

Decision Notice & Finding of No Significant Impact TRAVEL PLAN REVISION

Elimination of Motorized Cross-Country Travel and Motorized Route Designation

**USDA Forest Service
Fairfield Ranger District, Sawtooth National Forest**

Camas & Elmore Counties, Idaho

Decision and Rationale

Background

Most Sawtooth Forest visitors use motor vehicles to access the Forest, whether for recreational uses; commercial purposes; administration of utilities and other land uses; or the many other multiple uses of the Sawtooth National Forest (SNF). For many visitors, motor vehicles also represent an integral part of their recreational experience. People come to the Sawtooth Forest to ride on roads and trails in pickup trucks, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), motorcycles, and a variety of other conveyances. Motor vehicles are a legitimate and appropriate way for people to enjoy their National Forests

The Sawtooth National Forest “Visitor/Travel Plan” (Travel Plan) has been in place since 1989. The purpose of the Travel Plan is to show visitors the system of roads and trails they may use, as well as how and when they may use them. The Sawtooth Forest transportation system ranges from paved roads designed for passenger cars to single-track trails used by motorcycles. Many roads designed for high-clearance vehicles (such as a sport utility vehicle) also allow use by ATVs, and other off-highway vehicles (OHVs) not normally found on city streets. Almost all Sawtooth Forest roads and trails serve non-motorized users, including hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians, alone or in combination with motorized users.

In addition to this managed system of roads and trails, portions of the SNF contain a significant number of user-created routes. These routes are concentrated in areas where cross-country travel by motor vehicles is currently allowed, and often include dense networks of criss-crossing paths. Many of these routes do not meet safety or design standards, and many are located in environmentally sensitive areas such as riparian areas and on lands with erosive soils. Continuous pioneering of these routes has made it difficult to maintain an inventory.

Consistent with the 2003 revised Sawtooth Forest Plan, the Forest started travel management planning (Forest Plan Objective REOB17) in September 2004. The action was driven by three main needs:

- 1) to reduce damage to soil, water quality, wildlife and their habitat, vegetation, and other resources as outlined in the 2003 Revised Sawtooth Forest Plan;
- 2) to reduce conflicts between different types of users; and
- 3) To implement 36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261 and 295: Final Rule for Travel Management; Designated routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use. (11/9/2005). This final rule requires the elimination of cross-country motorized use, the designation of roads, trails and areas available for motorized use on all National Forest System (NFS) lands.

The environmental assessment (EA) documents the analysis of three action alternatives and a no-action alternative to meet these needs. On the Sawtooth, portions of the Minidoka, Ketchum and Fairfield Ranger Districts were open to cross country travel under the existing travel map. In light of national direction to eliminate cross-country motorized use and to designate routes, the Sawtooth National Forest opted to address the issue of cross-country travel for all three Ranger Districts in one analysis. However, each District Ranger is making an independent decision based on the EA and the site-specific analysis for each District.

Activities that are exempt from the Final Rule for Travel Plan Management include aircraft, watercraft, over-snow vehicles, limited administrative use, emergency and law enforcement response, national defense purposes and uses specifically authorized under a written authorization (e.g. firewood cutting permit, grazing permit, Special Use authorization).

Current Sawtooth travel plan direction for winter use and the use of aircraft is not changed by this Decision.

Area Analyzed

The project area within the Fairfield District includes all of the “G” and “H” areas on the Fairfield District as shown on the 1989 Sawtooth Forest Travel Plan; portions of Area A in and around Kelly Creek Flats; and seasonal closures throughout the Fairfield District. These areas are generally located on the South half of the District. Motorized use on the northern half of the District is already restricted to designated routes and was not part of this analysis. These areas will be managed according to the current Sawtooth National Forest Travel plan. The Fairfield Ranger District currently restricts dispersed camping to designated sites in the Kelley Flats area. This decision does not change dispersed camping restrictions in Kelley Flats.

Decision

I have decided to implement the Proposed Action - Alternative 2 with the modifications identified below. The objective of this alternative is to provide improved motorized and non-motorized recreation while reducing effects to wildlife and their habitats. Motor vehicle use is restricted to designated roads and trails, eliminating cross-country vehicle use. Although the majority of motorized use of non-system (user-created) routes will be eliminated, several non-system motorized trails are added to the system for both ATV and motorcycle use. Some non-motorized trails are designated with easy access from Fairfield. Seasonal closures are added in a

few areas to better balance recreational use with the need to provide additional protection for big game species, and some routes are closed where parallel routes existed.

In addition to the attached map which displays my decision, a complete and detailed description of the Decision (Alt. 2) can be found in Chapter Two of the EA.

