



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

**Southwestern
Region**

July 2008

Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact For

Travel Management on the Sandia Ranger District

**Cibola National Forest, Bernalillo and
Sandoval Counties, New Mexico**



Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact

Travel Management on the Sandia Ranger District

USDA Forest Service
Sandia Ranger District, Cibola National Forest
Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties, New Mexico

Decision and Rationale for the Decision

Background

On November 9, 2005, the Forest Service published the final regulations governing off-highway vehicles (OHVs) and other motor vehicle use on national forests and grasslands (Travel Management; Designated, Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use, Federal Register / Vol. 70, No. 216/36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295). This Travel Management Rule requires each national forest and grassland to designate those roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use. Designation will include class of vehicle and, if appropriate, time of year for motor vehicle use. Designated routes and areas will be identified on a motor vehicle use map (MVUM). After routes have been designated and these designations have been identified on a MVUM, motor vehicle use will be prohibited off the designated system. There are exemptions to designations specified in the Travel Management Rule including: aircraft, watercraft, limited administrative use by the Forest Service, use of any fire, military, emergency, or law enforcement vehicle for emergency purposes, authorized use of any combat or combat support vehicle for national defense purposes and law enforcement response or emergency needs (36 CFR 212.51 (a)). Use can be authorized when specified in contracts or permits, and to accommodate valid existing rights such as traditional tribal cultural uses. Vehicles designed for “over the snow” use, such as snowmobiles, are not being considered as part of this project as directed in the Travel Management Rule § 212.81.

The transportation system and motorized recreation use and management has had distinctly different characteristics on the Sandia Mountains north of Interstate 40 (I-40) and the Cedro area south of I-40. The Sandia Mountains have been managed primarily for developed recreation and non-motorized trail use. While cross country travel was permitted on the east side of this area under the Cibola Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) direction, there has been relatively little cross country travel compared to the Cedro area. There is a concentration of developed recreation sites along the Crest Highway (NM 536) and in the Juan Tabo Basin. Since Sandia Mountain Wilderness is closed to mechanized and motorized use, motorcycle, ATV and mountain bikers have concentrated use within the Cedro area south of I-40. As a result, most motorized OHV recreation has occurred in the Cedro area.

This project considers motorized travel management on approximately 33,025 acres of the Sandia Ranger District that does not include the military withdrawals, the Sandia Mountain Wilderness, or the area included in the “Ecosystem Management Plan for National Forest Lands In and Adjacent to the Military Withdrawal” decision. There are 45.4 miles of National Forest System roads (NFSR) on the Sandia Ranger District that are open to general motorized use. Of these, 19.1 miles are maintained and managed for all motorized vehicles licensed by any state to operate on public roads. There are 26.3 miles of system

roads that are managed for high-clearance vehicles, such as pickups or sport utility vehicles. In the Cedro area, OHV use by all vehicles has been permitted on the roads managed for high-clearance vehicles including NFSR 462. There are 51.1 miles of National Forest System trails on the Sandia Ranger District where motorized use has been accepted, all south of I-40. The Cedro trails are also popular with mountain bikers, equestrians and hikers. These routes are shown in the EA Appendix A, on the “Existing Direction North of I-40” and “Existing Direction Cedro Area” maps. Due to cross country travel in the Cedro area, there are a large number of unauthorized (user created routes) often creating a dense network of criss-crossing paths.

Motor vehicle use on the Sandia Ranger District has increased in recent years as the Albuquerque and East Mountain communities’ populations continue to grow. This increased use has led to the proliferation of unauthorized (user-created) routes; increased conflict between motorized and non-motorized recreationists; complaints about noise, trespass, and dust from adjacent landowners; and concerns about degraded soil, water, vegetation, and wildlife habitat conditions.

Previous Decisions

The Travel Management Rule directs that “the responsible official may incorporate previous administrative decisions regarding travel management made under other authorities, including designations and prohibitions of motor vehicle use, in designating National Forest System roads, National Forest System trails, and areas on National Forest System lands for motor vehicle use.” (36 CFR §212.50b) The previous decisions that will be incorporated into MVUM designations with no change are:

- Areas closed to cross-country travel in the 1986 Forest Plan and subsequent amendments including the Bernalillo Watershed Research Natural Area.
- All roads that are maintenance level 3 and 4 and are currently managed for vehicles licensed for public highways will be designated for highway legal vehicles only. There are 18.3 miles of maintenance level 3 and 4 roads on Sandia Ranger District. These roads are shown on the “Existing Direction Maps, North of I-40 and Cedro Area” in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for this project. The majority of these roads are paved roads and/or roads in picnic areas or other developed recreation sites.
- Motorized vehicle use is not permitted in the Sandia Mountain Wilderness areas as noted in the legislation that designated this area as wilderness.
- Public access is not permitted in the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Energy (DOE) withdrawals. DOD and DOE are responsible for managing motorized use within the withdrawals. The Forest Plan acknowledges the closure of the 20,486 acres included in the withdrawals to public entry for security and safety purposes. The existing withdrawn lands are established for purposes of tactical training, research, and military developments by both agencies [DOD and DOE] and their contractors most recently through Public Land Orders 995 (in 1980) and 4569 (in 1969.)
- Travel management decisions in the “Ecosystem Management Plan for National Forest Lands In and Adjacent to the Military Withdrawal,” and the subsequent closure order 03-211 signed in April 2005. This Decision Notice closed the project area to cross-country travel and designated 16 miles of trails for motorcycle use. These trails are shown on the “Existing Direction Maps”.
- Single-use roads such as the ski area administration roads and the helibase access road are currently gated and will not be designated for public use.

Decision

I have given careful consideration to the resources affected by the proposal and have read and considered the effects discussed in the Environmental Assessment and the Biological Evaluations. I have listened to and understood the public discourse that has resulted from this proposal including those responses received during the 30-day comment period. I also considered the existing Forest Plan, guidance provided by law, regulation and policy; and consultations with District and Forest specialists and the USDI Fish & Wildlife Service. I have reviewed the project record that shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgment of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk. I have considered the best available science in making this decision.

Based upon my review of all alternatives, their effects, comments received in response to the proposals, and the criteria specified for consideration in the Travel Management Rule, I have decided to implement Alternative 4 with modifications from selected actions from Alternative 5. The modifications are described on page 5 of this document.

Sandia Mountains (North of I-40)

This table provides the total miles where designation changes the permitted use with this decision:

Route Designation Miles – North of I-40		
Current Status	Designation	Total
Open System Roads	Not Designated for Motor Vehicle Use	4.70
Open System Road, Open to all motorized vehicles	Highway legal vehicles only	5.77

All motorized vehicle use will be restricted to routes designated and displayed on the motor vehicle use map (MVUM.) Cross country travel will be prohibited. 5.77 miles of road in the Bernalillo watershed (NFSR 445) is designated for state licensed highway legal vehicles only, changed from the current management where this road is open to all OHVs.

