

APPENDIX C – RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

Appendix C

The public, other agencies, and numerous organizations and recreation groups have been actively involved with the Caribou Travel Plan Revision process. Over 150 people looked over the Proposed Action and inventory maps for the project at a series of evening Open Houses held throughout southeast Idaho. The Interdisciplinary Team presented the Proposed Action and discussed site-specific route management with local trail users who attended one of the eight evening meetings. The Proposed Action and maps were posted on the Caribou-Targhee website. The Interdisciplinary Team received over 500 comments on the Proposed Action to revise the Caribou Travel Plan. These comments were used to create alternatives to the Proposed Action. This appendix does not include specific replies to comments received on the Proposed Action.

After the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), a second round of Open Houses were held in seven area communities. Over 150 people attended these meetings to discuss the draft analysis and specifics of the four alternatives to the Proposed Action. Over 1,700 comments were received on the DEIS for the Caribou Travel Plan Revision. A majority of these comments were “form” letters received electronically. The comments and the team’s responses are included below.

Section

1

Comments on the Process

Public Comments on the Process, Procedures and Content of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Comment #P1

Comment: The DEIS maps contain errors and some travel route numbers have been changed from the travel route number shown on the proposed action maps. Map #13 of the Map Packet indicates some routes as non-motorized and motorized. The DEIS does not provide a table of travel routes that indicate route status by alternative.

Reply: Due to mapping errors, the Forest extended the comment period from May 16, 2005 to May 27, 2005. The Forest sent a corrected hard-copy of Map #13 on or before April 11, 2005, to people and agencies that requested the map package. The Forest also sent notification of the comment period extension and an Errata sheet to everyone on the project mailing list. The extension notice, the corrected map and the Errata sheet were posted on our external website on April 7, 2005. The Final Environmental Impact Statement contains a table of special interest routes by alternative in Chapter Two and Appendix B contains a list of all travel routes by number and management by alternative.

Comment #P2

Comment: The Draft Environmental Impact Statement alternatives require Forest Plan Amendments. Forest Plan Amendments require another lengthy, expensive National Environmental Policy Act process. The Forest Service should follow the open motorized route densities set in the Forest Plan.

Reply: Based on findings of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), the Decision Notice can amend the Revised Forest Plan with a “finding of non-significant amendment”. This “finding” answers key questions concerning the significance of proposed amendments. The FEIS analyzes the effects of proposed plan amendments by alternative in Chapter Four, specifically under the Recreation and Wildlife sections.

Comment #P3

Comment: Various county officials and others have expressed concerns that the decision could have effects on Revised Statute (RS) 2477 travel routes under the 1866 Act.

Reply: As stated in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement in Chapter One, the Caribou Travel Plan Revision decision will not affirm nor deny the status of travel routes that may be subject to the RS 2477 Act. The intent of the Act and the requirements under the Act, have not yet been clarified by additional legislation or Forest Service policy. The Revised Forest Plan states that, “The Forest and local governments work cooperatively towards resolution of RS 2477 assertions.” (RFP 3-36). Some county representatives have prepared lists and maps displaying RS 2477 assertions for roads and trails they believe were in existence prior to the establishment of the Forest. These RS 2477 assertions are on file in the Forest Supervisor’s Office. Counties are free to add to these lists or make corrections at any time. The determination of jurisdiction these routes will be adjudicated over time as final policy is determined.

Comment #P4

Comment: Travel route densities, motorized and non-motorized, should be based on ecological parameters not on what is existing or demanded by motorized users

Reply: The motorized travel route densities set in the Regional Forest Plan were based on the existing motorized travel routes and their use, the management emphasis for the area, the desired recreation setting and wildlife concerns. Existing travel routes were considered as some roads and trails are needed for forest access and some travel routes are used by forest visitors for various recreation activities such as camping, hunting and fishing. Open Motorized Route Densities (OMRD) were also determined by the management emphasis of the area. For example, areas managed for winter range generally were given the OMRD of 1.0 or 1.5 miles per square mile. If the prescription area’s emphasis was for range or timber management, the OMRD could be 2.0 or 2.5. If an area’s management emphasis was semi-primitive recreation, the OMRD may be .5 miles. The factors that went into determining OMRD’s are described in more detail in Appendix A of the Plan Forest Final Environmental Impact Statement on page A-51 to 52.

Comment #P5

Comment: None of the alternatives meet the Revised Forest Plan Open Motorized Route Densities (OMRD) for every prescription area. All alternatives would require a Forest Plan Amendment. At least one alternative should meet Regional Forest Plan standard for OMRD’s in all prescription area. The decision should meet Plan OMRDs.

Reply: Existing motorized routes and use, management and resource emphasis, desired recreation setting and specific wildlife concerns were all used to determine the Open Motorized Route Densities (OMRD) for the Revised Forest Plan. Forest Plans are programmatic in nature and they set general direction in managing forest resources. The transportation data used for the Forest Plan was the best inventory at the time. Before the Travel Plan Revision analysis, the Forest spent two field seasons verifying and refining the road and trail inventory. This inventory revealed that some routes were actually longer than originally mapped, some route locations changed, in some cases this put the existing designated motorized route density over the plan OMRD. The prescription areas that are over the plan density under the no-action alternative are generally the areas that were managed as open to cross-county motorized travel. In some cases, areas that had travel restrictions are also over the Plan OMRD. (See Chapter Four of the Final Environmental Impact Statement under the Recreation and Wildlife sections for discussion of the effects of OMRD under each alternative.)

Comment #P6

Comment: The analysis needs to include an Education and Enforcement Plan to help implement the travel restrictions of the decision.

Reply: The decision will include education and enforcement efforts as described in Chapter Two, Alternative Descriptions of the Final Environmental Impact Statement. Education, including on-the-ground signing of routes and enforcement activities will be accomplished through leveraging limited funds and personnel with partners and other funding.

Comment #P7

Comment: The Forest should adopt a “closed unless posted open” policy on signing and enforcement of the Caribou Travel Plan.

Reply: The Forest Service has had mixed results with signing and enforcing travel plan compliance using this policy. Some courts do not understand nor support this policy, and Forest Law Enforcement Officers suggest using other strategies. Travel route status will be signed “on-the-ground” to the greatest extent possible. If a route is adequately signed as closed and someone violates the closure, the charge is more likely to be upheld in the courts. To achieve compliance by most trail users, routes need to be signed as to their status, open or closed, and to what types of travel.

Comment #P8

Comment: Public lands should be managed for multiple uses.

Reply: The Forest Service is directed to manage for multiple uses. This does not necessarily mean all uses on every acre. Historically, the agency did manage most trails for multiple use travel; however, with increased trail use and the advent of the all-terrain vehicle, some trails need to be managed for a non-motorized experience. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) analyzes six alternatives that provide for a mix of “multiple use” trails and non-motorized trails. (See the FEIS, Chapter Four under Recreation for a discussion of the effects to various trail uses.)

Comment #P9

Comment: There is no legitimate reason to close any established road or trail to motorized use.

Reply: In some cases, adverse impacts from established roads and trails can be reduced or eliminated through reconstruction, realignment, and construction for proper drainage. But some established roads or trails may occur in fragile wetlands or elk calving areas, or areas maintained for a non-motorized setting. Closures or seasonal closures are needed to protect forest resources or to achieve specific management objectives.

Comment #P10

Comment: On Page 19, the DEIS discusses how travel route closures and decommissioning will be undertaken. If the closure or the decommissioning requires major ground disturbance, such as constructing berms or ripping the road surface, additional NEPA analysis should be completed for the ground disturbing activity. These projects have the ability to affect rare plants, heritage resources, and safety. The Targhee National Forest was required to go through additional NEPA analysis for these activities.

Reply: The analysis and decision includes closure methods for routes not designated for public, administrative or special use access. (See Chapter Four; Recreation, Soils, Heritage, Rare Plants of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for analysis of closure effects to resources and public safety.) The 1997 Targhee Travel Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement did not fully address some of these concerns, and supplemental analysis was required.

Comment #P11

Comment: We are disappointed that the range of alternatives did not include an alternative that would increase recreation trail opportunities across the board. Year-round trail closures should be a last resort for providing additional non-motorized opportunities. Seasonal closures, construction, or reconstruction should be considered first.

Reply: An alternative that “maximizes” road and trail opportunities was considered, but not carried forward into the detailed analysis because it did not meet the purpose and need of the Travel Plan revision. (See Chapter Two in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.) Idaho Department of Fish and Game preferred year-round closure to address their concerns for less disturbance of wildlife from motorized travel. The Revised Caribou Travel Plan needs to reflect the goals, objectives and desired conditions of the Revised Forest Plan. Increasing motorized routes forest-wide would not be in alignment with the desired future conditions identified in the Revised Forest Plan, to maintain existing recreation settings and reduce impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat from motorized travel.

Comment #P12

Comment: All of the action alternatives provide inadequate motorcycling opportunity. We believe by preserving the southern half of the *Elkhorn Trail #7329* as single-track motorized, and by at least seasonally opening the Stump Creek Area to motorized uses, motorcycling opportunities will be improved over any of the action alternatives. Our recommendations will also increase ATV, mountain bike, and other non-motorized recreation opportunities over the existing condition.

Reply: If motorcyclists prefer travel on single-track motorized trails only, then their opportunities are limited in all alternatives including the “no-action” alternative. All alternatives provide over 500 miles of designated motorized trail. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives. (See the Final Environmental Impact Statement under Recreation for more discussion on motorcycle opportunities.)

Comment #P13

Comment: At the Open House in Pocatello, maps for only two alternatives were displayed for public review. NEPA requires that all alternatives be treated equally throughout the process.

Reply: The Proposed Action, Alternative 1 maps were printed at a large scale, and mounted on foam core boards for the 2004 Open Houses. These maps are very large, approximately 42” x 42”. The Proposed Action maps were based on our updated route inventory. We needed large scale maps to display where we thought our roads and trails were in relationship to the topography and to adequately display our Proposed Action. After the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, all alternatives were mapped at a slightly less than ½” to 1 mile scale and made available to everyone who requested the map package, these were also available at the 2005 Open Houses. The “Preferred Alternative” identified in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement was printed at the larger scale and mounted over the Proposed Action maps. Eight Open Houses were held throughout southeast Idaho. Maps of all alternatives were available and used for discussion at the Open Houses, not all alternative maps were at the larger scale.

Comment #P14

Comment: Allowing motorized travel 300’ off of a designated road sounds reasonable; however, a closer look reveals that for every mile of open road, there are nearly 73 acres of forest land that are essentially a 600-foot wide off-road play area along each designated road. Anyone found driving off-road in these areas can claim they are either parking, looking for wood or a camp spot. This allows for proliferation of two-track roads with all the associated impacts to resources. Since the Caribou is apparently committed to revising their RFP, they should also revise the 300 foot provision to close all off-road areas, unless designated open for specific purposes, such as designated wood gathering or dispersed camping areas.

Reply: This is a standard of the Caribou Revised Forest Plan, and applies unless posted otherwise. If an area begins to receive unacceptable resource damage, off-route travel is prohibited. Some roads on the Caribou are posted to prohibit off-road travel. This standard has been used on the Targhee portion of the forest since 1997. The previous 1986 Caribou Forest Plan contained a similar standard for dispersed travel off of designated roads and trails. Revising the standard was not considered in any alternative. Plan amendments considered with alternatives are adjustments of Open Motor Route Densities ceilings, minor boundary changes, and changing motorized travel restrictions for one prescription area.

Comment #P15

Comment: The Draft EIS is full of statements that show that the planning and/or management team is biased for motorized travel. Among these are many statements by resource specialists that point out the positive effects on their resource by reducing the number of roads, all of which are ignored when selecting Alternative 5. Examples Include:

Page 27, Comparison of Alternatives – “...increasing non-motorized areas decreases motorized access, and in these alternative many forest areas can only be reached on foot or horse.” This implies that “only reached on foot or horse” is a disadvantage.

(Page 106) Analysis of effects to Recreation – The “Motorized Use and Opportunity” statements across the alternatives do not treat various forest uses equally.

(Page 106) Recreation Effects – Comparison of the “Motorized Use and Opportunity” sections shows a bias toward motorized recreation. One example is that while motorized recreation is limited under all alternatives, Alternative 5 doesn’t list that access is limited for people with disabilities as it is under the other alternatives. There are other examples of bias.

Reply: The Interdisciplinary Team made every effort to avoid bias towards any recreation uses. All action alternatives reduce motorized routes which can reduce the potential for adverse resource impacts. Less travel routes equate to less risk of adverse impacts to resources; however, motorized recreation and other needed motorized access is desired by some people and to maintain administrative or special use access.

In response to the specific examples, the text was reviewed for bias in favor of motorized travel and some text was changed, for example the term “only reached on foot or horse” was changed to read, “Many forest areas are still accessible by foot or stock travel”.

Comment #P16

Comment: The Draft Environmental Impact Statement states on Page 7, “The assessment will consider the effects of forest travel management on adjacent lands; however, the decision does not include management direction for State, BLM and private lands”. Of course decisions in the Plan cannot apply to other ownerships, but why not cooperate with the BLM where these lands are adjacent. Especially since the BLM is now rewriting their land use plan. You do share the same building.

Reply: Forest staff met with the Recreation Staff of the Pocatello/Malad Field Office of the Upper Snake River District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to discuss their concerns with the Caribou Travel Plan Revision. BLM staff said they are beginning work on their Land Use Plan, and the plan will set broad direction for travel and access, but the plan will not designate routes. BLM staff stated that when they begin travel route designation they will coordinate with the Forest Service. The BLM and the Caribou-Targhee do share the same office. The Upper Snake River District Manager and staff were among one of the first to receive the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and map packets.

Comment #P17

Comment: Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 all add unauthorized, user-created routes. This is rewarding bad behavior for those who have illegally created these routes and is setting a precedent that encourages motorized users to create their own trails in the future.

Reply: All alternatives incorporate some non-system travel routes. Non-system travel routes have a variety of origins, some are historical roads built to access timber or range facilities, some are from early mining and exploration and some have been recently created by Off Highway Vehicle use. Under the 1986 Forest Plan, 40% of forest acres were managed as open to cross-country motorized travel. Not all user-created routes were created from illegal travel. The transportation inventory categorized the suspected origin of specific non-motorized routes. This information is available in the project record. (See the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapter Two for a description of travel route signing, education and enforcement which will be implemented under all alternatives.)

Comment #P18

Comment: (Page 175) “Unavoidable adverse effects have not been identified for any of the alternatives”. Wherever travel is limited, someone is being adversely affected. Everywhere there is a road, some wildlife species is being affected. Everywhere there is a road or trail, soil erosion is increased. EVERY alternative has adverse impacts to some degree.

Reply: This section has been edited to reflect the unavoidable adverse effects of travel on roads and trails.

Comment #P19

Comment: I am appalled that a community of over 60,000 residents including a large percentage of outdoor recreationists was given only one opportunity to participate in a local Open House hosted by CTNF.

Reply: The Caribou-Targhee National Forest held eight Open Houses in the spring of 2004 to discuss the Proposed Action and Transportation Inventory with interested outdoor recreationists. The two hour evening meetings were held in Pocatello, Idaho Falls, Fort Hall, Malad, Soda Springs, Preston, Montpelier and Afton, Wyoming. These Open Houses were advertised with press releases. Over 1,500 notification letters were sent out to people who have been interested in past forest activities.

In the spring of 2005, seven Open Houses were held to discuss the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and alternatives. These evening meetings were held in Pocatello, Fort Hall, Malad, Soda Springs, Preston, Montpelier and Afton, Wyoming. Press releases were sent out to numerous local newspapers and over 600 people were notified of the meetings by mail. Over 70 people attended the Pocatello meeting. Southeast Idaho residents who use the Caribou National Forest were given opportunities to review maps, discuss the project with Forest staff and to comment on the Revised Caribou Travel Plan Analysis. (For more detail on public scoping and outreach see Chapter One of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Comment #P20

Comment: Policy direction from the Forest Service's Washington Office calls for national forests to better manage the increasing demand for public land motorized recreation opportunities. Unfortunately, some planners and managers distort this worthy goal as requiring more vehicle restrictions and closures. Better management might result from these things, but it might also result from increased opportunities and/or less restriction. Regardless of the direction that “better management” takes, it is definitely time that the agency and forests apply a reality test to their planned actions. We all want better management of forest-based recreation, but this end is not well served by agency actions that cannot be enforced or understood by the public.

Reply: Comment noted. Education of the Travel Plan will be key towards its implementation.

Comment #P21

Comment: The dribble of money that filters from Washington, through the region and finally down to the forest and district level for on-the-ground recreation management is pathetically inadequate and unlikely to get better in the life of this travel management plan. Many forests are not managing and properly enforcing the current closures, contributing to a growing credibility gap. There is no way they can properly manage an even more intensive and complicated access management plan.

Reply: Comment noted. All action alternatives simplify the current Travel Plan and improve route design where possible, to encourage Travel Plan compliance. The Caribou-Targhee NF will cooperate with partners and trail users to help fund maintenance, signing and enforcement of forest roads and trails.

Comment #P22

Comment: 36 CFR, part 295, Section 295.2(b) requires plans to minimize “conflict among uses.” Wisely, it doesn’t set the standard to elimination conflict. It also states “among uses” not “between uses”. This would seem to target members of the same user group, not just different user groups. In managing recreation and responding to assertions of conflict, managers need to evaluate the real importance of these alleged conflicts to the well being of society as a whole. As more and more of us occupy this earth, at some point we are simply going to have to learn to get along. It is a standard strategy for opponents of motorized recreation to create a perception of irreconcilable conflict. If non-motorized recreation makes its case for conflict and incompatibility, they should stand an equal chance of losing their access.