The following 4 items are changes from the Proposed Action and are part of my decision::

1. The proposed ATV trail directly west of the Soldier Mountain ski area was part of Alternative 2, but is removed from my Decision and will not be designated. The steep topography with erosive soils, the lack of a loop opportunity, and the proximity of Soldier Mountain ski area are all reasons why I am not carrying this proposed trail forth.
2. The Smoky Dome ATV trail with a seasonal closure is being added in response to the public's request for more ATV trail opportunities. This was analyzed in Alternative 3 and I am making this addition part of my decision.
3. The trail connection between trail #7005 and #7088 is being changed from a motorized to a non-motorized designation. The connector provides a connection between two non-motorized trails. This connection was analyzed under Alternative 1 and Alternative 3.
4. I am designating a single track trail on the ridge south of Dollarhide Summit. This user-built trail is in place and provides a connection from Dollarhide Summit to the #7150 single track trail system. This trail was analyzed in Alternative 3 and I am making this a part of my decision.

My decision also includes the following elements:

1. All the September 20th route closure dates across the District are being amended from to September 30th to standardize closure dates. The September 30th date will now be standard across not only the Fairfield District, but will also match the Mt. Home Ranger District closure dates on the Boise National Forest.
2. No new construction is authorized by this decision. Any future construction of a trail or road will require site-specific project level National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis before it can be added to the system. This includes consideration of the future planned routes identified in Chapter 2 of the EA.
3. Dispersed camping accessed by motor vehicles would be allowed within 300 feet of designated roads or 100 feet of designated trails except in the Kelley Flats Area where dispersed camping is already restricted to designated sites. Dispersed camping areas with resource issues will continue to be evaluated and managed through administrative actions and larger scale analysis.
4. Cross-country motorized travel will be eliminated throughout the entire route designation area.
5. Big Game retrieval using motorized vehicles will be prohibited off of designated roads or trails.
6. Vehicle parking will be allowed on the edge of designated roads for purposes other than camping consistent with Forest Service policy.
7. The 50 miles of non-system routes that become system trails in this process will be maintained to appropriate standards for trail class & road maintenance level.

8. My decision only considers routes on Forest Service System Lands, and those routes on private, State or BLM lands within or adjacent to the National Forest boundary open to public use through a right-of-way or easement obtained for the purpose of public access.

Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered three other action alternatives which were analyzed in detail. Following is a brief description of these alternatives. A comparison of these alternatives can be found in the EA in Chapter Two.

Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative

- Under the No Action alternative, the current travel plan would continue to guide management of the project area. The Forest Service would not restrict motor vehicle use to designated roads and trails (except in areas that are currently restricted) and would not add any new restrictions nor would any other changes in the forest transportation system be made at this time. Cross-country motor vehicle use would continue to be allowed. Motorized use of non-system (user created) routes would continue and new routes would continue to be created. Changes to the transportation system would continue to be made on a case-by-case basis. Although the No-Action Alternative would provide the most opportunity for motorized users to travel unrestricted (i.e., cross-country travel), it would not address any of the resource concerns listed in the EA. This alternative would not implement the 2005 travel management rule (36 CFR 212) or fulfill the purpose and need.

Alternative 3 – Improved Motorized Opportunities.

- Many motorized users commented on wanting more single-track trails and more motorized opportunities in general. Alternative 3 was developed to address these comments. Like Alternative 2, this alternative would restrict vehicle use to designated roads and trails, would eliminate cross-country travel and would prohibit motorized use on user created routes. This alternative would convert more user-created routes to motorized system roads and trails than Alternative 2. Total miles of user created routes converted to motorized system roads and trails would be 77 miles under Alternative 3. Although it would provide more motorized travel opportunities than Alternatives 2 and 4, this alternative has greater impacts on soil and water, and provides less wildlife security.

Alternative 4 – Improved Wildlife Security & Habitat / Non-Motorized Opportunities.

- Alternative 4 was developed in response to commentors who wanted more non-motorized opportunities and concerns over the effects of motorized routes on wildlife habitat and security. Like Alternatives 2 and 3, this alternative restricts vehicle use to designated roads and trails, eliminates cross-country travel and would prohibit motorized use on user created routes. This alternative would designate the fewest miles of motorized routes, and would convert only 30 miles of user created routes to motorized system roads and trails. Although this alternative would have less effects on the resources (wildlife security, soil and water), I feel that Alternative 2 provides the best balance between resource protection and recreation opportunities.

I originally considered four additional alternatives but dismissed them from detailed analysis. Descriptions of these can be found in Chapter Two of the E.A..

