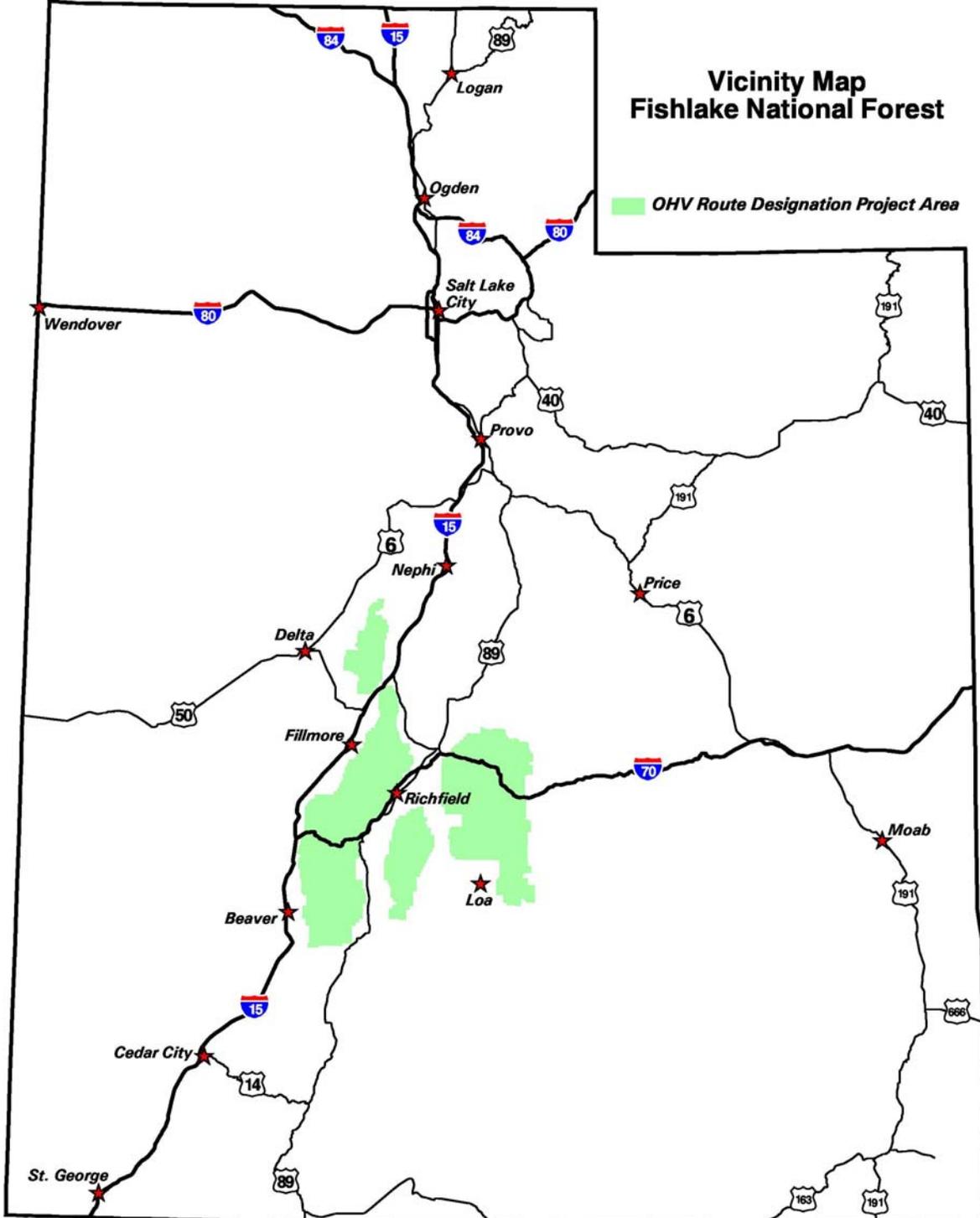


Chapter 1. Purpose of and Need for Action

Location of the Analysis Area

The Fishlake National Forest administers over 1.4 million acres of public land in Utah. The analysis area for the Fishlake OHV Route Designation Project is displayed below.

Figure 1-1. OHV Route Designation Project Area.



Existing Condition

There has been rapid growth in off-highway vehicle (OHV) use that was not anticipated when the 1986 Fishlake Forest Plan was written. Combined use on the Paiute and Great Western Trail systems has increased 205 percent since 1995 (Reid 2005). OHV registrations in Utah increased 212 percent from 1998 to 2004 (Hayes 2005). New retail sales of OHVs increased 163 percent between 1995 and 2001 (Motorcycle Industry Council 2002). Most of these vehicles are used on public lands (Fisher et. al. 2001, Motorcycle Industry Council 2001). The existing travel plan allows seasonal or yearlong motorized cross-country travel on over 62 percent of the forest. This is not desirable or sustainable, especially given the existing numbers of users and expected growth. This is also inconsistent with the travel regulations that were finalized on November 2, 2005.

The existing travel plan relies on “open unless signed or mapped closed” enforcement scheme, which is complicated to interpret and difficult to administer. In addition, the lack of consistent travel policies between the Fishlake National Forest and other nearby forests and land management agencies is confusing for the public and inhibits cooperative law enforcement and successful prosecution of offenders.

All of the factors described above have contributed to the current situation where some motorized travel is occurring in areas and on routes where motorized use is prohibited. In some open areas, networks of user-developed routes continue to appear that are creating use conflicts and resource impacts. Problems do not occur equally throughout the analysis area. Some of this use has occurred in riparian areas and on highly erodible slopes. In other areas, use is very light and little or no effects from wheeled motorized cross-country travel are evident. Types of impacts include the introduction and spread of invasive plants, displacement and compaction of soils, impacts to rare plants, rutting of wetlands, disturbance of wildlife and livestock, damage to cultural resources, and impacts to water quality, riparian and fisheries habitats. The majority of motorized impacts are occurring during hunting season and spring antler shed gathering, in play areas next to communities, and around popular dispersed camping areas.

Desired Condition

The Fishlake National Forest goal is to manage the use of OHVs in partnership with other federal and State land management agencies, local governments and communities and interest groups to protect public lands and resources while providing opportunities for the safe use and enjoyment of OHVs on designated roads, trails, and open use areas that comply with the Forest Plan.

