

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service Santa Fe National Forest



For Immediate Release:

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FOREST RELEASES DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

(SANTA FE, NM)— Santa Fe National Forest officials today released their Travel Management Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) that offers several alternatives for a travel system which will significantly reduce the places where people can drive motorized vehicles on the forest. The DEIS is available on the forest website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/sfe/travelmgmt/index.html>.

“We have heard a lot from the public about travel management and are assured that many care about their national forest,” noted Erin Connelly, Deputy Forest Supervisor. “Now we are looking for their comments on a range of alternatives developed in response to their concerns.”

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) considers alternatives to protect watersheds, wildlife habitat, cultural resources and communities by prohibiting cross-country motorized vehicle use outside of designated roads, trails, and areas; and reducing the miles of roads open to motorized travel.

Alternatives were developed in response to public comments on the forest’s initial Proposed Action released in July, 2008.

Significant issues raised by the public included resource impacts from continued public motorized use; reducing public motorized experience through reduced miles of routes; limits on big game retrieval and potential conflicts between motorized and non-motorized uses. Each alternative includes different road, trail and area configurations aimed to address these issues. The five alternatives are summarized below:

- Alternative 1 is the no action alternative. It represents the existing condition, which is forest staff’s best estimate of where people are driving now.
- Alternative 2 is the original proposed action. It differs slightly from the one mailed to the public in July 2008. It corrects the locations of roads and motorized trails based on the public’s comments and field verification. It also added the ability to retrieve big game with a vehicle in the same fixed-distance corridors proposed for motorized dispersed camping.
- Alternative 3 would provide fewer roads and motorized trails than the proposed action. It allows no driving off roads and motorized trails for any reason. This means, to camp, retrieve game, or participate in any other forest activity, people would have to park next to the side of the road and proceed without their vehicles.
- Alternative 4 would provide more roads, motorized trails, and areas designated for motorized use than the proposed action, but still less than the amount people drive on now. It would allow the most places for people to drive to retrieve game or set up a campsite.
- Alternative 5 would provide about the same amount of roads, motorized trails, and areas, designated for motorized use, as the proposed action but arranges motorized use geographically. This means that alternative 5 attempts to cluster motorized use in certain places on the forest, leaving other places with less motorized use. It incorporates concerns about use conflicts.

Alternatives 2 through 5 nearly eliminate areas, which are places where people are allowed to drive off roads and trails for any purpose. With motorized trails, alternatives 2 through 5 generally increase the miles officially managed for motorized use, but decrease the mileage from what people use as motorized trails now. Alternatives 2 through 5 all increase the miles of motorized system trail – those trails officially managed by the Forest Service for motorized use.

-more-

-add one-

Only alternative 4 proposes to designate more miles of motorized system trail than are being used now. The rest of the action alternatives decrease the amount of mileage people use as motorized trails now.

A summary table of each alternative and the effects are each can be found by clicking [here](#).

Connelly noted that the final travel management system will include designated roads and trails for Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use. “Motorized recreation use by OHVs is a legitimate and appropriate way for people to enjoy their National Forests-- in the right places with proper management and enforcement. Like other forms of recreation, it must be managed to ensure lasting protection of the lands people want to enjoy.”

The comment period begins the day after the notice of availability appears in the Federal Register and lasts for 45 days. The notice of availability should be published in the Federal Register by the end of the month. The forest will also host eight meetings to give the public an opportunity to review the alternatives, ask questions about the alternatives and process, and learn how to comment.

Connelly added, “We are providing another opportunity for people who have an interest in recreating and traveling in the national forest to learn more about travel management.” The public meeting schedule is as follows:

Community	Date	Time	Location
Abiquiu	Thursday, 8/5	6-8:30 p.m.	Rural Events Center, State Road 554, Abiquiu, NM
Los Alamos	Tuesday, 8/10	6-8:30 p.m.	White Rock Town Hall, 139 Longview, White Rock, NM
Pecos	Wednesday, 8/11	6-8:30 p.m.	Pecos High School Cafeteria, State Road 63, Pecos NM
Rio Rancho	Thursday, 8/12	6-8:30 p.m.	Grace Outreach Ctr., 2900 Southern BLVD, Rio Rancho, NM
Santa Fe	Saturday, 8/14	9:30 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.	Supervisor’s Office, 11 Forest Lane, Santa Fe NM
Jemez	Monday, 8/16	6-8:30 p.m.	Valles Caldera Conference Room, State Road 4, Jemez Springs NM
Las Vegas	Tuesday, 8/17	6-8:30 p.m.	NMHU Sala de Madrid, University Ave., Las Vegas NM
Cuba	Wednesday, 8/18	6-8:30 p.m.	Cuba Senior Center, 16A Cordova St., Cuba NM

Written comments must be mailed to: SFNF Travel Comments, 11 Forest Lane, Santa Fe, NM 85708. They may be faxed to (505) 438-5391 or emailed to sftravelmgt@fs.fed.us. Comments may be hand delivered to 11 Forest Lane between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. To make oral comments, call Julie Bain at (505) 438-5443 to arrange an appointment.

Comments must be submitted to the address, email, or fax number listed below to be considered and tracked in the project record. To be eligible to appeal the final decision, email or mail comments on or before the due date published in the Federal Register notice. Comments should clearly articulate your concerns with the alternatives. Comments are most helpful when they are focused on specific roads, trails, and areas.

Based on the analysis and public input, a final EIS will be prepared and the Forest Supervisor will make a Decision on the final routes which will be published in the Federal Register as a Record of Decision. The Forest plans to have the Record of Decision completed this winter.

The Santa Fe National Forest will also publish a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) to coincide with the Final Decision. The MVUM is a legal document that will show trails and roads designated for motor vehicle use. The forest will launch a public information and education effort to help visitors understand the new travel system and how to use the map. “We will also enlist people’s ideas and help in protecting national forest system lands,” added Connelly.