Public Involvement

Public involvement opportunities were extensive throughout the planning process involving numerous individuals, special interest groups, and government agencies. The Sawtooth National Forest began the process of involving the public in developing the initial motorized route concepts in September of 2004. A collaborative public involvement process was developed by the Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team to provide a forum between resource specialists and the public on key issues and to obtain feedback to develop alternatives. Extensive public involvement efforts prior to development of the proposed action included:

- Hanging comment cards on vehicles at trailheads in the planning area requesting public comment and involvement in the process,.
- Publication of two news releases asking for public involvement, requesting comments, and announcing open houses.
- Personal contact with 28 organizations and government entities including riding clubs environmental and recreation groups, and County Commissions.
- Formal presentations to Idaho Department of Fish & Game, Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation, as well as numerous user groups, organizations, and Tribes.
- Conducting open houses in Fairfield, Malta, Burley, Twin Falls, Hailey, and Gooding.

As a result of initial public involvement efforts, the Forest received written comments from 111 individuals or organizations. Twenty commentors provided detailed maps of roads, trails, and connectors proposed for designation.

Based on the results of the public involvement efforts discussed above, a Proposed Action was developed and provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping July 1 – September 30, 2006. The proposed action has also been listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions since October 1, 2006.

The formal 30-day comment period was initiated on Oct 4, 2006 and continued through November 4, 2006. Written comments were received from 222 parties during the formal comment period. Using the comments from the public, other agencies, and Tribes, the interdisciplinary team identified several issues regarding the effects of the proposed action. To address these concerns, the Forest Service created the alternatives described above.

A 29-day courtesy review period was initiated on November 1, 2007 and continued through November 30, 2007. This review period allowed the public to review the EA and identify issues that may have been overlooked previously. Written comments were received from 158 parties, however no new issues were identified during this 29-day courtesy review period.

How My Decision Responds To Public Concerns and the Need for Change

Throughout this process, it has become evident to me that the vast majority of the public; user groups; special interest groups; and State, County and Federal agencies acknowledge that there is a need to regulate motorized recreational use on National Forest System Lands. The disagreement arises once we start talking about where, when, how much and what kind of motorized recreation to allow. As you can imagine, I have heard arguments and concerns from one extreme to the other. As a result, we attempted to formulate a range of alternatives that was both reasonable and true to all the parties concerned.

From the four alternatives, I selected Alternative 2, with a few modifications. I selected this Alternative as it not only met the Purpose and Need (EA page 1-2), and addressed the issues (EA pages 1-5 to 1-8), but it also seemed to me to have the best balance of uses, opportunities, as well as restrictions that addressed the resource needs.

In trying to convey my rationale for this decision, let me briefly explain the 7 significant issues that were used to analyze and compare the alternatives, and how I think Alternative 2 reasonably addresses them.

Issue 1: Recreation – How will the route Designation Decision affect recreation on the District?

Many of you commented that under the Proposed Action, removal of cross-country motorized travel as well as loss of some non-classified travel routes would adversely affect your motorized recreation experience. There is no doubt that due to the underlying premise of the Final Rule and the elimination of motorized cross-country use, that overall there will be less routes and areas for motorized users to utilize.

We heard from motorized users that they desired to have access to quality motorized trail opportunities, and so we looked at our current motorized trail system. The project area, which is a portion of the Fairfield District, currently has 195 miles of designated single track motorized trails. In evaluating this system, we looked at where we could add trails and loops that would enhance the system, or remove redundant trails that basically went to the same general location. As a result, we added 4 miles of single track trail to the system, converted 38 miles of single track trail to accommodate ATV or non-motorized use and closed 13 miles of redundant trails. This will still allow motorized travel on approximately 147 miles of single track trail and 401¹ miles of all routes within the project area. Seasonal restrictions on approximately 54 miles of routes would still allow motorized use in the summer, while allowing non-motorized hunting opportunities in the fall. As a result, we will continue to have an extensive single track system of trails while reducing resource effects.

¹ 401 miles is a different number than shown in the EA because of the two changes I made in the Decision Elements above shown on page 3.

Other commentors stated that the quantity and location of motorized routes would adversely affect their non-motorized opportunities and wanted to see more non-motorized trails close to Fairfield. In trying to meet these needs and concerns, we looked for opportunities to provide additional non-motorized trails. My decision will designate 13 miles of trail, including the North Fork of Soldier Creek Trail (# 7005) and the Salt Creek Trail (#7088) to a non-motorized status. These trails are close to Fairfield, easily accessible and will provide a non-motorized trail experience while still allowing motorized trails in the area. In addition, eliminating cross-country motorized travel and approximately 262 miles of non-system motorized routes (roads and trails) will allow ample opportunity for non-motorized recreation.

We heard from ATV users the need for more ATV trails. Within the project area, there is one designated ATV route (9 mi.). My decision designates an additional 41 miles of ATV routes, which is in addition to the 191 miles of roads open to ATV travel.