Motorized travel is prohibited on 3.02 miles of NFSRs 62AB, 62B and 63C, and National Forest System trail (NFST) 0562 located north of La Madera Road. Currently these routes are shown as open in the roads database, but can only be accessed from the road under easement to Western Refining, a road that is not open to general public use under the terms of the easement. Motorized travel is prohibited on 1.68 miles of National Forest System roads (NFSRs) 445C and 445H in the Bernalillo watershed area, and will no longer be open for use by motor vehicles.

Designations are shown on the “Decision Map, Sandia Mountains – North of I-40” at the end of this document.

Cedro Area – South

This table provides the total miles designated (including new construction) by vehicle class with this decision:

Route Designation Miles by Vehicle Class – Cedro Area		
Current Status	Designation	Total
Open System Road	All Vehicles (including OHV)	10.04
Open System Trail	All Vehicles (including OHV)	1.04
Unauthorized Route	All Vehicles (including OHV)	0.29
<i>All Vehicles (including OHV) Total</i>		<i>11.37</i>
New Construction	Vehicles <50in Wide (ATVs and motorcycles)	0.86
Unauthorized Route	Vehicles <50in Wide (ATVs and motorcycles)	0.90
<i>Vehicles <50in Wide (ATVs and motorcycles)</i>		<i>1.76</i>
Open System Road	Motorcycles	2.50
Open System Trail	Motorcycles	28.84
Closed System Road	Motorcycles	0.38
New Construction	Motorcycles	2.64
Unauthorized Route	Motorcycles	8.30
<i>Motorcycles Total</i>		<i>42.65</i>
Grand Total		55.79

Designations are shown on the Decision Map, Cedro – South.

A number of unauthorized trails will be designated and added to the National Forest trail system. These routes are shown on the *Decision Map - Cedro Area*. These routes provide key links to Oak Flat Road which is County Road 413, SH 337 near Oak Flat, and to the Five Hills area at the terminus of Five Hills Drive, a Bernalillo county road.

I am approving new trail construction totaling 3.5 miles as shown on the *Decision Map - Cedro Area*. These trails replace existing system trails where there are erosion and access concerns. These new trails will not be shown on the MVUM until construction has been completed and the trail is open to the public. Minor rerouting of short trail segments will be completed to relocate trails out of channel bottoms and around gullies in the Cedro Peak area. These include segments of National Forest System trail (NFST) 05184 Chamisoso, NFST 05608 Wild Cat, and NFST 05619 Coyote. These reroutes will range from approximately 50 to 500 feet and total less than 1/2 mile for all trails. Since these are existing trails, they will be shown as designated trails on the initial MVUM. The reroutes will be completed in the course of routine trail maintenance.

There are three existing trailheads that access the motorized trail system—Chamisoso Trailhead on NFSR 462 near the junction with NM 337, Lower Pine Trailhead on NFSR 462 near the Tablazon Subdivision and Cedro Trailhead near the Cedro Group Campground on NFSR 252. These trailheads will be shown on the MVUM for motorized trail use access. There are no changes to these trailheads.

One new trailhead is approved for construction near the junction with NFSR 462 and the road to the Sandia Ranger District helipad site. This trailhead will include a vault toilet, up to 3 picnic tables, parking for up to 20 vehicles and an information board. The parking area will be designed to accommodate

vehicles pulling trailers. I approve adding trailhead use to the Oak Area picnic site in the Oak Flat complex. This trailhead will utilize the Oak Area facilities. Oak Area Group Picnic Area will be adapted so that it also functions as a trailhead for connecting to the designated system and will be open year round. The Oak Area site will continue to be available for picnic reservations year round. The rest of the Oak Flat complex will continue to be managed as group picnic sites: Yucca, Juniper, Pine, Pinon, and Locust sites will remain exclusively group picnic sites, available by reservation only.

Motorized dispersed camping will be restricted to the six designated locations in the Cedro area as shown on the *Decision Map - South, Cedro Area*. This includes the three sites adjacent to NFSR 542, one site along NFR 462, and two sites adjacent to NFSR 242. Dispersed motorized camping will be permitted within 100 feet of the junction of NFSR 9 and NFSR 242 and the beginning and end of the corridor will be marked by signs at the site.

There are three modifications in this decision to Alternative 4; all three modifications were analyzed in Alternative 5. A 0.65 mile segment of NFST05618 Gambles Oak/Mahogany beginning with the junction at County Road 36 will not be designated for motorized use. This segment of the trail joins County Road 36 on a corner, and there is no parking available to safely unload at this junction. County Road 36 is a paved road open only to vehicles licensed for highway use, so this segment does not support a loop system or OHV access.

NFSR 462 between the northern Forest boundary and the private land will be designated for vehicles licensed for highway use only. This segment connects a paved county road with private land, and does not support a connection to OHV access for vehicles other than motorcycles. There is parking available for unloading off highway motorcycles at the Lower Pine Trailhead. The southern ½ mile of NFST 0511.1 Lower Pine will not be designated for motorized use between the junction with NFST 05608 Wild Cat and Forest Road 11 where it crosses private land. Since this segment accesses a private road, it will not be designated for motorized use.

There is also one correction as shown on the Errata sheet in Appendix D of the EA. The Cedro trailhead near the Cedro Group Campground will be shown as trailhead parking for motorized vehicle access to trails. This is an existing trailhead, and no changes are part of this decision.

Motorized Route Designations being made with this Decision

This table provides the total miles being designated (including new construction) with this decision. The routes are categorized by the current status and designation displays the designation with the publication of the MVUM.

