conditions. In all cases where dispersed camping is allowed, motorized vehicles would be restricted to within 300 feet from the centerline of designated routes, using the most direct route to the camp site. This would allow for reasonable recreational use of the Forests while reducing the potential for resource damage. Designated routes along which

dispersed camping would be allowed will be shown on the MVUM.

This proposal would allow dispersed camping at designated dispersed campsites, in certain areas, under certain conditions. In all cases where camping at designated dispersed campsites is allowed, motor vehicles would be restricted to within 100 feet from the sign designating the dispersed campsite. Motor vehicles would use the most direct route to the campsite. This would allow for reasonable recreational use of the Forests while reducing the potential for resource damage. Designated dispersed campsites will be shown on the MVUM.

Under this proposal, off-road parking would be allowed along designated routes under certain conditions. Primary considerations in designating this policy were user safety and resource protection. Draft Forest Service Manual direction would allow parking off designated routes, not to exceed a distance of one vehicle length.

This proposal would allow cross-country motorized travel in seven designated Areas that total approximately 1,433 acres. This would allow for reasonable recreational use of the Forests while reducing the potential for resource damage. Designated cross-country travel Areas will be shown on the MVUM.

Responsible Official

The Responsible Official is Elaine Zieroth, Forests Supervisor, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, P.O. Box 640, Springerville, AZ 85938.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

Based on the purpose and need for the proposed action, the Forests Supervisor will evaluate the Proposed Action and other alternatives in order to decide whether to adopt and implement the proposed action, an alternative to the proposed action, or take no action to make changes to the existing Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests transportation system. Once the decision is made, the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests will publish a Motor Vehicle Use Map identifying the roads, trails, and areas that are designated for motor vehicle use. The MVUM shall specify the classes of vehicles and, if appropriate, the times of year for which use is designated.

Federal land managers are directed (Executive Order 11644, 36 CFR 212, and 43 CFR 8342.1) to provide for public use of routes designated as open, to ensure that the use of motorized vehicles and off-road vehicles will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands under their

authority, to promote the safety of users, and to minimize conflicts among various users of federal lands.

Public Involvement

Preliminary public involvement was initiated in June, 2006, in an effort to familiarize the public and stakeholders with the objectives of travel management. The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests hosted and participated in numerous public meetings and workshops across the Forests and local communities.

The National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council (NOHVCC) in cooperation with the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests conducted OHV Route Designation Workshops November 16–19, 2006 in Show Low, AZ for agency personnel and the public. The purpose of these workshops was to assist the Forest Service and public in effective implementation of the USFS Travel Management Rule.

The public was also asked to provide input to the Forests on routes they wanted to remain open and/or closed or those routes that may be in conflict with other desired conditions. Initial public involvement continues up to the point that this NOI is published in the **Federal Register**. To date, the Forests have received over 7,000 comments including numerous comments on individual routes, a large number of general comments, and some area-wide comments. This preliminary public input has been invaluable in helping the Forests develop this proposed action. A summary of the comments received to date is posted on the Forests Web Site <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf/projects/travel-mangement.shtml>.

Scoping Process

Public participation will be especially important at several points during the analysis. The Forests will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and other local agencies and other individuals or organizations that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. The Forests will conduct meetings to solicit comments from the public and interested parties on this proposal. The meetings are scheduled from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the following locations:

- Lakeside, AZ—November 6, 2007 (Tuesday), Blue Ridge Junior High School Cafeteria, 1200 West White Mountain Blvd.
- Eagar, AZ—November 7, 2007 (Wednesday), Eagar Town Hall, 22 West 2nd St.
- Clifton, AZ—November 8, 2007 (Thursday), Clifton Community

Center, Clifton Train Depot, 100 North Coronado Blvd (U.S. Highway 191). Overgaard, AZ—November 13, 2007, (Tuesday), Rim Country Senior Center, 2171 B Street.

Alpine, AZ—November 14, 2007, (Wednesday), Alpine Community Center, 42661 U.S. Highway 180.

Notices of these meetings and requests for comments will be posted on the Forests Web Site and will be published in local newspapers of record.

Based on comments received as a result of this notice and after the Forests have conducted public meetings and afforded the public sufficient time to respond to the proposed action, the Forests will use the public scoping comments and resource related input from the interdisciplinary team and other agency resource specialists to develop a set of significant issues to carry forward into the environmental analysis process. The draft environmental impact statement (EIS) is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and available for public review in September, 2008. EPA will publish a notice of availability of the draft EIS in the **Federal Register**. The comment period on the draft EIS will extend 45 days from the date the EPA notice appears in the **Federal Register**. At that time, the draft EIS will be posted on the Forests Web Site and copies will be distributed to interested and affected agencies, organizations, and members of the public for their review and comment. It is very important that those interested in the management of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest participate at that time. Those who provide comments during the official 45-day comment period are eligible to appeal the decision under 36 CFR part 215. Interest expressed or comments provided on this project prior to or after the close of the official comment period will not constitute standing for appeal purposes. Comments must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.6.

The final EIS is scheduled to be completed in January, 2009. In the final EIS, the Forests are required to respond to substantive comments received during the comment period that pertain to the environmental consequences discussed in the draft EIS and applicable laws, regulations, and policies considered in making the decision.

Preliminary Issues

The Forests have received some indications of potential issues from the initial public involvement process. Those potential issues include:

(1) Resource damage caused by inappropriate types of vehicle use, (e.g. motorized vehicles in fragile or steep terrain); proliferation of routes (e.g. parallel trails or roads, continued traffic on closed roads and travel off designated routes); and continued use during seasonal restrictions (e.g. routes closed to protect resources during wet or muddy seasons).

(2) Disturbing or harming wildlife by using routes in important or critical wildlife habitat areas, too many roads in wildlife habitat areas, and disturbances to wildlife during critical lifecycle periods.

(3) Concerns about recreational opportunities, including loss of recreational opportunities if cross-country and existing routes are closed to motorized travel; loss of primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities if more routes or areas are opened to motorized travel; and how to appropriately and reasonably accommodate the rapidly growing number of motorized users desiring to use federal lands for recreational riding of OHVs.

(4) Concerns on how the system might be designed to facilitate effective enforcement.

(5) Safety concerns on routes where multiple vehicle types (e.g. full-sized trucks and cars, ATVs, motorcycles) are allowed at the same time.

(6) Impacts to multiple use management of the Forests if routes are reduced.

The Forests recognize that this list of issues is not complete and will be further defined and refined as scoping continues. The Forests intend to develop a comprehensive list of significant issues before the full range of alternatives is developed and the environmental analysis is begun.

Comment Requested

This notice of intent initiates the scoping process which guides the development of the environmental impact statement for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Public Wheeled Motorized Travel Management Plan.

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review

A draft environmental impact statement will be prepared for comment. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

The Forests believe, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the draft EIS comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forests at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forests in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the draft environmental impact statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7 and 1508.22; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 21.

Dated: October 2, 2007.

Robert S. Taylor,

Acting Forests Supervisor, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

[FR Doc. E7-19872 Filed 10-9-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-P

Need and Use of the Information: NASS will collect information on monthly estimates of stocks, shipments, and selling prices for such products as butter, cheese, dry whey, and nonfat dry milk. Cheddar cheese prices are collected weekly and used by USDA to assist in the determination of the fair market value of raw milk. Estimates of total milk production, number of milk cows, and milk production per cow, are used by the dairy industry in planning, pricing, and projecting supplies of milk and milk products. Collecting data less frequently would prevent USDA and the agricultural industry from keeping abreast of changes at the State and national level.

Description of Respondents: Farms; Business or other for-profit.

Number of Respondents: 25,071.

Frequency of Responses: Reporting: Quarterly; Weekly; Monthly; Annually.

Total Burden Hours: 11,061.

Charlene Parker,

Departmental Information Collection Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. E7-21360 Filed 10-30-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-20-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Apache, Greenlee and Navajo Counties, AZ; Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Public Motorized Travel Management Plan

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement; Correction.

SUMMARY: On October 10, 2007, the *Federal Register* published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Motorized Travel Management Plan on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (72 FR 57514-57517). That document indicated that the proposed transportation system is depicted in detail on the *Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Travel Management Plan Proposed Action Map* located on the Forests Web site and that the Forests transportation system open to motorized travel under this proposal would be approximately 2,892 miles. Correction of both of these statements is necessary.

Correction: In the *Federal Register* of October 10, 2007, in FR Doc. 72-195, on page 57515, correct the proposed Action caption, second column, last paragraph, first and second sentence to read:

The Forests transportation system open to motorized travel under this proposal would be approximately 2868 miles. This is a change of approximately 78 miles from the existing condition of approximately 2,946 open miles.

In the *Federal Register* of October 10, 2007, in FR Doc. 72-195, on page 57515, correct the Proposed Action caption, third column, second paragraph, first sentence to read:

The proposed motorized public transportation system maps will be available for your review, prior to the public meetings, on the Forests Web Site: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf/projects/travel-management.shtml>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jim Copeland, Travel Management Team Leader at (928) 333-4301/(928) 339-4384.