To meet Forest Plan desired conditions, the Forest Service, cooperating agencies, and the public need greater certainty about which roads and trails are part of the managed system of motorized and non-motorized routes. Greater certainty is needed to

- ★ improve public understanding and adherence to travel rules, thus reducing the development of user-created routes,
- ★ reduce motorized conflicts with natural and cultural resources (Forest Plan pages IV-3 to IV-6),
- ★ coordinate public access across different land management agencies,
- ★ improve motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities on the Fishlake National Forest in cooperation with our partners (Forest Plan page IV-3),

- ★ prioritize and budget for road and trail maintenance, including the need to identify and remedy public safety hazards (Forest Plan page IV-5).

The desired condition is to provide a range of motorized recreation opportunities, recognizing their legitimate use while minimizing the current or anticipated effects on wildlife and their habitat, soil, native vegetation, water, fish and other users (Forest Plan pages IV-2 to IV-6). There will be designated routes, both roads and trails that permit motorized use. Unauthorized routes will not increase because adequate recreational activity is available in a well-planned system of trails and roads and because illegal routes are promptly obliterated if created. In some locations, there will be open use areas, such as in Flat Canyon and the Sawdust Pits west of Richfield or the Velvet Ridges east of Loa. Any cross-country travel authorized for administrative use, contracts and permits would weigh the need to meet multiple-use purposes with having minimum resource impacts as outlined in the Forest Plan.

Purpose of and Need for Action

In order to comply with travel management regulations (36 CFR parts 212, 251, and 261, which also incorporate Executive Orders 11644 and 11989) and Forest Plan direction, the Forest Supervisor has determined that there is a need to improve management and enforcement of the motorized travel policy on the forest. Specifically the purpose of and need for the proposed action is to

1. address the immediate need to better manage motorized cross-country travel,
2. create an implementable user friendly motorized travel plan that is simple to understand and is as consistent (seamless) as possible with adjacent public lands,
3. create a travel plan that is inherently easy to enforce to the fullest practical extent,
4. better accommodate current motorized use while addressing concerns related to future growth,
5. reduce the potential for motorized conflicts and impacts to other resource uses and values, and
6. increase user certainty about which roads and trails are part of the managed system of motorized and non-motorized routes.

The purpose of and need for action was developed over the course of 11 months as the forest conducted a pre-NEPA (NFMA) assessment. NFMA analyses included review of public comments from the OHV Event EA; consideration of reports from the OHV, roadless, and dispersed camping Topical Working Groups from the forest plan revision process; and development of a supplemental forest-scale Roads Analysis and a mixed-use safety analysis.

Discussion

The Forest Service recognizes in Federal Codes of Regulations, forest plans, policy, and manual direction that motorized use, including use by OHVs, is a valid recreational activity when properly managed. Managing this use along with other recreation uses and the need to protect natural and cultural resources has become increasingly difficult with increased public demands. Members of the public and other public resource management agencies, and even OHV users, have shared their concerns about unrestricted motorized travel on public lands. In general, there is strong support for limiting travel to designated routes and areas only (OHV project file). The sources of public disagreement generally center on specific routes and area designations and on which particular travel management strategies should be adopted.

The project area comprises almost 1.6 million acres of which over 1.4 million acres are part of the National Forest System lands managed by the Fishlake National Forest - the remainder is private and State land inholdings. Over 909,000 acres of the 1.4 million acres are currently designated as open to motorized, wheeled cross-country travel, either seasonally or yearlong based on the existing travel plan map, see Table 1-1 and Figure 1-2.

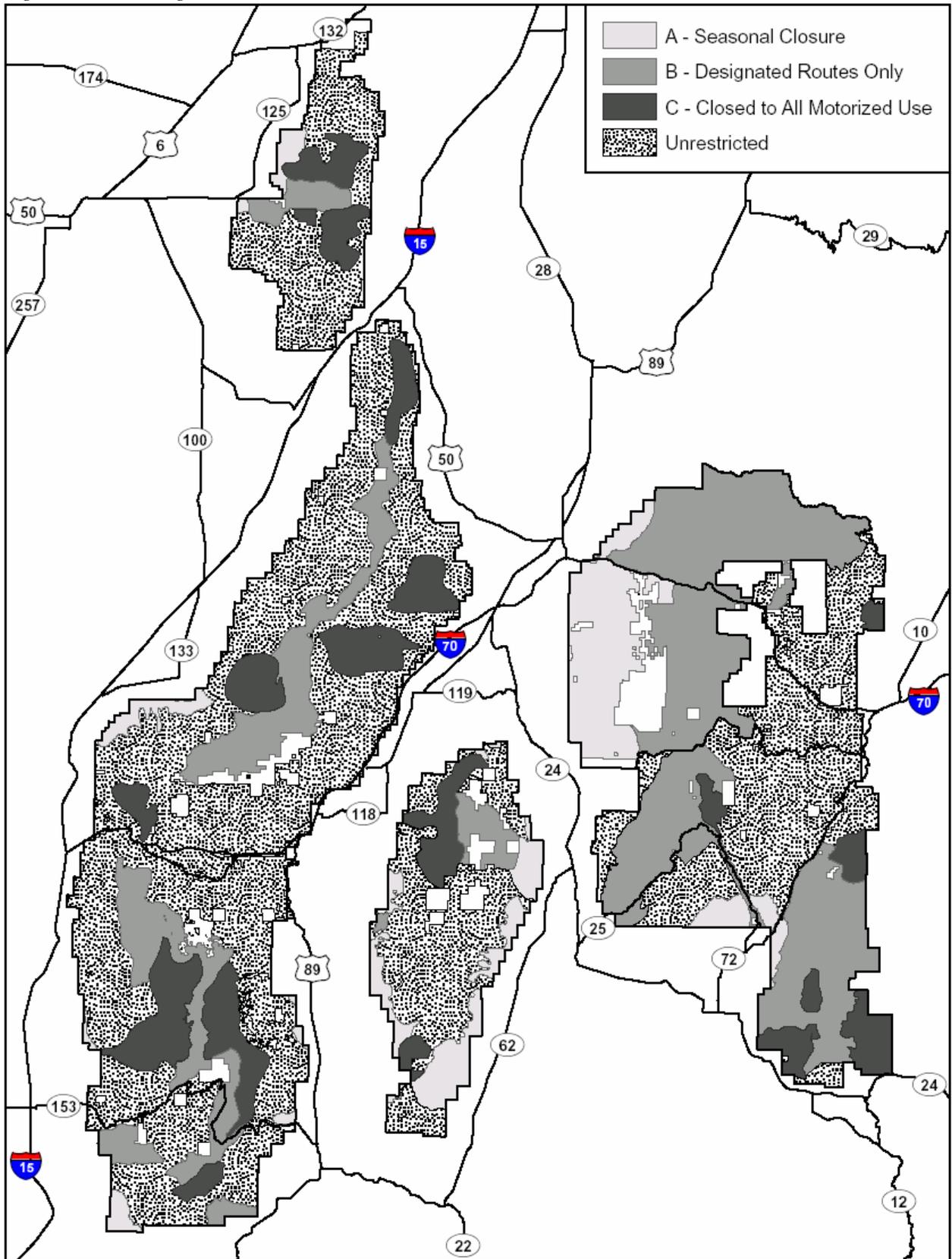
Table 1-1. Area summary of OHV restrictions on the existing Fishlake National Forest travel plan (total area is 1,454,380 acres).			
Closed Seasonally to Motorized Travel* “A” Restriction	Open to Travel on Designated Routes Only “B” Restriction	Closed to All Motorized Travel Yearlong “C” Restriction	Undesignated/Unrestricted*
126,530 acres	368,729 acres	176,535 acres	782,585 acres
* category permits wheeled motorized cross-country travel seasonally or all year.			