Reply: Increasing regional populations and increase in outdoor recreation participation will require different types of recreation use to co-exist. Multiple-use trails can still meet many people’s desires; however, non-motorized settings and experiences need to also be provided. (See Chapter Four of the Final Environmental Impact Statement under Recreation for a discussion of cumulative impacts of these regional trends.)

Comment #P23

Comment: We fully support closures based on sound resource issues, such as protecting important wildlife winter range. We support, somewhat reluctantly, the allocation of some reasonable amount of public land to meet the desires of other users with demonstrated special needs. We strongly support responsible shared use of public lands. We object in the strongest terms to limits supported only by feel-good science and vague opinions. When access to an area is denied us, we want the denial to meet the test of serving a real need; wherever possible, we would like to see any losses mitigated with access to other suitable lands.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #P24

Comment: I hope the Forest Service will deal with the growing problem of off-road vehicle use in a serious and comprehensive way in lieu of a few token gestures to non-motorized users and wildlife. Failure to deal with this problem effectively now will only make it more difficult to deal with in the future.

Reply: The Caribou Travel Plan Revision action alternatives bring the Forest closer to implementing motorized travel on designated routes and meeting the desired future conditions identified in the Revised Forest Plan. All action alternatives provide additional semi-primitive non-motorized areas than the existing condition. Chapter Four, Recreation and Wildlife discuss the effects of each alternative on non-motorized settings and wildlife.

Comment #P25

Comment: My family and I have been avid hikers and mountain bikers in the area around Pocatello for over thirteen years. It is from this stand point, that I would like to encourage you to conserve what we have and protect this beautiful area from further degradation.

Over the last three to five years, we have seen single-tracks widened, braided, and even eroded deeper than five feet. Trails that are severely damaged should be closed and rehabilitated not re-routed. But requesting that is useless unless there is not only monitoring and enforcement to deal with violations, but also dedicated funds for this purpose. As written, the travel plan needs to include a provision for rehabilitation, monitoring, and enforcement and funding.

Reply: Trail construction standards, mitigation measures, monitoring, signing, education and enforcement are described in Chapter Two of the Final Environmental Impact Statement. These measures will improve trail conditions. The Forest is committed to implementing the Revised Travel Plan. The Forest Service budget is set by Congress and varies from year to year. Allocating the funding for these activities is beyond the scope of this analysis.

Comment #P26

Comment: Please make sure that all designations are compatible with other public and private land uses. In other words, don't let ATV's ride up a trail that then dead-ends in a stretch of land that is either private or BLM or something else, where they then have to turn around (causing a new trail). Put a clear sign at the trailhead.

Reply: All alternatives are designed to avoid "dead-ending" a popular travel route on private land. In some cases, an easement or right-of-way is not available to cross private lands and a dead-end cannot be avoided. Improved route signing will be implemented with the Travel Plan Revision.

Comment #P27

Comment: The Department of the Interior supports the Preferred Alternative for the Caribou Travel Plan Revision (Travel Plan); however, enforcement strategies for the Travel Plan have not been sufficiently provided for in the DEIS. Without enforcement and compliance regulations, there will not be a strong conservation component for the species of concern.

Reply: Signing, education and enforcement strategies are further described in Chapter Two of the Final Environmental Impact Statement. The Forest is committed to implementing the Revised Travel Plan. In the past year, the Forest has committed over \$40,000 to enhance travel plan education and compliance patrols.

Comment #P28

Comment: In order to achieve the stated resource benefits, enforcement and monitoring must be conducted, specifically at identified priority sites. We recommend that the FEIS address the utilization of enforcement monitoring to identify any changes that may need to be made to the Travel Plan.

Reply: As previously stated, signing, education and enforcement strategies are further described in Chapter Two of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Monitoring for travel route closure effectiveness has been added between Draft and Final, also described in Chapter Two of the FEIS. The Forest is committed to implementing the Revised Travel Plan.

Comment #P29

Comment: The DEIS fails miserably to balance motorized and non-motorized recreation and access to the Forest.

Reply: People's opinion on what constitutes a "balance" between these uses is highly variable. Alternatives provide a mix of motorized opportunities and non-motorized settings. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives. (See Chapter Four under Recreation of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for more discussion of recreation allocations by alternative.)

Comment #P30

Comment: The Forest Service has delayed release of the DEIS for more than five months, evidently because of the complexity of the issues involved. Surely the public deserves more than 45 days to read, understand, and provide meaningful and substantive comments on such a complex issue. This is even more so the case when the maps are difficult to comprehend and contain information that conflicts with the text of the DEIS.

Reply: As previously stated, corrected information was mailed and posted on our web-site as soon as errors were discovered. The comment period was extended seven days to allow people to review the corrected information. The Caribou Revised Travel Plan process began in the spring of 2004. During this time, the public and others have been engaged through Open Houses, sharing of larger scale maps, talking to various interest groups, agency and government coordination, and numerous press releases.

Comment #P31

Comment: The purpose of NEPA is to assure that federal agencies are fully aware of the present and future environmental impact of their decisions. Additionally, the preparation of NEPA documents "ensures that other officials, Congress, and the public can evaluate the environmental consequences independently." A central tenet of NEPA is that federal agencies account for cumulative effects in NEPA analysis. The Caribou Travel Plan DEIS provides scant information on cumulative effects.

Reply: The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) had a formatting error for the location of the main cumulative effects discussion. The cumulative effects of each alternative have been addressed for each resource in more detail and substance in Chapter Four of the Final Environmental Impact Statement. Cumulative Effects for recreation and wildlife have been expanded from the DEIS.

Comment #P32

Comment: The Forest Service seeks to excuse itself from the required, thorough discussion of direct & cumulative effects by "tiering" to past NEPA documents.

Reply: The Travel Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement tiers to the 2003 Revised Forest Plan where appropriate. The Wildlife section analyzes the effects of each alternate in more detail, species by species, than found in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Comment #P33

Comment: The Forest's unqualified use of the NVUM statistics for the Travel Plan is inappropriate. The DEIS should have included the same information for non-motorized travel/recreation that it used for motorized recreation, and it should have expanded the discussion of the NVUM survey to insure that the public and decision maker clearly understand its limitations.

Reply: The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) noted that the data available from the National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) was for the Caribou-Targhee as a whole and only represented one year of survey information, and that recreation use patterns vary from year to year with weather, the economy, and other factors. The Final Environmental Impact Statement gives the corrected NVUM information for Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use and notes the reverse assumption for non-motorized use on the Forest. The DEIS stated that 16% of people visiting the Caribou-Targhee Forest participated in some OHV travel. The Final uses the correct 13% of people visiting the Caribou-Targhee National Forest participated in some OHV travel. The Final states that, “from these figures, we could assume that 87% of forest visitors do not participate in OHV activities”; however, the question of “no OHV participation” was not directly asked on the survey.

Comment #P34

Comment: In developing its Forest Plan and Travel Plan between 1997 and 2000, the Targhee Zone of the Forest adopted a “Signed Open” policy for roads and trails. That means that unless the route is signed “open” it is closed to motorized use. According to the DEIS, the Caribou Travel Plan does not intend to sign roads as open or closed.

Reply: The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) states that routes are open as designated on the Forest Travel Plan Map. The DEIS states that routes will be signed, as needed. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) expands the discussion of signing travel routes. The Forest intends to sign designated motorized and non-motorized routes. (See Chapter Two of the FEIS.)

Comment #P35

Comment: The Travel Plan fails to include either a monitoring or an enforcement element to deal with the inevitable violation of motorized closures.

Reply: As previously stated, signing, education and enforcement strategies are further described in Chapter Two of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Mitigation and monitoring, including monitoring for travel route closure effectiveness is described in Chapter Two of the FEIS. The Forest is committed to implementing the Revised Travel Plan.

Comment #P36

Comment: Trails that are currently severely damaged from use should be closed and rehabilitated rather than re-routed or reconstructed.

Reply: Some trails are desired for access and recreation; and often, these routes can be redesigned to reduce resource impacts. Some routes need to be closed, and possibly decommissioned. Site-specific conditions vary, and each trail is unique. (See Appendix B of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for site-specific analysis of trail need and noted resource concerns.)

Comment #P37

Comment: The Forest Service should ensure that it is designating uses on roads and trails that are compatible with designated uses on adjacent public land units. Often, conflicts arise when a public land management agency, such as the Forest Service, allows motorized use to its boundary and the adjacent public land management agency, such as another Forest Service district or other public land management agency, disallows motorized use on the continuation of the route within their jurisdiction. Conflicts also arise when trails dead-end at private property boundaries. The Forest should adjust or close routes that conflict with other adjacent public or private land uses.

Reply: As described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapter Four under Recreation, the Forest Service discussed “shared” travel routes with adjacent agencies and forests. The Bureau of Land Management is not yet designating travel routes, but will in the future. Private land access and uses were considered in the Proposed Action and other alternatives. Adjacent Forests and Districts were contacted, to assure that our route designations did not create a conflict in management. All alternatives consider adjacent uses.

Comment #P38

Comment: We are disappointed in the Forest Service’s apparent rejection of comments provided by the Southeast Idaho Recreation Alliance. The motorized community and Blue Ribbon Coalition have been “rewarded” in selecting Alternative 5 as the Preferred Alternative in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Reply: The analysis does not reward or withhold reward to various trail advocacy groups. Alternative 5 was chosen as the Preferred Alternative in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement because it retained many established uses, motorized and non-motorized, while moving the Forest closer to desired future conditions for resources. Alternative 5R responds to additional public comments.

Comment #P39

Comment: The Forest Service has no duty to appease each user group, especially where appeasement of the group could lead to a failure of your prescribed duty to act “as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations”.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #P40

Comment: The Forest Service has failed to consider the site-specific impacts of Alternative 5 in respect of motorized use on the specific trails it plans to designate.

Reply: The Final Environmental Impact Statement considers impacts to resources in more detail than the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. (Please see Appendix B and the Caribou Revised Travel Plan Roads Analysis for site-specific road and trail considerations by Alternative.)

Comment #P41

Comment: In the DEIS, by tiering to the RFP, the Forest Service improperly neglects to conduct specific analysis of the effects of ongoing motorized use in respect of impact on wildlife. Reference to the more general 2003 RFP Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in respect of the effects of motorized use on already designated roads and trails on wildlife is not enough.

Reply: As previously stated, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) analyzes direct, indirect and cumulative impacts to wildlife by alternative in more detail than found in the draft. The FEIS does tier to the 2003 FEIS for the Revised Forest Plan by using data and findings of this previous analysis

Comment #P42

Comment: The Forest appears to have come to a conclusion before considering the data presented in the DEIS, and then worked to rationalize the decision with the DEIS.

Reply: Travel planning is an allocation process based on recreation needs and desires and resource concerns. (See Chapter Two, Alternative Development of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), for information on the evolution of alternatives based on public comment and resource conditions.) The FEIS analyzes Alternative 5R, a new alternative based on public comment and resource conditions.

Comment #P43

Comment: It appears to me that your on-the-ground people should be the ones to determine the proper mix of roads, trails, etc. for their area.

Reply: On-the-ground people were involved in determining the status and future management of all travel routes. District staff was involved in inventory, the Proposed Action, in creating the alternatives, and in the Roads Analysis process.

Comment #P44

Comment: You should show all the roads with rights-of-way across private lands as open.

Reply: One of the goals of the Proposed Action and alternatives was to retain the use of existing rights-of-way by designating them for motorized travel. Site-specific considerations may have altered this in some areas.

Comment #P45

Comment: Roads left open for mining and logging should be left open for other uses until those operations are completed.

Reply: Travel routes for mining and logging are not always left open for public travel due to safety or resource concerns. This is decided within the environmental analysis associated with the forest activity or action.

Comment #P46

Comment: One of my concerns is that with the scale of map you will handout to the public, you cannot adequately show where roads start and end and you state that there will be no signs to indicate those points. I think that the ending points of all the roads should be natural barriers.

Reply: The Forest intends to sign all designated routes, motorized and non-motorized. The best enforcement to closing a route to motorized use is using an existing natural barrier, such as rock outcroppings and steep terrain.

**Section
2****Comments on Recreation****Public comments on the recreation experience settings, and uses.****Comment #R1**

Comment: Caribou Travel Plan should not restrict OHV travel, including ATVs and motorcycles, anywhere on the forest.

Reply: Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) travel has been recognized as an appropriate activity on Forest system lands; however, the agency has been given direction to manage OHV travel. Executive Orders direct the Forest Service to manage OHV travel on Forest and Grassland system lands to protect forest resources and reduce conflict of uses. Allowing OHV travel on the forest anywhere at any time would not comply with these orders.

Comment #R2

Comment: Motorized trail users have to register their vehicle with the State of Idaho. Non-motorized trail users should have to purchase “use” stickers or pay some type of fee to use forest trails.

Reply: The State of Idaho regulates Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) registrations and regulations. They do not have a similar program for hikers, stock users, or mountain bikes. The Forest Service can only charge fees for “facilities and services”, such as those offered at campgrounds and developed trailheads. There are Federal funds available through the State of Idaho for non-motorized trail construction and maintenance. Cross-country skiers who use designated plowed parking lots are required to purchase a “Park and Ski” pass from the State of Idaho. State Registration Programs are beyond the scope of this decision.

Comment #R3

Comment: The scoping documents and the Proposed Action do not address mountain bike use.

Reply: Under the “Introduction” section of the Proposed Action, it states, “all travel ways are generally open to foot and stock use”, it further states, “the Proposed Action will determine the season of use and types of use for the Forest’s roads and trails”. Mountain bike travel has been restricted on the Caribou National Forest since the 1987 Travel Plan Map. The Proposed Action, Alternative 2, does not change the existing mountain bike restrictions as depicted on the 2002 Travel Plan Map. Alternatives 5 and 5R allow mountain bike travel on additional non-motorized system trails. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative, or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #R4

Comment: Stump Creek area trails should be open to motorized use.

Reply: Alternative 1 manages many designated motorized trails within the Stump Creek area. Stump Creek is remote with steep topography and thick timber. Due to these attributes, historically this area was used by back-country horse users and hikers to hunt big game and for other non-motorized activities. Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 5, and 5R manage the interior of the Stump Creek area for a non-motorized setting. Under Alternatives 2, 5 and 5R, Stump Creek is one of four large areas within the Caribou National Forest that offer a non-motorized experience for people and wildlife. Alternatives 3 and 4 offer additional areas as non-motorized. (See the Chapter Four under Recreation of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for more discussion of motorized opportunity by alternative.)

Comment #R5

Comment: Private land owners have “closed” forest access routes to the public.

Reply: This decision cannot acquire or ensure public easement over private lands. The Forest does pursue and acquire needed public easements on an opportunity basis. Some routes that lead to the Forest have been designated as motorized to retain use and access for all forest visitors.

Comment #R6

Comment: Where do OHV sticker funds go?

Reply: The State of Idaho administers the registration sticker funds received from Off Highway Vehicle owners. (See Chapter Three under Recreation of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for a discussion of the funding used to improve the Caribou’s motorized and non-motorized trails over the last two decades.) The State of Idaho determines how and where these funds are spent.

Comment #R7

Comment: Recreation, including motorized recreation, should be managed within the ecological capabilities of the land. Managing with the capability of the land may mean restricting designated travel if the travel routes or travel route use is impairing the long-term sustainability of plant or wildlife species.

Reply: The Revised Forest Plan (RFP) standards and guidelines for wildlife and vegetation are designed to protect the long-term sustainability of habitat for species, including Threatened and Endangered species or species at risk, both plant and animal. Revised Forest Plan monitoring is also designed to ensure sustainability of forest resources. All alternatives reduce motorized travel routes, when compared to the 2002 Travel Plan, which allowed cross-country motorized travel on 40% of the Caribou zone. Alternatives 3, 4, 5 and 5R reduce motorized travel routes when compared to the 2002 Travel Plan with the 2003 Special Order which is the existing condition. Each alternative’s effects to wildlife and plant species are discussed in Chapter Four under Wildlife, Sensitive Plants, and Non-forested Vegetation sections.

Comment #R8

Comment: Motorized vehicles belong on designated routes that do not encourage proliferation of illegal trails, harm riparian habitats, cause resource damage, or severely impact wildlife.

Reply: The Revised Forest Plan contains standards, guidelines, and prescription direction to protect riparian areas, wildlife habitat, and to reduce resource damage from recreational and other travel. Designation of motorized routes in Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 5 and 5R considered road and trail design that would reduce cross-country motorized travel by creating loop trails when possible, and reducing dead-end roads and trails. Designing a road and trail system that offers variety and access to areas of interest will encourage motorized users to comply with the travel plan. Signing, education, enforcement and maps will also reduce the proliferation of illegal routes.

Comment #R9

Comment: According to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the National Use Monitoring Survey indicated that 16% of Forest visitors use Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) for recreation. Alternative 5 is not responsive to the remaining 84% of Forest visitors who do not use OHVs on the Forest.

Reply: Most of the 87% of forest visitors, that we have assumed do not use Off Highway Vehicles while on the forest, do use motorized vehicles to access the forest. All action alternatives manage much of the forest as roaded natural or roaded modified, these areas offer full-sized roads to reach points of interest or motorized and non-motorized trailheads. Some non-motorized trail users do not object to using a trail that is open to motorized travel, some non-motorized trail users want a non-motorized setting. All action alternatives manage some areas of forest as semi-primitive non-motorized settings. These areas provide a non-motorized experience for hiking, stock use and in some cases, mountain bike use. Each alternative provides a different mix of motorized and non-motorized opportunities. The Deciding Officer may choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #R10

Comment: Adopt Alternative 3 with these further recommendations: 1) Only allow OHV routes where the Forest Service demonstrates that existing or proposed OHV use does not and will not result in harm to wildlife, water quality, and non-motorized recreation; 2) Prohibit motorized vehicle use in recommended wilderness areas and other wilderness quality lands including roadless areas and; 3) Comply with the motorized route densities in the Forest Plan, and 4) Allow mountain bikes on non-motorized routes outside of recommended wilderness.