Route Designation Miles by Status – District Wide		
Current Status	Designation	Total
Closed System Road	Motorcycles	0.38
<i>Closed System Road Total</i>		<i>0.38</i>
New Construction	Vehicles <50in Wide (ATVs and motorcycles)	0.86
	Motorcycles	2.64
<i>New Construction Total</i>		<i>3.5</i>

Route Designation Miles by Status – District Wide		
Current Status	Designation	Total
Open System Road	All Vehicles (including OHV)	8.79
	Highway Legal only	7.02
	Motorcycles	2.50
<i>Open System Road Total</i>		<i>18.31</i>
Open System Trail	All Vehicles (including OHV)	1.04
	Motorcycles	28.84
<i>Open System Trail Total</i>		<i>29.88</i>
Unauthorized routes	All Vehicles (including OHV)	0.29
	Vehicles <50in Wide (ATVs and motorcycles)	0.90
	Motorcycles	8.30
<i>Unauthorized Total</i>		<i>9.49</i>
Grand Total		61.57

The following are the route designations included in my decision:

Route Number	Miles	Route Designation
Trails – Cedro Area		
0511.1 Lower Pine –north segment above Wild Cat trail junction	1.08	Motorcycles (Single track)
0511.1 Lower Pine –north segment below Wild Cat trail junction	.50	Not designated for motorized use
0511C Lone Pine	1.70	Motorcycles (single track)
0512 Poker Chip	0.23	Motorcycles (single track)
05184 Chamisos	1.87	Motorcycles (single track)
05252B Cedro Single Track	1.91	Motorcycles (single track)
05252C Meadow Ridge	0.91	Full-size 4x4 (all vehicles)
05252D Rattlesnake	0.46	Motorcycles (single track)
05257 Mighty Mule	1.25	Motorcycles (single track)
0527 Bear Scat	1.74	Motorcycles (single track)
05542B Powerline	0.88	Motorized <50 inches (ATV and Motorcycle)
	2.31	Motorcycles (single track)
05602 Mahogany	0.37	Not designated for motorized use
05604 Ponderosa	0.19	Not designated for motorized use
05605 Rabbit Run	0.71	Motorcycles (single track)
05606 Pinyon 2-track	0.80	Motorcycles (single track)

05607 Pinyon	1.52	Motorcycles (single track)
	0.42	Not designated for motorized use
	0.89	Motorcycles (single track)
05608 Wild Cat	0.75	Motorcycles (single track)
05610 Rocky Top	0.20	Not designated for motorized use
05612 Poker Chip	0.27	Not designated for motorized use
	1.57	Motorcycles (single track)
05618 Gamble Oak/Mahogany	1.15	Not designated for motorized use
	0.65	Not designated for motorized use
	1.74	Motorcycles (single track)
05619 Coyote	0.64	Not designated for motorized use
	4.14	Motorcycles (single track)
05851Coyote Split	0.79	Motorcycles (single track)
Trails—Sandia Mountains North of I-40		
0565	0.74	Not designated for motorized use
Roads—Cedro		
11	0.15	Motorcycles (single track)
11A	0.25	Not designated for motorized use
12 Meadow 2-track	1.50	Full-size 4x4 (all vehicles)
	0.13	Motorcycles (single track)
13 Cedro 2-track	2.02	Full-size 4x4 (all vehicles)
35B	0.38	Motorcycles (single track)
	0.55	Not designated for motorized use
9	2.34	Motorcycles (single track)
462	1.25	Highway legal vehicles only
	2.95	Full-size 4x4 (all vehicles)
542	2.30	Full-Size 4x4 (All Vehicles)
Roads—Sandia Mountains North Of I-40		
445	5.77	Highway Legal Vehicles Only
445c	1.11	Not Designated For Motorized Use
445h	0.57	Not Designated For Motorized Use
62ab	0.68	Not Designated For Motorized Use

62b	1.80	Not Designated For Motorized Use
63c	0.54	Not Designated For Motorized Use
Oil Pipeline Service Road	1.03	Not Designated For Motorized Use
Previously Unauthorized Routes Designated—Cedro		
Motorcycles (single track) (total miles-individual routes shown on the <i>Decision Map South-CedroArea</i>)	14.12	
Motorized <50 inches (ATV and Motorcycle) (total miles-individual routes shown on the <i>Decision Map South-CedroArea</i>)	0.88	
Full-size 4x4 (all vehicles) (total miles-individual routes shown on the <i>Decision Map South-CedroArea</i>)	0.27	

Design Features Associated with this Decision

- All motorized vehicle use will be restricted to routes designated and displayed on the motor vehicle use map (MVUM.) Motor vehicle operators are responsible for acquiring the MVUM prior to motorized travel on the Sandia Ranger District. Types of use designation are addressed by four categories: state licensed highway legal vehicles, full-sized vehicles-recommended for 4-wheel drive vehicles with high-clearance, ATVs (50 inches wide or less), and motorcycles. Motor vehicle use of roads and trails not designated on the MVUM will be prohibited after the map is released, unless provided for under special authorization or where individuals have valid existing rights. This decision does not make any changes to the use authorization of trails by foot, bicycle, and horse travel. This decision does not designate or prohibit non-motorized uses. Where new trail construction is approved, these routes will not be authorized or displayed on the MVUM until construction has been completed and the trail is available for public use. All roads and trails are open all year long, but may be subject to closures if a responsible official feels that temporary closures are necessary. For example, temporary closures may be initiated to manage fire risk, wet conditions or for public safety.
- As time, money, and Agency discretion allows, unauthorized roads and trails will be mechanically closed. Examples of closure methods include, but are not limited to, gating, ripping and seeding, recontouring, and placement of felled trees and/or rocks. Mechanical closures will be implemented over time, where resource damage is occurring and/or sensitive wildlife habitats are being affected. Cultural resource surveys will be completed prior to any ground disturbance on unauthorized roads and trails.
- There are no additional allowances for big game retrieval beyond use of the designated system with this decision on the Sandia Ranger District.
- Access for permitted activities (i.e. firewood gathering, forest product gathering, mineral exploration and development, maintaining water developments, and recreation events) on NFS lands is independent of general public access. Individuals or groups with written authorization will be allowed to conduct their business according to their authorization; however, the Forest Service reserves the right to control when and how access is achieved, such as through the

approval in the permits or through annual operating plans. It is the responsibility of all permittees to follow the terms of their permits.

- The Forest Supervisor can implement special orders to restrict public use of roads and trails where substantial resource damage is occurring or where implementation of other management activities is deemed necessary. This may include seasonal restrictions on an annual basis (e.g., for calving areas or active raptor nests) as well as temporary restrictions for short-term conditions (e.g., mudslides and wet conditions, timber sale activities, etc.), as authorized in the Code of Federal Regulation 36 CFR Part 261.
- Emergency fire suppression activities will continue to be exempt from seasonal restrictions and restrictions on use, except in wilderness and other congressionally designated special areas that restrict off-road motorized use. Any Federal, State, tribal, or local office, in the performance of an official duty, could receive permission to use motorized vehicles on unauthorized routes not designated as part of the transportation system.
- Forest Service personnel will be allowed limited administrative motorized use of any route for the protection or management of resources.
- Any previously unauthorized trails that are designated will be given a system number and will become part of the forest transportation system.
- Management objectives will be developed for each new or previously unauthorized route designated for use on the MVUM.
- On-the-ground signing will be used to clearly identify the road or trail system number that corresponds with the MVUM.
- Information describing appropriate user behavior will be provided at Cedro area trailheads. Emphasis will be on using TREAD LIGHTLY! and LEAVE NO TRACE programs to educate trail users.
- Partnerships and volunteer opportunities for proposing, constructing, and maintaining motorized road and trail routes, user education, and monitoring will be emphasized.
- User education and information will be emphasized as management tools to inform the motorized recreationists of appropriate uses, ethics, and interactions with other users. Information will be distributed through active user groups and clubs to achieve compliance.
- Trail safety and etiquette information will be provided at trailheads and parking areas where mixed use trail use will include motorized vehicles. A variety of methods could be used, including posters or brochures. Safety and outdoor ethics training will be provided for responsible motorized recreation use to Forest Service personnel that work in public contact positions in administrative offices and field patrols so that they have the training necessary to share information.
- Change the trail management objectives from motorized use “accepted”, to motorized use “managed for” where trails are designated for motorized use. Manage trails to apply motorized use standards appropriate for the type of use and level of development where trails have been designated for motorized use.
- Cooperate with county law enforcement officers to explore opportunities to improve compliance with county and State transportation laws on county and State roads that access motorized recreation areas.