Also, as part of this process, we have identified areas within the District for future ATV trail opportunities on the Soldier Front and the West Fork of Kelly Creek. Nine miles of new ATV trails will be reviewed and evaluated for designation in the system in the next few years.

My decision limits access to dispersed campsites with motorized vehicles to within 300 feet from any road and 100 feet from any motorized trail. Many people were concerned that their opportunity to use these dispersed campsites would be lost through this proposal. However, dispersed camping should only be minimally affected by this process because most motorized dispersed camping already occurs within these buffer limits. The only current exception on the Fairfield District is in the Kelley Flats area which is currently being managed for designated dispersed camping only.

Education and enforcement were also topics of concern. With this decision, we will be printing a new travel map which we term the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). This map will show only those roads and trails that are open to motorized use, making it easier for motorized users to know where motorized use is allowed. In addition, signing, physical closures and obliteration of some user-created routes will play a crucial role in implementing this decision. Physical closures and route obliteration will be used to make it more obvious where motorized use is allowed and where it is not.

Enforcement efforts are routine and will continue. The MVUM will make enforcement easier for us as well, providing a clear and concise way of knowing where motorized use can occur. Although I recognize that enforcement resources are limited due to the large area of the District, it is my responsibility to ensure that my staff is trained, equipped and prepared to enforce this new travel plan. We will continue to cooperate with law enforcement and other agencies and work with user groups in enforcing the plan and making it successful.

Issue 2: Vegetation – What will be the effect on the health, vigor and diversity of native plants, riparian vegetation and threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate or sensitive (TEPCS) plant species?

With the elimination of cross-country motorized travel, the health, vigor, and diversity of native plants and riparian vegetation should improve. This is due to both the reduction of use on existing and future user-built routes. Many of these routes are located in sensitive areas, in and along streams and riparian areas, and when added together, affect a large amount of acres of vegetation. Also, the potential to spread noxious weeds with motorized vehicle use is drastically reduced. Our analysis shows that the total acres at risk for introduction and spread of noxious weeds decrease with the implementation of this decision. The estimated total acres of TEPCS plant species and their potential habitat at risk decreases considerably with the elimination of cross-country motorized travel.

Although Alternative 4 has less designated routes than my chosen alternative, the biggest benefit to the vegetation issue is the elimination of cross-country travel. The designation of routes will allow us to travel these routes and monitor vegetation, noxious weeds and the impacts from motorized use, whereas this was impossible when cross-country travel was allowed. Therefore, my selected alternative protects vegetation while still allowing motorized recreational use.

Issue 3: Soil & Hydrology - How does this decision affect soils and water quality?

My Decision should result in improved conditions within riparian areas, and will considerably reduce the potential for erosion on highly erodible lands. By restricting motorized use to designated routes, new motorized non-system routes will not be established and therefore affects to aquatic resources would be greatly diminished as compared to the existing condition. Specifically, risks associated with surface erosion, channel and riparian impacts from route encroachments, and impacts to slope hydrology will all be reduced. The net result will be a beneficial effect for soil productivity, riparian areas, slope hydrology, and water quality.

Issue 4: Fisheries - What is the effect of this decision on fish species and their habitat?

My Decision should result in overall improved conditions for fisheries. This concern is closely related to the Soil & Hydrology Issue and will have the same positive effects noted above. The density of motorized routes will decrease in all subwatersheds as compared to the existing situation. Non-system routes that are not converted into a system road or trail would no longer be available for motorized recreation. As motorized route densities decrease so will impacts to streams, riparian areas, and aquatic habitat.

Issue 5: Wildlife – What will be the effect on wildlife and their habitat?

The elimination of cross-country motorized travel would significantly reduce the effects and disturbance of motorized activity on wildlife. In addition, habitat fragmentation caused by user created roads and trails would be reduced. With the reduction in the density of roads and trails, and the elimination of cross-country travel, the impacts to wildlife due to disturbance, compromised security, and/or impacts to habitat are greatly reduced.

My decision also implements seasonal restrictions on 54 miles of motorized routes. These routes will be closed to motorized use from October 1st through December 1st to provide additional

wildlife security during the hunting season. Although these routes will be seasonally closed, there are alternate routes in the vicinity that will allow motorized access to the same general area.

Issue 6: Heritage – How will heritage resources be affected by route designation?

Heritage resources can be vulnerable to motorized use. Elimination of cross-country travel limits the range of motorized use and discourages the establishment of user-created trails that may impact heritage sites. Consultation with the Idaho State Historic Protection Office (SHPO) is required for newly designated trails as required by the National Historic Preservation Act. There are no ground-disturbing activities proposed that would initiate consultation with the SHPO. In the future, if and when a new route is proposed, it will be analyzed appropriately for heritage resources.