Reply: Alternatives considered in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) are designed to reduce impacts to wildlife and water quality and provide non-motorized settings on the forest. Motorized use in recommended wilderness areas was considered in the Revised Forest Plan analysis, and the decision was to manage these areas as non-motorized during the snow-free season and to allow motorized travel during the snow season. Impacts to Inventoried Roadless Areas have been analyzed in the FEIS in Chapter Four under Roadless Areas section. Some alternatives provide more mountain bike opportunity on non-motorized trails than other alternatives. Mountain bike travel is discussed in Chapter Four under Recreation of the FEIS.

Comment #R11

Comment: If you close trails to motorized travel, the remaining trails will be crowded and over used.

Reply: Some motorized trails already receive heavy use especially during peak weekends during the summer. But many motorized trails on the Caribou, receive little use due to the fact that they are not known or do not occur next to a popular campground or trailhead. Closing a popular trail within a popular area could concentrate use on the remaining trails. This could happen if “heavy use” trails were closed in Mink Creek or Cub River recreation areas. Closing some “little used” motorized routes in “low use” areas would have little effect on trail use patterns.

Comment #R12

Comment: Some people cannot hike trails due to health issues. These people rely on motorized roads and trails to access the forest.

Reply: Some people with impaired mobility do rely on motorized routes to access the forest with full-sized vehicles or all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). Some people with impaired mobility and/or health issues cannot ride ATV’s or horses and must walk or use a wheelchair to access forest trails. All alternatives provide a different mix of opportunities and settings, motorized and non-motorized. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives. Access for people with mobility problems is discussed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapters Three and Four under Recreation.

Comment #R13

Comment: I support Alternative 5. My family has enjoyed riding ATV’s and motorcycles and camping on Caribou trails for many years.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #R14

Comment: Alternative 5 is the most reasonable plan for the diverse use of the Caribou.

Reply: All alternatives provide a different mix of motorized and non-motorized settings. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or combination of alternatives. (See Final Environmental Impact Statement – Chapter Two under Comparison of Alternatives section.)

Comment #R15

Comment: If you close motorized routes, illegal travel and resource damage will increase.

Reply: All alternatives provide a variety of motorized routes and experiences. If forest visitors do not support or understand route closures, they may not comply with closures. Education of the resource reasons for route closures can reduce non-compliance. The presence of Forest Staff on travel routes will also reduce non-compliance.

Comment #R16

Comment: I support Alternative 5 with modifications to include trail management suggestions from Bonneville County Recreation Committee. The Winschell Dugway should be an all-terrain vehicle trail. Brockman tributary roads should remain open.

Reply: Bonneville County Recreation Committee wanted additional motorized trails in many areas of the forest. Some of these routes are managed as open in Alternatives 1 and 2. Alternative 2 manages the Winschell Dugway as open to motorized use. Alternatives 1, 3, 4 and 5 manage the route as a non-motorized trail. Alternatives 5 and 5R do not propose the route as a system trail due to construction and maintenance concerns. These alternatives suggest additional analysis to determine the status of the Winschell Dugway. Alternative 1 manages the Brockman tributary roads as open to motorized use. Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 5 and 5R manage these short dead-end routes as closed to motorized use. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #R17

Comment: I support the “new” loop trails on the Montpelier Ranger District in Alternative 5.

Reply: Many trail users, motorized and non-motorized commented that they enjoy loop opportunities. Alternatives 5 and 5R offer motorized and non-motorized loop opportunities.

Comment #R18

Comment: If we lost our recreation use of the Caribou National Forest, it would have a negative impact on the economy of southeastern Idaho.

Reply: Recreation use of the Caribou National Forest does contribute to the local economies of southeast Idaho communities. (See the Final Environmental Impact Statement Chapters Three and Four under Economics.)

Comment #R19

Comment: Motorized trail users and local motorized trail groups have maintained most of the forest’s motorized trails for many years.

Reply: In the last 15 years, motorized trail users and groups have maintained many motorized trails. The State of Idaho’s Trail Ranger Program and their Off Highway Vehicle Grant Program have also upgraded and maintained many motorized forest trails.

Comment #R20

Comment: Eliminating cross-country motorized travel and managing motorized use on designated routes make “loop opportunities” and additional motorized routes much more important.

Reply: The Revised Forest Plan manages most forest areas as “motorized use on designated routes”. Alternatives 4, 5 and 5R manage the entire forest as motorized use on designated routes. Alternatives 5 and 5R create additional motorized loop opportunities. (See Chapter Four under Recreation for a comparison of motorized route miles by alternative.)

Comment #R21

Comment: Off Highway Vehicle recreation is growing at an exponential rate. This presents a challenge to educate these trail users about resource and trail ethics.

Reply: The Forest will concentrate on educating users about the Travel Plan and the resource reasons for travel restrictions. On-the-ground signing will also promote land and trail ethics. Many user-groups also teach environmental ethics and trail etiquette. The Forest will increase use of the "Tread Lightly" education materials.

Comment #R22

Comment: Off Highway Vehicle trail use is an important family tradition and activity. We care about maintaining the natural quality of the forest. Please do not reduce the existing motorized trails on the Caribou Forest.

Reply: Many people enjoy riding all-terrain vehicles and motorcycles on the Caribou's trails. Most trail users appreciate the forest's natural setting and wildlife. All alternatives maintain some trails for motorized use. (See the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapter Four under Recreation for more discussion on designated motorized routes by alternative.)

Comment #R23

Comment: All trails on the Caribou should be analyzed to determine their suitability for motorized use. Trail closures should be determined by science, not decided arbitrarily.

Reply: The updated Travel Route Inventory depicts a majority of the existing travel routes on the Caribou. The Interdisciplinary Team and Ranger District staff considered each route mapped on the inventory for inclusion into the road and trail system as a designated motorized or non-motorized route. Proposed route closures by alternative were based on resource concerns and/or to provide a non-motorized setting for people and wildlife.

Comment #R24

Comment: The Forest lacks trail signs.

Reply: The Caribou Road and Trail System needs improved signing. Signing priority motorized and non-motorized trails will be accomplished during the first field season after the decision. (See Chapter Two of the Final Environmental Impact statement under Actions Common to All Alternatives.)

Comment #R25

Comment: I would like to see the existing motorized single-track trails not managed as "open to ATV travel".

Reply: Many people are concerned with the loss of single-track motorcycle trails to all-terrain vehicle use. This is a significant issue in the Final Environmental Impact Statement and is discussed in Chapter Four under Recreation. Alternative 1 offers the greatest number of designated motorcycle trails at 172 miles. Alternative 3 offers the least, at 97 miles and Alternative 5R offers 147 miles. According to comments made by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, these miles are not sufficient for motorcycle mileage needs.

Comment #R26

Comment: I enjoy hiking, mountain biking and motorcycle trail riding. I support multiple use trails, and I support Alternative 5.

Reply: The alternatives considered in the Final Environmental Impact Statement offer different mixes of motorized opportunities and non-motorized settings. The differences between alternatives are discussed in Chapter Four under Recreation. Alternatives 2, 5 and 5R emphasize multiple-use trails in many areas of the Forest.

Comment #R27

Comment: I prefer Alternative 4 be selected as the Revised Travel Plan. It provides motorized and non-motorized opportunities and would provide the greatest benefit to wildlife and forest resources over time.

Reply: Alternatives 3 and 4 do provide the greatest protection to water resources and fish habitat. Alternatives 2, 5, and 5R offer more motorized access while reducing existing risk of impacts from motorized travel to riparian resources and wildlife habitat. (See the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapter Four under Riparian Resources section and the Wildlife section.)

Comment #R28

Comment: I prefer Alternative 2 because my family wants to travel the historic Winschell Dugway on all-terrain vehicles and motorcycles.

Reply: Alternative 2 proposes the Winschell Dugway as a motorized route. Alternatives 3 and 4 propose to manage the trail as a non-motorized system trail which is the existing condition. Alternatives 5 and 5R propose to not manage the route as a system trail motorized or non-motorized, until the trail and potential resource impacts are analyzed. Portions of this route have been obliterated by landslides and slumping soils.

Constructing and maintaining a trail on the alignment of the old Winschell Dugway will require additional information and analysis. (See the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapter Three and Four under Recreation section and Soils section for analysis of the Winschell Dugway.)

Comment #R29

Comment: I would like to see more motorized single-track opportunities in the future. Motorized single-track usually requires less maintenance than ATV trail, and has lower use and associated impact on wildlife and other activities. I'm concerned that the OMRD standards will continue to degrade motorized single-track opportunities as more trails are converted to ATV use against a OMRD ceiling that doesn't allow new motorized single track opportunities (despite the lower overall impact of motorized single-track).

Reply: Comment noted. Alternatives offer a differing amount of single-track motorcycle trails. Some motorcycle trails have been "upgraded" for all-terrain vehicle travel under some alternatives. Alternative 5R offers ten additional miles of motorcycle trail than Alternative 5 in response to public comment and resource concerns. Crestline Trail is retained as a motorcycle trail.

Comment #R30

Comment: The only single-track trails that can be preserved are those that have natural or placed obstacles that physically prohibit ATV access and don't have any way to easily get around or bypass those obstacles. ATV use on single-track trails, especially single-track that has a steep sideslope, causes excessive tread degradation, numerous bypasses and braids, eliminates cross-drainage and beneficial outsliping, and decreases usability by other trail users (particularly two-wheeled, who can dig a pedal or foot peg into the step between tracks). The bottom line is that a 4' wide ATV doesn't fit on a 1" wide trail.

I support development of high quality trail systems for ATV's, and don't have any problem with ATV's using roads or trails that have sufficient bench width and design features so that ATV's can use them safely and sustainably. And I have suggested (in my trail-specific comments) trail segments for ATV use (or for ATV use after upgrades) that will improve ATV loop opportunities and trail based recreation. But, until a trail meets design standards for ATV's, I feel it is a mistake to just turn ATV's loose to "widen" the trail for ATV use.

Reply: The Proposed Alternative and other alternatives were designed to provide for all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use on trails that can safely accommodate ATV travel. Some trails need reconstruction and maintenance to bring them to agency design standards.

Comment #R31

Comment: There has been a great deal of concern about recreational conflict. Some non-motorized users claim that the sight and sound of OHVs spoils their recreational experience. These claims often seem to be based on the assumption that this conflict occurs just because motorized use is allowed on a trail, or in an area.

But I haven't seen this based on actual frequency of use. Away from heavily used areas adjacent to population centers, trails may see only a few uses per day, so the chance of even seeing another trail user is not that likely. Just because a trail is open to motorized use, doesn't mean an OHV is coming by every 5 minutes, or every 5 hours, or even every 5 days. I often look at tracks while I'm riding trails. A number of times last year I road designated motorcycle trails on Elkhorn Mountain, Oxford Mountain, or on the east side of Snowdrift Mountain 3-4 days following the last time I'd ridden there, and noticed that there were no new tracks from any recreation user since I'd last been on that trail. I also often ride 70-80 mile loops on weekdays without seeing another person during the entire ride. Even when I see several vehicles at a trailhead, I may not see any other users on the trails. And if I do cross paths with other recreationists, the encounter is almost always friendly.

Alternative 5 provides 700 miles of non-motorized trails which are open to hikers and horsemen, and depending on how mountain bikes are managed in the final plan, mostly open to mountain bikes. The non-motorized users are also allowed on all motorized trails. Hikers and horsemen aren't even restricted to trails at all, so they can basically go anywhere on the forest. Given my experiences of not seeing many other recreationists actually out on the trail, I find it hard to believe that there is much interaction between recreational uses anywhere but next to larger cities, mainly Pocatello. And it appears that the Caribou has provided numerous non-motorized trails near Pocatello with Alternative 5.

Reply: Many Caribou trails, motorized and non-motorized do not receive heavy use, especially during week days and off-season use in spring and fall. All alternatives provide designated non-motorized trails, but many of these routes need maintenance to bring them up to agency standards. (See Chapter Three under Recreation for more discussion of existing trail use on the Forest.)

Comment #R32

Comment: During and since the Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership collaborative learning workshop, I've heard some hunting activists complain about how OHVs impact their hunting experience. These activists contend that more OHV routes must be permanently closed to all motorized vehicles, so that they can hunt without seeing an OHV. Most hunters I've talked with who feel this way tell stories about hiking for hours before sunrise to get to their favorite place, only to have someone ride up on an ATV and ruin their day.

Reply: Hunters use a combination of motorized and non-motorized travel to hunt and retrieve game. Hunting season conflict is an issue for the Forest and for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. (See Chapter Four, under Recreation of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the analysis of impacts to hunters, motorized and non-motorized, by Alternative.)

Comment #R33

Comment: Our largest concern with the revised travel plan is the loss of motorized single-track (motorcycle) trail opportunities. Under the No-Action Alternative, 170 miles of motorcycle trails are available. Under the Preferred Alternative 5, 130 miles of motorcycle trails are available. This is a significant reduction in opportunity that will likely drive motorcyclists to the Targhee National Forest where more opportunities are available. The Forest Planning staff may be under the impression that not as many people are riding motorcycles as they did in the past. In fact, off-highway motorcycle use has increased in southeast Idaho. Registration records show that over the past four years, motorcycle registrations have increased 49.6% in southeast Idaho and 70.6% in East Idaho. ATV registrations during the same time period increased 102% in southeast Idaho and 166.6% in East Idaho. This larger increase in ATV use overshadows the increase in motorcycle use. Trail motorcyclists in general prefer riding on single-track trails to ATV trails. In order to obtain a similar experience on an ATV trail, motorcyclists will increase their speed, increasing the chance for more serious injuries on an ATV trail than a single-track trail. To give an example, the Boundary Trail on the Westside Ranger District in the 1980's was a single-track trail. Our staff member time to travel the trail generally took four hours. When the trail was widened to ATV width, the time to travel the trail dropped to two and quarter hours. The increased width made for increased speeds.

Reply: Motorcycle opportunity on more challenging single-track trail is identified as a significant issue, Issue #3 in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. All alternatives provide a different mix of recreation alternatives. The "No Action" Alternative provides 170 miles and Alternatives 3 & 4 provides 100 miles. Alternative 5R offers 150 miles of single-track motorcycle trail. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives. (See Chapter Four under Recreation for more discussion of the Alternatives' effects to motorcycle travel.)

Comment #R34

Comment: Maintenance is an important consideration in travel management decisions. The Caribou-Targhee National Forest has a very limited budget for trail maintenance. This budget is unlikely to increase in the future. Our Trail Ranger and Trail Cat Programs are essential in keeping the Caribou's motorized trail system intact.

Non-motorized trails are facing a difficult future. With reduced recreation budgets, we are extremely concerned about the ability of the Caribou National Forest to maintain increased non-motorized trails under Alternative 3 and Alternative 4. The Trail Ranger or our Trail Cat Program can't maintain these trails. The Adopt-A-Trail Program and the Recreation Trails Program grants can handle a small

increase in non-motorized trails. Alternatives 3 and 4 non-motorized trail increases aren't reasonable with current and future budgets.

Reply: Past, present and future trail maintenance budgets have been and will be limited. As stated in the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), the Caribou-Targhee relies heavily on volunteers and the State of Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation to help us maintain system trails. Maintaining non-motorized trails is more difficult as the State's Trail Ranger Program and Trail Cat Program can only work on motorized trails. These two programs are funded from Off Highway Vehicle Registrations.

All alternatives provide a different mix of motorized and non-motorized trails. Many non-motorized trails need maintenance to bring them up to agency standards. The Forest plans to pursue volunteer agreements to maintain many of these trails. (See Chapter Four, Recreation of the FEIS for a discussion on maintenance concerns by Alternative.)

Comment #R35

Comment: We are extremely concerned with a few of the travel designations made in Alternatives 3 and 4. The designations would close trails that were reconstructed with Off Road Motor Vehicle Fund, Motorbike Recreation Fund, or Recreational Trails Program (diverse use) grant funding.

Closing these trails would result in a conversion. Idaho Administrative Procedures Act (IDAPA) Rule 26.01.31.350 regarding conversions requires, "No project funded by Recreational Program Grant Funds shall, without the prior written approval of the director, be converted to uses other than for the authorized purposes specified in the original recreational program grant application, grant agreement, or Memorandum of Understanding." Conversion can be resolved through providing a replacement opportunity or refunding the grant. Depending on the project, the refund could be more or less than the original grant. Only our director can approve a conversion. We are supplying a list of potential projects that would be converted under Alternatives 3 and 4. The Caribou/Targhee National Forest should not close these trails under the entire range of action alternatives. Closing these trails will require us to undergo conversion discussions with the Caribou/Targhee National Forest.

Reply: Chapter Three under Recreation of the Final Environmental Impact Statement lists the motorized trails on the Caribou that have benefited from grant monies generated by the Off-Road Motor Vehicle Fund, Motorbike Recreation Fund or Recreational Trails Program. Chapter Four under Recreation of the Final Environmental Impact Statement discusses the risk of trail conversion for each alternative. The National Environmental Policy Act process does not substantially change alternatives between Draft and Final.

Comment #R36

Comment: Overall, we were pleased with the recreation analysis in the DEIS. We appreciate the forest incorporating Idaho's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan (SCORTP) information. We are somewhat disappointed with the range of alternatives. Not one single action alternative increases motorized trail routes. We realize that the revised forest plan standards place limitations on open road and trail densities. Even with these densities, connection trails and unofficial trails could have been adopted in some areas on the forest.

Reply: The range of alternatives considered in detail was limited by the desired conditions of the Revised Forest Plan to reduce motorized disturbance of wildlife and to retain existing recreation settings. All alternatives propose to "adopt" portions of "non-system" routes and Alternatives 5 & 5R propose some "connector" trail construction under one-half mile in three locations.

