

Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact

Motorized Travel Management Environmental Assessment

Cleveland National Forest
USDA-Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region
Riverside and San Diego Counties, CA

1.0 Decision and Rationale

Based on analysis contained in the environmental assessment and supporting documentation found in the project record that addresses the anticipated environmental effects of travel management changes on the Cleveland National Forest, I have selected Alternative 3, as described in detail in section 2.2.1.3 of the environmental assessment, for implementation.

This alternative has been modified from the Alternative 3 that appeared in the review copy of the environmental assessment released for public comment in July 2008. These modifications were made in response to public comments as described in section 4.0 below. I selected this alternative for implementation because it best meets the purpose and need as described in section 3.0 below and in section 1.2 of the environmental assessment. Alternative 3 will:

1. Prohibit cross-country motor vehicle travel by the public off designated National Forest System roads, trails, and areas, except as allowed by permit or other authorization in the Corral Canyon and Wildomar OHV areas.
2. Add approximately 6.2 miles of trail to the Cleveland NF transportation system. Approximately 1.0 mile of existing, user-created trails and 5.2 miles of new trail construction will be added to the Cleveland NF transportation system to maintain a diversity of motorized recreation opportunities in the conversion of the Corral Canyon OHV area from one in which cross-country motorized travel is legal to one in which all motorized travel must occur on designated routes or in smaller designated open areas. Inspect and improve mitigation measures to prevent access to adjacent unauthorized routes.
3. Add approximately 1.27 miles of routes for highway-legal vehicles to the Cleveland NF transportation system to access dispersed recreation opportunities. Install mitigation measures to prevent access to adjacent unauthorized routes.
4. Establish a 2.0-acre open riding area adjacent to Corral Canyon OHV campground; allow several areas totaling 12.8 acres adjacent to existing and proposed trails in the Corral Canyon OHV area to remain open for continued use as locations for motorcycle and bike trial riding; and establish a 0.2-acre open riding area adjacent to the Wildomar OHV trailhead where young riders can learn safe vehicle operation. All other OHV use in the Corral Canyon and Wildomar OHV areas will be restricted to designated routes.
5. Amend the LMP to adjust land use zones and recreational opportunity spectrum designations on approximately 10 acres of land to reflect existing on-the-ground conditions. As per Forest Service policy and regulations, this amendment will be non-significant.

Alternative 3 will result in the Cleveland NF having a transportation system that consists of 202.7 miles of roads for highway-legal-only vehicles, 37.8 miles of routes for highway legal and non-highway legal vehicles, 13.1 miles of trail for all vehicles (that is, four-wheel drive, vehicles 50 inches or less in width, and motorcycles), 23.8 miles of trail for vehicles 50 inches or less in width, 5.4 miles of trail for motorcycles, and 15.0 total acres of open areas. Implementation of this alternative will lead to publication of a motor vehicle use map reflecting these changes in the transportation system.

Many routes that were listed in Alternative 2 (see section 2.2 below and section 2.1.2.2 in the environmental assessment) were dropped from consideration in Alternative 3. Buckman North, Buckman South, Cottonwood, Deer Park, Miners Road, the Narrows, Upper Santa Ysabel, and Yellow Rose Spring were dropped from consideration because they either would have intersected habitat for the arroyo toad and/or they would have intersected riparian conservation areas. Proposed motorized trail additions SDTR-1 and SDTR-2 were also removed for this alternative. Approximately 12.8 acres will remain open in the Corral Canyon OHV area to allow continued use for trial riding activities.

2.0 Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected alternative, two other alternatives were considered and are described below.

2.1 Alternative 1: No Action

This alternative provides a baseline for comparing other alternatives. Under this alternative current management plans would continue to guide management of the area. No changes would be made to the current transportation system and no cross-country travel prohibition in the Corral Canyon and Wildomar OHV areas would be instituted. Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule would not be implemented, and no motor vehicle use map would be produced. Motor vehicle travel by the public would continue to be limited to designated routes and areas. Unauthorized routes would continue to have no status or authorization as part of the transportation system.

Alternative 1 would have resulted in the Cleveland NF having a transportation system that consists of 201.4 miles of roads for highway-legal-only vehicles, 37.8 miles of routes for highway legal and non-highway legal vehicles, 11.2 miles of trail for all vehicles (that is, four-wheel drive, vehicles 50 inches or less in width, and motorcycles), 23.2 miles of trail for vehicles 50 inches or less in width, 1.8 miles of trail for motorcycles, and 2,160 total acres of open areas.