Issue 7: Economics – The decision may have economic effects on the maintenance and administration of the designated route system.

In my Decision, there is a minor decrease in miles of roads requiring maintenance and an increase in miles of trails requiring routine maintenance. With the implementation of the travel plan, purchasing and installing route markers and signs on roads and trails will require funding and emphasis for the next 3-5 years. After that, funding needs for signing will decrease, however routine maintenance will be an ongoing expense.

I recognize that motorized recreation plays an important role in the local economy. My Decision continues to provide a large network of motorized travel routes on the District and increases the likelihood for sustaining motorized and non-motorized recreation in the long-term by assuring that environmental protection requirements are met. This plays a significant role in the recreationally based portion of the local economy.

Finding of No Significant Impact

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

1. Context and Intensity

This action occurs on the Fairfield Ranger District and involves all “G” and “H” areas within the Fairfield Ranger District shown on the 2002 Sawtooth National Forest Visitor/Travel Map; a portion of Area A in and around Kelly Creek Flats; and seasonal closures throughout the Fairfield District. It designates an additional 50 miles of non-system motorized routes bringing the total of system trails to approximately 239 miles and system roads to 162 miles for motorized use. All 50 miles of trails to be formally designated already exist and have been used by motor vehicles for a number of years. **No new construction is included with this action.** This action

also eliminates cross- country travel by motorized vehicles on approximately 203,913 acres and closes approximately 260 miles of non system trails to motorized use.

This action is designed to reduce the environmental impacts of motorized recreation. No significant effects on local regional or national resources were identified in the EA. Impacts associated with the project are discussed in Chapter Three of the EA and the project record. None of the direct, indirect, or cumulative effects were identified as being significant, primarily based on two facts: 1) there are minimal changes proposed on the ground to the existing situation; 2) the action is compliant with the Sawtooth Forest Plan.

After careful consideration of the EA and the project record, it is my finding that the effects of this action are not significant. My finding that the impacts are not significant is not biased by the beneficial impacts described in the analysis.

2. Public Health and Safety

This action will not significantly affect public health and safety. Increased signing, availability of the Motor Vehicle Use Map and maintenance on the previously unmaintained 50 miles of newly designated routes, will provide a quality and safe recreation experience for visitors. The process of designating routes has been successfully implemented on numerous National Forests, and includes over 1,000,000 acres of the Sawtooth National Forest with existing designated routes. Some of these designations have been in place for decades and continue to provide safe recreational experiences for the public.

3. Unique Characteristics of the Area

This action will not adversely affect unique characteristics such as historic or cultural resources, wetlands, or ecologically critical areas. My determination is based on the discussion of effects found in the EA, Chapter Three. There are no parklands, prime lands (forest, farm or range), historic or cultural properties, wilderness or wild and scenic rivers associated with this action.

Six Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) are associated with this action. No new roads or trails will be constructed in these IRAs, nor will any user created routes be designated as roads in IRAs as part of this Decision. Therefore, my Decision will not affect the status of these IRAs. A worksheet documenting the effects to the IRA attributes is part of the route designation EA project record. 15.7² miles of existing non-system routes will be designated as motorized trails within IRAs. No motorized roads within these IRAs are being designated.

4. Controversy

The activities described in Alternative 2 do not involve effects on the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27). I find that while there are opposing opinions regarding the proposed action and alternatives, there is no substantiated scientific controversy over the effects themselves. The opposing opinions related to the motorized recreation experience, and protection of wildlife and other natural resources were addressed during alternative development and are discussed in Chapter Three of the EA. I find the effects

² The number 15.7 miles differs from the Inventoried Roadless Area Worksheet number of 9.6. This is due to the addition of the Big Smokey ATV trail and the Dollarhide single trail being added to the Decision.

on the human environment are not highly uncertain, are unlikely to involve unique or unknown risks and are not likely to be highly controversial and are, therefore, not significant.

5. Uncertainty

The action described in my decision will not involve effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1580.27). This action is similar to actions taken on many National Forests including the northern half of the Sawtooth.

Pertinent scientific literature has been reviewed and incorporated into the analysis process and the technical analyses used for determinations of the impacts to the resources are based on accepted techniques, reliable data and professional judgment. Issues of public concern and the possible environmental effects of the selected alternative have been adequately addressed in the analysis of this decision. Therefore, I conclude that there are no highly uncertain, unique or unknown risks associated with my Decision.

6. Precedent

My decision to implement the actions included in Alternative 2 with the listed modifications does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. This action is consistent with Forest Service direction contained in the 36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295 Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use; Final Rule published November 9, 2005. As noted above similar actions have been implemented across National Forest System Lands for the past 20 years. Any future proposals to the designated routes on the Fairfield District will be evaluated through the National Environmental Policy Act process, consistent with current laws and regulations.