Comment #R37

Comment: We were pleased to see on Page 13, that the Caribou National Forest recognizes the importance of looping opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized recreationists. In our careful analysis of Alternative 5, there seems to be more dead-end routes on the Soda Springs and Westside Ranger Districts than the Montpelier Ranger District. In our recommendations, we tried to eliminate many of these dead-end routes by opening some trails or recommending reconstruction of other routes.

Reply: Alternatives 5 and 5R emphasize loop routes if loops can be designed without constructing more than ½ mile of trail or by “adopting” a user-created route that does not contribute to adverse resource conditions. The purpose and need for the Proposed Action and alternatives was to designate a road and trail system, not to build new trail.

Comment #R38

Comment: The Roads and Trails Maintenance section on Page 36 states "Less popular motorized trails and non-motorized trails are not as likely to receive partner maintenance." We assume this statement is referring to our grant, Trail Ranger, and Trail Cat Programs. IDPR does offer the Recreational Trails Program grants for non-motorized trails. The Caribou National Forest hasn't applied for many non-motorized RTP grants in the past. We would encourage the forest to apply for more non-motorized grants. This would help get non-motorized trails in better condition and provide a more enjoyable non-motorized recreation experience.

Reply: Non-motorized trails and little used motorized trails are less likely than popular motorized trails to receive partner or volunteer maintenance. Most past and present trail maintenance on the Caribou has been achieved by volunteer groups such as Pocatello Trail Machine Association and through the Idaho Department Parks and Recreation Trail Ranger Program. (See Chapter Three under Recreation for additional discussion of trail maintenance.) The Forest has not utilized the Recreational Trails Program Grants for non-motorized trails. This is a source of trail maintenance funding that the Forest will consider in the future.

Comment #R39

Comment: On Page 38, the DEIS states "In general, learning to ride an ATV is not as difficult or physically demanding as learning to ride a motorcycle." ATVs and motorcycles are different vehicles that require different physical skill sets. On some trails, a motorcycle can be less physically demanding than an ATV and on other trails ATVs are less physically demanding.

Reply: Comment noted. Chapter Three under Recreation in the Final Environmental Impact Statement corrects these statements.

Comment #R40

Comment: The Cub River Road is discussed in the DEIS on Page 46. While Franklin County has an easement for this route and licensing requirements do apply, the county can designate this road for ATV use. Designating this road would eliminate the license plate requirement. Insurance for ATVs is easy to obtain and many ATV owners who finance their ATVs already carry insurance.

Reply: Comment noted. The issue of Franklin County's all-terrain vehicle (ATV) policies is beyond the scope of this decision. In the recent past, ATVs have traveled freely on this road, and the County has been concerned about the safety of mixing these two modes of travel (full-sized vehicles and ATVs).

Comment #R41

Comment: The DEIS states on Page 128 that "Motorcycle riders have ample opportunity in all alternatives on designated motorized trails." We disagree with that statement. Motorcycle riders need at least 60 to 100 miles of trail daily in a loop opportunity to provide a quality experience, according to Off-Highway Motorcycle & ATV Trails Guidelines for Design, Construction, Maintenance, and User Satisfaction by Joe Wernex, Westerville, OH, American Motorcyclist Association.

All of the action alternatives provide a minimal amount of motorcycling opportunity. In just one area of the Mountain Home Ranger District in the Danskin Mountains, at least 150 miles of motorcycle trails are provided. We believe that our suggestions offer the best opportunities for motorcyclists by designating 177 miles of motorized single-track trails primarily in the Stump Creek/Tincup area and the southern half of Elkhorn Mountain.

Reply: People riding licensed motorcycles can ride on 1,012 miles of designated roads. People riding non-licensed motorcycles can ride on 845 miles of motorized trails. People who prefer to ride motorcycles on single-track trails have 172 miles of designated trail. Some alternatives offer more motorcycle opportunity than others. The text in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement has been edited to explain that motorcycle riders have trail opportunities in all alternatives; however, some opportunities are on all-terrain vehicle trails.

Comment #R42

Comment: Idaho is the fourth fastest growing state in the United States. Pocatello was recently selected by Forbes Magazine as one of the ten most appealing cities of its size in the nation for business development. On two ordinary mid-week, mid-summer evenings last year, nearly 25 cars crammed into the West Fork of Mink Creek parking lot. West Fork and nearby Valve House trails are two popular, heavily used, non-motorized trails within 15 miles of downtown Pocatello. Parking at the Gibson Jack trailhead is a disaster on most weekends during the summer. It is clear that readily accessible, non-motorized recreation near Pocatello has exploded in the past 5–10 years and will continue to do so. High quality non-motorized recreational opportunities will continue to be a fundamental attraction to the area. I recommend that the CTNF recognize that all recreational opportunities within 15–20 miles of Pocatello are intimately connected with the urban environment and manage these lands accordingly.

Reply: The Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapter Three under Recreation recognizes the urban influence on forest recreation use for the Pocatello section of the Westside District. Non-motorized and motorized use in the area is increasing, especially in the Mink Creek drainage. All alternatives address this issue differently. Alternatives 2, 5 and 5R retain the existing allocation of motorized trails and non-motorized trails. Alternatives 3 & 4 manage more trails within this urban interface as non-motorized. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #P43

Comment: Virtually all research conducted by the National Park Service, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and others has shown that the experience of non-motorized recreationists is severely degraded by the presence (especially sound) of motorized recreation uses. The current Travel Plan does nothing to address this inherent conflict. In fact, many non-motorized trails are accessible only by traveling on motorized trails (e.g. 021, 026, 006, 013, 047, 178, 046, and 176), an appalling disregard of the very essence of non-motorized recreation. This mish mash of trails and conflicting uses is clearly unacceptable and an unacceptable situation for non-motorized recreationalists and for the CTNF to monitor, maintain and enforce.

I recommend that CTNF follow the lead of other recreational meccas such as Grand Junction, Colorado. Federal agencies there have created clearly designated, signed recreational zones featuring interconnected trail systems designed specifically for compatible users. I recommend that the CTNF designate the Slate Mt. Trail from the Gibson Jack Trailhead to Bannock Guard Station as a non-motorized trail that allows mountain bike use. This single change to the proposed Travel Plan would effectively create a zone of high quality, non-motorized trails linked to the West Fork of Mink Creek Trail system. In addition, it would enhance wildlife habitat, reduce erosion, reduce the spread of noxious weeds, reduce the potential for wildfire starts, decrease littering, increase opportunities for solitude, and improve water quality by reducing the recreational impact on streams, including Dry Creek which suffers from four stream crossings in a short area.

Reply: The Forest Service uses the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum categories (ROS) to “zone” forest areas for desired settings of motorized and non-motorized. [Alternatives analyzed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement offer a mix of motorized and non-motorized “zones”.] As described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Alternatives 3 & 4 offers the most forest areas as semi-primitive non-motorized or non-motorized zones. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternatives or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #P44

Comment: It is imperative that Forest restrict all OHV use to designated and well-signed routes, thus eliminating all cross-country motorized travel. A quick glance at the foothills adjacent to the community of Pocatello reveals an ugly and permanently scarred landscape. The National Forest System does not currently receive nor is there any prospect in the future of receiving funds sufficient to monitor either the damage caused by OHV use or to appropriately halt erosion and restore damaged lands with native plant species.

Reply: Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 manage approximately 29,000 acres as open to cross-country motorized travel. Alternatives 4, 5, & 5R manage this area with motorized travel on designated routes during the snow-free season. (See Chapter Four under Recreation of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for more discussion of cross-country travel in this area.) The Deciding Officer can choose any alternatives or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #R45

Comment: Dead-end roads are an invitation to “pioneering” use by ORV users. This is already apparent at Kinney Creek where the short, 2 mile road dead-ends and ostensibly becomes a ½ mile foot-trail. Already, ORV routes have been pushed beyond the end of the road and there is nothing to stop them. Kinney Creek is an easily accessible area, highly desirable to birders and wildlife watchers. It is prime winter range for deer and golden eagles are frequently sighted.

I recommend that dead-end roads, especially Kinney Creek which can be easily gated, be closed to all motorized use.

Reply: Dead-end travel routes are frustrating for recreationists and can lead to non-compliance of Travel Plan regulations. The Caribou’s Transportation Plan evolved over time from historic travel uses and was never designed to meet the needs of today’s outdoor recreation activities and travel. Alternatives 5 and 5R create more loop opportunities for all-terrain vehicle travel. Alternatives 3 and 4 manage Kinney Creek as a non-motorized trail. The Deciding Officer may choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives. The Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapter Four under Recreation discusses the effects of each alternative on various recreation travel modes.

Comment #R46

Comment: It is a grossly inaccurate to call ATV tracks “trails”. They are in fact, narrow roads that demand considerable and costly construction and maintenance, readily become eyesores, and are conduits for trash, weeds, and multiple kinds of abuse. Single-track trails such as the lovely Crestline Trail should clearly not be designated for ATV use. This trail crosses several streams and springs and is prohibitively narrow in many locations. Designating it as “ATV Not Recommended” simply invites abuse.

Reply: All-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails are two-track trails, as opposed to single-track trails. The State of Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Grant Programs and other programs help construct and maintain many ATV trails. Alternatives 4 and 5R manage Crestline Trail as a motorcycle trail. (See the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapter Four under Recreation for discussion of motorcycle trails.)

Comment #R47

Comment: I support Alternative 4. I think SIRA have come up with a fair and balanced approach to what I see as an unbalanced bias toward motorized use in our national forests.

Reply: As previously stated, people have different ideas about “balance” between motorized and non-motorized uses. The alternatives provide a differing mix of these allocations. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #R48

Comment: I am specifically concerned that there is a mixture of motorized and quiet recreation throughout the area. Quiet recreationalists find this especially dangerous as well as disturbing. There have been several times when I have been cross-country skiing and come around a bend almost to be run over by a fast snowmobile. This has been scary for me and my companions; I am also concerned for the dogs we take with us. A suggestion is to dedicate separate large areas for each activity. That way each will not disturb the other. At the very least make definable boundaries with clearly marked signs so that there will be no confusion.

Reply: The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum is a tool used by the Forest Service to “zone” uses. All alternatives provide areas during the winter that provide a non-motorized setting for people and wildlife. Alternatives 4, 5 and 5R refine existing non-motorized area boundaries to improve compliance.

Comment #R49

Comment: I am a hiker and I like to escape the sights and sounds of the city by visiting the forest. I hike to a spot in the forest where I can lay my head down on some moss and just listen to the quiet. Then it happens! I can hear the “motor heads” from several miles away as they approach. The wildlife can hear this racket from farther away than that. I enjoy seeing wildlife in their native habitat, but when the “motor heads” approach, the wildlife leave. Why do you even consider taking this from me with expanded ATV use with more loop trails. There are many other national forest owners who feel as I do. Why don’t you take a poll of the national forest users in your area. Ask them whether they want more or less ATV use on the forest, then structure your travel plan update according to the poll results.

Reply: The National Visitor Use Monitoring surveys are designed to help us understand how people use the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. The alternatives consider offer a differing “mix” of motorized opportunity and non-motorized setting. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternatives or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #R50

Comment: Finally, I'd like to add that as your District and others in the Forest review and update the Caribou Travel Plan, that you pay close attention to the impacts of motorized recreation, both summer and winter. As a long-time user of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, I have witnessed deterioration in my Forest experience in many canyons on the Caribou Forest.

Reply: Comment noted. (See the Soils section of Chapter Four and Appendix B - Road and Trail Tables for analysis of travel use impacts and recourse concerns.)

Comment #R51

Comment: The Caribou Travel Plan permits OHV use only to the extent that monitoring and enforcement are funded and implemented.

Reply: The Forest is committed to improving education and enforcement of the Travel Plan. It is expected that compliance will improve over time as trail users learn the new regulations and some trail users are fined for non-compliance. (See Chapter Two of the FEIS on alternatives not considered in detail.)

Comment #R52

Comment: We spend much of our free time recreating on the Soda Springs Ranger District and offer the following comments on your proposed Travel Plan. During the past 10 years, we have observed rapidly increasing deep rutting of trails and off-trail slopes in the Stump Creek area due to ORVs. This is particularly alarming since this has been a relatively dry period with lower-than normal water erosion. Much of this damage will continue to unravel during water periods. Strong action is needed to halt this damage and allow these areas to heal.

Reply: The Alternatives offer a variety of motorized and non-motorized opportunity in the Stump Creek area. Alternatives 4, 5 and 5R manage the interior of Stump Creek watershed for a non-motorized setting during the snow-free season. (See Chapter Four of the FEIS for the effects of these Alternatives on water quality and riparian resources.)

Comment #R53

Comment: Finally, I'd like to add that as your District and others in the Forest review and update the Caribou Travel Plan, that you pay close attention to the impacts of motorized recreation, both summer and winter. As a long-time user of the Caribou-Targhee, I have witnessed deterioration in my Forest experience in many canyons on the Caribou Forest.

Reply: See the reply to Comment #R52, above.

Comment #R54

Comment: We have ridden and maintained the trails in a lot of the National Forests in Idaho. We rebuilt several where run offs had washed them out. Our Trail Machine Association has trail clearing weekend campouts every spring. We also pick up trash all year. They have adopted eight of the local trails in the Mink Creek area but maintain a lot of them. We are in favor of Alternative 5.

Reply: As noted in the FEIS, the Caribou-Targhee National Forest relies on user groups to maintain forest trails. A majority of motorized trails are maintained by organized motorized use groups.

Comment #R55

Comment: The most recent National Visitor Use Monitoring Results, compiled by the Forest Service, monitored users on the Caribou Forest participating in off highway travel, which includes all-terrain vehicle and motorcycle use. The survey states that, of Caribou National Forest users, 13% participated in ORV use, and 8% listed ORV use as a primary activity. Regardless, the Forest Service, in its Alternative, increases designated ATV trail mileage, from the current 680 miles to 700 miles. This results in designated ATV trails on 28% of the Forest trail and road network, designated specifically for a use group totaling no more than 13%, and more realistically totaling 8% of Caribou Forest users. In total, ORVs will be allowed on over 71% of the Forest road and trail network. This is an outlandish number for an 8-13% user group. The Forest Service must provide a reasoned explanation for this decision.

Reply: All action alternatives propose to designate less miles of motorized route than Alternative 1, the No Action alternative. Some roads are closed, and some are converted to all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails. As previously stated, most Forest visitors use a motorized vehicle to access the National Forest, and to reach their point of departure for trail travel, motorized and non-motorized. Maintaining this primary access accounts for areas managed as Roaded Modified and Roaded Natural. As an example, considering trails only, Alternative 5R offers 649 miles of ATV trail, 147 single-track motorcycle trail and 635 miles of non-motorized trails. Non-mechanized trail users are not restricted to travel routes. Many forest trails do not receive heavy use and can function as multiple use trails without much conflict. Most trail preferences are offered under all alternatives.

Comment #R56

Comment: We urge the Forest Service to reduce ATV designated trails to reflect the actual user numbers on the Forest. The statement that ORV use requires more miles, due to high user speeds, is not an appropriate defense—a minority use should not be allowed a majority impact on the Forest. Allowing such violates NEPA's core requirement: to "achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities." 42 U.S.C. 4331 101 (b) While user education, monitoring and enforcement are important to reducing the impact of ORV use on the Caribou Forest, it is more important that the Forest Service not bend its will to accommodate the desires of a micro-minority of users on the Caribou Forest.

Reply: Comment noted. (See the response to Comment # 55.)

Comment #R57

Comment: The Bonneville County Trails Committee recommends that a few of the roads and trails, proposed as non-motorized, be opened to motorized travel. This will create a more equitable balance between motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunity.

Also, since loop trails are preferred over out-and-back trails, many of our recommendations for additional motorized trails/roads were strategically selected to form loop ride opportunities.

Reply: The purpose and need for the revision of the travel plan, is to better meet the desired conditions for recreation and resources described in the Revised Forest Plan. Some routes were not designated as motorized in some alternatives to better meet the desired recreation setting or to reduce disturbance to wildlife.

WINTER TRAVEL

Comment #R1

Comment: I would like to request the areas of Gibson Basin on the Montpelier Ranger District, bordering the Logan District of the Wasatch-Cache, be managed as non-motorized during the snow season.

Reply: Gibson Basin area is popular with snowmobiles and skiers during the snow season. Creating a non-motorized area in the basin would displace existing snowmobile travel. This management is not proposed in any alternative. The Final Environmental Impact Statement discusses winter travel in Chapters Three and Four under Recreation.

Comment #R2

Comment: I would recommend keeping the areas bordering the Logan District as depicted in Alternative 5.

Reply: Alternative 5 responds to public comment and recreation use patterns and manages additional areas as non-motorized in Emigration Summit of the Bear River Range. These areas are popular with skiers. Due to terrain, these areas are not used by snowmobiles. The remaining Forest System Lands in Bear River Range are open to cross-country snowmobile travel, with the exception of designated routes through winter range. The Final Environmental Impact Statement discusses winter travel by alternative in Chapter Four under the Recreation section.

Comment #R3

Comment: The Montpelier Ranger District and the Forest Planning Staff have done an excellent job in designating snowmobile routes through wildlife winter range. We encourage the Caribou-Targhee National Forest to carry through with these routes in the final alternative. These routes enable the Bear Lake/Franklin/Caribou Snowmobile Grooming Program to groom.

Reply: Comment noted. Alternatives 1 and 4 do not offer designated snowmobile routes through areas of “new” winter range. “New” means areas that were not considered winter range under the 1986 Forest Plan., but are managed for big game winter range under the 2003 Forest Plan. Alternatives 2, 3, 5 and 5R manage “new” winter range with designated snowmobile routes. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternatives or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #R4

Comment: We were pleased to see that the Alternative 5 designates three areas in the Emigration Summit area for non-motorized winter recreation. These small areas will provide valuable winter recreation opportunities that are accessible for non-motorized recreations.

Reply: Comment noted. Alternatives 5 and 5R offer these additional non-motorized areas during the snow season.