2.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Alternative 2, the proposed action, was developed initially from information gathered at public meetings during the summer of 2007 and from preliminary analysis by the interdisciplinary team. After subsequent field review by Cleveland NF personnel, this alternative was refined to exclude route segments that were inaccurately mapped and to update route segment lengths based on better GIS data. Therefore, Alternative 2 as described below is slightly different than the proposed action that was sent to the public for scoping on January 18, 2008. Alternative 2 would have:

1. Prohibited cross-country motor vehicle travel by the public off designated National Forest System roads, trails, and areas, except as allowed by permit or other authorization in the Corral Canyon and Wildomar OHV areas.
2. Added approximately 7.7 miles of trail to the Cleveland NF transportation system within the Corral Canyon OHV area. Approximately 2.5 miles of existing, user-created trails and 5.2 miles

of new trail construction would have been added to the Cleveland NF transportation system to maintain a diversity of motorized recreation opportunities in the conversion of the Corral Canyon OHV area to a system of designated routes.

3. Added approximately 4.87 miles of roads for highway-legal vehicles to the Cleveland NF transportation system to maintain dispersed recreation motorized access.
4. Established a 2.0-acre open riding area adjacent to Corral Canyon OHV campground and established a 0.2-acre open riding area adjacent to the Wildomar OHV trailhead where young riders can learn safe vehicle operation. All other OHV use in the Corral Canyon and Wildomar OHV areas would have been restricted to designated routes.
5. Amended the LMP to adjust land use zones and recreational opportunity spectrum designations on approximately 10 acres of land to reflect existing on-the-ground conditions. As per Forest Service policy and regulations, this amendment would have been non-significant.

Alternative 2 would have resulted in the Cleveland NF having a transportation system that consisted of 206.3 miles of roads for highway-legal-only vehicles, 37.8 miles of routes for highway legal and non-highway legal vehicles, 13.1 miles of trail for all vehicles (that is, four-wheel drive, vehicles 50 inches or less in width, and motorcycles), 25.3 miles of trail for vehicles 50 inches or less in width, 5.3 miles of trail for motorcycles, and 2.2 total acres of open areas. Implementation of this alternative would have led to publication of a motor vehicle use map reflecting the changes in the transportation system described above.

3.0 Purpose and Need

The Cleveland NF undertook this travel management action in accordance with the 2005 Travel Management Rule (*Federal Register*, Vol. 70, No. 216-Nov. 9, 2005, pages 68264 to 68291). Specific areas were identified in which there is a need for change. The following needs were identified for this proposal:

1. There is a need for prevention of resource damage by motor vehicles in the Corral Canyon and Wildomar OHV areas. The Corral Canyon and Wildomar OHV areas were first designated as open areas in the 1986 LMP and carried forward into the revised LMP. Currently, public motor vehicle travel is open to cross-country travel in these two areas. After years of open riding conditions, the number of trails has grown, and some of the new routes have environmental impacts and safety concerns that have not been addressed. Recent wildfires removed much of the vegetation that limited motor vehicle travel in the Corral Canyon OHV area. Under these circumstances, continued open riding in these areas will lead to further trends in route proliferation and resource damage. Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule provides guidance for ending these trends and managing motorized recreation in a sustainable manner.
2. There is a need for limited changes and additions to the Cleveland NF transportation system in order to maintain motorized access for dispersed recreation activities, such as camping, hunting, hiking, and horseback riding. A portion of known dispersed recreation activities are not located directly adjacent to an existing National Forest System (NFS) road or NFS motorized trail. Some dispersed recreation depends on access by foot or horseback, and some depends on motor vehicle access. Motorized access to such activities often consists of short spurs that have been created and maintained primarily by the passage of motor vehicles. An inventory of these "user-created" routes found that many dispersed recreation activities are accessed by routes that are not currently part of the national forest transportation system. Under the 2005 Travel Management Rule, only roads and trails that are part of the transportation system can be designated for motor vehicle use. If these routes are not added to the

transportation system, the regulatory changes brought about by the 2005 Travel Management Rule would make continued use of such routes illegal. Continuation of dispersed recreation activities in specified land use zones is a desired condition of the revised LMP.

4.0 Public Involvement

The interdisciplinary team relied on public involvement to ensure that an adequate range of alternatives would be considered. Public involvement included meetings during the summer of 2007, meetings during early 2008, a scoping letter mailed to interested persons in January 2008, and a copy of the environmental assessment made available for public review on July 15, 2008. Public involvement is summarized below.