Dated: October 24, 2007.

Elaine Zieroth,

Forests Supervisor, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

[FR Doc. 07-5396 Filed 10-30-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Notice of Public Meeting, Davy Crockett National Forest Resource Advisory Committee

October 24, 2007.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act of 2000 (Pub. L. 106-393) and the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (FACA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Davy Crockett National Forest Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) meeting will meet as indicated below.

DATES: The Davy Crockett National Forest RAC meeting will be held on November 29, 2007.

ADDRESSES: The Davy Crockett National Forest RAC meeting will be held at the Davy Crockett Ranger Station located on State Highway 7, approximately one-quarter mile West of FM 227 in Houston County, Texas. The meeting will begin at 4 p.m. and adjourn at approximately 6 p.m. A public comment period will be 5:45 p.m.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Brian Townsend, Designated Federal Officer, Davy Crockett National Forest, Route 1 Box 55 FS, Kennard, TX 75847; Telephone: 936-655-2299 or e-mail at: btownsend@fs.fed.us.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Davy Crockett National Forest RAC proposes projects and funding to the Secretary of

Agriculture under Section 203 of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act of 2000. The purpose of the November 29, 2007 meeting is to update the members on the following: Project status, legislation, and the Groveton Stewardship Project. These meetings are open to the public. The public may present written comments to the RAC. Each formal RAC meeting will also have time, as identified above, persons wishing to comment and time available, the time for individual oral comments may be limited.

Brian Townsend,

Designated Federal Officer, Davy Crockett National Forest RAC.

[FR Doc. 07-5398 Filed 10-30-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

Notice of Request for Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Proposed collection; comments requested.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Rural Business-Cooperative Service's (RBS) intention to request an extension of a currently approved information collection in support of the program for 7 CFR part 1951, subpart R, "Rural Development Loan Servicing."

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by December 31, 2007, to be assured of consideration.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Anthony Ashby, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA, STOP 3225, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-3225, Telephone: (202) 720-0661.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Rural Development Loan Servicing.

OMB Number: 0570-0015.

Expiration Date of Approval: August 31, 2008.

Type of Request: Extension of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: The regulations contain various requirements for information from the intermediaries and some requirements may cause the intermediary to require information from ultimate recipients. The

Notices

Federal Register

Vol. 73, No. 41

Friday, February 29, 2008

This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, Apache, Greenlee and Navajo Counties, AZ; Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Public Motorized Travel Management Plan

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement; Correction.

SUMMARY: On October 10, 2007, the **Federal Register** published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Motorized Travel Management Plan on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (72 FR 57514–57517). On October 31, 2007, the **Federal Register** published a corrected NOI for that document (72 FR 61607). The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests then conducted five public meetings in November 2007, to present the proposed action. After careful and deliberate consideration of public input received during those meetings, the Forests Supervisor decided to modify the proposed action. As a result, the Forest Service is hereby entirely revising both NOI documents, **Federal Register** of October 10, 2007 (72 FR 57514–57517) and **Federal Register** of October 31, 2007 (72 FR 61607), to read as follows.

Revision: The Forest Service proposes to designate which routes (roads and trails) and areas on federal lands administered by the Forest Service within the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (Forests) are open to motorized travel. In doing so, the agency will comply with the requirements of the Forest Service 2005 Travel Management Rule. The Forest Service will produce a Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) that reveals those routes and areas on the Forests that are open to motorized travel. The MVUM will be the primary

tool used to determine compliance and enforcement with motor vehicle use designations on the ground. Existing routes, user-created routes and areas not designated as open on the MVUM will be legally closed to motorized travel except as allowed by permit or other authorization. Cross-country motorized travel will be prohibited except by special permit. The decisions on motorized travel do not include over-snow travel or existing winter-use recreation and will not change the management of or restrict non-motorized methods of travel on the Forests.

DATES: Submit written or electronic issues and concerns related to the proposed action by March 14, 2008. The draft environmental impact statement is expected to be released in January 2009 and the final environmental impact statement is expected in April 2009.

ADDRESSES: Send written issues and concerns to Travel Management, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, P.O. Box 640, Springerville, AZ 85938. Electronic comments may be sent to asn_travel_management@fs.fed.us with "Travel Management" in the subject line. Electronic comments must be readable in Microsoft Word (.doc), rich text (.rtf), Portable Document Format (pdf), text (.txt) or hypertext markup language (.html).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jim Copeland, Team Leader at (928) 333-4301/(923) 339-4384.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of this action is to improve management of motorized (36 CFR 212.1, *Motor Vehicle*) vehicle travel on National Forest System (NFS) lands within the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (Forests) in accordance with provisions identified in 36 CFR parts 212, 251, 261, and 295 *Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use; Final Rule*. Currently, wheeled motorized vehicle travel by the public is not prohibited off designated routes except by signed Forests Orders. The number of user created routes continues to grow each year, with many routes having environmental impacts and safety concerns that have not been addressed. Therefore, there is a need to manage the Forests' transportation system in a sustainable manner through designation

of NFS roads, motorized NFS trails, and areas for motor vehicle use, and the prohibition of motorized cross-country travel (except by permit or special order).

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to designate roads, trails, and areas open to motorized travel on lands administered by the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (Forests). Where it is appropriate and necessary, the designations will also specify seasons of use, type of vehicle(s) permitted, and types of use for those roads, trails, and areas. In doing so, the Forests will comply with requirements of the Forest Service 2005 Travel Management Rule (36 CFR part 212). As a result of these travel management decisions, the Forests will produce a Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) depicting those routes and areas on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests that are open to motorized travel.

In order to implement the proposed action, it will be necessary to amend some existing direction and terminology in the 1987 *Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan*, as amended. These changes to the Forests Plan direction would be enduring changes and would apply to this decision and all subsequent project decisions unless and until further modified.

The Forests' public transportation system open to motorized travel under this proposal would be approximately 2,961 miles. Currently used closed roads (roads identified as closed in the Forests' database) and user created roads not identified as open under this proposal would no longer be open to public motorized use. Specifically, this proposed public motorized transportation system would allow for a balance between various recreational and commercial uses of the Forests. It would provide for various forms of reasonable motorized use on a designated system of routes in a responsible manner that addresses multiple resource concerns.

The proposed public motorized transportation system is depicted in detail on five maps, one for each Ranger District, collectively referred to as the *Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Public Motorized Travel Management Plan Modified Proposed Action Map*, is located on the Forests' Web Site: <http://>

www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf/projects/travel-management.shtml. In addition, maps will be available for viewing at:

Supervisor's Office, 30 South Chiricahua St., Springerville, AZ.
Alpine Ranger District, Junction Hwy 180 & 191, Alpine, AZ.
Black Mesa Ranger District, 2748 E. Hwy 260, Overgaard, AZ.
Clifton Ranger District, 397240 AZ 75, Duncan, AZ.
Springerville Ranger District, 165 S. Mountain Ave., Springerville, AZ.
Lakeside Ranger District, 2022 W. White Mountain Blvd., Lakeside, AZ.

Other existing routes not shown on this map would not be open to public motorized travel. New routes would not be created except by written decision of an authorized Forest Service official. Unauthorized new routes would not be approved for public travel. If this proposal is selected for implementation, the information on this map would become the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) required by regulation and agency policy.

Under this proposal most of the proposed public motorized transportation system routes would occur on existing National Forest System (NFS) routes currently open to the public for motorized travel. This proposal also includes designation of some currently unauthorized user-created routes to connect existing NFS routes.

Approximately 1,956 miles of NFS roads would be designated for mixed-use as "roads open to all vehicles." NFS roads not considered for mixed-use would be designated as "roads open to highway legal vehicles only" (695 miles), or "routes open only to vehicles 50" or less in width" (310 miles).

This proposal would allow cross-country motorized big game retrieval (MBGR), up to 1 mile from a designated route, of legally harvested and properly tagged elk and mule deer during certain seasons, in certain Game Management Units, during certain times of the day. The intent of this segment of the proposal is to reduce spoilage and waste by providing reasonable access to downed animals that are difficult to move long distances without motorized assistance. This proposal would also allow Arizona Challenged Hunter Access/Mobility Permit (CHAMP) holders the ability for cross-country motorized game retrieval, up to 1 mile from a designated route, of legally harvested and properly tagged elk, mule deer, and black bear. Cross-country MBGR will be subject to other existing regulations intended to protect natural and/or heritage resources. This includes

compliance with regulations addressing use of vehicles off roads (36 CFR 261.15), National Forest Wilderness (36 CFR 261.18), and National Forest Primitive Areas (36 CFR 261.21), as well as other applicable laws and regulations. No MBGR will be allowed in Wilderness or Primitive areas.