7. Cumulative Impacts

I am making this decision considering the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. The cumulative effects of this action are described in the EA – Chapter 3. These actions do not individually, nor with other activities taken cumulatively within the area affected, reach a level of significance as discussed in Chapter Three of the EA. 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.

8. Properties On or Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places

I find the action will have no adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. There are no ground disturbing activities that would initiate consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office. Any future ground disturbing activities will require consultation. I find the action will not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. Concurrence from the Idaho SHPO on this action was obtained on August 16, 2007.

9. Endangered or Threatened Species or Their Critical Habitat

Implementation of the proposed action will not likely adversely affect the gray wolf or Canada lynx. These determinations are based on the conclusions that individuals of the species and their

respective habitats, prey base, or reproductive success would have a beneficial effect from implementing the proposed action.

Implementation of the proposed action would not likely adversely affect Ute ladies'-tresses orchid. Indeed, implementation of the proposed action would beneficially affect habitat conditions for the threatened orchid species. This determination is based on improved riparian conditions expected from implementing the proposed action.

Implementation of the proposed action would have no effect on the yellow-billed cuckoo. This determination is based on the conclusions in Section VI that individuals of the species and their respective habitats, food base, and reproductive success would not be affected by the proposed action.

The Biological Assessment has been prepared and delivered to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A letter of concurrence was received from US Fish and Wildlife on February 1, 2008 for this action.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

Consistency with the Final Travel Rule - This decision complies with 36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295 Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use; Final Rule published November 9, 2005. In reference to the rules' requirement to consider effects on soil, watershed, vegetation, wildlife and wildlife habitat "with the objective of minimizing" them, page 68281 of the Federal Register Rule states:

"It is the intent of EO 11644 that motor vehicle use of trails and areas on Federal lands be managed to address environmental and other impacts, but that motor vehicle use on Federal lands continue in appropriate locations. An extreme interpretation of 'minimize' would preclude any use at all, since impacts can always be reduced further by preventing them altogether. Such an interpretation would not reflect the full context of EO 11644 or other laws and policies related to multiple use of NFS lands. Neither EO 11644, nor these other laws and policies, establish the primacy of any particular use of trails and areas over any other. The Department believes "shall consider * * * with the objective of minimizing * * * " will assure that environmental impacts are properly taken into account, without categorically precluding motor vehicle use."

The Route Designation analysis reflects the guidance above. Effects were minimized in the context of the Sawtooth Forest Plan and are displayed in Chapter 3 of the EA. The wildlife effects analysis did not show any "significant disruption of wildlife habitats" – in fact, wildlife effects were reduced under the Decision. The potential for wildlife harassment has been reduced, as shown in Chapter 3 of the EA.

Consistency with Forest Plan - This decision, as designed and with mitigation and management requirements, is consistent with the Sawtooth Forest Plan goals and objectives, and standards and

guidelines. This decision to designate a system of motorized routes is consistent with the intent of the Forest Plan's long- term goals and objectives.

National Environmental Policy Act - The EA and DN/FONSI document are in compliance with NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508) for implementing NEPA.

Endangered Species Act - This decision is consistent with the Endangered Species Act. A Biological Assessment and Biological Evaluation was prepared for listed plant, wildlife, and fish species and submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for review and concurrence. A letter of concurrence was received on February 1, 2008.

Treaty Rights – This decision does not conflict nor affect Treaty Rights. The relationship of the U.S. Government with American Indian tribes is based on legal agreements between sovereign nations. In June 1867, an Executive Order established the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, as a collective place to consolidate the various bands of Shoshones and Bannocks from their aboriginal lands. The United States then signed the Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868 with Shoshone and Bannock Chiefs and Headmen.

Today, descendents of the Lemhi, Boise Valley, Bruneau, Weiser and other bands of Shoshoni and Bannock reside on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. Tribal members continue to exercise off reservation treaty rights, and return to aboriginal lands to practice their unique culture and traditions.

The 1868 Fort Bridger Treaty reserves the right to continue traditional activities on all unoccupied lands of the United States for hunting, fishing, gathering of resources for subsistence purposes.

Clean Water Act - This decision is consistent with the Clean Water Act and amendments. No construction or ground disturbing activities within wetlands are involved and therefore no permit is required from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. No State permit for streambed alteration is required because no new disturbance of streambeds is involved in the project.

Nonpoint Source Water Quality Program for the State of Idaho – As described in the EA (Chapter 3, Water Quality section), this decision maintains water quality within the project area and is consistent with the State of Idaho Nonpoint Source Water Quality Program.