Comment #R5

Comment: The Bear Creek area is identified for a snowmobile closure. This area is located far enough away from a plowed road; it doesn't provide a winter recreation opportunity except for the hardiest of non-motorized winter recreationists. If this closure was designated specifically to provide more non-motorized winter recreation opportunities on the Soda Springs Ranger District, other areas should be considered.

Reply: Travel management closure areas have not changed from what was identified in the Caribou Forest Plan. The Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Revised Forest Plan recognized that Bear Creek does not have high value as a non-motorized winter recreation area due to its remote nature. It is managed as non-motorized year-round to benefit wildlife. (Revised Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement R-29.)

Comment #R6

Comment: It appears that the DEIS addresses a good range of alternatives pertaining to winter use. As you might expect, we would prefer the No-Action Alternative 1. The current plan is working quite well as it pertains to over-snow activities. However, recognizing that some changes in the overall travel plan are necessary, we feel Alternative 5 is the best of the change alternatives. It meets management goals and effectively addresses the identified issues with least negative impact on the Forest's users.

Reply: The Final Environmental Impact Statement considers various alternatives for winter travel. Alternative 1 does not address Revised Forest Plan direction to consider additional non-motorized areas for winter travel. Alternative 4 offers the most acres managed for a non-motorized setting in winter. Alternatives 5 & 5R manage additional areas for a non-motorized setting in winter and adjust existing non-motorized area boundaries to improve compliance. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternatives or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #R7

Comment: The Pocatello Pathfinders Snowmobile Club, Inc. has stated that they would like to see the Crystal Summit parking lot opened so that access can be made from the parking lot to South Fork Road, which would alleviate traffic at the lower parking lots. We support them in that request.

Reply: The Crystal Summit Parking Lot is not located on National Forest System Land and is not part of this decision.

Comment #R8

Comment: Because the proximity of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest (CTNF) to the major population centers in Utah and because the neighboring National Forest (Wasatch-Cache) carries so much non-motorized area, CTNF receives an abundance of snowmobile visitors. The WCNF Logan Ranger District has 53% closed to motorized winter travel; the Ogden Ranger District has 49% closed to motorized winter travel and the Salt Lake Ranger District has 96% of its lands closed to motorized winter travel, these closures displace for the most part some 17,300 registered snowmobiles. These winter recreation (sits) disperse to alternate snowmobile play areas, the Caribou-Targhee NF is one of the major destinations. Because of continuing closure of snowmobile use opportunities within the National Forest System, the participants of this growing sport are being condensed into smaller and more congested areas. This increases safety issues, trailhead conflict and lowering of "place dependant" values as well as affecting economic dependence, found in some of the adjacent communities, of snowmobile related businesses. A study done by USU in 2000 showed that northern Utah snowmobile owners spent 52.3 million dollars on their sport.

A historical history of closures to motorized winter travel on the WCNF shows closure increases conflict between users. Skiing opportunity abounds in the WCNF without the need for additional closures; in fact books have been written detailing the location and description of these ski opportunities. Management woes increase with closure as evidenced on the WCNF Logan Ranger District. Closure, for the sake of conflict, results in environmental groups using Executive Orders to effectively litigate and expand closed areas.

On the Caribou-Targhee NF the arbitrary closures of Williams Creek drainage and Squirrel Hollow to motorized traffic could very well result in further closure as complaints of violation, accidental or intended increase. These complaints would not exist if the area continued to carry a “gentlemen’s agreement” by the users. If conflict did not exist in the past because of such an agreement, one must ask “why close areas” in spite of an abundance of dispersed recreation opportunity near by?

Reply: The proposed non-motorized areas in Squirrel Hollow, in Emigration Canyon, will not change existing use patterns for winter recreation. (See the snow season discussion of Chapter Four under Recreation of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Comment #R9

Comment: The backside of Pebble Creek is such a special asset that it deserves individual comment. This is an area of superb backcountry skiing with low avalanche danger. I have skied it for 15 years and it is being enjoyed by an increasing number of skiers every year. Clear definable boundaries are needed beyond the 7000 foot altitude level. Making the lower boundary the road from Big Springs Campground to Inman Canyon would help eliminate confusion on where snowmobiles should be riding.

Reply: This area was designated non-motorized during the Revised Forest Plan analysis and decision. Alternatives 4, 5 and 5R propose to change the boundary of this area to include additional acres in “Strawberry Fields”. (See Chapter Four under Recreation of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Comment #R10

Comment: My primary concern is the lack of total acres designated as winter non-motorized on the whole Forest, especially from Soda Springs to the Utah border. In fact, I was unable to find a total number of acres anywhere in the documents to compare, but my guess is that it represents less than 1% of the total acres in this area. I am aware that snowmobiles are popular throughout the northern portion of the Bear River Range, but it seems irresponsible to completely ignore the simple fact that if there were more areas available to get away from noisy, smelly and dangerous snow machines, there would be more cross-country skiers and snowshoers using the forest.

Reply: Non-motorized travelers can use most areas of the forest during the snow season. Some areas of the forest are managed for a non-motorized setting. These acres are used as indicators for the issue of non-motorized settings during the winter. (See Chapter Four, Recreation for this analysis and comparison of Alternatives.)

Comment #R11

Comment: I am in support of Alternative 5 with respect to the winter travel plan. I am respectful and appreciative of the big game winter range closures and I appreciate the corridors that pass through these closures.

Areas that are important for beginner and intermediate riders are: Swan Flat, Ranger Dip, Old Logan Road, Fish Haven left, Fish Haven Canyon, St. Charles Green Canyon, St. Charles Main Canyon, Church Hollow, Pat Hollow, Egan Basin, Gibson Basin, Sink Hollow, St Charles Peak, Beaver Creek,

High Line Trail from B.C. Campground to Gibson Basin, Sink Hollow, Danish Pass, Hilliard Canyon, Franklin Basin, Corel Hollow, Blue Lake, Hidden Lake, and may other areas in the vicinity of the before mentioned areas.

These areas offer the beginner and intermediate rider with a wide range of snowmobiling opportunities. There are groomed snowmobile routes that lead to open meadows and rolling hills which are enjoyable for snowmobiling. In these areas there are beautiful mountain views for site-seers. And non-groomed routes that wind through the trees. The snow quality is excellent.

Areas which are important for intermediate to expert riders and even my personal riding areas are as follows: Wiggler Lake, Sink Hollow, Crab Ridge, Whites Canyon, Hodge Nibley Camp Wilderness, Andrew Nyman Peak, Wilderness Peak, Litz Canyon, Cub Basin, Snow slide, North Fork of St. Charles Bloomington, Worm Creek, Dry Canyon, Hogs back, and many other areas in the vicinity of the before mentioned areas.

We often get clients from the mid-west who, generally have their own snowmobiles but want to rent a mountain snowmobile to ride the steep challenging areas. The expert riders really enjoy these areas.

It is my understanding one non-motorized group has requested the area of Sink Hollow to be closed to snowmobiles. I strongly recommend it stays open to snowmobiling. Though the bottom of Sink Hollow does not get a lot of snowmobile traffic the west ridge line of Sink Hollow does. As does Gibson Basin, in fact it is a very popular snowmobiling destination.

Reply: Gibson Basin area is popular with snowmobiles and skiers during the snow season. Creating a non-motorized area in the basin would displace existing snowmobile travel. This management is not proposed in any alternative. The Final Environmental Impact Statement discusses winter travel in Chapters Three and Four under Recreation.

Mountain Bikes

Comment #R1

Comment: Alternative 3, based on comments received from Southeast Idaho Recreation Alliance, does not change mountain bike opportunity from the current Travel Plan. This does not reflect the intent of this coalition of interested parties.

Reply: The initial scoping letter states that the "Proposed Action" sets the season of use and types of uses for the Forest Roads and Trails. The Proposed Action did not change existing mountain bike opportunity. Comments received from Southeast Idaho Recreation Alliance on the Proposed Action were silent on mountain bike restrictions. This could be contributed to the fact that existing mountain bike restrictions were not well understood by many local trail users. Alternatives 5 and 5R increase mountain bike opportunity. (See the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapter Four under Recreation for additional discussion on effects to mountain bike travel by Alternative.)

Comment #R2

Comment: Both the Revised Forest Plan and the Travel Plan Proposed Action and scoping documents were quiet on mountain bikes. So there may have been the understanding amongst mountain bike riders that mountain bikes would be treated the same as hikers and equestrians. I feel mountain bikes should be limited to existing system trails on all Ranger Districts with this Travel Plan.

With Alternative 5, this means the Westside Ranger District will be managed consistently with the Montpelier and Soda Springs Ranger Districts.

Also, if mountain bikes have used trails in Recommended Wilderness from the Revised Forest Plan prior to the Wilderness review for that RFP, then use should be allowed to continue until other actions or Wilderness designation occurs. In other words, if mountain bike use didn't impair Wilderness qualities prior to evaluation and recommendation then continued mountain bike use of the same trails shouldn't impair the Wilderness qualities that existed when the recommendation was made.

Reply: (See the reply to Comment #R1.) Mountain bikes are restricted to existing motorized and non-motorized trails in areas managed as Recommended Wilderness in Alternatives 5 and 5R. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternatives or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #R3

Comment: The DEIS covers Mountain Bike use on Page 128. The scoping process was primarily driven by motorized/non-motorized opportunities, not non-mechanized/mechanized opportunities. In our opinion, the Caribou-Targhee needs to examine the possibility of mountain bike use on the trails north of Inman Canyon. Mountain bike designation on these trails would offer a non-motorized experience for mountain bikers.

Reply: Alternative 1, the "No Action" restricts mountain bike travel to designated routes. The Proposed Action did not change this management. Public comment between the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement indicated that some people wanted additional non-motorized routes available for mountain bike travel. Alternative 5R offers additional mountain bike trails in non-motorized settings. Alternatives 5 and 5R do not designate the Toponce area trails north of Inman Canyon for mountain bike travel. These trails have been managed for foot and stock travel since 1986, and the Revised Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement suggests retaining the existing setting for people and wildlife. (Revised Forest Plan – Final Environmental Impact Statement, R -118.)

Comment #R4

Comment: (Page 37) It seems to me that mountain biking is non-motorized use and should be treated as such. Having some non-motorized trails open to mountain bikes and others closed and differentiating between motorized, non-motorized and mechanized is adding unneeded complexity to the plan. It should be either motorized or not.

Reply: Just as some forest visitors prefer a non-motorized setting, some forest visitors do not want to share a trail with mountain bike travel. Some equestrians do not want to mix their stock with a silent, fast moving vehicle, (reference Caribou Travel Plan – Public Comment). The Forest would like to provide some trails for hikers and stock only. (See the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapters Three and Four under Recreation for more discussion on mountain bike travel.)

**Section
3****Comments on Heritage****Comment #H1**

Comment: I am concerned with ground disturbing activities having an impact on cultural resources. I am also concerned with building an ATV trail on the Winschell Dugway which is an historic wagon road.

Reply: Any ground disturbing activities associated with the alternatives will be surveyed for heritage resources. The Winschell Dugway does not currently meet Forest Service standard for a non-motorized or a motorized trail. Future management decisions will require additional analysis. The Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapters Three and Four under Heritage has more information on the mitigation and monitoring to protect heritage resources under all alternatives.

**Section
4****Comments on Soils****Comment #S1**

Comment: From USDI, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance:

The FEIS states "Off road vehicles, ..., easily damage microbiological crusts resulting in reduced soil stability, soil fertility, soil moisture retention, and increased wind and water erosion (Belnap et al. 1999)." The significance of undisturbed microbiological crusts is ecologically important. Microbiological crusts are fragile and, while intact, are important to soil integrity. The U.S. Geological Survey Southwest Biological Science Center contains an extensive list of publications on biological soil crusts. In developing the FEIS, the Forest should review this research.

Reply: The Forest Service recognizes the importance of microbiological crusts and their contribution to soil productivity and stability. A goal in the Revised Forest Plan states "Long-term soil productivity is sustained by limiting detrimental soil disturbances and by retaining ground cover, microbotic crusts, fine organic matter and, where applicable, woody residue on activity areas." These soil crust features are very important to the stability of soils in arid and semi-arid environments. However, on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest soils, where climates are much colder and moist, microbiological soil crusts, although present, are not a primary element in maintaining soil productivity and stability. In areas where vascular plants and fine organic matter are abundant, microbiological soil crusts occur less often.

Comment #S2

Comment: The DEIS covers the soil analysis methods on Page 56. The DEIS states "The indicator will be miles of designated motorized travel routes on erodible and unstable soil types, collectively defined as sensitive soils." This isn't the most accurate way to analyze soil impacts. A single-track trail, ATV trail, and road have differing levels of impact on sensitive soils. Trail and road design also play a

huge role on whether the road or trail will affect soils. Non-motorized trails and routes also have an effect on soils. Just because you close a route, unless rehab is complete, the route will still have impacts to the soil. It would be better to analyze the impacts of the route system by trail and road design examining how improper design may lead to erosion on sensitive soil types.

Reply: The rationale for using sensitive soils as an indicator for the Caribou Travel Plan is that alternatives have the potential to affect the soil resource, especially motorized travel routes located on soils with high risk. Travel routes and route closures have the potential to affect soils when located on erodible, unstable or landslide prone areas that may increase mass movement and erosion on the Forest and ultimately reduce soil productivity.

We agree that single-track trails, all-terrain vehicle trails and roads have differing levels of impacts on sensitive soil types and was disclosed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and will be explained in more detail in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. Trail and road design is an important element for controlling erosion and sediment from trails and roads; however, many trails and roads that exist on the Forest were never designed using engineering standards that would prevent or control erosion on these sensitive soil types nor were these soil types considered when the routes were created. By showing the motorized routes that occur on sensitive soil types, the Deciding Official can evaluate the differences between alternatives and determine which alternative has the greatest potential impact on the soils. Road design and location will be considered at the project level when routes are relocated, closed, or new routes created.

Comment #S3

Comment: We are concerned with the Soils Analysis starting on Page 135. The analysis examines motorized routes in low, medium and high-risk areas. The DEIS further states on Page 136 that "Road closure with barriers only, and without physical manipulation of the road prism, is not considered a soil reclamation measure." How can Alternatives 3 and 4 have a lower overall risk than 2 and 5 when many of the trail routes will still exist on the ground? Unless reclamation or specific improvements are made to these routes, they will still have soil impacts.

Reply: The comparison of alternatives was based on miles of motorized routes that occur on sensitive soil types. In the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Alternatives 4, 5 and 5R have fewer motorized routes that occur on sensitive soil types and do not allow cross-country travel on the 29,400 acres that area allowed in Alternatives 1, 2, and 3.

Comment #S4

Comment: On Page 57, the DEIS uses a reference from Weaver and Dale (1978). This study is out of date, and numerous other studies have different conclusions. Trail design and location are the primary causes of trail erosion. Trail use is a secondary impact. Erosional Impact of Hikers, Horses, Off-Road Bicycles, and Motorcycles on Mountain Trails by Joseph P. Seney and Dr. John P. Wilson found that "The use of multiple comparison tests clarify the roles of different trail users and in particular showed that horses and hikers (hooves and feet) made more sediment available than wheels (motorcycles and off-road bicycles)."

Reply: We agree that soils can be affected from non-motorized travel routes however, the travel routes in this analysis were analyzed for motorized use because they have a greater potential to affect sensitive soil types. Non-motorized routes are often trails that are narrow and do not tend to impact the soil resource as much as motorized routes.

Comment #S5

Comment: The DEIS states on Page 59 “The Forest contains approximately 1,110 miles of open roads, and 850 miles of open motorized trails, of which 170 miles are designated motorcycle trails, for a total of 3,820 acres (acres were determined by using an average disturbance width of twenty feet for roads and five feet for motorized routes).” This analysis ignores the fact that ATV trails and motorcycle trails have different widths. In our professional experience, average disturbance on motorcycles trails is three feet, while ATV trails can have an average disturbance of five feet.

Reply: Road widths were adjusted for the Final Environmental Impact Statement analysis; however, trails were analyzed with an average 5 feet width to compare alternatives based on a worse-case scenario. Trail width does differ based on the width of the Off Highway Vehicles, however, 5-foot widths were used because when trails are constructed, 5 feet is generally the disturbance width.

Comment #S6

Comment: Two Photos exist on Page 62. The titles of these photos should be switched. The deep gully erosion occurs in the left photo, while erosional processes are best depicted in the right photo.

Reply: The photos were not included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. Photos of the area are available in the project record.

**Section
5****Comments on Riparian Areas
& Aquatic Resources****Public and agency comments on riparian areas, water quality and aquatic resources.****Comment #R&A1**

Comment: The DEIS does not discuss the “TMDL” phase of monitoring 303D streams.

Reply: The Forest is committed to protecting and restoring beneficial uses. The Forest recognizes that inclusion of a stream on the 303(d) list may only be the first step in addressing non-support of beneficial uses. Inclusion on the list can trigger further studies, development of a Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) Plan and a TMDL Implementation Plan. The Forest is committed to cooperating in this process by following the Forest Plan goal “Cooperate as needed with the State, Tribes, other agencies and organizations to identify 303(d) impaired water bodies, develop and implement Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and their Implementation plans for water bodies influenced by National Forest System management” (USDA-FS, 2002a, pg 3-15).

Comment #R&A2

Comment: The DEIS does not discuss BURP monitoring. What about the Meadow Creek Drainage?

Reply: The Forest recognizes the extensive network of BURP monitoring sites and the function this data has in determining uses and beneficial use support status, and where the data indicates there is a problem, the classification of water bodies as 303(d) and identification of the pollutant. The Forest modifies or abandons project plans (including road and trail construction) as needed to insure that 303(d) streams are not impaired further. The Forest strives to be pro-active by restoring and protecting beneficial uses through following the Forest Plan goal "Design and implement watershed management programs and plans that protect and restore water quality and watershed function to support beneficial uses" (RFP 3-15) and adhering to the guideline "Projects in watersheds with 303(d) listed water bodies and/or delineated Source Water Protection Areas should be supported by scale and level of analysis sufficient to permit an understanding of the implications of the project within the larger watershed context (USDA-FS, 2002, pg 3-16).

