

NEWS RELEASE

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DOMBECK PROPOSES NEW POLICY FOR MANAGING FOREST ROADS

WASHINGTON, Mar. 2, 2000 – USDA Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck today outlined details of the agency's proposed road management policy. The policy would rely upon scientific analysis and public involvement at the local level. It is designed to help the Forest Service determine how to best manage the more than 380,000 miles of roads in the national forest roads system.

In February 1999, the Forest Service announced an interim rule that temporarily suspended road construction and reconstruction in certain unroaded areas on national forests and grasslands. The interim rule gave the agency 18 months to draft a new road policy and develop new analytical tools.

“The public has rightfully questioned the logic of building new roads when the Forest Service is inadequately funded to maintain its existing road system,” said Dombeck. “This proposal addresses how to maintain our existing road network in an environmentally and financially responsible way.”

The Forest Service has at least an \$8.4 billion maintenance and reconstruction backlog and receives only about 20 percent of the annual funding needed to maintain the existing road system to current environmental and safety standards. The new policy is designed to help the Forest Service prioritize its road maintenance and reconstruction work so that the national forest road system will be more affordable to manage in the future.

“Implementation of this policy at the local level will ensure safe and efficient access of public lands while protecting land health,” said Dombeck. “This policy will enable us to engage local people in constructive dialogue about how they want their national forests and grasslands managed,” he continued.

The final road management policy is scheduled for completion by Sept. 1, 2000. A 60-day public comment period begins tomorrow, March 3. Comments may be sent by mail to USDA Forest Service, CAET, Attn. Roads, P.O. Box 22300, Salt Lake City, UT 84122, by fax to (801) 517-1021, or by e-mail to roads/wo_caet-slc@fs.fed.us.

For more information on the proposed road management policy, go to www.fs.fed.us/news/roads.