Mitigation Measures and Monitoring

The table below lists mitigation measures and monitoring requirements for this decision, including best management practices (BMPs) for minimizing the risk of water pollution in accordance with Clean Water Act regulations. These are in addition to standards and guidelines from the Forest Plan. The monitoring plans in Appendix C of the EA will be implemented with this decision. This appendix is included as an attachment to this decision.

Mitigations and Monitoring

Requirement	Purpose/ Effectiveness	Source
Close areas vulnerable to compaction and damage to sensitive soils during times when they are most at risk and damage is occurring.	Reduces rutting and compaction – effective if area is monitored to ensure it is put in place as needed and enforced.	FSH 2509.22 (USFS 1990) BMP
Install drainage structures, or design trails and roads so that they do not need structures.	Moves water off the running surface frequently to avoid erosion of the running surface or associated fillslope – effective when drainages are placed to mimic natural drainage and keep water in appropriate drainages.	FSH 2509.22 (USFS 1990) BMP
Keep heavy equipment off of sensitive soils when at risk/wet unless confined to the running surface or the road or trail and it is beneficial to work with higher soil moistures.	Limits additional rutting and compaction to soil on and adjacent to the trail system – effective if written into any contracts as needed and followed.	FSH 2509.22 (USFS 1990) BMP
Install temporary erosion control devices prior to beginning earth disturbance to keep eroded material from moving offsite. When construction activities are finished, install long-term erosion and sedimentation control as soon as possible and prior to next precipitation season (e.g. monsoons or spring snowmelt). Erosion control devices are maintained until long-term stabilization is achieved. All short-term stabilization structures are removed when no longer needed.	Limits erosion and sedimentation when construction sites are most susceptible; long-term erosion protection provides more stable erosion protection for the long term; maintenance ensures that control measures are functioning properly; removal when no longer needed ensures that materials are not left on the trail to detract from the scenery – all measures are a very effective practice typical of all construction sites and required by law when disturbances exceed 1 acre in size.	FSH 2509.22 (USFS 1990) BMP
Design, engineer and install stream channel crossings considering onsite conditions. Only install crossings when no flow is realistically expected during the construction period (e.g. not during monsoon season). Monitor, and maintain if necessary, crossings after installation. Apply for appropriate permits as needed.	Stream crossings have great potential to negatively effect a stream so design and engineering is very important to ensure minimal or no degradation; installation timing helps to limit downstream movement of sediment and additional onsite erosion – can be effective if done by a qualified engineer/hydrologist.	FSH 2509.22 (USFS 1990) BMP

Requirement	Purpose/ Effectiveness	Source
Fuel and service all equipment away from stream channels and other wet areas at a designated site designed to contain the maximum possible spill. Develop and implement a spill prevention, containment and countermeasures (SPCC) plan if determined appropriate based on volume of fuel onsite.	Designed to limit contamination into streams, soil and other sensitive areas; prevention and containment of spills – effective if planned seriously and followed strictly.	FSH 2509.22 (USFS 1990) BMP
Ensure that all roads and trails not designated are blocked and, at a minimum, appropriate drainage is provided. Roads and trails should be placed in a state that does not require maintenance to avoid accelerated erosion and sedimentation.	Limits the continued degradation of roads and trails and allows the Forest Service to avoid future expenses on maintenance for the roads and trails no longer used—very effective at reducing environmental effects of roads and trails if decommissioned to the appropriate level.	FSH 2509.22 (USFS 1990) BMP
Asses the implementation and effectiveness of other mitigations and best management practices based on the monitoring plan in Appendix C of the EA.	Assess if the BMPs are implemented properly and if they are effective – allows the Forest Service to record if BMPs are implemented and allows changes in BMPS if not effective; also allows adaptations for future road and trail projects.	FSH 2509.22 (USFS 1990) BMP

Cibola Forest Plan Amendment

The Cibola Forest Plan permits cross-country travel in some areas of the Sandia RD, and directs that routes will be signed as open to motorized vehicles to manage travel. The plan will be amended with this decision to implement the Travel Management Rule direction for the Sandia Ranger District.

To provide for consistency between the plan and the Travel Management Rule, my decision will delete or change standards/guidelines on pages 20, 59, 59-1, 60, 86 of the amended forest plan, which refer to off-road vehicle (ORV) area closures and restrictions, signing of closed areas (no longer appropriate), or specific acreages of ORV areas closed to cross country travel (no longer necessary as all areas outside the designated system will be closed). We will also change the reference to Off Road Vehicles (ORV) to Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) to be consistent with the terminology used in the Travel Management Rule. This amendment is specific to the Sandia Ranger District.

I have determined that this is a not a significant plan amendment. I have considered several factors including:

- This amendment is late in the life of the current Forest Plan, which is scheduled to be revised within the next few years.
- This amendment does not affect the goals, objectives, and outputs described in the plan.
- It does not change management prescriptions but does make the plan consistent with the direction in the Travel Management Rule.
- This amendment only applies to the Sandia Ranger District.

The amendment includes:

Forest-wide Direction

Recreation, pg. 59 (Amended 1-9-87)

Current Direction: ORV closures or restrictions will be implemented to protect resources from unpredictable damage. These actions may vary from a seasonal restriction for specific vehicles to yearlong closures for all vehicles. User enjoyment and safety will be considered as well as needs for resource protection as outlined in Section 2355.12 of FSM dated January 1981.

Amended Direction: OHV use will be designated and managed in accordance with the Travel Management Rule, CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295 once the appropriate analysis has been completed and a decision has been signed by the deciding officer.