Executive Order 11990 of May 1977 (Wetlands) - This order requires the Forest Service to take action to minimize destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands and to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands. In compliance with this order, Forest Service direction requires that an analysis be completed to determine whether adverse impacts will result. Based on discussions in Chapter 3 of the EA and the Project Record concerning wetlands, the decision complies with EO 11990 by maintaining and restoring riparian conditions.

Executive Order 11988 of May 1977 (Floodplains) - This order requires the Forest Service to provide leadership and to take action to (1) minimize adverse impacts associated with occupancy

and modification of floodplains and reduce risks of flood loss, (2) minimize impacts of floods on human safety, health, and welfare, and (3) restore and preserve the natural and beneficial values served by flood plains. Based on discussions in Chapter 3 of the EA and the Project Record concerning floodplains, the decision complies with EO 11998 by maintaining floodplain integrity.

Executive Order 13186 of January 2001 Migratory Bird Treaty Act – This Act requires the Forest Service to provide for the protection of migratory birds. High priority migratory bird species breeding habitats are analyzed and discussed in the effects analysis chapter of the EA. Based on discussions in Chapter 3 of the EA and the Project Record, my decision complies with EO 13186 by providing for protection of migratory birds.

Environmental Justice - This decision was assessed to determine whether it would disproportionately impact minority or low-income populations, in accordance with Executive Order 12898. No impacts to minority or low-income populations were identified during scoping or the effects assessment.

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. If 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 administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215. The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery) with the Appeal Deciding Officer. Written comments must be submitted to: USDA - Forest Service, Appeal Deciding Officer, 324 25th Street, Ogden, UT 84401; (801) 625-5605. The Notice of Appeal may alternatively be faxed to: USDA, Forest Service, (801) 625-5277, ATTN: Appeals Deciding Officer; mailed electronically in a format (pdf, txt, rft or document) compatible with Microsoft Office applications to: appeals-intermtn-regional-office@fs.fed.us; or hand delivered between the hours of between 8:00 am and 4:30pm, Monday through Friday except legal holidays at Federal Building, 324 – 25th St., Ogden.


Contents of an appeal must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an electronic message, a verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature is one way to provide verification.

Appeals, including attachments, must be filed within 45 days from the publication date of this notice in the Times News, the newspaper of record. Attachments received after the 45-day appeal period will not be considered. The publication date in the Times News newspaper of record, is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information 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 Terry Clark or Kim Pierson – Travel Plan Revision Team Leaders, Sawtooth Forest Supervisor’s Office; 2647 Kimberly Road East, Twin Falls, by phone at (208) 737-3200.