The potential for roads in Aquatic Influence Zones (AIZ) to affect streams and water quality is discussed in the Environmental Impact Statement on pages 68-69 and effects of hydrologic connectivity is discussed on pages 68-69 and 74-75. Percentage of road mileage in AIZs was a major factor used in rating the overall risk to resource values of key routes analyzed for the 2002 Caribou Roads Analysis (USDA-FS, 2002b, Appendix C), which is summarized in the road risk-value graph ((USDA-FS, 2002b, pg 5-5). Roads more than 50% in the AIZ are rated as high watershed risk, those below 50% are rated as low risk. The risk analysis process for key routes, including watershed risk, is discussed in Appendix A of the 2002 roads analysis report (USDA-FS, 2002b, Appendix A).

The section of Eightmile Road (FR425) in Meadow Creek was ranked in the 2002 Caribou Roads Analysis as having a high watershed risk, with more than 50% in the AIZ. High risk roads receive higher prioritization for capital improvements to reduce resource risk, which is why the Meadow Creek Road was surfaced with gravel in 1994, with the purpose of reducing sediment delivery to Meadow Creek. The 2002 Roads Analysis also identified Meadow Creek Road as a high value road. The Forest still asserts that it is a high value road.

Comment #R&A3

Comment: How do "user-created" routes that may be adopted as system routes affect water resources?

Reply: The Final Environmental Impact Statement discusses site-specific "user-created routes" and their effects on water resources in Chapter Four, under the "Riparian Areas and Aquatic Resources" section. The Forest will not merely follow "the path of least resistance" in constructing new travel routes. All new access routes to be constructed will follow the direction incorporated in the 2003 Revised Forest Plan to best employ these improved capabilities to reduce these risks as best as feasibly possible. The Forest recognizes that roads can affect streams, water quality and beneficial uses, and this is discussed in the Environmental Impact Statement. The Forest maintains that adherence to Forest Plan requirements, The Soil and Water Conservation Practices Handbook (USDA-FS, 1988), the regional erosion guide for timber sales (USDA-FS, 1981), state guidelines such as the Idaho Forest Practices Act (IDAPA, 2000) and other guidance sought as needs require will reduce these effects to an acceptable level. All user-created routes to be adopted into the trails system will be reconstructed according to these guidelines to minimize resource and watershed risk as funding becomes available, and those that will not be adopted will be closed. In the recent past, grant funding has been aggressively sought in order to reconstruct motorized trails so that the affects to streams are

lessened. An example is the recent reconstruction of some trails on the Montpelier District, which has reduced the number of stream crossings, and replaced stream fords with bridges. Great strides have been made the last 30 years since most of the roads on the Forest were originally constructed. These improvements reduce the impacts of road construction and maintenance on streams by availability of better equipment and materials and designs, improved construction techniques which use recent development and continuing review and refinement of BMPs and placing a much higher priority in protecting watershed and other resource values than was true in the past. The commenter is referred to the more than 20 standards, guidelines, goals and objectives for transportation on pages 3-36 to 3-38 in the Revised Forest Plan.

Comment #R&A4

Comment: The Forest should monitor all designated stream crossings for compliance with BMPs?

Reply: All newly constructed stream crossings are designed to meet current Forest Plan requirements and follow Best Management Practice requirements of the Forest Plan, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through the 404 Permit process, and the Idaho Department of Water Resources through its Stream Alteration Permit process. As with roads, the construction of most road crossings pre-dates the relatively recent design improvements. Condition surveys are completed on existing key routes at least once every five years. Where drainage features, including stream crossings, do not meet current standards, they are prioritized for improvement to existing standards as budgets allow. The Forest is currently assessing culverts on road crossings of perennial streams to assess their aquatic passage capability and quantify the potential sediment that could be delivered to streams should a catastrophic overtopping failure occur. This information will be used to prioritize crossings for elimination or reconstruction to improve aquatic passage and reduce watershed risk.

Comment #R&A5

Comment: Stream crossings – the draft only discloses designated crossings. What about other stream crossings such as designated non-motorized trail crossings and illegal travel route crossings.

Reply: The Final Environmental Impact Statement discusses all travel route crossings and their general effects on water quality in Chapter Three and Four of the Riparian Areas and Aquatic Resources section.

The Soda Springs and Montpelier Ranger Districts conducted a detailed analysis of the existing condition for roads and trails over the last three seasons. This involved viewing imagery with the most experienced personnel on each district and an extensive on-the-ground GPS inventory of designated trails. During this process, many, if not most of the “non-designated” user-created routes were mapped. The “non-designated” user-created routes will be considered in the assessment of cumulative effects. The Forest recognizes that additional undesignated routes may exist that may not have been detected on the nearly one million acres that this Travel Plan Revision is examining. Those routes will be closed as they are found and budget allows.

Comment #R&A6

Comment: The Forest needs to establish Best Management Practices (BMPs) for culvert removal.

Reply: A discussion on the effects of culvert removal will be included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement and is reprinted below. Guidelines for road de-commissioning of roads are found on page 5-6 of the 2002 Roads Analysis. Site-specific analysis for reducing sediment during culvert removal on routes is used at present. Developing a single formalized set of Best Management Practices for culvert removal and the suggested re-prioritization of Forest funds to focus on upgrading culverts is not within the decision space for this process.

Comment #R&A7

Comment: We are concerned with the enforcement of road and trail restrictions, and the effects of illegal use on riparian resources.

Reply: Enforcement is a separate issue outside the decision space for this process. While closure of roads to protect sensitive species is an option that is sometimes used, the Forest may use other methods as monitoring warrants to protect critical resources, including sensitive aquatic species. The Forest is committed to protecting the viability of cutthroat trout populations on the forest and minimizing the impacts to critical aquatic habitat by roads and other uses.

Comment #R&A8

Comment: The Forest Service failed to consider the impact of ongoing motorized use, itself, in these and other areas on the Forest, regardless of the fact that no new trails or roads will be built in these areas.

Reply: The resource analysis of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) does consider the impact of on-going road and trail uses. Indicators used for water resources and fisheries are all designated motorized travel routes within Aquatic Influence Zones and motorized travel routes that cross streams. The wildlife analysis considers the existing impacts from current road and trail use and the anticipated impacts from each alternative. (See Chapter Four of the FEIS for specific resource concerns.)

**Section
6****Comments on Fisheries
& Aquatic Resources****Comment #F&A1**

Comment: Many trails cross perennial streams which degrade fish habitat and water quality in the Elkhorn Mountain and Oxford Peak areas of the Westside Ranger District.

Reply: Designated motorized trail crossings and their effects by alternatives are analyzed in Chapter Four of the Final Environmental Impact Statement under Fisheries & Aquatic Resources section and the Riparian areas of Aquatic Resources section. (See the findings under the heading "Summary of Effects" for comparisons of the effects between Alternatives.)

Comment #F&A2

Comment: Many trails cross perennial streams, degrading habitat and water quality. This is a concern as streams in the areas of Gannet Hills, Red Mountain, Georgetown, Meade Peak, and Montpelier Creek areas of the Montpelier Ranger District provide habitat for either Bonneville and/or Yellowstone cutthroat trout both of which are becoming increasingly rare.

Reply: Effects of designated motorized trails crossing perennial streams on fish and fish habitat is analyzed in Chapter Four of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) under the Fisheries of Aquatic Resources section. Miles of designated motorized routes in Bonneville cutthroat trout strongholds and Yellowstone cutthroat trout strongholds are also analyzed in this section. As stated in the FEIS, “All alternatives generally maintain a similar number of riparian road and trail stream crossings for Bonneville cutthroat trout stronghold sixth code HUCs as the existing condition.” Road and trail crossings in Yellowstone cutthroat strongholds vary from 395 in Alternative 1 to 194 in Alternative 4. Alternative 3 has 231 stream crossings in Yellowstone cutthroat trout strongholds and Alternative 5R has 243.

Comment #F&A3

Comment: Numerous motorized routes in the Clear Creek, Pole Creek and Little Elk Mountain area may be causing erosion and affecting spawning cutthroat trout habitat. This is one of the last pristine roadless areas in southeast Idaho and it should be maintained in a semi-primitive state.

Reply: The analysis considers effects of motorized travel routes within stronghold watersheds of Bonneville cutthroat trout and Yellowstone cutthroat trout. (See the Chapter Four under Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Comment #F&A4

Comment: We recommend that the Forest prohibit off-road vehicle use within 300 feet of BCT fish-bearing streams. Vehicles should be restricted to specific roads and trails through implementation of the Travel Plan.

Reply: Comment noted. (See Chapters Three and Four, Fisheries, on effects of travel on Bonneville Cutthroat Trout.)

Section 7

Comments on Threatened & Endangered & Sensitive Plants

Comment #TH&S1

Comment: How do the travel plan alternatives affect the Yellow spring-beauty (*Claytonia multiscapa*), a plant considered a “Species of Special Concern”.

Reply: The spring-beauty (common name Rydberg’s spring-beauty) is known to occur in the Island Park District area on private land in Idaho. It is not known nor highly suspected to occur on the Caribou National Forest.

**Section
8****Comments on Wildlife****Comment #W1**

Comment: According to studies by Wisdom and others, human activity affects elk and mule deer behavior. To help meet the objectives of Idaho Fish and Game's "Mule Deer Initiative", the decision should provide large areas for a non-motorized setting and experience for wildlife and non-motorized travelers, including hunters.

Reply: The Final Environmental Impact Statement discusses road and trail travel and how these activities affect big game and other wildlife in Chapter Three under the Wildlife section. All alternatives provide semi-primitive non-motorized areas which are defined as areas that are one-half mile from a designated motorized route. (See the Recreation Opportunity Maps by Alternative in Chapter Four of the Recreation section.) Alternative 3 provides the greatest number of acres within large blocks managed as "non-motorized". Chapter Four's Wildlife section discusses the differences between alternatives concerning large areas managed as non-motorized during the snow-free season.

The purpose of this analysis is to compare alternatives to the proposed action. To compare alternative, we determined indicators to measure the differences between alternatives. Because OMRD used miles of motorized roads and trails, this analysis used miles of motorized routes to compare the differences. To show refugia the analysis used polygons (contiguous acres) ½ mile from these motorized routes. The CNF RFP used 250 acre block to represent security habitat. The 1,000 acre size was provided by IDFG and applied in this document.

Comment #W2

Comment: I believe over snow use should also be restricted on known wintering areas. As private ground is sold for home sites, wintering areas are becoming more and more critical for all wildlife species. Unfortunately, public grounds will have to make up for lost private winter habitat.

Reply: The Revised Forest Plan manages snowmobiles on designated routes through areas of big game winter range. (See the alternative maps for snow season travel.)

Comment #W3

Comment: I do not believe that motorcycle or ATV travel disturbs or stresses wildlife in anyway. Animals are more afraid of people on foot.

Reply: There has been research completed on the effects of various trail uses on wildlife behavior. (See the Wildlife section, Chapter Four for a discussion on trail use and wildlife disturbance.)

Comment #W4

Comment: Another argument against OHVs is that they disturb and run deer/elk during the fall, while the animals need to be putting on fat for the winter. Probably the biggest disturbance in the Fall is the various hunting seasons which begin in September and run through October. Hunters using OHVs contribute to that disturbance, but if they're staying on open trails, their disturbance is limited (especially given the OMRD standards adopted with the Revised Forest Plan). Hunters on foot or horse are basically canvassing the entire landscape, leaving no real refuge areas for animals.

There are many factors affecting deer/elk herd size and health. Summer forage, which is more limited during drought years, is shared with cattle, predator populations have been growing, carrying capacity of winter range adjacent to the forest has been reduced due to increased human population and housing development, increased human population and highway travel increases road-kill, how many hunting permits are issued, and other factors.

The biggest factor OHVs may play in wildlife populations is their role of enabling more people to hunt more easily.

Reply: Comment noted. (See the Wildlife section of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for more discussion of wildlife disturbance from recreation use and travel.)

Comment #W5

Comment: On Page 12, Issue 6 states "The Idaho Department of Fish and Game want a travel plan that reduces wildlife disturbance from motorized travel and provides more non-motorized areas for hunters." A year-round closure is unnecessary to provide a non-motorized hunting opportunity. Hunting is a seasonal use. If the purpose of many of the closures in Alternative 3 and 5 is to provide more non-motorized hunting areas, then seasonal closures should be used. Year-round closures are also unnecessary for calving or fawning habitat. Trails and roads can be seasonally closed during the calving and fawning period to avoid disturbance.

Reply: The Interdisciplinary Team which included an Idaho Department Fish & Game staff member discussed seasonal closures to address Idaho Department Fish & Game's issue of reducing wildlife disturbance from motorized travel. Idaho Department Fish & Game's Staff stated that their concern was based on year-round disturbance.

Comment #W6

Comment: The DEIS defines wildlife refugia areas as non-motorized areas over 1,000 acres, buffered at least 1/2 mile for a motorized route. We believe that this model over-simplifies refugia areas. Refugia areas are also dependent upon topography and vegetation. Amount of use on a motorized route, and width of motorized route also play roles. Presently, there is no data that supports motorized trail density having the same effect as open road density. With the improvements in GIS with topography, aerial photography and vegetation layers combined with route density, we believe a much more accurate picture of refugia areas on the Caribou National Forest could be defined.

Reply: The Final Environmental Impact Statement discloses the relative differences between alternatives and the value of large non-motorized areas as they pertain to wildlife and specifically big game. (See the Wildlife sections of Chapter Three and Four.)

Using roads and motorized trails to analyze effects to wildlife was a decision made during the Revised Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement. As a result of the Revised Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement; open motorized route densities are used to retain recreation settings and to reduce disturbance to wildlife.

Comment #W7

Comment: The Travel Plan as proposed, and when implemented, may benefit the yellow-billed cuckoo by providing less motorized access into the Forest's limited cottonwood galleries.

Reply: Comment noted. (See the Chapter Four, Wildlife for specific effects to the yellow-billed cuckoo by alternative.)

Comment #W8

Comment: Based on the information provided in the DEIS, the Travel Plan, which proposes to restrict motorized use to designated routes year-round in portions of the Forest, should reduce displacement, disturbance, and direct mortality of wolves by humans.

Reply: Comment noted. (See Chapter Four, Wildlife for specific effects to the wolf by alternative.)

Comment #W9

Comment: Based on the information provided in the DEIS, the Travel Plan, when implemented, should provide more secure nest site areas for bald eagles than currently exist.

Reply: Comment noted. (See Chapter Four, Wildlife for specific effects to the bald eagle by alternative.)

Comment #W10

Comment: It is recommended that the FEIS address bald eagle winter use areas on the Forest, which are located adjacent to main access routes. Roost sites may also be adjacent to roads since road locations often follow major riparian corridors. There is the potential for disturbance, but if vehicles stay on the road, bald eagles may become habituated to it and not be displaced.

Reply: Comment noted. (See the Chapter Four, Wildlife for specific effects during winter to the bald eagle by alternative.)

Comment #W11

Comment: It is recommended that the FEIS consider closing roads or ATV trails that would allow access into or across boreal toad breeding habitat. This includes lakes, marshes, ponds, and bogs with sunny exposures and quiet, shallow water.

Reply: Comment noted. (See the Chapter Four, Wildlife for specific effects to the boreal toad by alternative.)

Comment #W12

Comment: It is recommended that the FEIS include the management strategies described in the Idaho Sage Grouse Management Plan" (IDFG 1997), which proposes protection of suitable habitats for 3.0 miles from all occupied leks and addresses protection for nesting and brood rearing areas. These measures may also benefit the Columbian sharp-tail grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*) in lower elevations.

Reply: These measures are part of the Revised Forest Plan standards and guidelines for grouse; and are incorporated into all alternatives. (See Chapter Two, Alternative Descriptions and Chapter Three, Wildlife of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

Comment #W13

Comment: The DEIS indicates "Travel routes have the potential to affect wildlife and wildlife habitat. There is more than a potential affect. In fact many studies indicate that wildlife needs a ½ mile buffer from motorized vehicles. This needs to be stated as fact rather than merely "potential". Many hunters

realize that ATV use during hunting season adversely affects their hunting experience since ATV's can enter every corner of the forest displacing wildlife by their presence or by the noise made by ATV's. Hunters are very concerned about the increased pressure being put on big game habitat and believe that ATV's should be left at the trailhead.

Reply: Humans impact wildlife. Human activities including the vehicle (not the road) impact wildlife. A motorized route in and by itself does not impact wildlife (not counting sediment or lack of vegetation). Motorized routes provide an easy form of access [the potential] that increases the opportunities for humans to interact with wildlife; usually to the detriment of wildlife. The term "potential" is used because if people are not on the road there are no impacts. "Elk avoidance of roads increased with increasing rate of traffic, providing further evidence that elk are not reacting to roads, per se, but to the activities associated with roads (Wisdom 1998, Wisdom et al. 2004b)." Wisdom et al. 2004, 467

Likewise, if elk do not associate humans as threatening or a perceived threat a smaller buffer is needed between elk and humans. Because elk are hunted in the project area, elk consider humans as a perceived threat and avoid human disturbances on motorized routes. Therefore, if there is no hunting there is no (or little) threat and distance from roads (and humans) is shortened and refugia is less critical. See the Wildlife section of Chapter Four of the FEIS for the analysis of travel routes and their effects to big game and other species. The Recreation Section of Chapters Three and Four discuss effects to hunting and hunters by alternative.