Recreation, pg. 59-1 (Amended 1-9-87)

Current Direction: Acres of ORV closure are indicated by management area. Remaining areas are open to ORV use unless resource considerations necessitate additional restrictions or closures based upon monitoring activities and appropriate environmental analysis.

Amended Direction: Once a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) has been issued for a district, cross-country travel is prohibited off of the designated system unless an area has been designated on the MVUM.

Recreation, pg. 59-1 - 60

Current Direction: Designate roads and trails open to motor vehicle use and sign closed areas on the ground. Use positive signing and regulatory techniques. Maps of ORV closure areas are available to the public.

Amended Direction: Roads and trails open to motor vehicle use will be designated by vehicle class and, if appropriate, by time of year pursuant to 36 CFR 212.51. Designated roads, trails, and areas shall be identified on a Motor Vehicle Use Map that is available to the public pursuant to 36 CFR 212.56.

Management Area 2 –

Recreation, pg. 86

Current Direction: (amended November 1996)

Maintain 17,794 acres closed to ORV use:

- 990 acres – Bernalillo watershed
- 6,079 acres – areas outside of wilderness area are closed because of sensitive soils.
- 3,103 acres – snowmobile closure in high winter use area on eastern slopes of Sandias.
- 7,622 acres ORV and snowmobile closure south of I-40 and west of Highway 337.

Amended Direction:

Maintain 10,725 acres closed to snowmobile use:

- 3,103 acres – snowmobile closure in high winter use area on eastern slopes of Sandias.
- 7,622 acres snowmobile closure south of I-40 and west of Highway 337.

Rationale for the Decision

This decision was not easy or simple, and not without effects. The action involves considering many social as well as resource issues. The comments received during the process reflect the diverse interests in and concerns about the use of the Sandia Ranger District. The analysis of comments is not a voting process, but I have sought to carefully and objectively assess public comments and the EA, including the purpose and need, issues, and alternatives and their effects, in reaching my decision. Through my discussions with workshop and work group participants, and the comments received throughout this process I am aware of the passionate feelings each has for the resource values of the Sandia Ranger District and the value of motorized and non-motorized recreation for participants in a variety of activities.

I have selected Alternative 4 with the modifications I incorporated over the other alternatives because this alternative provides reasonable access for motorized recreation on the Sandia Ranger District. My decision prohibits unrestricted cross country travel in those areas where this has been allowed in the past to comply with the Travel Management Rule direction.

This decision focuses on providing opportunities for motorcycles, through designation of the majority of system trails in the Cedro area for this use. Based on the analysis and comments received it has become evident that the Cedro area is highly valued for the single track trail experience and is heavily used by motorcycles, mountain bikes, and equestrian riders and has moderate hiking use. This alternative preserves the quality of singletrack trail use while providing a variety of trail opportunities with loops and a range of terrain challenges from easy to difficult. However, motorized recreation opportunities are provided for ATVs and full size OHV high clearance and 4x4 vehicles on Cedro roads and three miles of trails. I believe this alternative will reduce the conflict between recreation uses on area trails. There are opportunities provided for motorized dispersed camping in the Cedro area. This alternative can be implemented given anticipated budgets and funding opportunities over time.

I strongly considered selecting an alternative that included seasonal restrictions on road and trail use in the Cedro area. Public comment and the analysis in the EA have convinced me that seasonal restrictions would not necessarily achieve the resource protection for which they were intended. As I can issue road and trail closures to protect resources, alternatives that provided for inflexible seasonal designations were inferior to Alternative 4.

I am not approving any additional allowances for big game retrieval beyond use of the designated system with this decision on the Sandia Ranger District. Big game retrieval using motorized vehicles will be prohibited off of designated roads and trails. The State of New Mexico provides for very limited, bow hunting only opportunities on the district. The analysis did not identify a need for big game retrieval beyond the designated road system.

North of I-40 in the Sandia Mountains the transportation system will be designated to support access to the developed recreation sites, non motorized trail access, and for forest resource management. The La Madera area was the only area being considered for OHV motorized recreation in the action alternatives north of I-40. There were two primary considerations in the decision to prohibit motorized use in the La Madera area:

1. **Access Concerns.** The only motorized access to this area is a pipeline service road. The owner of the pipeline was granted an easement in 1957 for a single use road, prohibiting use by the general public. Representatives from Western Refining, the current owner of the pipeline, have indicated that due to soil stability concerns, they are not interested in renegotiating the provisions of the easement. While there has been some use of this area in the past, there has been an increase in motorized use this past year due to interest in Travel Management. The analysis in the EA indicates the continued increase is likely to result in accelerated erosion.

2. **Wildlife Concerns:** New Mexico Department of Game and Fish has indicated through correspondence and discussions with agency staff that they consider the La Madera area to be an important wildlife corridor. Most of the Sandia Ranger District is surrounded by residential and commercial development. The La Madera area of the district borders other public lands and private ranch lands that are relatively undeveloped compared to the rest of the district. This provides corridors where wildlife can move between other mountain areas to the north and east managed by BLM and other National Forests. Comments received from the private land owners indicate a desire to maintain their lands in the current undeveloped character and recognize the value of this area as a wildlife corridor.

Issues developed were the basis for alternatives. These issues were derived from the comments from the public, other agencies, and tribes, the interdisciplinary team identified several issues regarding the effects of the proposed action (see EA pages 13-14). I selected Alternative 4 with modifications because it best meets the Purpose and Need described in the EA on page 2 and provides a balanced response to the issues identified in the EA on pages 12 – 13.

1. **Designation of motorized trails in the Cedro Area.** Comments received expressed concern that too many National Forest System (NFS) roads and trails and unauthorized roads and trails were considered for motorized designation in the Cedro area. There were two general categories of concerns, the potential impacts to residents of neighboring residential areas, and potential impacts to non-motorized recreation.

This decision will result in the production of the Motor Vehicle Use Map. Following the release of the map, cross country travel will be prohibited. This will reduce the incidents of trespass on private lands by motorized vehicle users in the Cedro Area. This will also define the routes and motorized dispersed camping sites improving the effectiveness of law enforcement and fire patrols.

Providing additional trailhead parking at Oak Flat group area and constructing a new trailhead on the western end of NFSR 462 is expected to reduce impacts near area residences.

Many people commented that enforcement and education are crucial to the success of any decision for route designation. I agree on the importance of enforcement and education and recognize that both will be a challenge to implement effectively. To address these challenges, I am not relying on any one tool to achieve compliance with the MVUM. Rather, I will employ a variety of management tools, including education, engineering, enforcement, and evaluation. I recognize that enforcement resources are limited and will actively recruit and train volunteers to assist agency personnel to provide education and assist with enforcement and trail maintenance. Our volunteer program has been very beneficial in the management of the Sandia Mountains, and we anticipate that a similar program will be equally effective in the Cedro area. My employees and I will continue to work with partners and cooperate with law enforcement and other agencies. Monitoring will be used to reassess needed management changes.