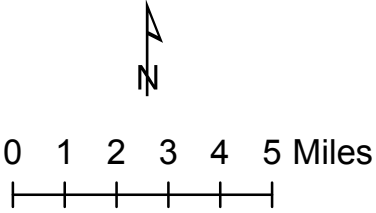
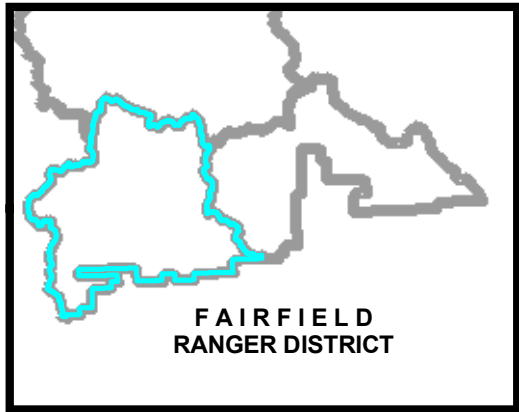
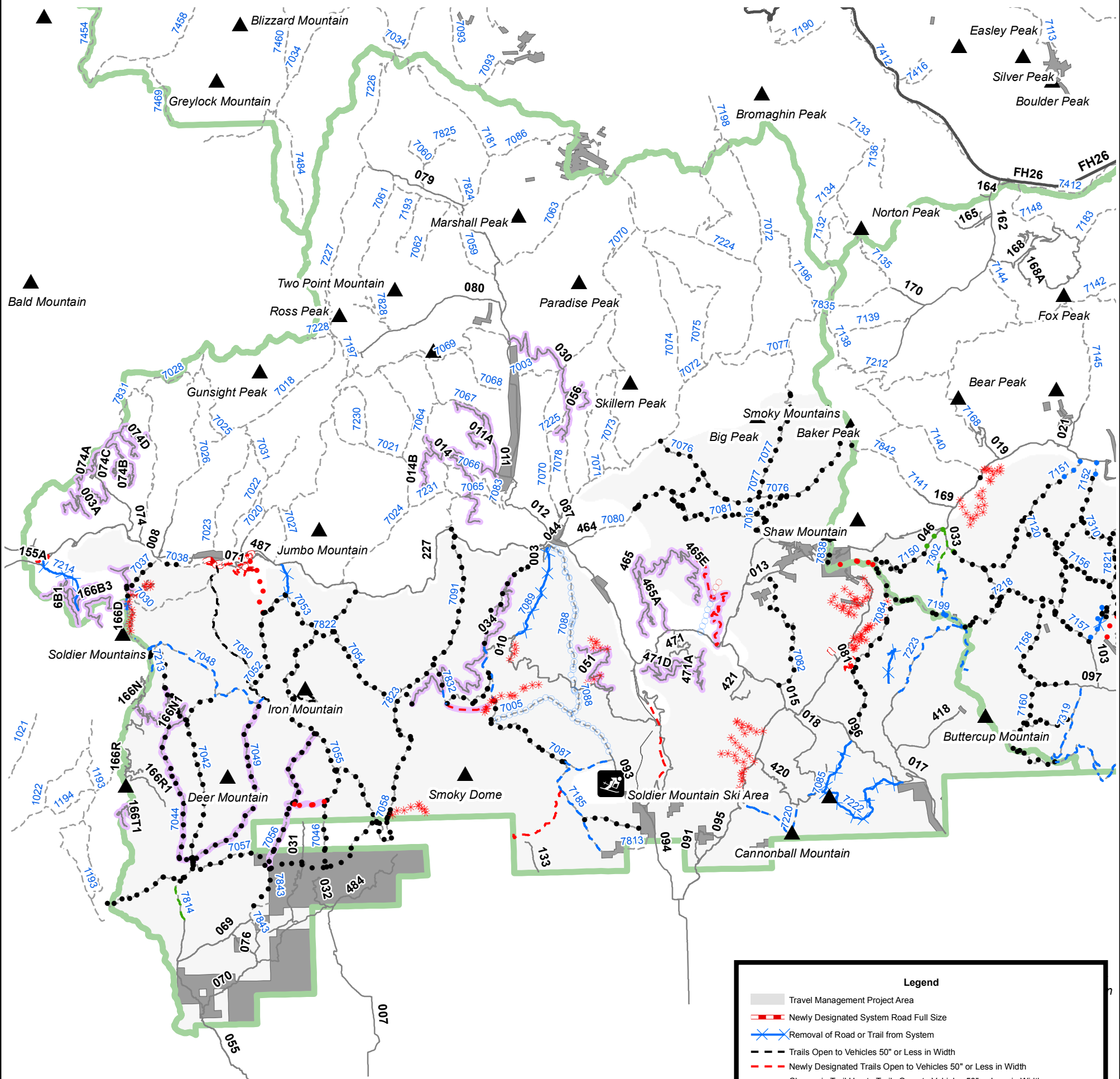


MIKE DETTORI
District Ranger
Fairfield Ranger District

2-22-08
Date

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Travel Management Decision Fairfield District Sawtooth National Forest



Legend	
	Travel Management Project Area
	Newly Designated System Road Full Size
	Removal of Road or Trail from System
	Trails Open to Vehicles 50" or Less in Width
	Newly Designated Trails Open to Vehicles 50" or Less in Width
	Change in Trail Use to Trails Open to Vehicles 50" or Less in Width
	Change in Road Use to Trails Open to Vehicles 50" or Less in Width
	Trails Open to Horse and Foot Traffic
	Newly Designated Trails Open to Horse and Foot Traffic
	Change in Trail Use to Trails Open to Horse and Foot Traffic
	Change in Road Use to Trails Open to Horse and Foot Traffic
	Trails Open to Bike, Horse, and Foot Traffic
	Newly Designated Trails Open to Bike, Horse, and Foot Traffic
	Change in Trail Use to Trails Open to Bike, Horse, and Foot Traffic
	Change in Road Use to Trails Open to Bike, Horse, and Foot Traffic
	Trails Open to Motorcycle, Bike, Horse, and Foot Traffic
	Newly Designated Trails Open to Motorcycle, Bike, Horse, and Foot Traffic
	Change in Trail Use to Trails Open to Motorcycle, Bike, Horse, and Foot Traffic
	Change in Road Use to Trails Open to Motorcycle, Bike, Horse, and Foot Traffic
	Trails Open to All Vehicles
	Newly Designated Trails Open to All Vehicles
	Change in Trail Use to Trails Open to All Vehicles
	Change in Road Use to Trails Open to All Vehicles
	Seasonal Closures
	Forest Highways
	System Roads - Oper Maint Levels 2-5 - Labeled in Black
	System Trails - Labeled in Blue
	NFS lands
	Non-NFS lands
	Peak
	Ski Area