



United States  
Department  
of  
Agriculture

# Travel Management

## Final EIS Questions and Answers

### Eldorado National Forest



#### **Do you want to close the Forest?**

No. Motor vehicles are a legitimate and appropriate way for people to enjoy their national forests – in the right places and with proper management.

#### **Did you meet the court date to complete the EIS?**

Yes, we met the April 2, 2008 District Court deadline to complete the FEIS and Record of Decision. We still have a 45 day administrative appeal period and another 45 days to try to resolve any appeals.

#### **Why are you closing any routes? There are plenty of people interested in volunteering who will take care of the Forest.**

This project is designed to establish a “backbone system” of designated routes that complies with the Forest’s Standards and Guidelines. It is the intent of the Forest Supervisor to maintain the system of roads and trails open for use so that they can continue to be used. However, it is recognized that this travel management system is dynamic and allows for a yearly evaluation.

The Forest Service will monitor route conditions and will continue to perform necessary maintenance. The Forest Service intends to expand working with volunteers to complete needed route maintenance to avoid damage to routes. As a part of route designation, the Forest Service will annually prepare and distribute a free motor vehicle use map (MVUM). Based on trail monitoring, public input, and budget constraints, new routes may be added to the system, existing routes may be removed from the system or the system may remain unchanged.

#### **Why did the mileage open to motorized travel increase in Forest Supervisor’s decision?**

Based on comments received on the DEIS, Alternative B was modified between the DEIS and FEIS in order to provide a higher level of access than Alternative D while still minimizing impacts to certain resources. Many of the roads included in Modified B are secondary roads or short spur roads that provide access to areas used by people who camp, picnic, or enjoy other day use activities.

#### **Why are you shutting down the Rubicon Trail by not allowing travel on bypasses?**

This travel management project makes no decisions regarding State or County roads or highways, including the Rubicon 4WD Trail, which is a county un-maintained road. El Dorado County has been completing the Rubicon Trail Master Plan, which will provide direction for the use and management of the Rubicon Trail. The Forest has addressed some of the roads and trails providing access to the Rubicon Trail in this travel management project. However, some of the bypasses were not included because no site-specific analysis was completed. We will continue to work with the county to address specific bypasses along the trail.

#### **How will I know where I can travel legally?**

The Forest will annually produce a motorized travel map displaying the designated travel routes open to public use, much the same as it has since 2005.

Forest Service  
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Region



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**Won't there be increased impacts on the remaining routes if the demand increases and travel opportunities are reduced?**

Reducing the total number of miles of routes does not necessarily lead to increased resource damage. Trails and roads in sensitive areas are more likely to sustain damage, even at lower levels of use, whereas trails and roads that are located in stable areas or otherwise avoid sensitive areas (archaeological sites, sensitive plant locations, etc.) can accommodate high levels of use without leading to resource damage. It is not just a matter of concentration of use, but also the location of routes, for both providing a good recreation opportunity and avoiding resource impacts. We cannot guarantee that impacts to trails will not increase as a result of a reduction in travel opportunities. However, we will continue to monitor route conditions.

**How will the routes be maintained?**

The forest will continue to use federal funding for road or trail maintenance. However, we intend to work with interested people to help maintain the trails. This assistance may come in the form of volunteer work or grants to accomplish specific work.

**Did you consider or analyze new routes to meet growing demand for access?**

No. The Forest Supervisor at the start of the project decided that, in order comply with the court ordered timeline, it was necessary to keep the scope of the project manageable. As a result, construction of new routes was not part of this decision. It will be possible, however, to revise designations as needed to meet changing conditions, including the potential to add new routes following public involvement and site specific environmental analysis.

**Will the designated travel routes be different from the routes people have been allowed to travel on since 2005 when the court order went into effect?**

In many cases the routes people have been using will be the same, however, there were a few unauthorized routes added and a some NFS roads or trails closed for resource protection. The court ordered map includes a number of routes that were never intended to be open to the public (ML-1) roads that will not be shown on the new map.

**What if I disagree with the decision?**

Appeals from people who commented on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be reviewed by R-5 Regional Forester. The 45 day appeal period begins April 2, 2008.

**How will this decision affect persons with disabilities?**

Persons in a wheel chair will be able to go where ever foot travel is permitted. However, restrictions on motor vehicles, including 4 X 4s, ATVs, and motorcycles, apply to all people, including those with disabilities.

**Isn't there a way you can designate a route through private land?**

The Forest Service may obtain an easement through a written agreement with the property owner or through condemnation – taking property for public use by power of eminent domain. The Forest Service has worked with landowners to obtain easements or rights of way across private land and will continue to do so, within the limits of available resources and funding.