As budgets permit and volunteer and employee resources are available, physical closures and route obliteration will encourage motorized recreationists to stay on designated routes. This will reduce potential trespass onto private lands.

Forest employees have been working with Bernalillo County to ensure compliance with the county Fugitive Dust ordinance and will continue to do so. We are working with the county to obtain a programmatic permit, and will comply with the provisions of that permit.

There will be shared use between motorized and non motorized trail users in the Cedro area, primarily with motorcycles. Information will be provided at trailheads and through distribution of

the MVUM so that non motorized users are aware that they may encounter motorized vehicles. For non motorized users that prefer to not share trails with motorized users, trails North of I-40 are not being designated for motorized use. Some of trails are in the Sandia Mountain Wilderness, where there is no mechanized use allowed. Trails outside of the wilderness are open to mountain bikes in the Sandia Mountains.

2. **Designation of motorized trails for shared use between ATV and motorcycle use in the Cedro area.** Many people expressed a concern that trails originally constructed as single-track trails are were being proposed for ATV and full-size 4x4 routes in the Cedro area. This led to their concern of the potential impacts to single-track uses including damage to trail surfaces, reduced safety, reduction of scenic quality, widening of area trails by ATV and full-size vehicles, and reduction in quality of single-track users' experience due to user conflicts.

This decision results in very limited trail mileage where singletrack users would share trails with wider vehicles (1.76 miles.) The only location where this occurs is on the trail segment that bypasses the western end of NFSR 462.

3. **Designation of locations for dispersed motorized camping in the Cedro area.** Concern that permitting dispersed motorized camping could increase the potential for wildfire in this area.

I have selected motorized dispersed camping locations that are close to roads, to provide for ease in patrolling and monitoring these areas. During times of extreme fire danger, these areas can be closed to dispersed camping under a temporary closure order.

4. **Loss or reduction of motorized recreation opportunities:** Comments were received that shared a concern that quality opportunities for motorized recreation, particularly opportunities for wider vehicles including ATVs and full-size 4x4s were excluded from the proposed action. These concerns included:

- a. Conflicts with seasonal closures, because the Cedro area is highly valued for winter and spring motorized recreation when it is cooler and other higher elevation areas may be closed due to snow; and
- b. Requests for additional designations for full-size 4x4 vehicle and ATV opportunities, including the La Madera area.

There are no seasonal restrictions in this decision; all designated routes will be available for year round use. This will provide opportunities for motorized recreation when there is limited precipitation.

While there are limited full size OHV and ATV opportunities with this decision, there are opportunities that provide a range of challenges on Cedro area roads and a few trails. I recognize that motorized recreation contributes to local economies. My decision does not appreciably affect the capacity of the motorized network. It does increase the likelihood for sustaining motorized and non-motorized recreation in the long-term by assuring that environmental protection concerns are addressed.

5. **Environmental impacts:** Comments were received expressing concerns that motorized use designations could cause environmental impacts including: fragmentation and wildlife security, and result in impacts to drainage channels, soils, vegetation, and heritage resources.

Under my decision the health and vigor of native plants should improve. Eliminating cross-country travel would reduce the potential for noxious weed infestations. As unauthorized routes are either obliterated or vegetation is reestablished due to lack of use, more areas will support native plants.

This decision will reduce the potential for erosion on soils that are subject to erosion. Unauthorized trails that are being designated with this decision will be reconstructed and maintained, improving drainage and reducing erosion. Where trails impact drainage channels, maintenance will reduce impacts. The most substantial benefit will come from the prohibition of cross country travel, especially in the Cedro area.

The prohibition of cross country travel in my decision is expected to improve wildlife habitat through decreases in fragmentation and disturbance from noise. Not designating any routes for motorized use in the La Madera area is expected to maintain the value of this area as a wildlife corridor.

Elimination of cross country motorized travel greatly reduces the risk to heritage resources. All designated routes have been surveyed. If any activities require ground disturbance beyond those described in EA or this decision, they will be evaluated and surveyed by archaeology staff.

Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered five other alternatives in detail. A complete description and comparison of these alternatives can be found in the EA on pages 16-40. Four additional alternatives were considered and eliminated from detailed study, as discussed on pages 15-16 in the EA.

Alternative 1 – Proposed Action

This is the proposed action that was presented in the “Scoping Report for Sandia Ranger District Travel Management Project” dated June 19, 2007, with minor changes as a result of additional field review.

Sandia Mountains (North of I-40)

Proposals are the same for the Sandia Mountains, North of I-40 in Alternatives 1, 4, 5 & 6. In these alternatives, this area is not managed for OHV motorized recreation. There are no trails proposed for motorized designation. No changes are proposed for the Level 3 and 4 roads, and these will be shown on the MVUM as designated for highway legal vehicles only.

Cedro Area – South

Alternative 1 focuses motorized recreation opportunities in the Cedro area with seasonal designations, where trails would be designated for motorized use from May 1st to November 30th. This alternative proposed 33.6 miles of trails designated for motorcycle use, and included 7.6 miles of unauthorized trails and 2.4 miles of new construction to address resource and access concerns. There were approximately 8 miles of trails considered for vehicles up to 50 inches, including ATVs and motorcycles. Designations for all vehicles were included for 14.2 miles of roads, primarily from current system routes. Sites were considered for motorized dispersed camping, and one new trailhead was proposed, as well as providing trailhead use at the Oak Flat group picnic ground.

Alternative 1 - Rationale for Non-Selection. This alternative was not selected due to the seasonal designations that restricted use in the winter and spring and the ATV trail loop in this alternative. The seasonal designation considerations are described on page 13. There are two primary concerns with the ATV loop. The ATV loop was located on several trails that are highly valued for the quality of the single track experience. The loop also depended on access across the private land in T10N, R6E, section 20. This loop was proposed originally through comments received by work group members. Further research in the analysis process determined that the agency does not have right of way access through this land, and I feel that a trail should not be designated where the Forest does not have legal access.

Alternative 2 - No Action

National Environmental Policy Act regulations require analysis of the no action alternative. Although it is not compliant with the Travel Management Rule, “no action” serves as a baseline for comparing the effects of other alternatives. No action is the continuation of existing uses for motor vehicle use on the Sandia Ranger District.