Motorized cross-country retrieval of other game animals would not be allowed under this proposal because these animals are small enough to retrieve without motorized assistance. This proposal is consistent with 36 CFR 212.51(8)(b) and the recommendation from Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Roadside parking within vehicle length from the shoulder of designated routes is proposed, unless otherwise posted on-the-ground and provided it is safe to do so and without causing damage to NFS resources or facilities. This would allow the public to access many traditionally used dispersed campsites adjacent to NFS roads or within a short walking distance of those roads.

This proposal would allow dispersed motorized camping in designated dispersed campsites. Currently, the Forests have identified approximately 1,612 historically used dispersed campsites. The Forests recognize that not all historically used day-use or dispersed camp sites have been identified and will continue to collaborate with the public to identify more sites. Motor vehicles would be allowed to travel the currently established route to designated areas for day-use parking or dispersed camping. This would allow for reasonable recreational use of NFS lands while reducing the potential for resource damage. Designated dispersed campsites would not be displayed on the MVUM.

This proposal would allow dispersed motorized camping off designated routes, in certain areas, under certain conditions. Motorized dispersed camping would be allowed along designated corridor routes. Designated routes with designated corridor camping would be displayed on the proposed action maps and would be displayed on the MVUM. Motorized vehicles would be permitted to travel 300 feet or less from either side of the centerline of designated corridor routes, using the most direct route to and from the campsite and the adjacent designated route. Cross-country motorized travel within the designated corridors would not be allowed for purposes of searching for or locating a campsite or other general travel. Currently, the Forests have identified approximately 938 miles of designated corridors on the Black Mesa (702 miles), Lakeside (1 mile),

Springerville (78 miles), and Clifton (157 miles) Ranger Districts. The Alpine Ranger District proposes to meet the intent of the TMR and the needs of the recreating public by utilizing other strategies such as roadside parking and designated dispersed day-use and camp sites.

This proposal would allow cross-country motorized travel in eight designated Areas on the Black Mesa (6 areas) and Lakeside (2 areas) Ranger Districts that total approximately 5,989 acres. The intent is to provide expanded motorized travel opportunities in areas with multiple campsites, but without a defined transportation system. Designated cross-country travel Areas would be displayed on the MVUM and clearly marked on the ground.

Possible Alternatives

The initial proposed action presented to the public during November, 2007, may be included and analyzed in the EIS. In addition, the EIS will fully describe and evaluate the no action alternative and a full range of alternatives identified during scoping.

Responsible Official

The Responsible Official is the Forests Supervisor, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, P.O. Box 640, Springerville, AZ 85938.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

Based on the purpose and need for the proposed action, The Forests Supervisor will evaluate the proposed action and other alternatives in order to decide whether to adopt and implement the proposed action, an alternative to the proposed action, or take no action to make changes to the existing Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests transportation system. Once the decision is made, the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests will publish a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) identifying the roads, trails, and areas that are designed for motor vehicle use. The MVUM shall specify the classes of vehicles and, if appropriate, the times of year for which use is designated.

Federal land managers are directed (Executive Order 11644, 36 CFR 212, and 43 CFR 8342.1) to provide for public use of routes designated as open, to ensure that the use of motorized vehicles and off-road vehicles will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands under their authority, to promote the safety of users, and to minimize conflicts among various users of federal lands.

Public Involvement

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests hosted and participated in approximately 26 public meetings and workshops, relating to travel management and the Travel Analysis Process (TAP), during 2005 to 2007, across the Forests and local communities. Local citizens, State, county, local, and tribal governments and other Federal Agencies were invited to collaborate with the Forests on routes they wanted to remain open and/or closed or those routes that may be in conflict with other desired conditions. This preliminary, pre-NEPA public input was invaluable in helping the Forests develop the initial proposed action.

The Forests then hosted five public meetings to present to the public the initial proposed action; which was developed considering access to private lands within NFS lands boundaries, current and predicted future funding, and access to the Forests for public motorized and non-motorized recreation. After careful and deliberate consideration of public input received during those meetings, the Forests Supervisor decided to modify the initial proposed action.

Scoping Process

Public participation will be especially important at several points during the analysis. The Forests will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and other local agencies and other individuals or organizations that may be interested in or affected by the modified proposed action. The Forests will conduct open-house meetings to inform the public and interested parties on this modified proposal. Comments on this proposed action will be taken only in written format during the meetings. The meetings are scheduled at the following locations, dates and times:

Show Low, AZ—March 6, 2008

(Thursday), from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. and March 8, 2008 (Saturday), from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Show Low Public Library, 180 N. 9th Street.

Springerville, AZ—March 6, 2008

(Thursday), from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. and March 8, 2008 (Saturday), from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Forest Service Supervisor's Office Conference Room, 30 South Chiricahua Drive.

Clifton, AZ—March 6, 2008 (Thursday),

from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Clifton Community Center, Clifton Train Depot, 100 North Coronado Blvd. (U.S. Highway 191).

Safford, AZ—March 8, 2008 (Saturday),

from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Bottom Floor

Assembly Room, Graham County General Services Building, 921 Thatcher Blvd.

Heber, AZ—March 6, 2008 (Thursday), from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. and March 8, 2008 (Saturday), from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Mogollon High School gymnasium, 3450 Mustang Ave.

Alpine, AZ—March 6, 2008 (Thursday), from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. and March 8, 2008 (Saturday), from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Alpine Community Center, 42627 U.S. Highway 180.

Based on comments received as a result of this notice and after the Forests have conducted public open-house meetings and afforded the public sufficient time to respond to the modified proposed action, the Forests will use the public scoping comments and resource related input from the interdisciplinary team and other agency resource specialists to develop a set of significant issues to carry forward into the environmental analysis process.

The draft environmental impact statement (EIS) is expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and available for public review in January, 2009. EPA will publish a notice of availability of the draft EIS in the **Federal Register**. The comment period on the draft EIS will extend 45 days from the date the EPA notice appears in the **Federal Register**. At that time, the draft EIS will be posted on the Forests Web Site and copies will be distributed to interested and affected agencies, organizations, and members of the public for their review and comment. It is very important that those interested in the management of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests participate at that time. Those who provide comments during the official 45-day comment period are eligible to appeal the decision under 36 CFR part 215. Interest expressed or comments provided on this project prior to or after the close of the official comment period will not constitute standing for appeal purposes. Comments must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.6.

The final EIS is scheduled to be completed in April, 2009. In the final EIS, the Forests are required to respond to substantive comments received during the draft EIS comment period that pertain to the environmental consequences discussed in the draft EIS and applicable laws, regulations, and policies considered in making the decision.

Preliminary Issues

The Forests have received some indications of potential issues from the initial public involvement process. Those potential issues include:

(1) Resource damage caused by inappropriate types of vehicle use, (e.g. motorized vehicles in fragile or steep terrain); proliferation of routes (e.g. parallel trails or roads, continued traffic on closed roads and travel off designated routes); and continued use during seasonal restrictions (e.g. routes closed to protect resources during wet or muddy seasons).

(2) Disturbing or harming wildlife by using routes in important or critical wildlife habitat areas, too many roads in wildlife habitat areas, and disturbances to wildlife during critical lifecycle periods.

(3) Concerns about recreational opportunities, including loss of access to NFS lands for recreational opportunities if cross-country and existing routes are closed to motorized travel; loss of primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities if more routes or areas are opened to motorized travel; and how to appropriately and reasonably accommodate the rapidly growing number of motorized users desiring to use federal lands for recreational riding of OHVs.

(4) Concerns on how the system might be designed to facilitate effective enforcement.

(5) Safety concerns on routes where multiple vehicle types (e.g. full-sized trucks and cars, ATVs, motorcycles) are allowed at the same time.

(6) Impacts to multiple use management of the Forests if routes are reduced.

(7) Economic impacts to local and surrounding communities.

The Forests recognize that this list of issues is not complete and will be further defined and refined as scoping continues. The Forests intend to develop a comprehensive list of significant issues before the full range of alternatives is developed and the environmental analysis is begun.

Comment Requested

This revised notice of intent continues the scoping process which guides the development of the environmental impact statement for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Public Wheeled Motorized Travel Management Plan.

Early Notice of Importance of Public Participation in Subsequent Environmental Review: A draft environmental impact statement will be prepared for comment. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the draft EIS comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forests at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forests in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the draft environmental impact statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

(Authority: 40 CFR 1501.7 and 1508.22; Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 21)

Dated: February 20, 2008.

Deryl D. Jevons,

Acting Forests Supervisor, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

[FR Doc. 08-882 Filed 2-28-08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE CULTURE AND ARTS DEVELOPMENT

Request for Nominations to the Board of Trustees

AGENCY: Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development (aka Institute of American Indian Arts).

ACTION: Notice—Request for nominations.

SUMMARY: The Board directs the Administration of the Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development, including soliciting, accepting, and disposing of gifts, bequests, and other properties for the benefit of the Institute. The Institute, established under Public Law 99-498 (20 U.S.C. 4411 *et seq.*), provides scholarly study of and instruction in Indian art and culture, and establishes programs which culminate in the awarding of degrees in the various fields of Indian art and culture.