**Won't you need the closed roads to fight wildfires?**

This decision does not obliterate routes; it merely decided which routes are open to public use. Any thought about obliteration will need to be explored in a more site specific decision and not in this one.

**Why have you limited access to dispersed camp sites?**

This decision limits cross country travel, driving off system roads and trails. This prohibition has been in place since 2005 when the court order was implemented. You will be able to park one vehicle length off the road, and in some cases you may need to carry your gear to your campsite. This decision includes some short parking spurs that lead to popular dispersed camping, picnicking, and other day use sites. An analysis of dispersed camping sites will begin after this decision is implemented.

**Why are you closing the dirt roads for three months in the winter?**

The primary objectives of the wet season closure are to protect drainage structures, such as earthen mounds placed across roads to channel water off the road, to protect the road or trail tread from rutting or other damage and to minimize impacts to water quality. Appendix D was added to the FEIS to explain the basis for the period of closure. As described in Appendix D, the closure period is based on rainfall data and soil moisture conditions associated with the critically dry water year type. The Forest Supervisor may sign Forest Orders at other times of the year to close roads or trails due to wet weather conditions, when conditions warrant.

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**Are you following the Executive Order to minimize impacts to specific resources?**

Yes. Alternative B was modified between the DEIS and FEIS. Modified B provides a high level of access while adhering to Standards and Guidelines within the LRMP and minimizing impacts to certain resources, as described in Chapter 2 of the FEIS. Modified B and the other action alternatives were developed to meet the objectives of the Executive Orders and the Travel Management Rule, as described in Chapter 1 of the FEIS under the Purpose and Need.

**Are there any changes to non-motorized routes?**

Yes, 1.7 miles of non-motorized routes are now motorized and 10.3 miles of previously motorized routes are non-motorized, mostly in the Caples Creek area.

**When will this decision be implemented?**

Given the appeal period and associated administrative activities the forest will not be implementing until January of 2009. The interim forest order and Motor Vehicle Restriction map will continue to be used for the 2008 summer season.

**Why are you allowing travel on the Hunter's trail?**

This area was identified during public scoping as one that various interests were concerned about. Certain users recommended that motorcycle use continue to be allowed on the trail as it provides a unique high country opportunity in a scenic setting. Others requested that the trail be closed to motorized use to allow for undisrupted non-motorized recreation. The Forest Supervisor decided to allow motorized use on the Hunter's Trail to provide a unique riding opportunity. This was balanced with not allowing wheeled motor vehicle use in other high country areas, such as the Caples Creek recommended wilderness area.

**What about hunting? Can I still drive to my hunter's camp?**

Depends on whether or not your camp is accessed by a designated route. This was considered when the routes were designated.

**How will this decision affect woodcutting?**

Driving off road is covered by the terms of the woodcutting permit.

**Why didn't you notify people that you were planning to keep people on designated roads?**

We attempted to notify as many people as possible that they were invited to participate in public involvement activities. Public awareness activities began in 2005 when

the court order went into effect restricting people to travel only on routes identified on a free map. Last summer more than 1,200 people attended public meetings and 6,000 people sent in comments on the draft EIS. We'll continue to try to reach more people.

**How quickly will you start working on the dispersed camping and parking situation?**

The Implementation Strategy presented in Chapter 2 of the FEIS describes how the ENF intends to develop a strategy for designating areas for public motor vehicle use of dispersed camping areas within one year after the completion of the ROD.

**Will you decommission routes if you can't maintain them?**

Route decommissioning is a proposed action that is normally triggered by resource concerns. If a road or trail is causing resource concerns and the route is not providing some other benefit, or if it provides access into an area where motorized use would cause resource concerns, then decommissioning is considered. The decommissioning proposal is then analyzed through the NEPA process. Some routes may be proposed for decommissioning because there is a lack of adequate maintenance funding, and therefore the routes have deteriorated to the level where resource damage is a concern. If this happens, decommissioning won't be postponed while waiting on the available maintenance funding to be increased.

**How can we get a second look at routes if they are closed? What about new routes, or routes that need to be closed?**

The Implementation Strategy in Chapter 2 of the FEIS describes that the ENF will begin working with public stakeholders within six months of the final decision. The process for considering the addition of routes, closure of routes, or changes in management of the designated system will be developed in collaboration with diverse interested publics.

**Why does the Poho Ridge area have a seasonal closure?**

The experience on the ENF has been that to implement a wet weather closure that opens roads or trails for short periods during the normal wet season has required a significant amount of time and resources to assure that signs are changed to display which routes are open or closed, gates are in proper positions, and phone messages, email messages, and websites are current. The Forest Supervisor has concluded that it is not reasonable to implement the Rock Creek strategy for seasonal closure to

other areas of the Forest because of the staffing needed to implement signing, gate management, etc., and the ability to inform the diverse publics that use the Forest in a timely way.