The current combination of the four travel map area designations shown in Table 1-1 and Figure 1-2 lead to six different designations when applied. Official designations for routes include Open Seasonally, Open Yearlong, Street Legal Vehicles Only, and Administrative Use Only. De facto designations include “Undesignated, but Open” and “Undesignated, but Closed”. The mileages in each class are summarized in Table 1-2 below.

Table 1-2. Route mileage summary of OHV restrictions on the existing Fishlake National Forest travel plan (total of 3,540.2 miles of motorized routes).					
Open Yearlong	Open Seasonally	Street Legal Vehicles Only	Administrative Use Only	Undesignated Open	Undesignated Closed
1,859.1	328.6	225.2	29.6	764.3	333.4

The current motorized travel plan has proven confusing for the public and Forest Service personnel alike. Internal dialog, public conversations, and written correspondence reveal that the existing travel plan is frequently misinterpreted. The project file contains numerous examples that illustrate that the public is knowingly and unknowingly using closed routes and areas for motorized travel. Many motorized users are not aware that much of what they consider as the “existing” motorized system has not recently or in some cases ever been legally declared as open to motorized use. It is clear that the current travel map is part of the source of confusion. As an example, in areas that are open seasonally (“A” areas), limited to travel on designated routes only (“B” areas), or closed to all motorized travel (“C” areas), routes that are highlighted in green are open yearlong. Routes shown on the map, but without a green highlight are open seasonally in “A” areas, closed yearlong in “B” and “C” areas, and open yearlong in unrestricted areas. Routes not shown on the map are open in “A” and unrestricted areas and closed in “B” and “C” areas. The current system also creates some discontinuities where a middle portion of a route may be open, but is closed at both ends. The above description is confusing because the current travel map is confusing.

Figure 1-2. Existing Motorized Travel Restriction Areas.



In addition to a complex travel map for the Fishlake National Forest, motorized users have to contend with a myriad of rules that are not consistent between land management agencies. Appendix F shows some selected OHV policies for Forest Service, and a sampling of Bureau of Land Management Field Offices, National Park Service, and State lands in Utah. There is a large amount of variation within and among these different agencies. Route and area designation procedures, motorized cross-country travel allowances and exemptions, and seasonal closures all differ to some degree.

Making the travel plan simpler, seamless to the user and easier to enforce requires greater consistency among the various public land management agencies. This factor helped shape the specifics of the proposed actions including coordination with the BLM, Capitol Reef National Park, State lands, and adjacent national forests. In Utah, both the Forest Service and the BLM are moving towards travel on designated routes and areas, which will greatly simplify the complex rules currently in place.

A critical test for the travel plan revision is to avoid creating rules that cannot be enforced since this degrades the legitimacy of the entire plan in the eyes of the public. Lack of public acceptance for the travel plan legitimacy and purpose translates into lack of ownership and lack of adherence to the assigned rules and designations.

Proposed Actions

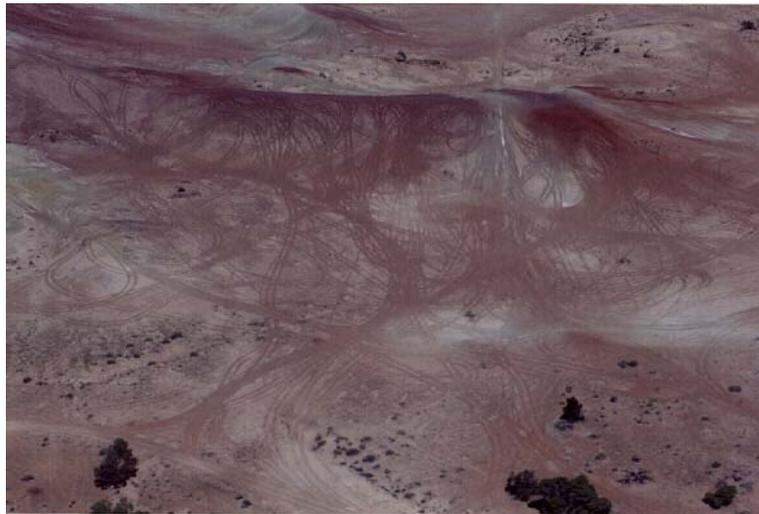
The proposed actions consist of changes to type or season of motorized use, route types and authorizations, and changes to area designations. The alternatives, including No Action, would add from 0 to 587 miles of unauthorized routes to and would remove from 0 to 73 miles of authorized routes from the forest's existing motorized system. Between 0 to 1,113 miles of unauthorized motorized routes would be obliterated and 0 to 84 miles converted to non-motorized trail. The proposed actions



Flat Canyon on the Fillmore Ranger District is open to cross-country travel in the current travel plan.

