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Date: March 11, 2009

Dear Friends and Neighbors of the Coronado National Forest:

SCOPING NOTICE: PROPOSED CHANGES TO DESIGNATED ROADS, TRAILS, AND AREAS OPEN TO MOTORIZED TRAVEL ON THE SANTA CATALINA RANGER DISTRICT

I am writing today to let you know that the Forest is proposing the following changes to the current system of designated roads, trails, and areas on National Forest System (NFS) lands on the Santa Catalina Ranger District that are open for motorized travel. Details are provided later in this notice.

- Designate 5.75 miles of new Forest System roads (FSRs).
- Re-route 0.95 miles of FSR 4431.
- Decommission 1.27 miles of FSRs.
- Prohibit motorized travel up to 300 feet off the following roads for the purpose of dispersed camping: Happy Valley Road (FSR 35) and connecting roads (FSRs 4307, 4406 and 4409; proposed FSRs 35-1 through 35-19, 4307.0.14R-1); and roads accessed by the Mt. Lemmon Highway (FSRs 1, 5, 7, 9, 9A through 9H, 10, 11, 11A, 12, 14, 19, 21, 607, 615, 750, 807, 4477). The Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan; 1986, as amended) will be amended to reflect this proposed change. Incidental parking up to one-vehicle width off the road will continue to be allowed on these roads when it is safe to do so and not otherwise restricted.
- Designate spur roads by which the public may access dispersed camping at locations off Happy Valley Road. These roads will be depicted on the MVUM, which will be available to the public on the Forest website and at the District office.
- Amend the Forest Plan to clarify that on the Santa Catalina District, ***hiking*** trails are closed to motorized travel.

This action is needed for the Forest to comply with the requirements of recently issued Forest Service regulations regarding management of motor-vehicle use on national forests and grasslands. Management of motorized travel on roads that are not under Forest Service jurisdiction but are legally accessible to the public from NFS lands is not part of this proposed action.



With this Scoping Notice, I am providing you with a description of the proposed action and inviting your comments on the scope of the upcoming National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental analysis of the proposal. Your response to this notice will play a vital role in our NEPA review. Information on how and when to comment is provided below.

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT RULE

In January 2009, the Forest Service published final regulations governing motor-vehicle use on national forests and grasslands, including the use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) [*Travel Management; Designated, Routes and Areas for Motor-vehicle Use* (36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295)]. The regulations also address the use of vehicles to access campsites and retrieve big game.

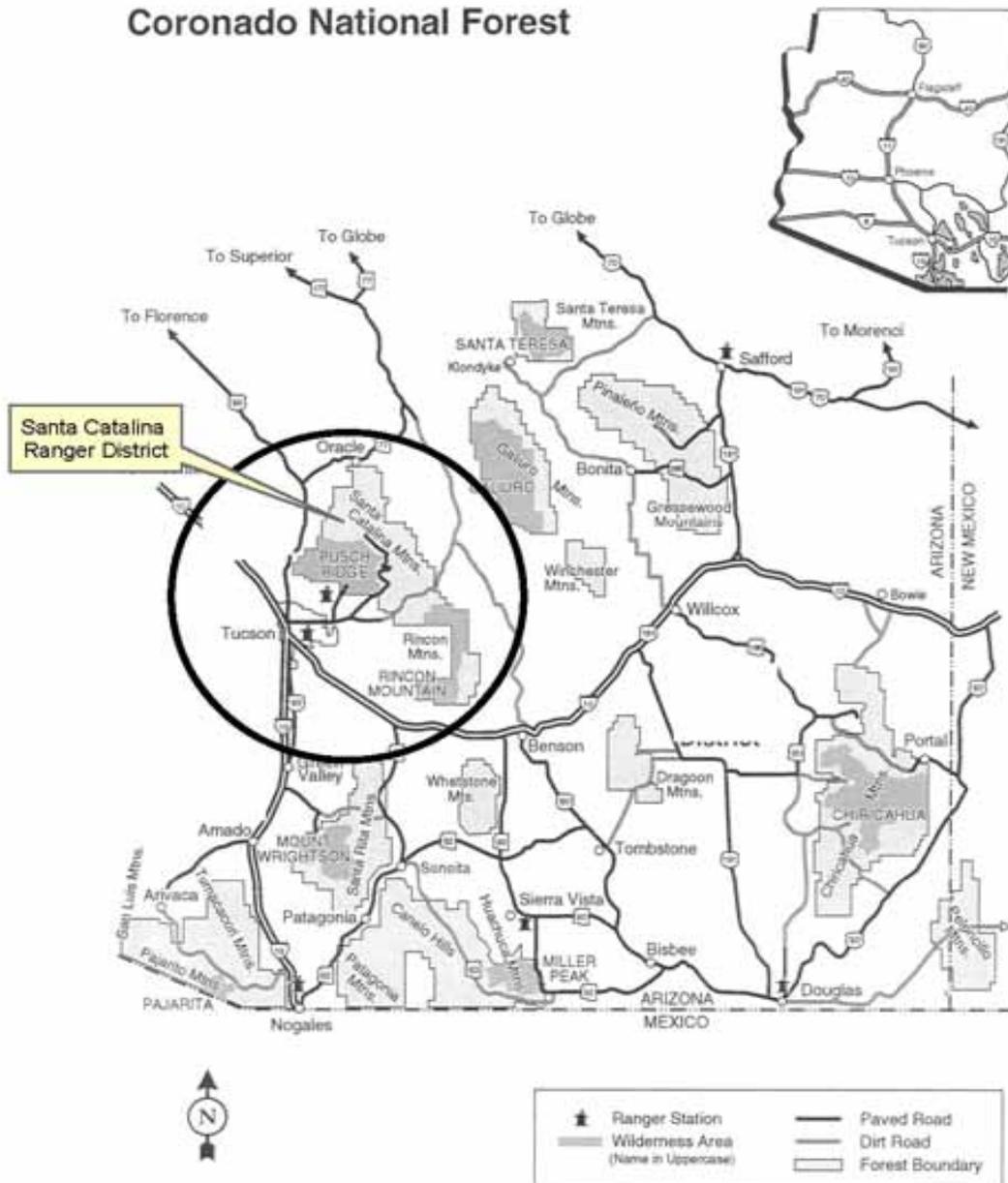
Generally known as the Travel Management Rule (the Rule), the regulations require every national forest and grassland to (1) designate roads, trails, and areas that are open to motor vehicle use by vehicle class and by time of year if appropriate, and (2) document this information on an MVUM, which will be reviewed annually and updated, as needed. The Rule prohibits the use of motor vehicles off the designated system, as well as use of motor vehicles on roads, trails and areas that are not consistent with the designations.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The proposed action will apply to motor-vehicle use across the Santa Catalina Ranger District (Figure 1), which comprises approximately 259,674 acres in the Santa Catalina and Rincon Mountains, excluding private land or land managed by other agencies within the District boundary. Although roads, trails and areas on such lands will not be affected by the proposed action, their uses were considered during the planning of this proposed action. Private landowners and other agencies have been and will continue to be consulted throughout the travel management process.