### **Why didn't you include more miles of mixed use in your decision?**

The mixed use designation that is part of the ROD/FEIS is limited to roads that are going to be managed as Maintenance Level 2 roads. The Forest separates the road system into two classes- roads that are subject to the Highway Safety Act, and roads that are not subject to the Highway Safety Act. Our more heavily used, higher standard roads are included in the class of roads subject to the Highway Safety Act. The Maintenance Level 2 roads are not subject to the Highway Safety Act. We manage the heavily used roads similar to County and State roads, and we start with the presumption that they are not suitable for mixed use by off-highway and highway legal vehicles. If through a detailed analysis we feel confident that mixed use on these roads can be safely accommodated, then we will designate them in the future for mixed use. The information needed for this detailed analysis isn't available, and we are planning to begin the process of collecting this information this year. However, we don't want to create the wrong impression about the future. Allowing mixed use on roads subject to the Highway Safety Act may be considered on a few key roads in the future, but we have no intention of designating a large number of these roads as allowable for mixed use.

### **Why have you changed access to Little Indian Valley and Indian Valley?**

Wheeled motor vehicle use will not be allowed in Indian Valley because of two issues that do not comply with the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) standards and guidelines. The trail that provides access, 19E04, bisects the meadow in Indian Valley and the ENF does not have a public right-of-way for road 9N03, which accesses 19E04. The unauthorized routes within Little Indian Valley are within a Critical Aquatic Refuge. These routes were not designated to minimize impacts to the aquatic resources.

### **Are you planning to close down campgrounds, boat ramps, and restrooms?**

No. In a process un-related to travel management, the Eldorado determined through a recreation facility assessment, formally known as Recreation Facility Master Plan, that it could keep all of its 113 facilities open with the exception of a restroom on Highway 50. Considering the size of the recreation demand on this relatively small urban Forest, the analysis came out with good news. You can find more information about the Recreation Facility Assessment on our website at: [www.fs.fed.us/r5/eldorado/rfa/index](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/eldorado/rfa/index) .

### **Why is Caples Creek Trail non-motorized? It was allowed under the Forest Plan.**

A large portion of the Caples Creek IRA is within a management area recommended for Wilderness designation in the ENF LRMP. As such, that portion of the Caples Creek Inventoried Roadless Area has additional management direction applied to it. National direction for management of recommended wilderness areas states in part that "activities currently permitted may continue, pending designation, if the activities do not compromise wilderness values of the area" (FSM 1923.03). The analysis of these effects is described in the Wilderness section of Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

### **Why didn't you consider equestrian's needs with your parking decision? We need more space for vehicles, trailhead parking is too limited.**

Limiting vehicles to one vehicle length from the edge of the route provides a guideline between parking on the route system and driving cross country. The distance proposed in this analysis is the distance currently proposed nationally by the Forest Service. The Forest Service agrees that parking in inappropriate locations or positions can be a safety issue. Following the release of the FEIS and Record of Decision, analysis for designating public motor vehicle use for dispersed recreation will be conducted as resources are available.

### **Why aren't you protecting meadows more?**

Appendix G contains the rationale for not allowing motorized use on routes in Modified B. Routes identified for inclusion in the Forest Plan Amendment are routes that provided a unique recreation opportunity (such as high elevation trail experience), enhanced the recreation experience by connecting routes or areas, provided access to an area of interest, or allow access to dispersed camping. The ecological importance of meadow habitat was considered and the number of routes crossing meadows was minimized.

### **Did you give into the OHV community?**

The comments we received on the DEIS covered a wide, often conflicting, range of concerns from Forests users with diverse interests. The Forest Supervisor, in his decision, wanted to provide access for both motorized and non-motorized users in a manner that is environmentally sustainable over the long term. Alternative B was modified to respond to those comments by providing greater access for all classes of vehicles, complying with LRMP standards and guidelines, displaying rationale for eliminating use on ML-2 routes, and minimizing impacts to certain resources. Prohibiting cross country travel will enhance our ability to provide clean water and wildlife habitat and protect against soil erosion.

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**Did you consider the interests of people who want quiet recreation?**

Yes. Noise is a concern that was considered in this decision. National Forests are managed by law for multiple uses. The effects to recreation visitors, including those seeking quiet recreation opportunities, are described in Chapter 3 in the Recreation, Wilderness, and Inventoried Roadless Areas sections.

**Are you encouraging illegal use by allowing mixed use on dirt roads? Aren't you encouraging route proliferation?**

We do not believe we are encouraging illegal use when we allow mixed use on the lower standard roads that are not subject to the Highway Safety Act. The direction in our Forest Plan states that, in general, native surface roads will be open to both highway and non-highway licensed vehicles.

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