Comment #W14

Comment: The Caribou Travel Plan DEIS provides scant information on cumulative effects. The entire discussion of cumulative effects for wildlife is contained in five sentences on page 156 of the DEIS and is constrained by the Forest erroneous assumption that the only "cumulative" effects they need consider is that of potential new roads (and possibly motorized trails, although it is not clear that is the case). NEPA requires a cumulative effects analysis to analyze the impacts of the Travel Plan in light of the projects interaction with the effects of past, current, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Not just whether more or fewer roads may appear or disappear from the landscape. For example there is not a hint in the cumulative effects analysis for wildlife on how the Travel Plan, along with past, present or reasonably foreseeable timber harvest, grazing, mining, and so forth will affect wildlife.

Reply: Cumulative impacts are a discussion of how the direct and indirect effect being canalized fit in to the rest of the impacts. Not a discussion of how all of the other activities have impacted the species. "Will this activity *tip the scales* on the total impacts to a species." Additional cumulative effects analysis is found in the FEIS Chapter Four, Wildlife.

Comment #W15

Comment: The DEIS suggests that since the all alternatives for the Travel Plan "meet Plan (RFP) Open Motorized Route Densities (OMRD) in *most* forest areas" that wildlife habitat requirements are adequate (emphasis added). This assumption is then reiterated in the *brief* discussions of impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat in Chapter Four, Environmental Consequences. Simply referencing the RFP discussion of wildlife needs, based in large part on the OMRD standards contained in the RFP is inadequate and fails to meet NEPA's requirements for a full and fair discussion of the impacts.

Reply: Comment noted. Additional analysis has been included in the FEIS.

Comment #W16

Comment: The DEIS failed to adequately and completely disclose impacts to wildlife habitat by tiering Caribou Travel Plan to the RFP's legally inadequate selection of management indicator species (MIS). The RFP's legally flawed circumvention of NFMA's requirement to select appropriate MIS is now playing out in yet another site-specific project – the Caribou Travel Plan – to the detriment of wildlife and their habitat in contravention of NFMA's mandate to “maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native populations of vertebrate species” The 1982 Planning Rule required the selection of MIS during the development of Forest Land Use Plans. The Forest selected northern goshawk, Columbia sharp-tailed grouse, and sage grouse as their MIS species when revising the Forest Plan in February 2003. The selection of MIS species on the Forest was upheld in the appeals of the RFP, which was the final administrative decision on this point (Chief's RFP Appeal Decision #03-13-00-0401). The 2003 RFP for the Caribou zone of the CTNF fails to delineate the minimum amounts and distribution of late seral/old growth habitat, riparian & aquatic habitats, aspen, tall forbs, and early seral forest. That must be present across the Caribou zone of the CTNF to ensure species viability as required by the NFMA. Furthermore, no population data for MIS or sensitive species or monitoring information from communities for which the Forest failed to designate MIS is disclosed in the DEIS for the Travel Plan. Instead the Forest simply says that monitoring took place in 2004 for the three species selected as MIS. Such monitoring fails NFMA requirements to ensure viability. Because the RFP fails to comply with the NFMA as described above, the approval of the Travel Plan as now contemplated conflicts with the Forest Service's mandate to insure species viability even though the project might not violate Forest Plan standards directly affected by the proposal. The Forest has failed in the RFP to define what constitutes a viable population of all the MIS it did designate along with the failure to identify how much habitat and the distribution of such habitat that is needed to ensure population viability. Unless that is remedied before the FEIS for the Travel Plan is finalized the Forest will be in violation of the NFMA.

Reply: Delineating habitat is outside the scope of this document. MIS were monitored and population data gathered in 2004 as indicated in the RFP. The impacts of designating motorized routes on MIS and Sensitive species are analyzed in the FEIS.

Comment #W17

Comment: Elkhorn Mountain and Oxford Peak back country areas. There are few areas within these two units on the south end of the Westside Ranger District that are more than ½ mile from an open road or motorized trail under Alternative 5. **Wildlife** has limited opportunity to escape motorized intrusions. We support IDFG's road and trail recommendations, referred to as Alternative 3. On the east side of Montpelier District, Gannet Hills, Red Mountain, Georgetown, Meade Peak, Montpelier Creek areas, wildlife has limited opportunity to escape motorized intrusions. The area is important for elk, deer, moose, and black bear, along with a host of other species. Wolves from Yellowstone have used this area of the Forest, with probable wolf tracks recorded from the area in the fall of 2004.

Reply: The effects of each alternative on various species are analyzed in the Wildlife section of Chapter Four of the FEIS.

Comment #W18

Comment: Our concern in motor vehicle routes and their management on the Caribou National Forest is the density of motorized routes on the Forest. Very little of the Forest is further than one-half mile from a motorized road or trail. This has fragmented the habitat on the forest into small patches, resulted in numerous stream crossings, and has increased human activity in nearly every corner of the

forest. We strongly recommend that Alternative 3, as it applies to the Elkhorn and Oxford Areas of the West Side Ranger District and the Montpelier Ranger District be adopted in the final alternative. These areas have high quality habitat that supports a variety of wildlife and fisheries resources. They have historically been mule deer strongholds and have the potential to produce high mule deer populations in the future. Under Alternative 5 these areas have a high density of motorized routes and OHV use has fragmented habitats. Conversion of motorized to non-motorized routes in a few key areas, as proposed in Alternative 3, can substantially improve fish and wildlife habitats and provide a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities.

Reply: The analysis uses Semi-Primitive/Non-motorized Areas over 1,000 acres as an indicator for big game disturbance. Alternative 1 offers 24%, Alternative 2, 5 and 5R offer 29% and Alternatives 3 and 4 offer 37% and 38% respectively. The affects of these percentages on mule deer and elk is analyzed in Chapter Four of the FEIS.

Comment #W19

Comment: Goshawks are a forest management indicator species and an Idaho State Species of special concern. Populations and reproduction may be declining across their range, as well as on the Caribou-Targhee NF (Reynolds 1992, TREC, Inc. 2005). These suspected declines coupled with the lack of understanding about how goshawk habitat is affected by forest management activities make the conservation of goshawk habitat an important management consideration. Because of the limited number of known breeding individuals, conservation of every home range is important (Reynolds 1992). Further, in his northern goshawk management recommendations Reynold's (1992) states that in all forest types road densities should be managed at the lowest level possible to minimize disturbance in nest areas, post-fledging family areas, and foraging areas.

Reply: This has been clarified in the FEIS with a Personal Communication from Reynolds on road densities. There would be no new system roads in the nest and post-fledging areas meeting goshawk guidelines.

Comment #W20

Comment: While the effects of forest road and trail density on lynx survival and productivity are not fully understood, there are several areas of concern. Lynx may be more vulnerable to human-caused mortality near open roads. Roads and trails facilitate snow machine and other uses during the winter. This may allow competing carnivores such as coyotes and mountain lions access into lynx habitat where they are normally limited during mid-winter. Summer use of roads and trails through denning habitat may have negative effects (Ruediger et al 2000).

Reply: The effects to lynx were analyzed in the Biological Assessment. Because the Caribou NF is only considered linkage habitat, management direction for Lynx Habitat (i.e. LAUs) are not used in the analysis.

Comment #W21

Comment: The Forest Service fails to consider "the effects of changes in vegetation type" that could occur on a Forest wherein the miles of all-terrain vehicle motorized has been increased rather than decreased. This estimated change should then be considered with regard to the future productivity of the MIS.

Reply: As stated previously, in some alternatives, the miles of all-terrain vehicle (ATV) route increased, as the miles of full-sized road decreased, some roads were converted to ATV trail under some alternatives. All action alternatives reduce motorized routes over-all. Impacts to upland vegetation will decrease under all action alternatives, as designated routes are reduced.

**Section
9****Comments on Economics****Comment #EE1**

Comment: The Forest Service always compares the economics of alternatives and uses that as a surrogate for public benefits. Nothing could be more inaccurate. Many members of the public value the non-monetary values they derive from the forest much more than any profit that a corporation might derive from commodity extraction.

Reply: The economic analysis does not predict favorable or unfavorable effects to local economies as a result of different Travel Plan alternatives. (See Chapter Four under Economics of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.)

**Section
10****Comments on Noxious Weeds****Comment #NW1**

Comment: Motorized travel on roads and trails spreads noxious weeds into forest areas.

Reply: Noxious weeds are spread by a variety of means, including motorized and non-motorized travel. The Forest controls and contains new weed infestations as they are discovered. Noxious weed monitoring indicates that we are reducing acres of some noxious weed infestations such as leafy spurge. The transportation system will continue to contribute to the spread of noxious weeds under all alternatives; however, a variety of methods to control and contain infestations. (See the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapters Three and Four under Noxious Weeds for more information on the current condition of noxious weed infestations on the forest and a comparison of effects by alternative.)

Section 11

Comments on Site-Specific Travel Routes

Some routes were commented on by many individuals. These specific route comments are included here.

Comment #SSTR1

Comment: We recommend the following travel routes be closed to motorized travel during the snow-free season.

On the Westside District:

1) *Route #20293 (vicinity of Cusick Creek)* this route fragments deer and elk security areas; 2) *Route #20010 (Cusick Creek)* – route is rutted due to use during wet conditions; 3) *Route #159 and #60 (North Fork and South Fork of Gibson Jack Trail)* – illegal motorized travel creating erosion and impacts to big game; 4) *Route #20008 (Main Gibson Jack Trail)* – close to all uses, disturbance to wildlife; 5) *Route #20513 (Corral Creek Trail)* – route is rutted and non-motorized designation would protect wildlife; 6) *Horse Lake Trail (Not numbered)* – illegal motorized travel compromising big game security; 7) *Route #20304 (Elk Meadows)* – this route is in an elk security area; 8) *Route #162 (Bannock Guard Station Trail)* – illegal use off of this route causing resource concerns; 9) Kinport Peak area – *Route #20511 (Crystal Creek Trail)* due to illegal travel, close this route during hunting season; 10) *Route #128 (East Fork of Mink Creek Trail)* close to protect fish and wildlife and; 11) *Route #78 (South Fork of Inman Creek Trail)* close due to erosion concerns.

On the Soda Springs District:

1) *Route #20107 (Boulder Creek)* illegal use has created a pioneered route into Webster Ridge; 2) *Route #20367 and #20370* – illegal use creating resource damage and fragmenting wildlife; 3) *Route #20140 (Stump Creek Cabin Road)* – illegal use creating fragmenting elk security; close at the bottom of switchback with berm and/or gate; 4) *Route #109 (Stump Creek Area)* illegal use off of this route, reduce wildlife disturbance; 5) *Route #14 (South Fork of Tincup Creek)* illegal use off of this route, reduce wildlife disturbance; 6) *Route #15 (Hyde Canyon Trail, over Suicide Pass)* illegal use off of this route, reduce wildlife disturbance; 7) *Route #50 (Timothy Creek Trail)* illegal use off of this route, reduce wildlife disturbance, wetland protection; 8) *Route #20106 (Bacon Creek Trail)* route creating resource damage and erosion and; 9) *Horse Creek and Cow Creek Trails* remain non-motorized.

Reply: All alternative offer a different mix of motorized and non-motorized routes. See Appendix B for individual routes (numbered, and in some cases named) and their management by alternative. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives. Also see Chapter Four on travel route effects by alternative and resource of concern.

Comment #SSTR2

Comment: *South Wilson Creek Trail #2330* should be designated as motorized single-track. This would increase the motorized single-track opportunities and loop possibilities near the other motorized single-track in this area. This may also simplify the proposed rock barrier and signage, since both trails (*#2348 and #2330*) beyond the intersection would be motorized single-track.

Reply: The Forest does not agree with the need for a loop opportunity here. Trail 2348 provides connection between the Highline and motorized opportunities east of Eightmile Canyon.

Comment #SSTR3**Montpelier Ranger District: Bear River Range -- Map B-2**

Comment: *Trail #2308 between Meadow Creek Road and Mill Hollow* -- Change the segment (highlighted in figure) of Trail #2308 between Meadow Creek Road and Mill Hollow from ATV trail to motorized single-track. This segment is narrow single-track and has steep sideslope sections at each end. As of 2004, ATVs were not getting through on this trail. Since this trail seems to naturally prohibit ATV use, and other another connection is available for ATVs (see purple arrows in the following figure), this should be retained as a motorized single-track. This trail currently supports motorcycle use, but cannot support sustainable and safe ATV use without bench widening.

Reply: The District and team has included this change in Alternative 5R.

Comment #SSTR4

Comment: *Trail #2350* -- Change the Cheatback Canyon Trail #2359 from non-motorized (as in Alternative 5) to a designated ATV trail. This trail provides forest access from Niter, Beach, and other adjacent communities, and can support motorcycle and ATV use. Much of this trail is along the bottom of the drainage, but it has a very rocky bed so there should be minimal erosion impacts. The canyon is very narrow in some sections, making this an interesting and unique trail.

Reply: This change is included within Alternative 5R.

Comment #SSTR5

Comment: *Trail #2358* -- The Alternative 5 proposed realignment and ATV trail designation is a good addition to provide ATV access to/from the popular dispersed campsites in Squirrel Hollow. Currently, the short connecting segment from the top of Squirrel around the north side of the 8221' peak is only safely passable by motorcycles.

Reply: Comment noted. Some alternatives will require trail maintenance and or reconstruction.

Comment #SSTR6**Montpelier Ranger District: Bear River Range -- Map B-3**

Comment: *Trail #2342 and "sustr" from Copenhagen Basin to Snow Hollow* -- These two trail segments, *Trail #2341 from Copenhagen Basin to Hells Kitchen Spring*, and *Trail "sustr" from Hells Kitchen Spring to Snow Hollow*, would provide a good, moderately challenging motorized single track addition and add some loop opportunities for motorcycle riders. Alternative 5 proposes these segments as closed to motorized use.

Reply: The trails in this area were "lost" due to non-use. The trail labeled "sustr" on the map was re-established by volunteers with the understanding that it would be for foot and horse only. Much of Trail 2342 is not locatable on-the-ground.

Comment #SSTR7

Comment: *Trail #2354 from Highline Trail to Dry Basin* -- The segment of Trail #2354 between the *Highline Trail #316* and *Dry Basin* should be a designated ATV trail. This segment is shown as non-motorized in Alternative 5. This short segment is on relatively flat and dry ground, and I have not seen erosion problems, wet areas, or other issues with this trail segment. This segment, used with some other road/trail segments, provides a desirable bypass at times when large snags fall on a section of the *Highline Trail #316* that is on a very steep, west facing (see segment labeled "Occasional Large Fallen Trees" on following figure). The short segment also provides some additional ATV loop opportunities. Trail #2354 has long been signed at its west end, at the intersection with the *Highline Trail*, and is not a recent user pioneered trail.

Reply: This is included in Alternative 5R.

Comment #SSTR8

Comment: *Trail #316* -- The segment of trail is part of the original *Highline Trail #316*. This segment is still single-track and the preferred route for motorcycle riders.

Reply: The Forest would prefer to avoid two parallel routes for this short distance, field visit in 2004 by District Ranger, Soils Scientist, and Hydrologist preferred old road bed as most suitable location.

Comment #SSTR9

Comment: *Road #1057A Connection to Road #408* -- A short segment of the upper end of *Road #1057A* (under power lines), before it connects with the *German Dugway Road #408*, is designated for ATVs in Alternative 5 (see highlighted segment on following figure). This segment should be designated as a road, so that full-sized, high clearance 4WD and utility vehicles can connect between these two roads. There is an earthen berm near the top of the suggested road segment that should be checked to see if it can pass full-sized vehicles, and modified to do so if it can't, providing that this suggestion is used in the final plan.

Reply: This is included in Alternative 5R.

Comment #SSTR10

Comment: *Trail #2301* -- Trail #2301 from Worm Basin Spring to Hull Valley should be kept motorized single-track as shown in Alternative 5. This is a narrow trail and much of its current alignment cannot safely support ATV use. South of Worm Basin Spring there are numerous large fallen dead trees (there was a fire in this area some years back), and a narrow cleared path through all this deadfall could effectively prevent ATV intrusion onto this trail.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR11

Comment: *Trail #2339* -- The *Shoshone Indian Trail #2339* is designated as non-motorized in Alternative 5. I would suggest designating this trail a motorized single-track. It has been open, but is rarely used because it's fairly challenging and not well known. Most other challenging motorcycle trails in this area have been closed, and this trail could continue to provide this type of challenge with minimal impact on non-motorized users, who also rarely use this trail.

A fence closure at the bottom end of this trail, as is indicated in Alternative 5, is needed to control access in this area. There is also an old, faint, single-track trail that starts just south of the "Shoshone Indian Trail" sign that avoids the wet areas and stream crossing. It may be desirable to reclaim this alignment and obliterate the more obvious, rutted trail segment in the bottom of the drainage.

Reply: Open Motorized Route Density ceilings are fully met for this prescription area in Alternative 5.

Comment #SSTR12

Comment: *Alternate Trail past Budge Spring* -- The highlighted trail shown in the figure below is on an old roadbed, and is closed to motorized use per Alternative 5. This could provide a good alternate route for ATVs to avoid the relatively heavy full-sized vehicle traffic and blind corners in this section of *Road #407*, and I suggest this be designated as an ATV trail in the final plan. If this is done, I'd also recommend some hardening (cinder blocks with the openings pointing up may work well) in the short section directly below Budge Spring, since it is usually muddy.

There are some possible resource issues with this trail (short muddy section mentioned above), but I feel it could reduce the possibility of vehicle collisions on *Road #407*. Some warning signs on *Road #407* could possibly mitigate safety issues if the resource issues on the suggested ATV segment are excessive.

I agree with closure of the shortcut trails shown in the figure. These shortcuts are deeply rutted, and are simply not needed (although I do think the Bear 100 has used the upper one that's marked to be obliterated).

Reply: Open Motorized Route Density ceilings are fully met for this prescription area, under Alternative 5.

