

Implementation of the 2005 Travel Management Rule in 2007 on Spotted Bear Ranger District

Flathead National Forest



Why Are We Here?

- Outdoor recreation is central to why many of us live in Northwest Montana.
- Motorized recreation is recognized as a legitimate use - in the right place.
- Route designations will involve working with local communities.



What's Ahead



- Purpose of the 2005 Travel Management Rule
- Key Steps in the Process
- Anticipated Timeline

Purpose of the 2005 Travel Management Rule

- Bring the current designated motorized routes into compliance with laws, regulations and other management direction
- Designate a sustainable route system for public access and recreation travel on the District
- Identify types of use and restrictions associated with each designated motorized route

Key Steps in the Process

1. Review existing travel management direction.
2. Assemble resource and social data.
3. Use travel analysis to identify proposals for change.
4. Evaluate feedback on the need for change.
5. Publish a motor vehicle use map.
6. Implement, monitor and revise.

Step 1 – Review Existing Travel Management Direction

- Flathead NF Proposed Land Management Plan
- 2005 Travel Management Rule issued by the Forest Service, directing that Travel Management Plans be developed within the next four years.

What's the Relationship to the Land Management Plan (Forest Plan)?

- The Land Management Plan describes the desired condition for the Forest, and establishes the objectives, suitability, and guidelines that help achieve those desired conditions. Land management plans are strategic and do not typically include site-specific decisions.
- Travel Plans reflect project-level decisions. They implement road use designations and must be consistent with the Land Management Plan.

2005 Travel Management Rule

- Designate roads, trails and areas open to motor vehicle use by vehicle class and, if appropriate, by time of year.
- Display designated roads, trails and areas on a motor vehicle use map.
- Until designation is complete, the current rules and policies remain in place.

Step 2 - Assemble Resource & Social Data

- Identify motorized roads and trails for consideration
- Identify natural resource conditions
- Identify user demand and social and economic interactions
- Accomplish through **collaboration** with the public

Collaborate: To Work Together

Keys to Collaboration

- Use common conversational courtesy.
- Humor is welcome and important.
- All ideas and points of view have value.
- Attack problems instead of each other.
- Focus on interests, not positions.
- Have a realistic timeline for completion.
- Honesty builds trust.

Step 3 – Use Travel Analysis to Propose Changes

- Begins with the baseline system of motorized roads and trails as a starting point
- Results in a set of proposed changes to the transportation system (the Proposed Action)
- Will be done through collaboration with a variety of user groups, environmental organizations, other agencies, interested individuals and the general public

The objective of Travel Analysis is to provide both recreation experiences and access.

Motorized roads and trails that meet users' needs while protecting natural and cultural resources, as well as protecting public safety while minimizing resource damage, facility deterioration, and law enforcement issues.

Step 3...Use Travel Analysis to Propose Changes

- The following sideboards will guide this project:
- Travel management planning has been ongoing on Spotted Bear Ranger District and on the Flathead National Forest in general. It is expected in the future that additional projects (i.e. vegetation management or other) could also consider additional travel management actions.
- Utilize the past site specific motorized decisions and implementation actions related to motorized access.
- Grizzly bear security needs remain a very important component related to motorized recreation opportunities.
- (continued)

Step 3...Use Travel Analysis to Propose Changes

(Sideboards continued)

- Motorized use is currently only allowed on designated motorized roads and trails, and also on motorized wheeled cross-country travel to a campsite has been permissible within 300 feet of motorized roads and trails as per the January 2001 Off-Highway Vehicle Record of Decision for Region One.
- The Motorized Vehicle Use Map is to be reviewed, updated if needed, and reprinted for each Ranger District each year so this review is not a one time occurrence.
- Winter use will not be addressed by this effort. Over-snow vehicle use will continue to be managed under the current Flathead National Forest 2002 snowmobile settlement agreement and/or Winter Motorized Recreation Plan (Amendment 24) to the Forest Plan.

User-created Routes

Some user-created routes may be appropriate for inclusion in the transportation system. Public involvement and site-specific environmental analysis is required; therefore these will not be considered under this Travel Plan project, but may be considered under separate proposals.

Factors to Consider When Proposing Changes

- Recreation experience
- Environmental issues
- Operational issues

Recreational Experience

- Types of use
- Vehicle classes
- Safety (including difficulty level)
- Ability to link routes, attractions and facilities

Environmental Issues

- Soil, water, vegetation, wildlife and cultural resources
- Other past, present and future actions which may contribute to cumulative impacts from motorized use
- Relationship between motor vehicle use and other national forest uses

Operational Issues

- Speed, volume, type and distribution of traffic
- Support from user groups, volunteers and other cooperators
- Support from state, county, or other government agencies
- Access for emergency, maintenance and enforcement
- Ability to fund maintenance, operation and enforcement of the system

Step 4 - Evaluate feedback on the need for change

Current Conditions

We need your help over the next several weeks to validate and identify the current motorized map and condition, any need for change.

Our starting point for a motorized visitor use map is the current transportation system (roads and trails managed for motor vehicle use) and any restrictions or prohibitions on motor vehicle use.

Effects Considerations

- natural and cultural resources
- public safety
- recreational opportunities
- access needs
- conflicts among uses
- maintenance and administration

Step 5 – Publish Motor Vehicle Use Map

- Displays only roads and trails designated for motor vehicle use.
- The principal enforcement tool for motor vehicle regulations.
- Available free to the public.
- Updated annually.
- Does not replace visitor maps or other maps intended to convey visitor information.

Step 6 – Implement, monitor and revise

Implementation of travel management decisions requires effective public education and enforcement.

Monitoring will help provide the information needed to determine what, if any, revisions are needed each year.

Implement

- Educate visitors on travel regulations and designations
- Install signs
- Maintain designated roads and trails
- Establish cooperative and volunteer agreements for sustainable maintenance and funding

Monitor

- Project implementation monitoring to assure compliance with the Land Management Plan and project decisions.
- Effectiveness monitoring to assure management actions are achieving desired outcomes.
- Program monitoring to track and evaluate ecological, social and economic trends.
- Validation monitoring to verify assumptions and models used in project implementation.
- A monitoring plan must emphasize realistic, cost-effective commitments that we can meet.

Revise

- Monitoring information will be used to re-evaluate decisions and change them when necessary
- Changes will be addressed on a site-specific basis under NEPA
- Motor vehicle use maps will be republished annually to reflect changes in designations.

Timeline

- **February- March 2007:** Work with the public to identify current conditions and develop a proposed action if any need for change.
- **March 2007:** Present the current situation and identify any need for change to the general public for review and comment. (30 days)
- **April-August 2007:** Review identified needs for change to motorized use.
- **September 2007:** Publish a Motorized Visitor Use Map for Spotted Bear Ranger District
- Annually review, revise, and publish a Motor Vehicle Use Map.

Our Goal is Clear

Working together, we can address the growing demand for motorized recreation while protecting the environment and assuring that our national forests provide clean air, clean water and abundant wildlife for future generations.