The Board consists of thirteen members appointed by the President of the United States, by and with the consent of the U.S. Senate, who are American Indians or persons knowledgeable in the field of Indian art and culture. This notice requests nominations to fill seven expiring terms and one vacancy on the Board of Trustees.

ADDRESSES: Institute of American Indian Arts, 83 Avan Nu Po Road, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87508.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Robert Martin, President, 505-424-2302.

Dated: February 21, 2008.

Robert Martin,

President.

[FR Doc. E8-3897 Filed 2-28-08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4312-W4-P

COMMITTEE FOR PURCHASE FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR SEVERELY DISABLED

Procurement List Addition

AGENCY: Committee for Purchase from People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled.

ACTION: Addition to the Procurement List.

SUMMARY: This action adds to the Procurement List a service to be furnished by nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

DATES: *Effective Date:* March 30, 2008.

ADDRESSES: Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, Jefferson Plaza 2, Suite 10800, 1421 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, Virginia 22202-3259.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kimberly M. Zeich, Telephone: (703) 603-7740, Fax: (703) 603-0655, or e-mail CMTEFedReg@jwod.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On January 4, 2008, the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled published notice (73 FR 841) of proposed additions to the Procurement List.

After consideration of the material presented to it concerning capability of qualified nonprofit agencies to provide the service and impact of the addition on the current or most recent contractors, the Committee has determined that the service listed below is suitable for procurement by the Federal Government under 41 U.S.C. 46-48c and 41 CFR 51-2.4.

Regulatory Flexibility Act Certification

I certify that the following action will not have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities. The major factors considered for this certification were:

1. The action will not result in any additional reporting, recordkeeping or other compliance requirements for small entities other than the small organizations that will furnish the service to the Government.

2. The action will result in authorizing small entities to furnish the service to the Government.

3. There are no known regulatory alternatives which would accomplish the objectives of the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act (41 U.S.C. 46-48c) in connection with the service proposed for addition to the Procurement List.

End of Certification

Accordingly, the following service is added to the Procurement List:

Service

Service Type/Location: Document Destruction, Internal Revenue Service, 412 N. Cedar Bluff Rd, Knoxville, TN.

Service Type/Location: Document Destruction, Internal Revenue Service, 710 Locust St, Knoxville, TN.

NPA: Goodwill Industries—Knoxville, Inc., Knoxville, TN.

Contracting Activity: Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, Chamblee, GA.

This action does not affect current contracts awarded prior to the effective

APPENDIX B

Media Releases and Public Service Announcement

Apache and Sitgreaves National Forests

Newsroom

NEWS RELEASES: 2008

2007 | 2006 | 2005

USDA Forest Service

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

DATE: March 31, 2008

CONTACT: Robert Dyson 928-333-4301

The Travel Management Rule — Fact and Fiction

Submitted by **Deryl Jevons, Acting Forest Supervisor, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests**

The Travel Management Rule (TMR) has prompted much discussion in our White Mountain and Mogollon Rim communities. It is perceived by some as the answer to the tremendous increase of off-highway vehicle use on national forests or by others as a threat to the freedom to travel anywhere on public lands. I am compelled to address the misinformation that is circulating throughout communities about the TMR and in particular about our motorized transportation planning effort. Looking at what is fact and what is fiction is necessary to ensure that our continued dialogue with local communities is constructive, mutually respectful, based on facts, and aimed at designing a motorized transportation system that meets the needs of the public and minimizes impacts to our natural resources.

What is the Travel Management Rule and why is it needed?

More Americans than ever are using off-highway vehicles to enjoy the outdoors. No where is this more apparent than in our own state of Arizona. A recent article in the *Arizona Republic* reported that OHV ownership has skyrocketed in the copper state. Visit any of Arizona's national forests or other public lands and you'll see scarred hillsides and meadows and rut-marked roads. Another grave concern is the number of illegal roads or "rogue" trails that are created when people traveling on their OHV blaze a new trail that soon invites others to follow. Road and trail damage requires repair work which is becoming more and more difficult to fund as these incidents increase. Off-highway vehicles are a legitimate use of national forest lands, but it is a use that we need to manage carefully. That is what the TMR is all about, providing access that can be used and enjoyed into the future.

The TMR, which is national rule that covers all 155 national forests in the United States, set in motion changes to motorized access of national forests and grasslands. This means that motor vehicle users will be required to travel on roads, trails and in areas designated as suitable for motorized use. The travel management rule requires each national forest and grassland to designate those roads, trails and areas open to motorized vehicle use and it prohibits motorized cross-country use without a written authorization.

How are we going to designate a motorized road and trail system?

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, along with all the other national forests and grasslands in the country, are undertaking an analysis of their motorized transportation system. That transportation system ranges from paved roads designed for passenger cars to ATV trails. In addition to this managed system of roads and trails, the Apache-Sitgreaves has many user-created roads and trails. The result of the motorized transportation plan will be the creation of a Motor Vehicle Use Map, which will identify all the roads, trails and areas on the forests that are open to motor vehicle use. Designations may also be made by size of vehicle and, if appropriate, by time of year. For example, a road could be designated for ATV use only.

Thus far we have conducted many public meetings, discussed the TMR at every opportunity with individuals and groups, and mailed out thousands of e-mails and letters to people who have asked us to remain in contact with them. We plan to work with local governments. We've received thousands of comments that span the whole spectrum of possible motorized travel options. We are now identifying the issues that have been raised associated with our proposed transportation system. With your help and input, we will formulate potential alternatives to our modified proposed action during the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. Those alternatives then will receive an intensive analysis from an environmental, social, and economic perspective. The Forest Service will develop a Draft EIS to analyze the impacts and affects of the various alternatives related to designating a transportation system. The selected alternative is scheduled to be implemented in late 2009.

What is the "modified proposed action" that I hear about?

The Forest Service first proposed a motorized transportation system last October but we modified that proposal in February, 2008.

We took this unusual step because we had not reviewed all of the public comments we received during the first public review and comment period.

Here is a quick comparison of the existing road and motorized trail system and the modified proposed action:

	Existing	Proposed
Miles of roads open to public motorized use	2,779	2,651
Miles of trails open to public motorized use	155	310
Miles of Level 1 roads closed to motorized use	3,376	3,409

The Level 1 roads referenced above are those logging roads built over the years to remove timber and which were closed after the timber sale. They were closed for a variety of reasons including protection of wildlife habitat, reduction of wildlife harassment, soil erosion, and for watershed concerns caused by high road density. They were never intended to be opened for public motorized use. This proposal also closes some roads that are causing soil erosion or are in close proximity to another open road. We know we need to improve our capability to maintain and enforce road closures under any alternative considered.

Fuelwood: When cross-country motorized travel is necessary to gather fuelwood, it must be authorized by a fuelwood permit.

Motorized Dispersed Camping: Because motorized camping requires a road to access an undeveloped campsite, we need to identify where people usually camp and designate those campsites. It is not our intent to designate **where** people can camp but to designate where people **do** camp using motor vehicles. We have identified over 1,600 campsites thus far plus 938 miles of open roads where motorized campers could camp within 300 feet on either side of that open road.

Motorized Big game retrieval: The modified proposed action also proposes to allow big game retrieval for elk and mule deer up to one mile off of a designated open road with a valid hunting license and tag. Because we are concerned with possible spoilage of meat and minimizing hunter disruption by motor vehicles, the proposal also restricts motorized retrieval from one hour before sunrise and 10:00 am. Motorized retrieval of elk would be allowed up until midnight of the last day of the last scheduled hunt in October. Motorized retrieval of mule deer would be allowed from the July hunts through midnight on Sunday of the second week of October. These dates and times were agreed upon by the Forest Service and the Arizona Game and Fish Department. CHAMP permit holders would enjoy even more access.

Facts versus Myths

We are hearing some amazing "facts" being disseminated by e-mail and hard copy mailings from local sources about the Travel Management Rule so I think it's appropriate now to separate facts from fiction.

Myth: "Each comment will count as 1000 votes." **Fact:** The Forest Service will develop a Draft Environmental Impact Statement to analyze the impacts and affects of the proposed action and various alternatives created to address issues related to designating a transportation system. This process is guided by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public participation and involvement is an important part of developing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), but it is incorrect to view or refer to public involvement as a voting process. Each comment is reviewed to ensure we are considering all public comments relevant to designing a forest transportation system. Alternatives are developed to address issues and concerns expressed by the people, agencies and organizations participating in the transportation planning process.

Myth: "The intent of the Forest Service is to close the forest to public access." **Fact:** The American people truly enjoy their national forests—the great outdoors. The Forest Service is responsible for managing forest resources so that future generations can continue to enjoy their public lands. The intent of the Travel Management Rule is to provide access to national forest lands through a sustainable system of designated routes and areas for motor vehicle use. If you care about which trails or roads should be open or closed to motor vehicle we hope you'll join us in developing a transportation system that provides access and recreational opportunities and protects our natural resources for our grandchildren and beyond.