would range from systems of roughly 1,926 to 2,181 miles of road and from 196 to 639 miles of trail for combined totals of 2,122 to 2,820 miles of motorized routes. Only action alternatives explicitly limit motorized travel to designated routes, areas, and seasons of use across the entire forest. The amount of seasonally restricted routes range from 231 miles to 424 miles. In the action alternatives, the ending date for the seasonal closure period for nearly all of these routes would be lengthened from March 31 to April 15 with a start date of January 1. The Paiute and Great Western Trail systems would be retained in its current configuration except under Alternative 4. Motorized travel off designated routes would be prohibited except as specified for open use areas, over-snow vehicles, and access to dispersed camping, firewood gathering, emergency fire suppression, search and rescue, law enforcement, military operations, and limited Forest Service administrative use. Limited changes in area restrictions for winter travel by over-snow vehicles are proposed to protect critical mule deer winter ranges and Research Natural Areas. The proposed alternatives designate 0 to 780 acres in three open use areas west of Richfield, UT (includes the area in the previous photo), and 0 to 193 acres on the Velvet Ridges near Torrey, UT (photo to the right) where motorized cross-country travel would be allowed. The

alternatives also incorporate an implementation plan that identifies risk management strategies for motorized use and lists infrastructure and enforcement considerations, public education plans, monitoring requirements, and strategic considerations for future travel planning decisions (see Appendix B for details).



Velvet Ridges on the Fremont River Ranger District is open to cross-country travel in the current travel plan.

Decision Framework

The Forest Supervisor has determined that the project scope as defined by the purpose and need represents the best balance between addressing immediate concerns associated with motorized cross-country travel and longer-term travel management planning issues. Given the purpose and need, the Forest Supervisor will review the tradeoffs and environmental consequences from the proposed action and other alternatives in order to make the following decisions:

What designations and strategies are needed to close the forest to wheeled motorized cross-country travel as quickly and effectively as possible?

What designations and strategies result in a motorized travel plan that is inherently simpler to enforce and that is easy for users to understand and apply?

What designations and strategies are the most consistent with ongoing revisions to motorized travel plans on adjoining National Forests and BLM lands in Utah?

What are the most effective and realistic strategies to reduce or prevent environmental impacts and use conflicts while providing for motorized access needs?

What class of motor vehicle and season of motorized use should be allowed or prohibited on each designated route or area?

Which unauthorized travel ways should be added to the forest transportation atlas of motorized and non-motorized routes and which should be eliminated?

Public Involvement

The Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the Federal Register on June 7, 2004. The NOI asked for comments on the proposed action by July 30, 2004. Prior to release of the NOI, the Forest Service briefed local governmental officials, motorized advocacy groups, businesses, and environmental groups. The efforts following the NOI included public open houses in Richfield, Fillmore, Beaver, Loa, Junction, Salina and Salt Lake City, Utah. Subsequent to those open houses, comments on the project were reviewed and the proposed action was revised. The forest

developed two additional alternatives based on public comments that also incorporated new route inventory data from the summer of 2004.

The project web site <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/fishlake/projects/ohv.shtml>, press release, and postings at some trailheads were used to disseminate information and gather comments. About 198 scoping responses from individuals, advocacy groups, State and other federal agencies were received and analyzed for content (see project file or [project web page](#)). Public open houses were held in Richfield, Fillmore, Loa, and Beaver Utah in August of 2005 following release of the DEIS. Twenty-four comments were received between the formal scoping period and the formal DEIS comment period. Fifty comments were received during the formal DEIS comment period and an additional 15 comments arrived after the formal comment period. The response to comments document is located on the project web site listed above.

Scope of the Project and Analysis

The scope of this project is limited to existing roads and trails. Proposals for new route construction are not included because the amount of site-specific information and analysis would be too cumbersome to track at the forest scale. In addition, adding new construction would substantially complicate the range of alternatives needed and would greatly lengthen the time required to complete the NEPA process. This does not fit with the purpose and need to deal with the immediate concerns related to motorized cross-country travel. Other than routes being obliterated, this project does not address changing the maintenance level or condition of existing travel roads and trails. As such, if a road is designated as open to motorized use, it will only be open to vehicle types suitable to the current condition. For example, a high clearance road will not be upgraded or maintained for passenger cars simply because the road has been designated as open yearlong to all vehicles. Similarly, the experience and skill of a rider will determine whether trails can be traveled safely since some require intermediate or advanced skills.

This FEIS is a site-specific document with a focus on route and area designation for motorized use, but that requires a broad geographic scope since the project covers the entire Fishlake National Forest. Cumulative site-specific impacts are discussed at appropriate scales for each resource. Some disclosed effects necessarily represent relative (ordinal) magnitudes of impact rather than absolute levels. In any case, the effects are estimated to provide a basis for comparison and choice among the alternatives. This project will update and replace the current motorized travel plan for summer and winter use. It is not intended to address all aspects of unmanaged recreation or motorized use. Dispersed camping, over-snow vehicle use, optimality of the route system for long-term multiple uses, resource protection, and access needs are addressed to varying degrees depending on site-specific considerations and the context provided by the Purpose of and Need for Action.

The analysis area is limited to National Forest System lands, but the Fishlake NF has coordinated with and will continue to seek consistency with adjoining national forests, Capitol Reef National Park, State lands, and BLM field offices. The forest does not have jurisdiction on all roads and trails that are located on National Forest System lands. The mapped designations for routes under other jurisdiction are provided so that the public can see how the system interconnects, but is not meant to imply the forest has unilaterally determined the designation. The forest coordinated with State, county, and city officials and private landowners to reduce motorized use conflicts where such potential existed. This coordination resulted in changes to some existing designations on routes where the Forest Service does not have jurisdiction.

As of October 1, 2004, the Fishlake National Forest began administering the Fremont River Ranger District, which is a combination of the Teasdale Ranger District from the Dixie National Forest and the Loa Ranger District from the Fishlake. Due to the timing of the transition, the Teasdale portion of the district is not included into the Fishlake OHV Route Designation project area. Consequently, the Dixie National Forest motorized travel planning project will update the

travel plan for Teasdale. The district name was formally changed to the Fremont River Ranger District after the DEIS was released. Any reference to the Fremont River Ranger District in the FEIS excludes the Teasdale portion. This is a change from the DEIS, which referred to the Loa Ranger District.