- After completing an inventory of existing roads, trails, and off-route use areas, maps were posted to the Cleveland NF website for public review and comment. Suggested adjustments to the maps were accepted until October 31, 2006.
- Route designation has been discussed at quarterly meetings between Cleveland NF personnel and members of local off-highway vehicle user groups.
- Press releases were posted on the Forest Service regional office travel management website (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/routedesignation/>) as well as on the Cleveland NF website. In addition, the press releases were sent to elected officials and to local media in the San Diego, Riverside, and Orange county areas.
- On January 18, 2008, Cleveland NF Supervisor Will Metz mailed a scoping letter to interested parties summarizing the proposal and requesting comments. A legal notice initiating the 30-day scoping period appeared in the San Diego *Union-Tribune* outlining the proposal and requesting comments.
- Public open houses to discuss the proposal were held in San Diego County at the Cleveland NF supervisor's office on January 19, at the Palomar Ranger District on January 23, and at the Descanso Ranger District on February 6, and in Riverside County at the Trabuco Ranger District on February 7, 2008. Cleveland NF personnel were present at all meetings to answer any questions and to provide further information on the proposal.
- The project has been listed continually in the Cleveland NF schedule of proposed actions since July 2006 (<http://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/forest-level.php?110502>).
- A review copy of the environmental assessment was released for a 30-day public comment period beginning July 15 and ending August 15. The Cleveland NF held three open houses to discuss the environmental assessment and associated analysis. An open house was held at the Palomar Ranger District on July 17, at the Descanso Ranger District on July 24, and on the Trabuco Ranger District on July 28. The Cleveland NF response to comments that were gathered during these open houses, or submitted by the public via email or traditional mail, is included with this decision notice.

Comments from the public were used to formulate issues concerning Alternative 2 (the proposed action) and resulted in development of Alternative 3 (see section 1.7 of the environmental assessment). Public comments led to removal of all proposed travel management additions that intersected habitat for the arroyo toad and/or riparian conservation areas from the project. In addition, public comments led to removal of two proposed motorized trail additions as well as retention of 12.8 acres within the Corral Canyon OHV for continued use as trail riding locations (see sections 2.1.2.2 and 2.1.2.3 in the environmental assessment).

5.0 Finding of No Significant Impact

After considering the environmental effects described in the environmental assessment and supporting documentation found in the project file, I have determined that the selected alternative will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

The following is a summary of the project analysis for significance, as defined by NEPA (40 CFR 1508.27).

5.1 Beneficial and adverse impacts of the selected alternative. Both beneficial and adverse effects have been taken into consideration and displayed in the environmental assessment. Beneficial effects have not been used to offset or compensate for potential adverse effects. Singularly and collectively, resources affected by the selected alternative are not expected to experience significant impacts.

5.2 The degree to which the selected alternative affects public health or safety. Public health and safety would not be adversely affected by the selected alternative.

5.3 Unique characteristics of the geographic area. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area, such as historic resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, and wild and scenic rivers because no such resources are found in close proximity to the project area.

5.4 The degree to which the effects on the human environment are likely to be highly controversial. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. There is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of the project.

5.5 The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. Both the Forest Service in general and the Cleveland NF in particular have extensive experience managing land for off-highway vehicle use. The effects analysis shows that the effects of the selected alternative are not uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks. As described in the environmental assessment, LMP standards will be followed throughout project implementation and are designed to mitigate potential impacts to biological resources, heritage resources, public safety and security, water resources, and air quality.

5.6 The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. This decision does not set a precedent for future decisions. Any future decisions relating to travel management on the Cleveland NF would consider all relevant information available at the time. Specifically, the decision to implement the selected alternative does not preclude other routes from being added to the transportation system in the future—the decision to add any such routes will depend on site-specific analysis.

5.7 Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. The cumulative impacts are not significant. See the cumulative impact discussion for each resource in Chapter 3 of the environmental assessment.

5.8 The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Registers of Historic Places, or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources. The selected alternative will

have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The selected alternative will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

5.9 The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The biological assessment and biological evaluation concluded that the selected alternative will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or their habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act. Based on public comments, proposed additions to the travel management system that would have intersected arroyo toad habitat and/or riparian conservation areas were removed from consideration.

5.10 Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law, or other requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. Implementation of the selected alternative does not threaten a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

6.0 Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

My decision is consistent with the National Forest Management Act, the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and with the Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan. The project was designed in conformance with and incorporates LMP standards, tactics and strategies.

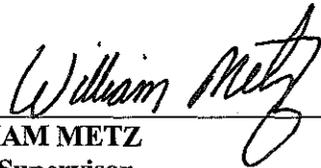
7.0 Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

My decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215. To initiate an appeal, a written notice of appeal must be postmarked within 45 days of the publication date of the legal notice of this decision in the San Diego *Union-Tribune*. Attachments received after the 45-day appeal period will not be considered. The publication date in the Union-Tribune is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Notices of appeal must meet the specific content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. Persons who wish to appeal must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.13.

Copies of the notice of appeal must be filed with Regional Forester, Attn: Appeals, USDA-Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, 1323 Club Drive, Vallejo, CA 94592. Appeals may be submitted in person at the address above during normal business hours of 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to appeals-pacificsouthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us.

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day appeal period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, five business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

Contact: For further information contact Pete Gomben, NEPA coordinator, Cleveland National Forest, 10845 Rancho Bernardo Road, Suite 200, San Diego, CA 92127, (858) 674-2901.



WILLIAM METZ
Forest Supervisor
Cleveland National Forest



Date

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