Myth: "The Forest Service is in the process of closing 80-90% of all existing roads and trails throughout the forest." **Fact:** Currently 45% of the Forests' inventoried roads are open to motorized travel. The modified proposal calls for keeping 44% of all inventoried roads open for public motorized use. In addition, there would be an increase in ATV trails from the existing 155 miles to 310 miles. Alternatives still to be developed in the Environmental Impact Statement may change the percentage of open and closed roads but that will be fully disclosed during the public review and comment period.

Myth: "You will not be allowed without special permits to go off-road in a vehicle to collect cut firewood." **Fact:** A permit will be required to gather fuelwood just as it is required presently. When cross-country motorized travel is necessary, it must be authorized by the fuelwood permit.

Myth: "You will have to obtain special permits to retrieve a downed animal by motorized vehicle." **Fact:** This proposal requires a person to have a valid hunting license and tag in order to use a motor vehicle to retrieve a downed elk or mule deer within one mile of an open road. No other permit would be needed. There are restrictions that include season, time of day, and game management area with the intent to allow motorized retrieval to reduce meat spoilage while not disrupting the experience for other hunters.

Myth: "They will close all but the main roads in and out of the Forest." **Fact:** The modified proposed action has a mix of primitive to higher standard roads and trails.

Myth: "You will not be able to camp off of these main roads." **Fact:** We have identified over 1,600 dispersed campsites in our present proposal where motorized camping has occurred and would continue to occur. In addition this proposal has identified 938 miles of corridors adjacent to proposed open roads where motorized camping would be allowed with 300 feet on either side of the open road. Non-motorized recreation including camping, hiking, biking, and equestrian use are not part of the TMR. Snowmobile use and emergency vehicle use are not part of the TMR.

Myth: "The economic impact of the TMR will be devastating to local communities." **Fact:** The impact of all alternatives will be analyzed by competent professionals in their field of expertise. This includes a thorough economic, social, and environmental analysis. It is premature to judge the proposal or any alternatives until all facts are considered.

Myth: "We will lose our freedom in the forests." **Fact:** The public will still be able to access national forests but the freedom to travel cross-country on a motor vehicle will be greatly curtailed. Motorized travel on national forest and grasslands is changing. Adoption of the Travel Management Rule set in motion these changes. This means that motor vehicle users will be required to travel on roads, trails and in areas designated as suitable for motorized use. As the Apache-Sitgreaves develops a transportation system we invite and encourage the public to participate in the process. Along with the ownership of truly invaluable public lands comes the responsibility to care for that land.

Myth: "They (the Forest Service) are trying to keep us out of the forest. What will be open will have a fee for camping, boating, game retrieval, and day-use areas." **Fact:** There is no plan to charge for public use of the forests for day-use activities nor a plan to assess a fee for big game retrieval, boating, fishing, hunting, hiking, picnicking, equestrian use, or motorized use. Fees will continue to be charged for the use of certain developed facilities such as campgrounds and picnic areas.

There may be confusion between the TMR and the Recreation Facility Analysis that was recently completed on all national forests including the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. That analysis did suggest that the users of some recreation facilities such as trailheads and boat launching sites should be assessed a user fee to pay for the maintenance or replacement of those facilities. There are no funds available presently to do so.

I invite dialogue about our proposal and I invite your continued interest in helping us to formulate transportation system alternatives that best meet the needs of the public and the forest. You can call any of our Ranger District offices or the Forest Supervisor's Office in Springerville to discuss any questions or concerns you might have. You can also visit our Forests' website at www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf for more details about the Travel management Rule and our modified proposed action.

-- END --

Apache and Sitgreaves National Forests

Newsroom

NEWS RELEASES: 2008

2007 | 2006 | 2005

USDA Forest Service

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

DATE: February 15, 2008

CONTACT: Robert Dyson 928-333-4301

Forest Service Revises Road Proposal

Springerville, AZ — The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests have released a modified proposal for motorized use on the Forests which is now available for public comment. The proposal is one of several possible alternatives that will be developed and analyzed over the next six months.

"The modified proposal includes more motorized roads and trails available for public travel than did the earlier proposal," said Deryl Jevons, Acting Forest Supervisor. "We have worked hard to consider all of the comments received and design a motorized transportation system that tries to balance the needs of non-motorized recreation and motorized recreation." The Forest Service is requesting written comments about the modified proposal by March 14, 2008, so that issues can be further identified and a range of alternatives can be developed that address those issues.

The modified proposal calls for keeping 2,651 miles of roads open for public use in comparison to the 2,779 miles currently open across the Forests. The 128 mile decrease resulted from closing about 438 miles of existing Forest Service roads that are currently open; opening about 371 miles of roads that are currently closed; designating about 42 miles of existing trails and user-created roads to the Forest Service road inventory; converting about 93 miles of currently closed and open roads to to ATV routes for vehicles less than 50 inches wide; and establng about 55 miles of new ATV routes.

"The proposal tries to establish a system of motorized travel opportunities where those users of ATVs or high-clearance vehicles will be rewarded with some outstanding rides while discouraging cross-country use," said Jevons. The Travel Management Rule is scheduled to be implemented in the fall of 2009 and will close the Forests to cross-country motorized use. "Off-highway vehicles are a legitimate use in the right place, and that includes many places on national forest land. We just have to make sure that use is done in a responsible manner," he added.

Dispersed camping with vehicles would be allowed adjacent to open roads in areas designated; there are almost 1,700 existing individual campsites that would be designated available for camping. In addition, this proposal calls for the designation of 938 miles of recreation corridors that would be open for camping within 300 feet on either side of a designated open road. Cross-country motorized travel would be allowed in eight designated areas that total about 6,000 acres located on the Black Mesa and Lakeside Ranger Districts.

Cross-country motorized big game retrieval for elk and mule deer would be allowed up to one mile off of an open road with some seasonal and time of day restrictions. Fuelwood gathering would continue using the current Forest Service permit system with some minor modifications to ensure the gathering is done in accord with the Travel Management Rule.

Maps of the modified proposal and documents describing the proposal can be seen at the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests web site at: www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf/projects/travel-management. The public is also invited to view the proposal and provide written comments at the closest scheduled open house:

Show Low, AZ	March 6, 2008 (Thursday), from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. and March 8, 2008 (Saturday), from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Show Low Public Library, 180 N. 9th Street.
Springerville, AZ	March 6, 2008 (Thursday), from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. and March 8, 2008 (Saturday), from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Forest Service Supervisor's Office

Conference Room, 30 South Chiricahua Drive.

Clifton, AZ **March 6, 2008 (Thursday), from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.,
Clifton Community Center, Clifton Train Depot,
100 North Coronado Blvd (U.S. Highway 191).**

Safford, AZ **March 8, 2008 (Saturday), from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.,
Bottom Floor Assembly Room, Graham County
General Services Building, 921 Thatcher Blvd.**

Heber, AZ **March 6, 2008 (Thursday), from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. and
March 8, 2008 (Saturday), from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.,
Mogollon High School gymnasium, 3450 Mustang Ave.**

Alpine, AZ **March 6, 2008 (Thursday), from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. and
March 8, 2008 (Saturday), from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.,
Alpine Community Center, 42627 U.S. Highway180.**

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Apache and Sitgreaves National Forests

Newsroom

NEWS RELEASES: 2008

2007 | 2006 | 2005

USDA Forest Service

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

DATE: January 8, 2008

CONTACT: Robert Dyson 928-333-4301

Forest Service Revises Road Proposal

Springerville, AZ — The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests have extended the comment deadline for their initial proposed action on the Travel Management Rule past January 11, 2008, because they have revised the proposal in response to public comments offered during the last series of public meetings held last November.

"We recently conducted five public meetings to introduce our initial proposed action for designating a public motorized transportation system that would take effect during the fall of 2009," said Jim Copeland, Team Leader for this process. "Based on the input we received from these meetings, it was apparent that a significant number of comments received during the public collaborative process inadvertently did not receive consideration. As a result, the Forest Supervisor determined that we would revise our proposed action. We hope to complete work on the revised proposed action in late January, 2008, and make it available to the public soon after that," he said.

The public will have 30 days in which to offer comments on the revised plan after a corrected Notice of Intent is published in the Federal Register, tentatively scheduled for sometime in early February, 2008. People who have already commented need not re-submit the same comments.

"This revised proposed action will be just one of several alternatives that will be developed and analyzed in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 2008," Copeland said. "Comments received about this revised plan will be used to generate issues around which alternative motorized transportation systems will be designed and then analyzed in the EIS work. We encourage anybody wanting to comment on this plan to be road-specific. In other words, provide us with recommendations by road number which routes you would like to see open or closed and why so that we can consider your recommendation thoroughly," he said.

The Forest Service is adapting its travel management policies nationally to enhance opportunities for public enjoyment of the national forests, including both motorized and nonmotorized recreation experiences. Recreation is a significant use of national forests but the Forest Service recognizes unmanaged recreation, including OHVs, as a potential threat to the condition of the national forests. The agency believes that a managed system of roads, trails and areas designated for motor vehicle use will better protect natural and cultural resources, address use conflicts, and secure sustainable opportunities for public enjoyment of national forests and grasslands.