Over-snow travel by over-snow vehicles is outside the scope of the route designation project except where seasonal closures to all motorized use are necessary to protect the integrity of critical mule deer winter range.

No Forest Plan amendment was triggered by the alternatives analyzed in the DEIS. Route designations in the final preferred alternative require a Forest Plan amendment to implement. The routes require minor boundary changes for semi-primitive management area 3A and will additionally fix existing mapping errors.

The Fishlake National Forest will produce a motor vehicle use map once project requirements specified in the signed Record of Decision for the FEIS are met. The 36 CFR 261.13 prohibitions of motorized cross-country travel outside of designated routes and areas will then take effect. 36 CFR 261.14 prohibitions on winter travel will take effect with the production of the over-snow vehicle use map.

Issues

Only significant issues are discussed in detail in the main body of the FEIS. Significant or “primary” issues represent concerns directly or indirectly caused by or attributable to the existing or proposed actions. Proposed actions and alternatives are developed to address significant issues. Descriptions of and rationale for issues that create minimal risk or that can be eliminated by project design, or that are non-significant can be found in Appendix D. Non-significant issues are identified as those: 1) outside the scope of the proposed action; 2) already decided by law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision; 3) irrelevant to the decision to be made; or 4) conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations explain this delineation in Sec. 1501.7, “...identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (Sec. 1506.3)...”

An issue is a concern, dispute, or debate about the environmental effects of an action. Issues are identified through the scoping process, and from formal DEIS public and other agency comments, along with internal review. A summary of the public involvement process and comments can be found in the project file and on the project web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/fishlake/projects/ohv.shtml>.

Primary Issues

Forest monitoring and enforcement have revealed that the current travel plan has several fundamental design flaws. In addition to known mapping errors, the flaws include unnecessarily complex rules and inconsistent travel management policy with adjacent lands. This makes the motorized travel plan difficult for the public to understand and adhere to. Thus, the travel plan is difficult to enforce.

Fishlake National Forest System lands are either near or contiguous with the lands managed by the Dixie and Manti-LaSal National Forests, Capitol Reef National Park, State lands, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). These organizations believe that it is better customer service to have consistent policies across their boundaries, but currently that consistency does not exist (see Appendix F). This issue is discussed further in Chapter 3.

The rapid growth in OHV uses on the forest necessitates that the current travel plan be updated and replaced with a management scheme that realistically addresses current and future management concerns. A travel plan that is difficult to understand and enforce, is inconsistent with adjoining public lands, and allows unrestricted motorized cross-country travel on over 62 percent of the forest is incompatible with the agency mission to provide public access while protecting natural resources. This is especially true in light of current and anticipated levels of motorized use, and given the requirements of the new travel rule.

Resource protection needs led the forest to the current proposal to limit motorize travel to designated routes and areas only. Therefore, making the travel plan enforceable by making it easy to understand and consistent among public lands, and reducing impacts from motorized cross-country travel are key issues. Cross-country travel is tied to many actual and potential resource issues and impacts, which include the introduction and spread of invasive plants, displacement and compaction of soils, impacts to rare plants, rutting of wetlands, disturbance of wildlife and livestock, damage to cultural resources, and impacts to water quality, riparian and fisheries habitats. As we evaluated the existing travel plan, two resource issues surfaced that broadly influenced the development of the proposed actions. These are the need to protect critical mule deer winter range and Threatened and Endangered plants. However, there are innumerable other site and resource specific concerns addressed by the proposed actions as is documented in the project file.

The above issues are by no means the complete list of topics identified during internal and public scoping processes, but they did help guide development of the alternatives. Most of the public comments received during scoping were from persons who frequently use national forests for one or more purposes. They expressed concerns that their access to the resources was either enhanced or impacted by the use or presence of motorized use. As an example, all parties expressed concern about the potential impacts from future growth in OHV use. However, motorized proponents desire enough riding opportunities to avoid overcrowding, while preservation groups want greater immediate protection of unroaded and undeveloped areas.

The primary issues identified below are the biophysical and social elements that drove the development, design, and analysis of the alternatives. Table 1-3 lists the primary issues, problem statements, and the indicators that are used to assess potential impacts to the resource elements being considered. The forest identified these issues through internal and public scoping. These issues are the most important and relevant resource considerations based on current and expected impacts within the scope of the proposed actions.

Table 1-3. Management considerations and issues.		
Management Consideration	Primary Issues	Issue Descriptions and Indicators
Adherence to and Enforcement of Travel Plan	Inherent Travel Plan Enforceability	<p>The existing travel plan has been difficult to enforce in large part because it is difficult to understand. The lines on the map have different meanings depending on whether the route is located in an area closed to all motorized travel, on a seasonally restricted area, on a designated route only area, or undesignated area. The need is to make the travel plan as simple and understandable as possible.</p> <p>Travel rules and methods of route designation vary - in some cases substantially so - across public lands under different jurisdictions (e.g. Fishlake, Dixie, and Manti-LaSal National Forests, Richfield and Fillmore BLM Districts, Capitol Reef National Park, various cities and</p>

Table 1-3. Management considerations and issues.

Management Consideration	Primary Issues	Issue Descriptions and Indicators
		<p>counties, Utah SITLA and Division of Wildlife Resources). This causes confusion for the public and deters cooperative law enforcement and judicial review of travel plans at the State and Federal levels. The need is to have a seamless travel network on public lands.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ The number of elements and complexity of the travel map legend contrasted against the level of resource protection and reduction in user conflicts afforded by the scheme. ★ The type, number, and importance of similarities and differences in travel plan rules and map designations among adjoining lands to the Fishlake National Forest.
<p>Critical Mule Deer Winter Range</p>	<p>Habitat Effectiveness and Displacement</p>	<p>Historically big game would be forced down to the valley and foothills by the snow and winter conditions. The animals would follow new vegetative growth back up to higher elevations in the spring as it became available. Currently motorized disturbance, primarily by ATVs, but also over-snow vehicles, are forcing deer and elk out of the green line and back into the snow during a period when animals have low energy reserves. The critical stress period starts approximately in January and gets progressively more severe until spring green-up begins.</p> <p>Mule deer are the primary species of concern because their populations have continued to decline for several years in spite of modifying the hunting season in ways that should normally create a positive population response.</p> <p>The motorized use impacts are occurring on top of and in addition to effects from human development in winter range and fragmentation by major highway systems. Sagebrush die off is another concern in the sagebrush steppe habitat that is particularly important winter range for mule deer. Suitable winter habitat is typically less than 9000 feet in elevation.</p> <p>Antler shed gathering on ATVs is the primary motorized use that is creating impacts to critical winter range. Use of over-snow vehicles for recreation or lion hunting is a secondary concern in some locations where seasonal closures are desired.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Open route densities in critical mule deer winter habitat (yearlong and seasonally). ★ Acres in open use areas and within dispersed camping distance designations in critical mule deer winter habitat. ★ Acres of critical mule deer winter range open to over-snow travel during the critical use period.