Cross-country travel is currently permitted on 29,472 acres, which represents 29 percent of the Sandia Ranger District (100,727 acres), and would remain open to cross-country travel under this alternative. Motorized dispersed camping would be unrestricted in the areas open to cross-country travel. There are 45.4 miles of National Forest System roads on the Sandia Ranger District that are open to general motorized use. Of these, 19.1 miles are maintained and managed for all motorized vehicles licensed by any state to operate on public highways. There are 26.3 miles of system roads that are managed for high-clearance vehicles, such as pickups or sport utility vehicles. In the Cedro area, OHV use has been accepted on the roads managed for high-clearance vehicles including NFSR 462.

There are 51.1 miles of National Forest System trails on the Sandia Ranger District where motorized use has been accepted, all south of I-40. In this alternative, motorized use would continue to be accepted. While these trails are managed for single-track use, ATV use would also be permitted.

Alternative 2 - Rationale for Non-Selection. This alternative was not selected because it does not comply with the direction in the Travel Management Rule and does not fully meet the purpose and need of the project. More specifically, the no action alternative does not prohibit cross country travel. The Forest Plan Amendment would not be implemented with this decision, which provides for use of the MVUM as the enforcement tool as directed in the Rule.

Alternative 3

This alternative was developed to address the issue of lost or reduced motorized recreation opportunities, especially for ATVs and full-size vehicles. This alternative expands designations for full-size, high-clearance 4x4s and ATVs (vehicles up to 50 inches) by proposing additional trail designations for ATVs in the Cedro area to provide an expanded system, and considering routes in the La Madera area on the northeast side of the Sandia Ranger District. No seasonal restrictions were considered in this alternative.

Sandia Mountains (North of I-40)

Changes included designations of 3 miles of system and unauthorized routes in the La Madera area for all vehicles (compared to the proposed action).

Cedro Area –South

This alternative considered additional designations for full sized vehicles and ATVs in the Cedro area. Approximately 20 miles were considered for ATV and motorcycle use designations. Approximately 19 miles of system and unauthorized trails are considered for designation for all vehicles in this area.

Alternative 3 - Rationale for Non-Selection. I chose to not select this alternative due to two primary considerations. The first was the wildlife and access concerns in the La Madera area which are discussed in detail on page 13. The second is the designation of a substantial number of trails for ATV use in the Cedro area. All trails were constructed and maintained for single track use. Designations for ATVs would require widening the trails to meet standards for those vehicles. Also, this area is very popular for singletrack users, and public comments and analysis have demonstrated that widening the trails would impair the quality of the trail experience for the current users.

Alternative 5

This alternative proposes fewer motorized trail designations in the Cedro area. This alternative responds to issues 1, 3 and 5. Trails on the northeast side of the Cedro area were not considered for motorized designations to respond to concerns from area homeowners in the Tablazon, Five Hills and neighboring areas, and there were designations adjusted to respond to concerns in the Heatherland Hills subdivision. Seasonal designations were expanded to include the level 2 roads in the Cedro area, where they did not provide primary access to private land inholdings. There were also reduced motorized camping sites, compared to the proposed action.

Alternative 5 - Rationale for Non-Selection. I did not select this alternative but did incorporate several elements from this alternative in the decision as described on page 5. These modifications respond to some of the concerns shared by residents near the forest boundary. I feel that through designation and increased education and enforcement the Sandia Ranger District can provide OHV recreation opportunities in the Cedro area while being responsive to the concerns of these residents and non motorized recreationists who share the trails.

Alternative 6

This alternative provides for no motorized trails or motorized dispersed camping designations in the Cedro area. This alternative responds to issues 1 and 5, to respond to environmental concerns related to OHV recreation and concerns from homeowners on adjacent private lands. Seasonal designations were considered for the level 2 roads in the Cedro area.

Alternative 6 - Rationale for Non-Selection. I did not select this alternative because while it minimally responded to the purpose and need, I felt that OHV trail recreation is an acceptable use of the Sandia Ranger District in the Cedro area with improved management provided in this decision.

Public Involvement

The Sandia Ranger District travel management interdisciplinary team initiated a collaborative process to inform the travel management planning process in June 2006 in response to National Forest System direction to designate motorized routes on National Forest routes and trails. Early in the process, the Cibola National Forest entered into partnership with the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (institute) to secure assistance in collaborative process design and implementation.

The Sandia Ranger District Travel Management Collaborative Process

The process began with assessments of internal and external stakeholders followed by six public workshops and establishment of the Sandia Travel Management Work Group convened by the institute. The process provided for public workshops both before and after development of the proposed action during formal scoping. Six public workshops were held—four in Albuquerque, New Mexico and two in Tijeras, New Mexico—from October 2006 to July 2007. In addition, the work group met seven times with the objective to make recommendations for a designated motorized route and trail system on the Sandia Ranger District. The work group meetings were open to observers. Written comments were received in association with the workshop and work group sessions, and are included in the project record.

Scoping: The District sent a scoping letter and report describing the Proposed Action to the public on June 19th, 2007. The letter was sent to environmental organizations, landowners, tribes, other federal agencies, other local governmental agencies and the Sandia Travel Management mailing list. The scoping letter and report were sent to 347 people. The scoping letter, report and maps were posted on the Cibola National Forest's travel management Web page. Press releases were sent to local area media outlets to

announce the release of the scoping letter and report. Two public workshops were held on July 10th and 11th with 148 participants. Approximately 244 comments were received. The proposal was listed initially in the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) on April 1, 2007, and the status has been listed in all subsequent versions to the present.

Using the comments from the public, other agencies, and tribes, the interdisciplinary team identified issues regarding the effects of the proposed action (see EA pages 13-14). To address these concerns, the Forest Service created, analyzed and considered the alternatives described above.

As required by the agency's notice, comment and appeal procedures, the Cibola NF offered a 30-day comment period on the proposal. The legal notice for the comment period was published in the *Albuquerque Journal* on January 29, 2008. We received 175 responses during the comment period. Each comment was reviewed and a summary of comments and responses has been included in the project record.

Finding of No Significant Impact

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. In making this determination I have considered the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). I base my finding on the following:

1. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action. Impacts associated with my decision are discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA, and supplemented in Appendix E Response to Comments in the EA. The environmental assessment provides sufficient information to determine that this project will not have a significant impact (beneficial or adverse) on the lands and its natural resources, air quality, or water quality (pgs. 41-118.)

This action reduces the environmental impacts of motorized recreation by prohibiting cross country travel and implementing mitigation and design criteria that reduce impacts of the designated system. No significant effects on local regional or national resources were identified in the EA. None of the direct, indirect, or cumulative effects were identified as being significant.

