



HUMBOLDT-TOIYABE NATIONAL FOREST USDA FOREST SERVICE

Travel Management Planning Update for the Mountain City, Jarbidge, and Ruby Mountains' Ranger Districts

Northeast Nevada, February 14, 2009

This newsletter provides additional information, an extension of the scoping period from February 20 to March 9, and an additional round of public meetings for travel management planning in Elko County, Nevada.

Update: We held four meetings on travel management in Elko County during the week of January 25, 2009. Many good comments were provided. Another round of meetings will take place from February 23-26, 2009. We hope that the following information will help promote better understanding about this planning process, as well as more opportunities for public participation.

Travel Management Rule: In 2005, the Forest Service issued a new rule, 36 CFR part 212, guiding the management of motor vehicle use on *all* National Forests and Grasslands in the United States. On the Humboldt-Toiyabe, all of its ten Ranger Districts have either completed or are in the process of completing this process by the required deadline, the end of 2009. The Rule is on the web at <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/final.pdf>, and states:

- Each National Forest and Grassland will designate those roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use.
- Designated routes will be identified on a motor vehicle use map.
- Once designation is complete, the Rule prohibits motor vehicle use off the designated route system, including for game retrieval.
- Motor vehicles used for fire, military, and law enforcement purposes, or under written authorizations such as for grazing, minerals, or firewood collection, are covered by exemptions under the Rule.

Getting Involved: Over the past several years, we've invited interested Forest users to identify routes that should be considered for motor vehicle use. We presented an initial proposal in several public meetings and postings on our

Forest web site. We will analyze this proposal and alternatives to it throughout the coming year. Multiple opportunities will allow you to weigh in with your ideas and review the stages of this project. You should get involved.

Proposal: For the Mountain City, Jarbidge, and Ruby Mountains Ranger Districts, the Forest Service proposes to:

- Add 337 miles of motorized trails and 48 miles of road to the Forest transportation system; and
- Reclassify 44 National Forest System roads, totaling 122 miles of roads or trails, as “Administrative Use” only, and a number of unauthorized roads, as closed to motorized use by the general public.
- This reclassification is because of: 1) access blocked by private lands with no current easement; 2) FS recreation residence/minerals road; and, 3) reported as impassable.

Extension of the Scoping Process/Additional Meetings: We mailed our scoping document to over 500 interested parties on January 20, 2009, and held a series of open house meetings the week of January 25. In order to give you a chance to submit additional comments, we are extending the scoping period to March 9, 2009. We will also hold additional public meetings:

- February 23 in Elko at the Elko BLM Office;
- February 24 in Wells at the Forest Service Ranger Station;
- February 25 in Jackpot at the Community Recreation Center;
- February 26 in Mountain City Court House.

**All meetings are scheduled for 5 -7 p.m. at Pacific Standard Time.*

Questions and Answers

What routes will be closed to the public?

The Travel Rule requires that the Forest Service designate a system of routes that are open to the general public.

1. Under the current “Proposal” section above, the 122 miles of “Administrative Roads,” and a number of unauthorized roads, would be closed to motorized use by the general public.
2. We are requesting that the public provide input on their use of these unauthorized and administrative routes that are proposed to be closed.
3. As we learn of routes that provide important access to dispersed campsites, valued recreation areas, or loop opportunities for responsible motorized visitors, we will consider adding them to the proposed action.

After this scoping comment period, the Forest will revise the proposed action to reflect these additions. We will then have a better idea of the number and miles of unauthorized routes that will be closed.

Why is travel management important to me? Your help in identifying roads and trails that *should or should not* be included on the maps. You will be creating a transportation system that meets both your and other visitors' recreation needs.

How is the Forest Service addressing roads blocked by private gates? What are "Administrative Use" roads?

1. Some existing National Forest System roads are only accessible by crossing private property.
2. Some private property owners provide public rights of way across their property to the Forest Service, the County, or other public road authorities.
3. Others have gated roads on their private property to control access.
4. The Forest Service respects private property rights, and cannot authorize public use where we do not have the legal right to do so.

The Forest Service would like to designate existing roads and trails for motorized use on a number of places on the Forest, but cannot because of a lack of legal public access or because of other current uses such as mining. In these cases, we have included 122 miles of "Administrative Roads" in our proposal. These routes will be retained on our system and considered in the analysis so that they can be opened to the public if legal public access is acquired, or in the case of mining, when they are safe for public travel on those routes. Until then, "Administrative Roads" are off-limits to motorized vehicles (with exceptions as noted above).

We are sometimes asked why these routes cannot remain open to property owners as private roads, available to them alone, and to the individuals the owners allow to cross their property. This approach would violate fundamental principles of fairness. National Forest System lands belong to all Americans, and we cannot grant selective control over access to these lands on the basis of ownership of adjacent property.

Could you please provide definitions of the terms being used during this process?

Here are definitions for some of the most commonly used terms:

Administrative National Forest System (NFS) Road – Any NFS road that is not open to the public.

Cross-Country Travel - The use of a motor vehicle off designated roads and trails.

Designated Route - A National Forest System road or National Forest System trail. Other routes under federal, state, or county jurisdiction are not part of the designation process.

Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) - A map reflecting designated roads, trails, and areas on an administrative unit or a Ranger District of the National Forest System. The map also shows routes under other jurisdictions.

National Forest System (NFS) Road or Trail - A road or trail, wholly or partly within or adjacent to and serving the National Forest System, that the Forest Service determines is necessary for the protection, administration, and utilization of the National Forest.

Road - A motor vehicle route over 50 inches wide, unless identified and managed as a trail.

Trail - A route, 50 inches or less in width or a route over 50 inches wide, that is identified and managed as a trail.

Unauthorized Route - A route, which is a road or trail that is not currently identified as a National Forest System road or a National Forest System trail.

How Can I Get Involved? The designation of a transportation system on the Mountain City, Ruby Mountains and Jarbidge Ranger Districts is a big task. Although our public meetings are a great way for you to learn more about our process and proposal, your written comments are equally important.

The input we've received to date has been very helpful as we work to develop alternatives to our proposed action. We would like to hear from you about specific routes that you use on the National Forest that should be included in our proposed action, or routes that you believe should not be included. Please provide specifics and your rationale.

Log on to fs.fed.us/r4/htnf/projects to review the present scoping documents and maps. If you do not have a computer, stop in at either our Elko or Wells office locations. Either District Ranger welcomes group or individual presentation requests.

Contact Numbers and Web Site

- Mountain City District Ranger, Tom Montoya, 775-738-5171
- Jarbidge & Ruby Mountains District Ranger, Gar Abbas, 775-752-3357
- Visitor information, fs.fed.us/r4/htnf/

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