There are currently 263 miles of open FSRs, 20.8 miles of closed FSRs, and 32 miles of non-system roads and trails on the District, according to an inventory completed by the Forest in January 2009. Many non-FS roads/trails are the direct result of illegal off-road travel. Others were created with Forest Service permission, for activities allowed under special-use authorizations, maintenance and/or construction of range improvements on grazing allotments, access to active mining claims, and similar purposes. Some of these roads were not closed when

Figure 1. Location of Santa Catalina Ranger District on the Coronado National Forest.



the authorized project or activity ended, and they are presently used by the public for unauthorized motorized and non-motorized travel.

The District has developed almost 5 miles of motorized trail specifically for enhancing OHV recreation opportunities in Redington Pass near FSR 371.

Travel Designations: The standards and guidelines of the 1986 Forest Plan assign the following three designations to motorized travel [pp. 27-28, 7(a-c)]. Designation of “areas” for motorized use, as defined in the Rule, is not addressed in the Forest Plan.

“a”= Closed to all motorized travel.

“b”= Restricted. Generally closed to all cross-country motorized travel. Roads and trails are open to travel except when posted closed.

“c”= Restricted. Generally closed to all cross-country motorized travel. Roads are open to travel except when posted closed. All trails are closed to motorized travel.”

The Pusch Ridge Wilderness, the Rincon Mountain Wilderness, the Santa Catalina Research Natural Area (RNA), and the Butterfly Peak RNA (approximately 96,520 acres total) are designated as “a”, “Closed” to all motorized travel. The remainder of the District (approximately 163,150 acres) is designated as “c”, “Restricted”. All trails are closed to motorized travel.

Road Density: The Forest Plan limits the density of existing and new road construction to one mile of road or less per square mile (p. 34, d). The District road density is presently 0.79 miles per square mile.

Off-Road Travel: Cross-country motorized vehicle use beyond existing roads on the District is prohibited, except for travel within a 300-ft corridor for motorized dispersed camping [pp. 27-28, 7 (c)].

Motorized Dispersed Camping: Vehicles may travel off roads up to a distance of 300 feet for parking or camping [pp. 27-28, 7 (c)].

PROPOSED ACTION

The Forest proposes to comply with the Rule by making the following changes to the system of designated roads, trails, and areas on National Forest System (NFS) lands on the Santa Catalina Ranger District that are open for motorized travel:

- Designate 5.75 miles of the new Forest System roads (FSRs) as listed in the following table. Maps showing the location of these roads are available for your review on the Forest’s public website at www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado and at the District Office.