"We recognize that some people feel that any proposal that we develop will infringe upon their freedom to use motor vehicles in the forests," said Copeland, "but we need to address the management of increased motorized use in our forests in order to protect other resources such as soils, watersheds, and fisheries. This is our attempt to do so."

More information about the Travel Management Rule is available at the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests' website. This webpage will be changed as new information such as the revised proposed action becomes available.

-- END --

Travel Management - Help Develop a Socially, Economically, and Environmentally Sustainable Motorized Public Transportation System on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests , October 20, 2007

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Public Motorized Travel Management Plan was published in the Federal Register on October 10, 2007, Vol. 72, No. 195, pages 57514-57517.

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNFs) proposes to designate which routes (roads and trails) and areas on National Forest System (NFS) lands within the ASNFs are open to public motorized travel. In doing so, the ASNFs will comply with the requirements of the Forest Service 2005 Travel Management Rule. The ASNFs will produce a Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) that displays those routes and areas on the ASNFs that are open to public motorized travel. The MVUM will be the primary tool used to determine compliance and enforcement with motor vehicle use designations on the ground. Existing routes, user-created routes and areas not designated as open on the MVUM will be legally closed to motorized travel except as allowed by permit or other authorization. Cross-country motorized travel will be prohibited except by special permit. The decisions on motorized travel do not include over-snow travel or existing winter-use recreation. This proposed action represents a synthesis of public comments and Forest Service specialist recommendations gathered during the travel analysis process.

Public participation will be especially important at several points during the analysis. The ASNFs will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from federal, state, and other local agencies and other individuals or organizations that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. The ASNFs will conduct meetings to solicit comments from the public and interested parties on this proposal. The meetings are scheduled from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the following locations:

Lakeside, AZ--November 6, 2007 (Tuesday), Blue Ridge Junior High School Cafeteria, 1200 West White Mountain Blvd.

Eagar, AZ--November 7, 2007 (Wednesday), Eagar Town Hall, 22 West 2nd St.

Clifton, AZ--November 8, 2007 (Thursday), Clifton Community Center, Clifton Train Depot, 100 North Coronado Blvd (U.S. Highway 191).

Overgaard, AZ--November 13, 2007, (Tuesday), Rim Country Senior Center 2171 B Street.

Alpine, AZ--November 14, 2007, (Wednesday), Alpine Community Center, 42661 U.S. Highway 180.

The meetings will be conducted as open house from 5 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. and then a formal comment period from 6:30 p.m. until 8 p.m.

Comments concerning the scope of the analysis must be received by January 11, 2008. All comments received including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal, and will be available for public inspection. The comments will be used in the preparation of the draft EIS.

Further opportunity to comment on the proposal will occur with publication of the draft EIS. The draft EIS is scheduled for availability in September 2008 and the final EIS is expected to be available in December 2008.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: James Copeland, TMR Team Leader, at (928) 333-4301 or (928) 339-4384.

Apache and Sitgreaves National Forests

Newsroom

NEWS RELEASES: 2007

2007 | 2006 | 2005

USDA Forest Service

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

DATE: October 17, 2007

CONTACT: Robert Dyson 928-333-4301

Forest Services Proposes a Motorized Route System on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

Springerville, AZ... A year and a half after starting the Travel Management Planning process and receiving over 7,000 comments, the Forest Service is starting an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Travel Management Plan. The recently-developed proposed action will designate roads, trails, and areas open to motorized travel on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. The proposal would change the existing situation by closing many of currently used "closed" roads (roads identified as closed in the Forests' data base) but the net result over the entire transportation system on the Forests is only a reduction of 56 miles.

"We've worked hard to try to come up with a transportation system that is socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable," said Jim Copeland, Project Leader. "We've looked at the roads and trails using these criteria and suggestions from the public and have tried to meet all of the various access needs," he said. "Even so, we would like the public to comment on this proposal because we may have missed something in analyzing the thousands of miles of roads on the Apache-Sitgreaves."

The rules for game retrieval, fuelwood gathering, and dispersed camping opportunities are proposed to change to make these activities more compatible with natural and heritage resources. This proposed action would also allow cross-country motorized travel in seven designated areas.

Where it is appropriate and necessary, the designations will also specify seasons of use, type of vehicle(s) permitted, and types of use for those roads, trails, and areas. Cross-country motorized travel will be prohibited except by special permit. The decisions on public motorized travel will not include over-snow travel or existing winter-use recreation.

Public participation has been an integral part of the development of this proposal so the Forest Service will again be seeking information and comments from individuals and organizations as well as federal, state, and local agencies that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. The Forest Service will conduct meetings to display the proposed transportation system and solicit comments from the public and interested parties on this proposal. The meetings are scheduled from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the following locations:

- Lakeside, AZ-November 6, 2007 (Tuesday), Blue Ridge Junior High School Cafeteria, 1200 West White Mountain Blvd.
- Eagar, AZ-November 7, 2007 (Wednesday), Eagar Town Hall, 22 West 2nd St.
- Clifton, AZ-November 8, 2007 (Thursday), Clifton Community Center, Clifton Train Depot, 100 North Coronado Blvd (U.S. Highway 191).
- Overgaard, AZ-November 13, 2007, (Tuesday), Rim Country Senior Center 2171 B Street.
- Alpine, AZ-November 14, 2007, (Wednesday), Alpine Community Center, 42661 U.S. Highway 180.

The meetings will be conducted as an open house from 5 p.m. until 6:30 p.m. where the public may view the proposed travel maps and offer comments to agency officials in more of a quiet, one-to-one setting. At 6:30 p.m. a presentation of the proposal will be made after which comments and questions from the public will be addressed. The proposed action maps can also be seen at local Forest Service offices

Further opportunity to comment on the proposal will occur with publication of the draft EIS. The draft EIS is scheduled for availability in September 2008 and the final EIS is expected to be available in December 2008.

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Supervisor invites the public to submit comments and suggestions on the proposal before January 11, 2008. For more information contact James Copeland at the Alpine Ranger District (928-339-4384).

More information on the proposal is available at the forests' web page: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf/projects/travel-management.shtml>

-- END --



NEWS RELEASE

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

*P.O. Box 640
Springerville, AZ 85938
928-333-4301
TTY 928-333-6292*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: MARCH 13, 2007**

**CONTACT: Robert Dyson or
Chris Bielecki 928-333- 4301**

Travel Management Planning Update on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

Springerville, AZ... There has been much public discussion about the Travel Management Rule and how it should be implemented on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. These discussions have indicated that there is a considerable diversity of public opinion about which travel routes should be designated for motorized use. There is also a substantial amount of confusion and misunderstanding about what this travel management process is all about and what the Forest Service is trying to accomplish.

The Travel Management Rule or regulation was issued by the Forest Service in 2005 after much public and national dialogue. The Rule directed that each National Forest address the problem of deteriorating forest conditions caused by motorized use, especially the burgeoning use of Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs). The Rule implements two Executive Orders issued in 1972 and 1977 concerning motorized travel off of roads and trails on public lands and national forests and requires that motorized use must occur only on designated roads, trails, and areas especially designated for such use. This means that cross-country motorized use will be prohibited when the Rule is fully implemented in 2009. The roads, trails, and areas to be designated will follow a public planning process that incorporates community concerns, multiple resource management, and sustainability.

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests have provided a series of travel maps that indicate what the current management is for forest roads. These maps are useful in determining where existing roads are located and if they are intended to remain open or closed under current direction. During this process of travel planning, the Forest Service is seeking comments about how the current direction should be changed and why. Specifically, the public is asked to identify those routes where management needs to change and why, such as a need for soil or wildlife habitat protection or to increase or maintain recreation opportunities.

Since dispersed camping is a significant recreation opportunity throughout the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, it needs to be considered when planning a motorized travel system. Many people camp in trailers, RV's, and truck campers, and roads link these campers to their desired campsites. To ensure access to these campsites, roads need to be identified in this process by the public. It is important to contribute that information to the local Ranger District.

The Forest Service is currently compiling comments and suggestions for change in the existing road system that was presented in public meetings and other venues and will present those findings at a series of public meetings this spring. Later this year, possibly in late summer, an initial travel system proposal will be presented at another series of public meetings. The proposal will attempt to reflect the comments received thus far, and will be used as a basis for further discussion for suggested improvements in order to make a comprehensive proposal.

The Forest Service must strike an appropriate balance in managing all types of recreational activities. The Rule also requires the agency to preserve areas of opportunity for non-motorized travel and experience. When the travel planning process is complete and motorized use is confined to designated areas, roads, and trails, areas of non-motorized use will be better defined. The American public will then be able to choose their preferred recreation experience on these National Forests.

