

Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests and
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Working as One to Serve Central Oregon

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Environmental Analysis Begins for Travel Management Rule

BEND—The Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests are beginning the environmental analysis process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to implement the National Travel Management Rule.

Motorized travel by off-highway vehicles will continue on approximately 9,000 miles of lower standard National Forest System roads and over three hundred miles of designated trails. Motorized travel off of existing designated routes will be prohibited. Motorized access to dispersed campsites will be provided within three hundred feet of most designated routes. In some areas, campsites may be accessed by a designated route.

This process began in 2005 when the Forest Service published a new rule that prohibits motor vehicle travel outside of designated routes and areas on the National Forests and Grasslands of America. Here in Central Oregon, the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests and the Crooked River National Grassland have been working through multiple public meetings in local communities over the last two years. The outcome by 2009 will be a published Motor Vehicle Use Map.

Last year the Travel Management Working Group of citizens contributed more than 1,400 hours to develop recommendations on how to implement the new rule. The Forest Service held workshops in July 2007 to present the working group's recommendations. Over two hundred participants shared their thoughts on these recommendations for access to dispersed camping and locations for designated motorized trails.

The public will have opportunities to comment through the NEPA planning process. A Federal Register notice and public comment period are slated for early spring of 2008. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is anticipated by fall of 2008, with a Final EIS and Record of Decision planned in the winter of 2009. In addition, opportunities to participate in development of proposed trail corridors on the ground will be available to the public during spring and summer of 2008.

For more information, please visit the Central Oregon National Forests website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon/travel-mgmt/index.shtml> or <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon/recreation/cohvops/index/shtml>.

“I am really encouraged by how people have been involved in this important activity,” says Deschutes National Forest Supervisor John Allen. “We will keep our thinking and implementation of the travel management rule visible every step of the way.”