2. After considering the analysis and mitigations in the EA, I conclude that implementing the chosen alternative would not significantly affect public health and safety because of the limited scope of the actions. In addition, measures to ensure public safety have been incorporated into the project (see EA pages 16-18 and 104-105). The process of designating routes has been successfully implemented on numerous National Forests across the nation, and some of those systems have been in place for decades. In fact, portions of the Sandia Ranger District have successfully implemented motorized trail designations, as in the lands adjacent to the military withdrawal area, which has protected public health and safety. By designating a system, all users will be aware of where they may encounter motorized vehicles. The designation will provide tools necessary for law enforcement and improve the effectiveness of agency patrols.
3. I have concluded that the selected alternative will not have a significant effect on any unique characteristics and ecologically critical areas on the Sandia Ranger District. Measures have been incorporated to protect cultural resources that exist near roads and trails. No other unique characteristics or ecologically critical areas as described in 40 CFR 1508.27(3) - park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers - exist in the area. (see EA pages 41-118). There are no changes or additions to the Forest Service system motorized routes near the Sandia Mountain Wilderness. There are no Inventoried Roadless Areas on the Sandia Ranger District.

The location and features of the Bernalillo Watershed Research Natural Area were considered in making designations. As a result, NFSR 445 is designated for highway legal vehicles only to reduce the potential for OHV violations off of the designated road.

4. I recognize that elements of a designated motorized system have generated controversy. Many people have expressed a desire for additional designations, or had preferences for the types of vehicles accommodated by designations. Others have indicated concern for the degree of motorized designations, and requested fewer designated routes than those designated with this decision. However, there is no substantiated scientific controversy over the effects as described. The opposing opinions related to the motorized recreation experience, impacts to nearby private lands, and protection of wildlife and other natural resources were addressed during alternative development and are discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA (pages 41-118) and Appendix E of the EA.
5. We have considerable experience with the activities to be implemented. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk (see EA pages 41-118) and, therefore, are not significant.
6. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. Managing motor vehicles and the use of motorized vehicles for recreation is well established on the Sandia Ranger District. The designation of routes for public motorized use does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Procedures are in place to periodically revise the MVUM to accommodate changes as a result of future management decisions. Any future proposals that alter the designated system will be evaluated through the National Environmental Policy Act process, consistent with current laws and regulations.
7. The decision was evaluated in the context of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. This action does not individually, nor when considering other activities within the area affected, cumulatively, result in significant effects. This determination is based on the discussion of cumulative effects in Chapter 3 of the EA (see EA pages 69-73, 75-76, 77-78, 80,82, 83, 84, 85, 89, 90, 94, 98-99, 100, 103, 105, 107, 109, 113, 114, 115-116, 118 and Appendices B and D.). This is primarily based on the predicted effects from the modest level of overall change that would occur as a result of the route designation process. I have also considered travel management planning underway on other national forests in the region, and on Bureau of Land Management lands, and other OHV management by State of New Mexico, county and local governments on nearby lands.
8. The action 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, because measures have been included to protect these areas. (see EA pages 113-114). The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. (see EA pages 113-114). There was a 100 percent survey completed for cultural and historical resources on unauthorized routes being considered for designation, alignments for new construction and motorized dispersed camping corridors where a previous survey had not been performed. The project was in compliance with the protocol specified in the programmatic agreement with the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO.) No sites were found within the designated system and a finding of “No Effect” was reached in the archaeological clearance report, and concurrence with the New Mexico SHPO was not necessary.
9. The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat. The Mexican spotted owl is the only endangered or threatened species that would be potentially affected. The Biological Assessment and Evaluation (BAE) prepared for the project determined

that the project “May effect but not likely to adversely effect” the Mexican spotted owl or its habitat. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service concurred with the determinations of effect on June 30th, 2008. For the Regional Foresters Sensitive Species, no determinations were reached that found that any of these species were likely to become Federally listed as Threatened or Endangered in the near future as a result of the action (see pages 61 and 66 of the EA and the Biological Assessment for this project).

10. The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. The action is consistent with the Cibola National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended with this decision (See EA pages 10-11).

Alternative 4, as modified, complies with the requirements of the 2005 Travel Management Rule (including 36 CFR 212, 251, 261, and 295); the Cibola Forest Plan standards and guidelines as amended; and the intent of Executive Orders 11644 and 12898. Forest Service specialists have been working closely with the City of Albuquerque Environmental Health Department, Air Quality Division to ensure compliance with the Bernalillo County “Fugitive Dust Control Regulations; 20.11.20 NMAC,” and will finalize the permitting process upon implementation of this decision.

I received several letters from the public that requested that the Forest conduct an environmental impact statement (EIS) for motor vehicle route designation, primarily due to the potential impacts from OHV use. The number of roads or trails designated for motorized use is not a criteria of significance for determination of the need for an EIS. The environmental consequences or effects of OHV travel on designated roads and trails are what I, as the Deciding Official, must consider in determining the need for an EIS. Based on the context, scope, and intensity of the environmental effects documented in the EA and project file, on my experience with similar projects and factors in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the project does not constitute a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is not needed.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision for travel management on the Sandia Ranger District is consistent with the intent of the long term goals and objectives listed on pages 33-34 and page 84 of the Plan. The project was designed in conformance with land and resource management plan standards and incorporates appropriate land and resource management plan guidelines for Management Areas 2 on pages 85 to 94. The project was developed in consideration of the best available science.

The decision is consistent with other applicable laws and regulations including the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Endangered Species Act. The measures included in the proposal to protect soil, water and air resources ensure compliance with the Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act.

Implementation Date

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, 5 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.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

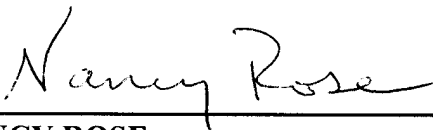
This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to regulations at 36 CFR 215. Those who provided comments during the comment period are eligible to appeal the decision under the regulations. The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service) with the appropriate Appeal Deciding Officer. Submit appeals to: Corbin L. Newman Jr., Regional Forester, Appeal Deciding Officer, 333 Broadway SE, Albuquerque, NM 87102 or fax to (505)842-3173. If hand delivered, the appeal must be received at the above address during business hours (Monday - Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm), excluding holidays. Electronic appeals may be submitted to: appeals-southwestern-regional-office@fs.fed.us (.doc, .rtf, or .txt formats only). The appeal must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic appeals.

Appeals, including attachments, must be in writing, fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14, and filed (postmarked) within 45 days following the date notice of this decision is published in the *Albuquerque Journal*. This publication date is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframes provided by any other source.

Individuals or organizations who submitted comments during the comment period specified at 215.6 may appeal this decision. The notice of appeal must meet the appeal content requirements at 36 CFR 215.14.

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Keith Baker, Cibola National Forest, 2113 Osuna Road NE, 87113, or phone at (505) 346-3820.



NANCY ROSE
Forest Supervisor
Cibola National Forest

July 10, 2008

Date

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.