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Apache and Sitgreaves National Forests

Newsroom - 2007

Interview with the Leader of the Travel Management Planning Process on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests: Mr. Chris Bielecki

Date: February 20, 2007

Information Office: 928-333-4301

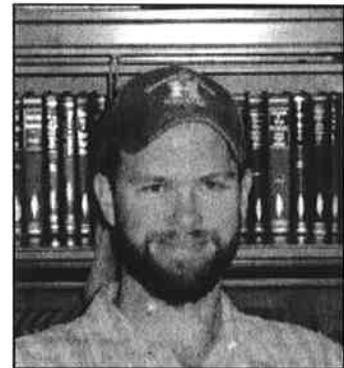
Springerville, AZ.....

Q. What is your position in the Forest Service?

A. I am the Transportation Engineer for the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

Q. Why is the Forest Service closing roads?

A. Our process is actually about designating and identifying where motorized use will be legally accepted. The change in management reflects a major effort to reduce unmanaged motorized recreation that negatively impacts national forests and grasslands.



Q. Has the Forest Service made a proposal or made a decision on what roads will be closed or kept open?

A. No--we haven't designated a system or even proposed a designated system. We will do so only after analyzing the information and suggestions made to us through this planning process. I know that there are a lot of rumors that we've made some kind of decision or that we already have developed a travel proposal but that's simply untrue. We have our travel maps available to the public that reflect what our current management strategy is for all roads in our inventory. "User-created" roads have not been identified by us on these maps but can be identified by the public if someone thinks that they are of value in accessing the forest. It's been an eye-opener for some people to see how the system roads are supposed to be managed. The travel management rule process is a good opportunity for the public and the Forest Service to identify needs and highlight problems and issues before we officially designate a public motorized system.

Q. What will be designated?

A. Roads, trails, and areas will be designated by vehicle class and, if appropriate, by time of year. This meets the new requirements in the Code of Federal Regulations that reflect the Travel Management Rule. (The CFRs covering Travel Management on national forests are available here: http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_06/36cfr212_06.html)

Q. Many people think this rule was created to solve problems on national forests in the eastern US. Is this true?

A. The reality is that our eastern national forests already strictly manage motor vehicles. They allow very little OHV use when compared with the expansive western forests. The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests are prime examples of terrain and vegetation that can easily be traveled by today's off-road machines. This type of country is the focus of the travel management rule. With the growth of the population in Arizona and the increase in OHV use, our current forest management is not sustainable. Now that ATVs and other equipment are consistently using our old logging roads, we really need to better address what we are managing for the public use. Our

long-time practice of closing and storing roads for future management is no longer working. Keep in mind the regulation that requires us to designate a motorized system is nationwide, but what we actually designate will involve local planning and participation.

Q. There have been public meetings and workshops where information is provided about the travel planning process. Some meetings are sponsored by local groups and some by the Forest Service. It's confusing.

A. There is definitely confusion--we have actually received complaints about other peoples' meetings! We try to clearly state when the Forest Service is sponsoring a meeting. At our initial FS meetings, I offered to attend meetings planned by other agencies, organizations, and groups with the purpose of sharing the basics of our travel management process. We have received a few offers, and we also try to at least be represented in the meetings sponsored by other entities. We've been putting a lot of effort into clearing up rumors and false information that is being spread around. The bottom line is that we are trying to get as much useful dialogue with the public as we can so that we come up with a travel system that is reasonable, sustainable, and best meets the needs of the variety of forest users.

Q. Have you received much public input in this process?

A. Although there has been substantial community involvement we have received very few site specific comments recommending change to the current management. We have received some general comments such as "We want OHVs banned!" or "We want all existing roads open." We need to know why. It is much more useful when participants list areas and particular roads by number and explain what it is about the current management that you want to change.

Q. People like to camp in undeveloped areas throughout the Forests. Is there a danger that these campsites will be closed?

A. Anyone who uses motor vehicles when camping needs to be involved in the process. Our intent is to identify those sites and the roads that access them and keep them open if there is no other compelling reason to close the campsite or the access road. As an example, if the road is deteriorating to the extent that it is actively contributing sediment into a stream, then our job is to fix the erosion problem and either keep the road open or close the road to motorized use. In the end, budget limitations may dictate our course of management.

Q. What about hunting and firewood cutting?

A. Written authorizations are exempt under the Travel Management Rule. Therefore, our current fuelwood permit program will continue. Hunting is another big issue. I have worked in a few other national forests across the country and realize that motor vehicles are used extensively here by hunters—much more so than elsewhere. Because this is such a big issue we are working closely with the public and with the Arizona Game & Fish Department to better understand where motorized big game retrieval and hunting access is needed.

Q. Where can I get more information?

A. If you can access the internet, visit our website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnl/projects/travel-management.shtml>

Contact Chris at:
Chris Bielecki, Transportation Engineer
Phone: 928-333-6271;
Email: csbielecki@fs.fed.us;
Fax: 928-333-5966

Apache and Sitgreaves National Forests

Newsroom - 2007

Travel Management Planning Update on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

Date: February 20, 2007

Information Office: 928-333-4301

Springerville, AZ...There has been much public discussion about the Travel Management Rule and how it should be implemented on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. These discussions have indicated that there is a considerable diversity of public opinion about which travel routes should be designated for motorized use. There is also a substantial amount of confusion and misunderstanding about what this travel management process is all about and what the Forest Service is trying to accomplish.

The Travel Management Rule or regulation was issued by the Forest Service in 2005 after much public and national dialogue. The Rule directed that each National Forest address the problem of deteriorating forest conditions caused by motorized use, especially the burgeoning use of Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs). The Rule implements two Executive Orders issued in 1972 and 1977 concerning motorized travel off of roads and trails on public lands and national forests and requires that motorized use must occur only on designated roads, trails, and areas especially designated for such use. This means that cross-country motorized use will be prohibited when the Rule is fully implemented in 2009. The roads, trails, and areas to be designated will follow a public planning process that incorporates community concerns, multiple resource management, and sustainability.

The Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests have provided a series of travel maps that indicate what the current management is for forest roads. These maps are useful in determining where existing roads are located and if they are intended to remain open or closed under current direction. During this process of travel planning, the Forest Service is seeking comments about how the current direction should be changed and why. Specifically, the public is asked to identify those routes where management needs to change and why, such as a need for soil or wildlife habitat protection or to increase or maintain recreation opportunities.

Since dispersed camping is a significant recreation opportunity throughout the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests, it needs to be considered when planning a motorized travel system. Many people camp in trailers, RV's, and truck campers, and roads link these campers to their desired campsites. To ensure access to these campsites, roads need to be identified in this process by the public. It is important to contribute that information to the local Ranger District.

The Forest Service is currently compiling comments and suggestions for change in the existing road system that was presented in public meetings and other venues and will present those findings at a series of public meetings this spring. Later this year, possibly in late summer, an initial travel system proposal will be presented at another series of public meetings. The proposal will attempt to reflect the comments received thus far, and will be used as a basis for further discussion for suggested improvements in order to make a comprehensive proposal.

The Forest Service must strike an appropriate balance in managing all types of recreational activities. The Rule also requires the agency to preserve areas of opportunity for non-motorized travel and experience. When the travel planning process is complete and motorized use is confined to designated areas, roads, and trails, areas of non-motorized use will be better defined. The American public will then be able to choose their preferred recreation experience on these National Forests.



NEWS RELEASE

Apache–Sitgreaves National Forests

*P.O. Box 640
Springerville, AZ 85938
928-333-4301
TTY 928-333-6292*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: SEPTEMBER 27, 2006**

**CONTACT: Robert Dyson or
Chris Bielecki 928-333- 4301**

Inside Look: Road Maintenance on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

Road management operations are in full swing on your local National Forests. As the monsoons have ended, Forest Service road crews and contract equipment operators are working in many different areas. Here are some of the activities taking place:

- Road improvements for the White Mountain Stewardship Project:
Focused around communities, this fuels reduction project involves removing forest material in logging trucks and semi-trailers called “chip vans”. Chip vans are less maneuverable than traditional logging trucks, and therefore many forest roads are being improved to accommodate the new equipment. Typical work includes curve-widening and straightening, spot-surfacing, vegetation removal, and culvert installation. Recent and upcoming work areas include Alpine Ranger District (Alpine, Nutrioso), Springerville Ranger District (Greer), Lakeside Ranger District (Los Burros), and Black Mesa Ranger District (along Forest Road 34).
- Standard annual maintenance:
This work includes surface conditioning with a motor-grader and drainage cleaning & repair with a backhoe. This work is common on major arterial roads of the forest—those routes that are signed with horizontal route signs. These signs are significant because the routes they designate fall under the Highway Safety Act (1966) and can only be driven by highway legal vehicles operated by licensed drivers.
- High-clearance road maintenance:
The Apache-Sitgreaves NFs received supplemental funding in late summer 2006 to maintain primitive, high clearance roads. High clearance routes in all five Ranger Districts are being maintained. These routes, marked by vertical route signs, do not receive regular maintenance and are therefore recommended only for high clearance vehicles. The maintenance is performed for drainage and resource protection measures.