Table 1-3. Management considerations and issues.

Management Consideration	Primary Issues	Issue Descriptions and Indicators
Threatened and Endangered Plant Habitat	Habitat Impacts	<p>The one listed or candidate species that requires greater analysis is Last Chance townsendia. Its occupied habitat occurs in several locations within the distance designation corridors and at times less than one foot from the routes' tracks. The other listed species would not be affected under any of the alternatives.</p> <p>Last Chance townsendia (<i>Townsendia aprica</i>) is a member of the sunflower family and grows to be about 0.5 to 1 inch tall. This species is endemic; its worldwide distribution is limited to portions of Emery, Sevier and Wayne counties in south-central Utah. It is found in pinyon/juniper and salt desert shrub communities on clay-silt soils of the Arapien and Mancos Shale formations in habitats that range in elevation from 6,000 to over 8,000 feet. April thru May is the blooming season (Rodriguez 2006).</p> <p>The recovery plan for Last Chance townsendia does not designate any critical habitat; however, threats to this species include road development and road building (US Fish and Wildlife Service 1993).</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Acres in open use areas and within dispersed camping distance designations within potential habitat.
Soil Productivity	Motorized Cross-country Travel on Sensitive Soils	<p>Off-route motorized travel can directly cause soil rutting and compaction, and loss of protective cover from ground vegetation and rock armor (desert pavement). This increases erosion potential and alters nutrient cycling. Indirectly, cross-country travel can introduce and spread invasive plants resulting in a loss of vegetative cover and diversity that can lead to higher erosion rates, and a greater need for chemical treatments.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Miles of motorized routes on soils highly susceptible to geologic hazards, surface erosion, and puddling and compaction. ★ Acres in open use areas and within dispersed camping distance designations on sensitive soils.
Wetland and Riparian Area Condition	<p>Amount and Proximity of Roads and Motorized Trails to Riparian Areas and Wetlands</p> <p>Motorized Cross-country Travel within Riparian Areas and Wetlands</p>	<p>Wetland and riparian areas are particularly vulnerable to motorized trespass because human use is concentrated in and near these areas and the terrain and gradient often provide the easiest relative access. Off-route use can modify wetland hydrology by causing headcutting or by altering or concentrating diffuse water flows. Either process induces erosion that can drain the local water table, affecting wetland and riparian condition and function. Rutting and compaction can lead to a loss of organic content of wetland soils from oxidation, which can lead to a loss of productivity and hydrologic function. Wetlands are typically sensitive to changing nutrient levels. Nutrient levels and the water chemistry can be altered by the delivery of sediment and debris from chronic or</p>

Table 1-3. Management considerations and issues.

Management Consideration	Primary Issues	Issue Descriptions and Indicators
		<p>catastrophic erosion from routes and upland sources. Pollutants can also wash off or leak from vehicles at stream crossings.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Miles of motorized route located adjacent to (within 50 feet), or within a 300-foot riparian influence zone of stream channels, lake margins, and wetlands. ★ Motorized route stream crossing frequency. ★ Acres in open use areas and within dispersed camping distance designations within the riparian influence zone.
Fisheries and Aquatic Organisms and Water Quality	<p>Amount and Proximity of Roads and Motorized Trails to Riparian Areas and Wetlands</p> <p>Motorized Cross-country Travel within Riparian Areas and Wetlands and on Sensitive Soils</p>	<p>Delivery of sediment to streams can fill in fish spawning and rearing habitats, and the spaces between gravels, cobbles, and boulders on the streambed. Fish and the variety of aquatic organisms on which they depend use these habitats. North Horn sediments in particular are prone to accelerated surface and mass erosion once cover is lost. Other soil parent materials are also a concern (see the soils report for further information). Mass erosion from slopes or constructed stream crossings can introduce large volumes of sediment to streams over a short period. Elevated sedimentation can degrade water quality and habitat for fish and other organisms, and can negatively affect channel stability.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Miles of motorized route located adjacent to, or within a 300-foot riparian influence zone of, stream channels, lake margins, and wetlands. ★ Miles of motorized route on sensitive soils. ★ Motorized route density within the cumulative effects watershed. ★ Motorized route stream crossing frequency. ★ Acres in open use areas and within dispersed camping distance designations within the riparian influence zone and within the cumulative effects watersheds.
Unroaded and Undeveloped Lands	Effects to Wilderness Characteristics	<p>Presently there are 50 total miles of existing motorized roads and 482 miles of motorized trails contained within associated undeveloped areas. Additionally, 934,433 acres or 64 percent of the forest is open to cross-country motorized travel. This includes undeveloped areas in which a total of 502,391 acres or 54 percent are open to unrestricted motorized travel.</p> <p>Cross-country travel (both legal and not) and motorized use of non-system roads and trails has increased annually causing corresponding reduction in a sense of remoteness and naturalness within undeveloped areas. Authorized and unauthorized motorized use has reduced the manageability of these areas based on past trends. In addition to direct effects, there are indirect effects to undeveloped areas associated with sights and sounds, etc. from activities or development on adjacent lands.</p>

Table 1-3. Management considerations and issues.

