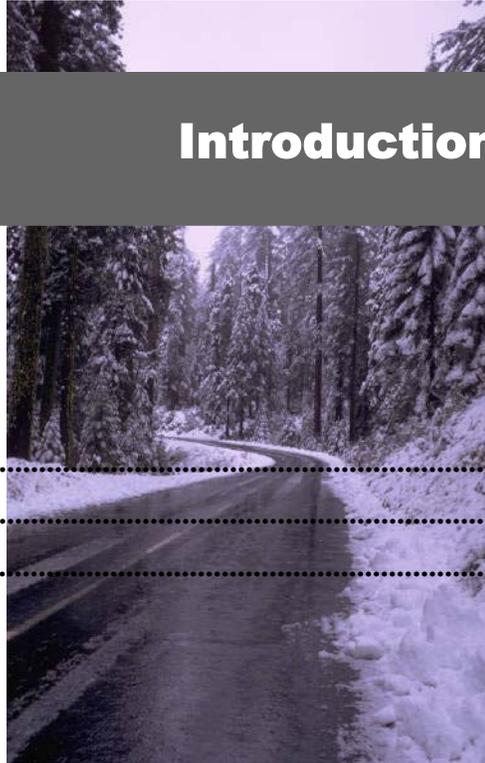


Chapter 1

Introduction

Table of Contents

BACKGROUND	1
PROCESS	2
REPORT	2



Background

In August 1999, the Washington Office of the USDA Forest Service published Miscellaneous Report FS-643, *Roads Analysis: Informing Decisions about Managing the National Forest Transportation System*. The objective of roads analysis is to provide decision-makers with critical information to develop road systems that are safe and responsive to public needs and desires, are affordable and efficiently managed, have minimal negative ecological effects on the land, and are in balance with available funding for needed management actions.

In October 1999, the agency published Interim Directive 7710-99-1 authorizing units to use, as appropriate, the road analysis procedure embodied in FS-643 to assist land managers in making major road management decisions.

On March 3, 2000, the Forest Service proposed to revise 36 CFR Part 212 to shift emphasis from transportation development to managing administrative and public access within the capability of the lands. The proposal was to shift the focus of National Forest System road management from development and construction of new roads to maintaining and restoring needed roads and decommissioning unneeded roads within the context of maintaining, managing, and restoring healthy ecosystems.

On January 12, 2001, the Forest Service issued the final National Forest System Road Management Rule. This rule revised regulations concerning the management, use, and maintenance of the National Forest Transportation System. Consistent with changes in public demands and use of National Forest System resources and the need to better manage funds available for road construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and decommissioning, the final rule removes the emphasis on transportation development and adds a requirement for science-based transportation analysis. The final rule is intended to help ensure that additions to the National Forest System road network are deemed essential for resource management and use; that construction, reconstruction, and maintenance of roads minimize adverse environmental impacts; and that unneeded roads are decommissioned and restoration of ecological processes are initiated.

On December 14, 2001, the agency published Interim Directive 7710-2001-3 which removed interim requirements of Section 7712.16. This section addressed road management activities in inventoried roadless and contiguous unroaded areas and reserved to the Chief decision authority over some road construction and reconstruction in roadless and unroaded areas. The directive clarified how and when decisions on roads are made and what actions and activities require roads analysis. Interim directive 7710-2001-2 was removed from 7710 but remains in effect with some change and was simultaneously reissued as an interim directive to Chapter 1920. Interim directive 7710-2001-1 was superseded by 7710-2001-3. Interim Directive 7710-2001-3 expires June 14, 2003.

An optimum road system supports land management objectives. For the Forest Service, those objectives have markedly changed in recent years. How roads are managed must be reassessed in light of those changes. Expanding road networks have created many opportunities for new uses and activities in national forests, but they have also dramatically altered the character of the landscape. The Forest Service must find an appropriate balance between the benefits of access to the national forests and the costs of road-associated effects to ecosystem values. Providing road systems that are safe to the public, responsive to public needs, environmentally sound, affordable, and efficient to manage is among the agency's top priorities. Completing an assessment of the road system is a key step to meeting this objective.

Roads analysis is an integrated ecological, social, and economic approach to transportation planning, addressing both existing and future road systems. The analysis is designed to be scaleable, flexible, and driven by road-related issues important to the public and managers. It uses a multi-scale approach to ensure that these issues are examined in context and provides a set of analytical questions to be used in fitting analysis techniques to individual situations. Roads analysis is intended to complement and integrate existing laws, policy, guidance, and practice into the analysis and management of roads on national forests.

The detail of the analyses must be appropriate to the intensity of the issues addressed. Where ecosystem analyses or assessments are completed, roads analysis will use that information rather than duplicating efforts. Roads analysis may be integrated as a component of watershed analysis, landscape assessments, and other analyses supporting existing decision processes.

Roads analysis neither makes decisions nor allocates lands for specific purposes. Line officers, with public participation, make decisions. The roads analysis report informs the decision-maker about effects, consequences, options, and priorities, and provides information about important ecological, social, and economic issues.

Roads analysis may be conducted at multiple scales to inform road management decisions. Generally, road management decisions should be informed by roads analysis at a broad scale. Accordingly, all units of the National Forest System should conduct a forest-scale roads analysis (FSM 7710, Section 7712.13).

Roads analysis at the forest-scale will generally provide the context for informing road management decisions and activities at the watershed, area, and project level. However, it is generally expected that road inventories and road condition assessments such as 1) identification of needed and unneeded roads; 2) identification of road associated environmental and public safety risks; 3) identification of site-specific priorities and opportunities for road improvements and decommissioning; 4) identification of areas of special sensitivity, unique resource values, or both; and 5) any other specific information that may be needed to support project-level decisions would be completed at the watershed or project scale (sub-forest scale), not the forest scale.

Process

Roads analysis is a six-step process. The steps are designed to be sequential; the process may require feedback and iteration among steps over time as the analysis matures. The amount of time and effort spent on each step differs by project based on specific situations and available information. The process provides a set of possible issues and analysis questions; the answers can help managers make choices about road system management. Decision-makers and analysts determine the relevance of each question, incorporating public participation as deemed necessary. The following six steps guided the process.

Step 1: Setting up the analysis

Step 2: Describing the situation

Step 3: Identifying the issues

Step 4: Assessing benefits, problems, and risks

Step 5: Describing opportunities and setting priorities

Step 6: Reporting (Key Findings)

Report

- The product of this analysis is a report for the Forest Supervisor and the public. The report documents the information and analyses used to identify opportunities and set guidelines and priorities for the Umatilla National Forest road system. Maps and spreadsheets displaying the known road system for the analysis area and the values, risks, and opportunities for each road or road segment are included.