This work includes surface reconditioning with bulldozers and motor graders, grade-dip installation, spot-surfacing, vegetation removal, and drainage repair.

In addition, adjoining closed roads are having closure devices enhanced—such as berms, boulders, gates, and signing. **NO NEW CLOSURES WILL BE INSTALLED PRIOR TO THE COMPLETION OF THE FOREST TRAVEL MANAGEMENT RULE PROCESS. ONLY EXISTING CLOSURES ARE BEING MAINTAINED.**

- Mobile crushing operations:

The Forests added a mobile-crushing unit to their fleet in early 2006. This machine mounts on the front of a loader and can “eat” rocks up to 18 inches in size, crushing them into surface-sized material. When conditions are good, the mobile crushing operation can generate surface material at a fraction of the cost of traditional mining and hauling methods. The mobile crushing operation typically includes the crusher and loader, motor grader, and sometimes a bulldozer or backhoe to help gather rocks. It has been used most recently on Forest Road 81.

Since there is a mix of large machines and recreational traffic on Forest roads right now Chris Bielecki, Transportation Engineer for the Apache-Sitgreaves, has offered some safety tips for motorists using the Forests:

- Travel at safe speeds for the road and weather conditions.
- Watch out for other vehicles including heavy equipment. Pass with caution.
- Be aware of your surroundings and pay attention to warning and temporary hazard signs.
- Keep your distance from working equipment, and make eye contact with the operator prior to passing. Try to avoid making the maintenance equipment unnecessarily move to accommodate your vehicle—remember these operators are maintaining road for you.
- Share the road. Yield to larger vehicles and equipment. On steep & narrow grades, give large vehicles and uphill traffic the right-of-way.
- Obey road closures—typically marked by berms, boulders, signs, and/or gates. These routes are closed to all motorized use, including ATVs. Non-motorized use is allowed and encouraged on these routes. Please don't bypass closures—it only takes a few bad decisions to create resource damage. Help set a good example for future visitors.
- Help prevent resource damage by not driving in muddy & wet conditions. Ruts can leave lasting impressions on the land and can lead to further damage.
- Remember—responsible forest users help maintain public access for everyone!

For road-related questions and comments, please contact:

Chris Bielecki

Transportation Engineer

Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

928-333-4301

csbielecki@fs.fed.us

News Release: Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

June 23, 2006

Contact: Bob Dyson 928-333-4301

Travel Management Planning Begins on the Forests

Springerville, AZ...If you have ever wanted to access a portion of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests but found that the road system was closed or if you think that there are too many roads on this national forest then the Forest Service needs to hear from you.

All across the United States each national forest is reviewing its roads and trail system to determine if it meets the needs of the public. The process being used is called Travel Management Planning and the Forest Service recently issued a national Travel Management Rule that guides the process. When fully implemented by September, 2009, each national forest will have designated roads, trails, and areas that are open to motor vehicle travel. These routes will be designated after citizens have had an opportunity to voice their views on access issues including the type of motorized travel appropriate to the road or trail.

The first phase in the process is to gather the wants and travel needs of the many users of the forest so the Forest Service is inviting all interested citizens to a series of public meetings where citizens can share their access needs or issues and learn about the process being used and the timeline for implementation. The schedule of public meetings is:

- June 27, 2006, at Blue Ridge Junior High School Cafeteria, Lakeside, AZ
- June 28, 2006, at the Alpine Community Center, Alpine, AZ
- July 5, 2006, at Black Mesa Ranger District office, Overgaard, AZ
- July 6, 2006, at Eagar Town Hall Conference Room, Eagar, AZ
- July 13, 2006, at the Greer Community Center, Greer, AZ
- July 17, 2006, at the Greenlee County Courthouse Conference Room, Clifton, AZ
- July 18, 2006, at the Graham County General Services Building Conference Room, Safford, AZ

Each meeting will begin at 6:30 pm and end by 9:30pm. The July 17 and July 18 meetings will also incorporate a presentation of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Plan Revision process.

End



NEWS RELEASE

Apache–Sitgreaves National Forests

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: OCTOBER 26, 2007**

CONTACT: Robert Dyson 928-333- 6263

(Radio Message)

Springerville, AZ....The Forest Service has developed a transportation system proposal affecting motorized access to the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. If you drive anywhere on the national forest you might be affected by this proposal so the Forest Service asks that you become aware of the roads and trails being proposed to remain open for public use and offer your comments by January 13, 2008. Access for camping, firewood gathering, and game retrieval are also a part of this proposal.

You can see the proposals at Forest Service offices, on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests web page, or by attending any of the public meetings near you. The meeting locations and dates are:

- Lakeside – November 6, 2007 at Blue Ridge Junior High School Cafeteria
- Eagar – November 7, 2007 at the Eagar Town Hall
- Clifton – November 8, 2007 at the Clifton Community Center at the Train Depot
- Overgaard – November 13, 2007 at the Rim Country Senior Center
- Alpine – November 14, 2007 at the Alpine Community Center.

#

NEWS RELEASE



USDA FOREST SERVICE
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
P.O. Box 640
Springerville, AZ 85938
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For Immediate Release
July 11, 2008

Contacts: Bob Dyson 928-333-6263
Julia Faith Rivera 928-333-6336

UPDATE ON FOREST SERVICE MOTORIZED TRAVEL PLANNING

Springerville, AZ... Motorized travel management planning continues on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. The Forests have contracted with a private firm to assist in the analysis processes necessary to implement the Travel Management Rule (TMR). Using information and data supplied by the Forest Service, the contractor will manage the process and organize, assemble and compile the required documents. Having a contractor perform these time-intensive tasks enables Forest Service specialists to provide their professional expertise to this effort, while also continuing work on other important Forests' priorities, such as forest thinning projects that reduce the risks of wildfire to local communities, and forest plan revision.

The contractor, Ecosphere Environmental Services, is based in the Southwest and has worked extensively in the area. All TMR decisions remain the responsibility of the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. The contractor is currently analyzing the public comments to identify the issues and concerns raised in the comments. A summary of the issues and concerns should be completed by late July, and will be posted on the Forests website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/asnf/projects/travel-management.shtml>

The issues and concerns contained in the public comments will be used to develop additional motorized travel management proposals. These additional proposals, also referred to as alternatives, will span a broad range of public motorized transportation system options. "We've received a tremendous amount of input from individuals, organized groups, elected officials, the business community, and local, state and federal agencies," said Robert Taylor, the Recreation and Engineering Staff Officer on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. "Our intent is to better manage motorized use so the Forests can continue providing these opportunities. We are not attempting to shut down motorized recreation, or motorized access and travel opportunities across the Forests. Americans expect many different types of benefits and experiences from their National Forests. TMR planning ensures a wide range of benefits and experiences for forest users by balancing the opportunities for motorized access and recreation with the opportunities for non-motorized recreation while caring for the Forests," added Taylor.

(MORE)

All of the proposals will be analyzed, and the analysis will be disclosed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, or DEIS. The DEIS helps the Forest Service analyze and disclose the environmental, social and economic impacts of the proposals, and offers an opportunity for public review and comments. The deciding official, the Forest Supervisor, considers the impacts of the proposals and public comments when selecting which proposed alternative the Forests will adopt. The DEIS is expected to be available for public review and comments in June 2009.

“We appreciate the willingness of those who seek to work with us in a truly collaborative effort to develop a responsible and sustainable public motorized transportation system. We’ve worked with folks who have a strong interest in motorized use, and also with folks who have a strong interest in non-motorized use. Our efforts together will ensure that future generations can enjoy many types of recreation opportunities on their National Forests,” added Taylor.

The contractor will prepare the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The FEIS is expected to be completed in November 2009. The Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) is expected to be published in the Spring of 2010.

END

APPENDIX C

Forest Service Comment Form

PR

PUBLIC COMMENT FORM

Public Motorized Travel Management Project Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

If you have no specific comments on the proposed action at this time, but desire to be kept informed, please complete this form and mail it. Send comments via email to:
asnf_travel_management@fs.fed.us (please print)

Name:	Date:
Address:	
Phone # / Email Address:	

The list of preliminary issues is included below to help us further refine the concerns associated with the Proposed Action so that we can develop suitable alternatives to it.

1) Preliminary Issue: Dispersed Camping – Are there enough designated dispersed camping sites identified on the Proposed Action? If not, please suggest in detail where other sites should be identified. (attach map if needed).

Road #/ Area _____
 District _____ Why? _____

2) Preliminary Issue: Big Game Retrieval – Is the proposed policy satisfactory?

3) Preliminary Issue: Adequate Forest Access – Is the proposed transportation system adequate for your planned activities? If not, please comment specifically why the proposal is not adequate.

Road # /Area _____
 District _____ Why? _____

4) Preliminary Issue: ATV Trails – Is the proposed ATV trail (width less than 50 inches) system adequate? If not, please explain specifically why not and what changes you would propose.

Road # /Area _____
 District _____ Why? _____

5) Other Issues:

(If need more room please use back of sheet or attach blank sheet of paper)

Thank you for your comments.