Management Consideration	Primary Issues	Issue Descriptions and Indicators
		<p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ The key comparison elements for evaluating how the alternatives respond to the issue are miles of road authorized and open use areas, as well as narratively describing associated changes in manageability, natural integrity, natural appearance, opportunities for solitude, opportunities for primitive recreation or challenging experiences, special features, and remoteness.
Motorized and Non-motorized Recreation	Type, Amount, and Characteristics of Route Systems Provided	<p>Designating routes and areas for motorized use simultaneously affects the balance of motorized and non-motorized recreational uses and opportunities. The types, amount, and characteristics of the route systems provided are a key interest to recreationists who use the Fishlake National Forest as it influences the potential for and quality of their experience.</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Proportion of the forest within varying distances from motorized routes. ★ Miles of routes available for motorized and non-motorized uses. ★ Timing and duration of motorized and non-motorized use. ★ Percent of inventoried dispersed campsites retaining motorized access. ★ Qualitative narrative describing how the alternative responds to expressed public concerns.

Issues Not Discussed in Detail

The following issues are not discussed in detail in the main text of the FEIS. These issues have minimal risk or are eliminated by project design and are found in Appendix D. Though not discussed in detail in the FEIS, many of the items below are described in detail in the source reports prepared by the resource specialists, which can be found in the CD-ROM and on the [project web site](#).

Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and Management Indicator Species – Animals [other than mule deer]

Migratory Birds

Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and Management Indicator Species – Plants [other than Last Chance Townsendia]

Invasive Plants

Vegetation and Fuels Management

Fire Control

Range Management

Research Natural Areas (RNAs)

Microbial contaminant impacts to water quality
Radioactive contaminant impacts to water quality
Decreases in stream base flows
Changes in stream dynamic equilibrium
Air Quality
Heritage Resource Impacts
Socio-economic Impacts

Questions from Scoping

A number of important issues raised during scoping are addressed in detail in the FEIS in Chapters 2 and 3, and in Appendix D. Agencies, advocacy groups, and members of the public often asked similar questions about the scope of the proposal. A brief discussion of each is included below.

How will the route designation affect the existing Paiute and Great Western Trail System?

The Paiute and Great Western are both very popular existing designated trail systems that are retained as is in Alternatives 2, 3, and 5. Modifications to these systems are proposed in Alternative 4 as was suggested by some members of the public and advocacy groups such as Three Forest Coalition, Utah Forest Network, and the Utah Environmental Congress.

Is the forest route inventory complete?

The forest began using global positioning system (GPS) technology to field verify roads and trails in 1999. Though substantially complete by 2003, additional routes have been added from 2004 through 2006 based on additional field inventory and validated contributions from the public and Sevier County. The forest has intensively updated and corrected the transportation atlas in a Geographic Information System (GIS) since 2003. The inventory of authorized and most unauthorized routes is now essentially complete. A thorough inventory is not required by the travel management rules in 36 CFR parts 212 and 261.

Why not update the travel plan during Forest Plan revision?

The Forest Supervisor feels that the challenges presented by rapidly growing OHV use are too immediate to deal with in the lengthy Forest Plan revision process. In addition, Forest Plans are not intended to make site-specific decisions such as those necessary to create a motorized travel plan. [The Forest Plan Revision Team](#) and the Motorized Travel Planning teams for the Dixie and the Fishlake National Forests are coordinating very closely to make sure that information is shared and that integration occurs.

Why are the Dixie and Fishlake National Forests conducting separate travel planning efforts while they are involved in a combined Forest Plan revision effort?

The Dixie and the Fishlake National Forests are starting from different situations and in some cases have different issues with regards to motorized travel and OHV management. In addition, each forest has a unique mix of interested publics, local and county governments, and other State and Federal land management agencies with whom to coordinate. The site-specific nature of the actions being considered under travel management planning makes the process too intensive to manage as a dual forest project. However, close coordination between the two teams is considered essential and occurs on a continual basis.

Does the route designation project affect opportunities for non-motorized recreation?

Yes. Both types of recreational opportunities are being addressed in the designation process. Considering desired opportunities for non-motorized recreation is a necessity when identifying where motorized use is allowed.

What is the difference between a travel plan and travel management planning?

Travel management planning constitutes analyses that inform what should be on a travel plan. A travel plan instructs forest managers and users about motorized use restrictions and allowances. Travel management planning can be much broader in scope, including not only the route system and primary uses, but also secondary uses that depend on motorized transportation. The forest has spent a considerable amount of time and resources assessing travel management planning issues so that we can develop an effective strategy for managing motorized cross-country travel. However, all concerns with uses that rely on or interact with motorized access cannot be solved through one project. The forest has identified several additional travel planning efforts that are needed. Because of the required site-specificity, the forest must carefully direct the scope of the project in order to keep the project manageable and timely so that we can deal with the immediate needs to restrict motorized cross-country travel and define the appropriate routes available for use. Due to the complexity and need for integration, some broader travel management planning issues are being dealt with through our ongoing Forest Plan revision process. Others that require more localized assessments will be dealt with in other site-specific projects.

What NEPA was done for the current route system?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that mandates disclosure of actions and effects from federal decisions was passed in 1969. Most roads and trails on the Fishlake National Forest substantially predate 1969. Roads and trails constructed by the Forest Service after 1969 have required some level of NEPA, and construction of new roads has entailed a Roads Analysis Process since July 12, 2001. Most unauthorized routes developed by users since 1969 have not been specifically analyzed under NEPA. However, route and motorized use impacts were evaluated in an environmental assessment prepared for the first travel plan on the Fishlake National Forest in 1976. The existence, use, and maintenance of motorized road and trail systems was also an assumed condition in the Final Environmental Impact Statement prepared for the Forest Plan, which evaluated the potential impacts of authorized allocations and land uses in 1986. Similarly, subsequent NEPA documents for a variety of project types analyze transportation and motorized cumulative impacts where applicable. One forest-scale example is the environmental assessment done to authorize the Fillmore and Rocky Mountain Jamborees. However, there are also many types of sub-watershed scale actions such as vegetation management, special uses, or recreation projects that requires a cumulative assessment of motorized routes and use. This is one of the ways motorized route and area impacts are discovered and addressed over time. The Fishlake OHV Route Designation EIS will provide the necessary NEPA documentation for routes that are added to the authorized system and provides an updated same time assessment of the cumulative impacts for the forest transportation system.

How will the decision affect the status of user-created roads and trails?