New FSR Designation	Length (Miles)
35-1	0.11
35-2	0.44
35-3	0.08
35-4	0.06
35-5	0.06
35-6	0.11
35-7	0.01
35-8	0.03
35-9	0.06
35-10	0.01
35-11	0.03
35-12	0.10
35-13	0.04
35-14	0.10
35-15	0.04
35-16	0.09
35-17	0.10
35-18	0.09
35-19	0.04
38-9.46R-1	0.17
38-16.46R-1	0.53
38-16.61R-1	0.07
38-16.61R-2	0.19
38-18.10R-1	0.19
371-16.10R-1	0.08
736-11.03R-1	0.52
807-0.26L-1	0.15
4307-0.14R-1	0.06
4426-3.50L-1	0.16
4429-1.75L-1	0.40
4431-0.32R-1	0.77
4435-0.51L-1	0.76
4483-0.02R-1	0.10
<i>Total</i>	<i>5.75</i>

- Re-route 0.95 miles of FSR 4431.

- Decommission 1.27 miles of FSRs, as follows:

Closed FSR Designation	Road Name	Length (Miles)
625	Soldiers Camp Annex	0.23
4491	Burney Mine	0.27
4451	Lombar	0.77
Total		1.27

- Prohibit motorized travel up to 300 feet off the following roads for the purpose of dispersed camping: Happy Valley Road (FSR 35) and connecting roads (FSRs 4307, 4406 and 4409; proposed FSRs 35-1 through 35-19, 4307.0.14R-1); and roads accessed by the Mt. Lemmon Highway (FSRs 1, 5, 7, 9, 9A through 9H, 10, 11, 11A, 12, 14, 19, 21, 607, 615, 750, 807, 4477). The Coronado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan; 1986, as amended) will be amended to reflect this proposed change. Incidental parking up to one-vehicle width off the road will continue to be allowed on these roads when it is safe to do so and not otherwise restricted.
- Designate spur roads by which the public may access dispersed camping at locations off Happy Valley Road. These roads will be depicted on the MVUM, which will be available to the public on the Forest website and at the District office.
- Amend the Forest Plan to clarify that on the Santa Catalina District, ***hiking*** trails are closed to motorized travel.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Since 2006, the Coronado’s travel management planning has included many opportunities for public involvement. Four open-house meetings (one each in Tucson, Safford, Sierra Vista and Douglas) afforded the public an opportunity to view maps of the existing direction and to provide input on individual routes regarding unique recreation opportunities, specific vehicle class opportunities, access to significant locations, dispersed camping opportunities, and environmental and/or safety concerns related to specific roads.

In a letter dated May 18, 2007 thirteen Native American tribes were advised of the travel management planning process and offered an opportunity to comment. One response was received from the Ak-Chin Indian Community.

The Forest is also in the process of revising its Forest Plan and has held many public meetings. Travel management was a topic discussed at Plan Revision meetings and input relative to travel management was considered in the development of the proposed action.

Distribution of this Scoping Notice is the initial step of public involvement in this NEPA review. The NEPA review of the proposed travel management action has been listed on a Schedule of Proposed Actions on the Forest’s public website, which will be updated on April 1, 2009. Public comments on the proposed action will be considered by Forest resource specialists to develop

alternatives and to analyze effects. Other opportunities for public involvement in the NEPA process will be offered in future meetings and document reviews.

OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT

The Forest Service values public input as part of its NEPA process. You are encouraged to submit comments regarding the proposed action and the scope of the NEPA analysis of this project, including those related to alternatives and issues to be addressed¹. To receive full consideration and to best assist the Forest Service in defining the NEPA review, your comments should be submitted within 30 days from your receipt of this notice, or before April 15, 2009.

Written comments may be sent by U.S. mail to Ms. Laura White, Travel Management Program Manager, Coronado National Forest, 300 West Congress Street, Tucson, AZ 85701; by facsimile to "ATTN: Travel Management NEPA" at (520) 388-8305; and by electronic mail (email) to comments-southwestern-coronado@fs.fed.us with "Travel Management NEPA" in the subject line.

To provide telephone or in-person comments and for further information on the project, please contact me at the address and phone number in the letterhead, or contact Ms. White at (520) 388-8419. Questions on the NEPA process may be directed to Ms. Andrea W. Campbell, Forest NEPA Coordinator, at (520) 388-8352.

Please note that, in addition to this Scoping Notice, the Forest will host an open-house meeting on March 26, 2009, from 5 p.m. through 7:30 p.m., at the Udall Regional Center, 7200 E. Tanque Verde Road, in Tucson. Comment forms will be available at this meeting. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Thank you for your interest and participation in the activities of the Coronado National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Stan Helin
STAN HELIN
SANTA CATALINA DISTRICT RANGER

¹ Comments and personally identifying information associated with them, such as names and addresses, become part of the administrative record of this NEPA review. As such, they may be made available to a third-party upon request under the authority of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). If you do not wish for your personal information to be released in response to a FOIA request, you may choose not to include it with your comments. Alternatively, you may request an exemption from FOIA with your comment submittal. Should you choose the latter, you would be informed by the Forest Service as to whether or not your request qualifies for an exemption. If it does not, you will be offered an opportunity to resubmit your comments without personal information or to withhold them.