



**What is “Roads Analysis?”  
in the  
Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area  
USDA Forest Service  
November 2002**



The Forest Service’s Transportation Policy adopted in 2000 requires that road management decisions that may affect access or generate adverse environmental effects be informed by a “roads analysis.” Because there will be decisions in future projects that affect roads and public access, the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area is conducting the required roads analysis. Since the analysis we will be looking at currently is specific to the National Scenic Area at large it is called a “Forest Scale Analysis.” Project, or watershed scale analysis, which is specific to a particular part of the National Scenic Area, will be conducted when appropriate.

The Forest Scale Analysis is an assessment of conditions, issues, and needs. It does not include a decision. Rather, it provides information that will be used with the revision of the National Scenic Area management plan. It also provides the base for project scale analyses.

The Forest Scale Analysis considers environmental issues, social issues, rights-of-way acquisition needs, transportation investments needed, current and likely future funding levels, and the **relationship of the Forest’s road system to other transportation systems (e.g. county, city, tribal, state, etc.)**. The report will: cover all classified roads (Forest Service defined maintenance levels 1 through 5) as well as currently inventoried unclassified roads; develop guidelines for addressing road management issues and priorities; identification of significant issues, concerns, and opportunities; and documentation of coordination efforts. It also sets priorities for watershed/project scale assessments. Maintenance levels and other terminology are defined in a separate sheet (Roadway Terminology).

**The Assessment Process Has Six Primary Steps:**

**STEP 1.** Set up the analysis by clarifying roles and responsibilities, establishing primary contacts, identifying information available/needed, and establishing an Interdisciplinary Team. This step has been completed.

**STEP 2.** Describe the situation. This includes collecting State, County, City, Forest Service, and Tribal road maps and identifying future plans. It also includes identifying watershed areas, high fire risk areas, utility corridors, recreation sites, study areas, streams and lakes, soils, etc. This is an exercise in data collection of existing information. This step also includes identifying legally mandated processes that are required for transportation planning (National Forest Management Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, etc.) The information collected should broadly describe the road system area from a physical, biological, social, cultural, economic, and political perspective. This step has largely been completed.

**STEP 3.** Identify issues. This necessitates contacting state DOT, county officials, city officials, Tribes, Forest Service disciplines, citizens at large, and interest groups. Issues considered in the Forest Scale Roads Analysis are those related to roads only, including the origin and basis covering environmental, social, cultural, and economic concerns. These might include realignment, additions, deletions, management objectives, etc. This will be handled through direct contacts, open houses, and public meetings. Public Open Houses are planned for Tuesday, December 3 from 6:00-8:30 p.m. at the Hood River Inn in Hood River, Oregon and Wednesday, December 4 from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. at the Rock Creek Center in Stevenson, Washington. We have begun this step.

**STEP 4.** Assessment of benefits, problems, and risks. The Interdisciplinary Team will systematically examine the major uses and effects of the road system to generate an information baseline against which the existing and future road systems can be compared. The main element of this step will be to assess the various benefits, problems, and risks of the current road system and whether the objectives of Forest Service policy are being met.

**STEP 5.** Description of opportunities and setting priorities. The Interdisciplinary Team and Area Manager will identify management opportunities, establish priorities, and formulate technical recommendations for the existing and future road system that responds to the issues and concerns, benefits, problems, and risks identified in the preceding steps, using public participation wherever appropriate. The objective is to compare the current road system with what is desirable or acceptable, and describe options for modifying the road system that would achieve desirable or acceptable conditions.

**STEP 6.** Issuance of a final report. The final report will describe the key findings of the analysis. **All steps with a final report must be completed by January 13, 2003.**

**The following questions can help identify issues associated with the existing National Forest road system in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area:**

- Where are our transportation access shortcomings?
- Which roads are crucial for private access, tribal access, state or other federal agency access, bus routes, etc.?
- Which roads are problems for poaching, trash dumping, safety?
- Which roads have high traditional uses? Low uses? Are important for recreational use?
- To what degree do the presence, type, and location of roads contribute to the control of insects, disease, and parasites?
- What are the adverse effects of noise caused by developing, using, and maintaining roads?
- Which roads or segments have high cost maintenance problems?
- Which roads or segments may be degrading water quality, damaging streams, and riparian plant communities?
- Which roads should be closed and why? Remain open and why?
- Which roads facilitate human activities and their effect? Should limit human activities and why?

- How does the road system directly affect unique communities or special features?
- How does the road system affect cultural resources?
- How does the road system affect economics in the area?
- How does the road system connect to public roads and provide access to communities?
- How does the road system connect blocks of land in other ownership?
- Which roads are better served under Town Jurisdiction? Forest Service Jurisdiction? State? Tribal? Other?
- How does the road system address the safety of road users?
- How does the road system affect investigative or enforcement activities?
- How does the road system provide access for fire control?
- How does the road system affect cultural and traditional uses (such as plant gathering and access to traditional and cultural sites) and American Indian treaty rights?
- What are traditional uses of animal and plant species in the area?
- How does the road spacing and location affect logging system feasibility? Managing suitable timber base?
- How does the current road system affect managing special-use permit sites?

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