User-created roads and trails (routes not included on the travel atlas or unauthorized) are a subset of the existing roads and trails found on the ground and are not part of the permanent authorized transportation network. Legally, the Forest Service cannot recognize nor maintain unauthorized routes. Therefore, it is proposed to either designate these travelways or eliminate them. Currently there are about 1,239 miles of inventoried roads and motorized trails that are not officially part of the forest travel system. The total is roughly 1,367 miles

of unauthorized routes if non-motorized trails are included. These routes may have been constructed for a specific short-time purpose and were never properly closed or were reopened by users. Some are the result of traffic going off-route repeatedly forming a user created road or trail. Several unauthorized routes have been used and managed, because they were thought to be, authorized routes for many years, but for whatever reason were never officially added to the travel atlas and entered into the database that makes them part of the authorized system. Unauthorized routes mapped before completion of the route designation project will be evaluated directly in the EIS. Disposition of routes known to exist prior to the decision date, but that are added to the inventory after completion of the EIS will be assessed using a screening process described in the FEIS during the implementation period. The analysis for this project will provide a one-time assessment of unauthorized routes that will result in either the inclusion or elimination of a given route from the forest travel network. After the decision date, any new unauthorized travelways will be eliminated and closed to public use. Future road and trail proposals for new construction will undergo NEPA analysis and disclosure.

Won't the dispersed camping designation create a sacrifice area on hundreds of thousands of acres when tallied across the forest?

No. The distance designation allowing cross-country travel for dispersed camping “does not authorize creation of new campsites or travel ways.” [see project requirements in Chapter 2 of the FEIS]. In addition, the distance designations will be removed from the motor vehicle use map in subsequent years as dispersed campsite inventories are completed and routes are designated to desired locations.

Will I be able to travel cross-country to retrieve legally tagged game using my OHV?

No. Based on the new travel rule, the Regional Forester, in consultation with Forest Supervisors of Utah and Idaho, have determined that game retrieval will not be allowed on any National Forest lands in Region 4. Legally tagged game may be retrieved using non-motorized means only. Some of the most notable off road impacts on the Fishlake National Forest occur during hunting season, primarily from scouting and stalking game on ATVs but also from retrieving game. There is no consistent, logical or enforceable means to assure that a given cross-country exemption for game retrieval will not result in an undesirable user conflict with other hunters and recreationists or that can dependably avoid resource impacts. This policy is consistent with current and planned restrictions on the BLM, and other public lands in Utah.

Will I be able to hunt for antler sheds using my OHV?

No. Antler shed gathering areas may be accessed from open designated routes provided the route is not gated closed or seasonally restricted. However, OHVs may not be used off-route to search for sheds. This use typically occurs in the spring when snow cover is patchy, soils are moist, and when mule deer and elk are using critical winter ranges. Some antler shed hunters cause substantial off-route impacts because they use OHVs to grid slopes on closely spaced transects. There is no consistent, logical or enforceable means to assure that a given cross-country exemption for antler shed hunting can avoid undesirable user conflicts or resource impacts. Also, this use directly conflicts with the need to protect critical mule deer winter range habitat. This policy is consistent with current restrictions on other forests and public lands in Utah including big game habitat managed by the Utah Division of Wildlife. Before the new travel rule, there was no incentive or logical reason for the Fishlake National Forest to be the only public lands in Utah with such an exemption. With the travel rule in place, the Forest Supervisor no longer has the authority to do so in any case.

Why aren't over-snow vehicles included in this proposal?

Over-snow vehicle use on the Fishlake National Forest is not nearly as pervasive as other OHV use and is not creating known use conflicts or resource impacts in most cases. Over-snow vehicles are usually driven on a layer of snow so the timing, types, and magnitudes of environmental effects (i.e. erosion, sedimentation, weed spread) are different than those of motorized wheeled vehicles, which come into direct contact with vegetation and the ground.

The new travel rule separates summer and winter use maps, while the current Fishlake travel plan does not. This makes some changes to winter use inevitable. A consequence of separating the summer and winter use maps is that current area restrictions do not carry forth with the same meaning. The forest does not want to fully revise winter use restrictions until Forest Plan revision is completed so that areas with special designations can be integrated into the winter use map. The forest is committed to finalizing the winter motorized travel plan after the Forest Plan revision is complete. For now, limited restrictions on over-snow vehicle access are included in the proposed actions where needed to protect critical mule deer winter ranges. Fully addressing over-snow vehicle use in this proposal would complicate and lengthen the EIS process significantly and would divert time and resources from more pressing issues related to the motorized travel plan.

What is the definition of motorized wheeled cross-country travel?

In the current travel plan: Cross-country travel occurs when motorized users leave *existing* roads and trails in unrestricted areas, or when travel occurs off *designated* routes in closed and restricted areas. The DEIS answer to this question presented several examples that illustrate the difficulty of defining what is a legitimate “existing” route.

After the forest has designated open routes: Cross-country travel occurs any time motorized users travel off an open *designated* route. The motor vehicle use map that accompanies the travel plan will explicitly specify route and area designations. Use of “existing”, but undesignated travel ways is purposefully considered cross-country travel by this definition.

How will route designation affect people with disabilities?

Per the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, an individual with a disability will not, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by the Forest Service. All users, including those with disabilities are afforded the same motorized access opportunities and are subject to the same rules and restrictions. Restrictions on motor vehicle use that are applied consistently to everyone are not discriminatory. Motorized wheelchairs as defined in the Rehabilitation Act are not considered OHVs and therefore are not restricted by any of the alternatives.

Relationship to Other Plans, Decision Documents and Regulatory Authority

Direction and authority for the proposal come from the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). NFMA, NEPA, and CEQ provide general land management and environmental analysis direction. Federal Codes of Regulation at 36 CFR 212 and 261 have given the Forest Service the authority to manage OHV use and provides specific regulations for the agencies based on EOs 11644 and 11989. The agency maintains other discretionary authorities such as the ability to issue emergency closure orders that allow enforcement or modification of the motorized travel plan or that regulate use and occupancy of National Forest System lands.

Decisions to Be Made

The Fishlake Forest Supervisor has evaluated the proposed alternatives. The selected alternative actions and rationale is documented in the Record of Decision. Through this analysis she is determining what site-specific route and area designations to use in order to affect a forest-wide closure to motorized cross-country travel that best meets the Purpose of and Need for the project. She is also identifying implementation and monitoring requirements.