Comment #SSTR13

(Montpelier Ranger District: Bear River Range -- Map B-5)

Comment: *Trail #2340* -- The Paris Peak Trail should be designated single-track, as has been done in Alternative 5. In the last two years, ATVs have been trying to use this trail, and this has resulted in numerous bypasses and braids. In one case, ATV users could not ride a high basin switchback, and punched a bypass trail straight down the fall line. Within a year, this ATV bypass had eroded to the point that it was no longer usable by ATVs, and ATV riders punched another trail straight down the fall line a few feet to the side.

In the last two years, ATVs have been trying to use this trail, and this has resulted in numerous bypasses and braids. In one case, ATV users could not ride a high basin switchback, and punched a bypass trail straight down the fall line. Within a year, this ATV bypass had eroded to the point that it was no longer usable by ATVs, and ATV riders punched another trail straight down the fall line a few feet to the side.

This trail has been used for years by motorcycles, and had been holding up well with motorcycle use. But it simply can't support ATV use, and in many sections ATV users simply can't stay on the original trail, and punch bypasses to avoid these sections of the trail. This trail needs more physical blockage added to prevent ATV intrusion at each end. I would also be willing to help obliterate bypasses, braids, and shortcuts, and can probably get some other volunteers to help with this work.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR14

Comment: *Trail #sustr from Highline Trail to Telegraph Flat* -- I support this change and I am hopeful that this new loop opportunity, enabled by the proposed connection from the Highline Trail to Telegraph Flat, will satisfy ATV users. Signs should be posted at the Highline Trail junction, and boulders or other physical blockage should be added if possible, to discourage ATV use south onto the single-track portion of the *Highline Trail #316*.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR16

Comment: *Trail #2315 from Litz Basin to Trail #2306* - Between Litz Basin and the designated motorized *Single-Rack Trail #2306*, Trail #2315 is closed to motorized use in Alternative 5. I'd suggest it is designated motorized single-track to add more loop opportunities for motorcycle riders.

Reply: This change was made under Alternative 5R.

Comment #SSTR18

Comment: *Trail #2318* -- Under the current travel plan, the *North Fork Trail #2318* was open to ATVs up to its junction with the *Snowslide Canyon Trail #2319*, and open as a motorized single-track beyond that point. This created a situation where ATV riders could legally only go out and back on the same trail. Unfortunately, the "NO ATV" stickers at this designation change have been removed almost as fast as they are placed, and many ATV riders subsequently use (or try to use) the upper portion of this trail, some getting as far as the ridgeline. This has led to multiple bypasses and braids, as ATV riders have pushed their way up a trail that simply can't support ATV use. Not only that, but this trail only connects to other single-track trails, none of which can support ATV use.

Given that there are no other trails suitable for ATVs to connect to, and this, and the connecting motorized single-track trails form the core of one of the few remaining high quality motorcycle trail systems on the Bear River Range, I feel that closing the entire trail to ATVs (as is shown in Alternative 5) will be the only manageable solution.

With this change, there are no ATV trails in St. Charles Canyon. I hate to see complete closure as a management tool, but in this case, I feel it's the only thing that will work. And I support the designation proposed in Alternative 5.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR20**Montpelier Ranger District: Pruess Area -- Map Pr-1**

Comment: *Trail #2406* -- Trail #2406 in the Sage Meadow area is currently a single-track trail that is passable by motorcycles, and should be designated motorized single-track. This trail is shown as closed in Alternative 5.

It may be desirable to upgrade this trail to ATV width for ATV connection between *Roads #145 and #1102* in the future. But this may depend on mine haul road location other effects of nearby mining operations.

Reply: The District does not want to encourage recreation opportunities in this phosphate development area of the Forest.

Comment #SSTR21

Comment: *Trail from Trappers Cabin to Snowdrift Ridge Trail* -- There is an unnumbered trail from the Trappers Cabin to the Snowdrift Ridge Trail #2113 which is currently a single-track trail that is passable by motorcycles. This trail has been designated as a motorized single-track trail in Alternative 5, and I strongly support keeping that designation in the final plan. This trail is not passable by ATVs, and would take considerable work to upgrade to ATV standards, but is a very desirable motorcycle trail and can be used with the other top-notch motorcycle trails that connect to the Snowdrift Mountain ridgeline.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR23

Comment: *Trail #2414* -- Trail #2414 in Church Hollow is designated closed to motorized use in Alternative 5. I have not ridden this trail, so I don't know how suitable it would be as a motorized trail (it looks very steep in places on the quad-based topographic map). But if it could be designated as an ATV trail, this would provide an additional connecting route between the Summit View Campground and Georgetown Canyon.

Trail #1100 provides motorized single-track connection to Georgetown Canyon, and Trail #2414 should be considered as an ATV connection if the trail can safely and sustainably support ATV use.

Reply: This trail has not been pushed through by either all-terrain vehicles or motorcycles because of steep terrain.

Comment #SSTR25

Comment: *Trail #2096* -- The *Pine Creek Trail #2094* is designated a motorized single-track trail in Alternative 5. There is a possibility of providing an ATV loop using this trail with the Rock Creek Trail #2094. If this is done, some realignment (and possibly a trail bridge) in the meadow area may be needed at the south end of this trail. Some additional bench work and rerouting may be needed to make this a sustainable ATV trail.

Reply: The District wishes to keep this loop as a motorcycle trail only. This is a favorite place for non-motorized hunters and since few hunters ride motorcycles and few motorcycle recreationists are riding in October and November, conflict is minimal.

Comment #SSTR26

Comment: *Trail #sys West of Elk Valley* -- I have not ridden this trail and don't know if it would be suitable as a motorized single-track. Alternative 5 shows Trail #sys as a non-motorized trail. If this could support motorcycle use, and were designated motorized single-track, as well as adding a connector to the Pine Creek area, this would provide largely single-track connection (using the White Dugway Creek Trail and a few road segments) from Clear Creek to Pine Creek single-track trails.

Reply: Whatever this route used to be, it is now no more than a cow path. It is in an area that is popular with non-motorized hunters.

Comment #SSTR28

Comment: **East Side of Montpelier District – Gannet Hills, Red Mountain, Georgetown, Meade Peak, and Montpelier Creek Areas** -- There are few places within this area of the Montpelier District that are more than 0.5 mile from an open motorized route with the exception of the Gannet Hills and Red Mountain roadless areas under Alternative 5. The area is important for elk, deer, moose and black bear, along with a host of other species. Many trails cross perennial streams, degrading habitat and water quality. This is a concern as streams in this area of the Montpelier Ranger District provide habitat for either Bonneville and/or Yellowstone cutthroat trout both of which are becoming increasingly rare. Southeast Idaho Recreation Alliance supports Idaho Department Fish & Game's road and trail recommendations, referred to as Alternative 3.

Reply: Comment noted. See the Fisheries section of the FEIS, for alternative effects to Bonneville Cutthroat Trout strongholds.

Comment #SSTR30

Comment: Please close to snowmobiles the following prime moose habitat in *Emigration Canyon*: The boundary would be from Highway 36 at the summit of Strawberry Canyon and Williams Canyon running east along the Snow Hollow Road and south on the ridge.

Reply: This closure was not considered in the Alternatives. See the Wildlife section of Chapter Four for discussion of effects from winter travel on wildlife.

Comment #SSTR31

Comment: *Sink Hollow* – We support the skiers in the Logan, Utah area who are asking for a winter non-motorized zone in Sink Hollow from the Idaho border to Gibson Basin, specifically to the junction with the *Beaver Creek Trail*. For many of those years, the Utah side of Sink Hollow was designated as non-motorized in the winter and managed by the Forest Service. Now the lower section to the Beaver Mountain road is managed by the State of Utah through the State Institutional Trust Lands Administration (SITLA). Even though SITLA has not managed lower Sink Hollow strictly as a winter non-motorized area, they are interested in doing so in the future.

Additionally, many local cross-country skiers through a non-profit organization, Nordic United, are planning to resume grooming cross-country ski trails in Sink Hollow to the Idaho border with the support of Forest Service, Beaver Mountain and SITLA. There would be strong support from cross-country skiers and snowshoers from the Logan Canyon side to use the Idaho side of Sink Hollow. Moreover, Sink Hollow forms a geographically closed canyon in the upper reaches, making travel management in the winter much easier.

Reply: See reply in the “winter section” under recreation comments.

Comment #SSTR33

Comment: On the **Montpelier District**, we would like *Trails #330, #112, #099, and #419* left open to motorcycles.

Reply: Comment noted. See the Alternative Maps and Appendix B for individual route management by alternative.

Comment #SSTR34

Comment: *Copenhagen Road* should be open to full-sized vehicles, and after the “turn-around” open to ATV’s.

Reply: Comment noted. See the Alternative Maps and Appendix B for individual route management by alternative.

Comment #SSTR35

Comment: Close *Snowdrift Mountain Trail* on the **Montpelier Ranger District**, at Clear Creek to motorized travel.

Reply: Comment noted. See the Alternative Maps and Appendix B for individual route management by alternative.

Comment #SSTR37

Comment: Keep the *Dry Fork to Mill Canyon Trail* open to all-terrain vehicle travel.

Reply: Comment noted. See the Alternative Maps and Appendix B for individual route management by alternative.

Comment #SSTR38

Comment: The *Pine Creek Trail #2096* and *Rock Creek Trail #2084* are identified as single-track motorized across the range of alternatives. These trails are non-technical for motorcyclists. The Caribou-Targhee National Forest should consider upgrading these trails to ATV use. These trails combined with Camel Hollow would make an excellent ride for ATV recreationists looking for loop opportunities in the Crow Creek drainage.

Reply: These trails have been limited to single-track since 1985. All alternatives manage the routes as motorcycle trails. This limits the motorized use in the area during hunting season. This area along the Wyoming border is favored by hunters seeking a non-motorized experience.

Comment #SSTR39

Comment: The *Dry Creek Trail #2099* is identified for closure under the current range of action alternatives. This trail is a beautiful single-track motorized trail. If road density standards are a concern during the hunting season, this trail could be closed during the general rifle season. The trail provides the only single-track trail opportunity from the Dry Creek drainage to the Crow Creek drainage. Motorcyclists prefer using this trail to the Boulevard Jeep Trail.

Reply: Based on District Ranger field observations, this trail receives little use. Downfall has not been cleared along the trail, and in some places the trail location is not clear, further indicating the lack of use. The District combined this knowledge with comments from a number of non-motorized hunters and determined to provide a larger area of non motorized recreation opportunity with Red Mountain at the center.

Comment #SSTR40

Comment: In the *Cub River* area, we were pleased to see that the preferred alternative considers constructing an ATV Route along the Cub River road. We strongly encourage the Caribou-Targhee National Forest to adopt this route across the range of action alternatives.

Reply: The alternatives do not change between draft and final analysis, except for minor corrections. Alternatives 5 and the new Alternative 5R consider this route for further analysis. (See Chapter Four under Recreation.)

Comment #SSTR41

Comment: The *Paris Peak Trail #2340* is divided between ATV and motorbike in Alternative 5. The Caribou-Targhee National Forest should consider reconstructing the northern half of the trail to accommodate ATVs. This reconstruction would create another looping opportunity in the Wasatch Range, using the Highline Trail and Paris Peak Trail along with associated roads.

Reply: The route up the south side of Paris Peak is located on an old road which accommodates all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use. The north slope is steep and currently impassible to ATV's. Although loops are preferred, the terrain would make a through route difficult. The view from the top saddle on the trail justifies a dead-end ATV trail. The Highline Trail, Road 426, and the user-defined and now adopted route at the Forest boundary provide multiple loop opportunities without adding this one.

Comment #SSTR43

Comment: Trail #7329 -- Trail #7329 south of the Indian Mill Trail #7333 is currently single-track, and should be kept as a single-track trail to retain some motorcycle trail opportunities on Elkhorn Mountain. North of the Indian Mill Trail #7333, Trail #7329 should be kept as ATV trail to provide a variety of ATV loop opportunities. This is consistent with Alternative 5, but I wanted to reinforce the need to preserve the southern portion of Trail #7329 as single-track.

Just north of Indian Mill Creek, on the current and Alternative 5 ATV section, there is a portion of trail that became quite "tippy" for ATVs last year due to back-slope sloughing. Some ATV riders are using old jeep road segments farther down the canyon that begins on private land to avoid this potential safety risk. Since those jeep trails are not part of the designated system, work should be done as soon as possible to fix the "tippy" parts of Trail #7329 north of Indian Mill Creek so it's safely passable by ATVs.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR44

Comment: EA-M1-7331: Trail #7331 -- Some parts of the ATV portion (per Alternative 5) of Trail #7331, between the Summit Trailhead and lower Rowley Canyon, are single-track and on rocky side-hill areas. These sections are marginally passable by ATVs currently, and some bench widening work is needed for safe and sustainable ATV use, which could be quickly done with a trail dozer. But most of the ATV part of Trail #7331 can currently support ATV use.

As shown on the Alternative 5 map, this trail is currently a single-track between Big Creek and Potter Creek, and is faint in some areas. But I have ridden or hiked through most of this section of the trail, and found clear signs of a trail and past maintenance (saw cut deadfall and pruning) and marking. While this is currently single-track, it should be upgraded to an ATV trail in the future. This would provide some excellent loop opportunities for ATV riders and improved access for other forest uses. Since the trail is very close to the edge of lands managed by the Caribou NF, the large non-motorized refuge area is largely retained for wildlife.

I support this conversion of single-track trail to ATV trail **only** if the other Alternative 5 single-track trails in the Elkhorn Area continue to be managed as motorcycle single-track and blocked to prevent ATV intrusion. This will provide a good balance of ATV trails and motorized single-track, and keep the bulk of the single-track located on the southwest area, physically separated from desirable ATV loops, which may help reduce ATV intrusion onto single-track trails.

Between Rowley Canyon and Big Creek, the Alternative 5 motorized connection using Trail #7374, Trail #7384, and Trail #7329 will provide a good alignment for future upgrade to ATV use. I would also suggest keeping the portion of Trail #7331 between Rowley Canyon and Big Creek as a motorized single-track (Alternative 5 shows this as non-motorized), to provide some additional motorized single-track in the Elkhorn Mountain area on terrain that is unsuitable for ATVs.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR45

Comment: *EA-M1-7370: Trail #7370* -- The motorcycle single-track portion of Trail #7370 currently starts higher and traverses as shown in the figure below. The current (labeled "Existing Motorcycle Single-track Trail, Use This Alignment") has seen historical maintenance and stays above springs and seeps, and is holding up very well with motorcycle use. I would suggest the segment shown on the Alternative 5 map not be included as a motorized trail in the final plan, in lieu of the above change. If this needs any clarification, it may be best to arrange a field trip with Westside RD personnel, please feel free to contact me if you'd like to look at this suggestion on-the-ground.

The Farmers Canyon segment of Trail #7370 is a very enjoyable motorcycle single-track trail, and this designation should be retained as in Alternative 5. Trail #7391 provides a very good ATV route to the main west side ATV connecting trail. And the Reed Canyon Trail #7092 provides a good alternative route for non-motorized users.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR46

Comment: *Trail #7308* -- Trail #7308 appears to be a faint pack trail, and should remain non-motorized as shown in Alternative 5 at this time. But this could provide a very desirable motorized single-track connection in the future, would enhance the motorcycle trail experience with a trail on terrain that discourages ATV use.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR47

Comment: *Trail #7329* -- Trail #7329 between Indian Mill Creek and Kent's Canyon is currently single-track, and should be as single-track as in Alternative 5. This section is faint in sections but easily found, and I rode it in the fall of 2004. The trail traverses steep side slopes in several locations, going in and out of the many canyons along the way, and has a narrow 1' bench, making it unsuitable (and impassable in many places) for ATVs. Also, since it's connected with other single-track (Kent's Canyon and continuation of Trail #7329 to Secret Canyon) it is highly desirable to keep this trail a motorcycle single-track.

The segment of Trail #7329 between Kent's Canyon and Secret Canyon is very faint in places, and has a narrow bench and obstacles that would be impassable by ATVs. This is also best left as a designated motorized single-track, as is shown in Alternative 5.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR49

Comment: *Trail #7413* -- Trail #7413 on the northwest side of the Oxford Peak could be used for a future loop if connected with *Trail #7421* in a future action. Due to the rugged terrain, a single-track connector may be much more feasible between the existing trail segments, and I would suggest changing the designation on Trail #7413 to motorized single-track instead of ATV trail, as done in Alternative 5.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR53

Comment: *OA-M3-7421: Trail #7421* -- Trail #7421 to Oxford Peak should keep the ATV designation as shown in Alternative 5. Since this trail provides access to magnificent viewpoints, spur access for ATVs should be provided, and a loop is not as important. This could be used as an ATV leg for a future motorcycle single-track loop, as described above in OA-M4-7413, which may only be feasible as a motorcycle trail north of Trail #7421.

Trail #7421 needs a switchback (or two) added on the north-facing slope of the 9089' peak that is south of Oxford Peak

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR55

Comment: *OA-M4-7437: Trail #7437* -- Trail #7437 on the Oxford Mountain ridgeline should be changed from ATV trail (as in Alternative 5) to a motorized single-track. As of fall 2004, this trail was still single-track because of the very rugged, rocky climb from the south, and the very narrow nature of the trail on very steep side slopes from the north end, south of Weston Peak. There are also several obstacles between these ends that would be impassable by ATVs, if ATVs could even get to them. The upper ridgeline has sections that could be easily used by ATVs, but it has remained a single-track trail, and very enjoyable and valued motorcycle trail because of the many obstacles that prevent ATV intrusion. Since there is so little single-track trail remaining on Oxford Mountain, the little that has remained single-track (because ATVs simply can't use it) should be preserved and designated and motorized single-track

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR56

Comment: *OA-M4-7451: Trail #7451* -- Up to the intersection with the rerouted *Trail #7437*, change *Trail #7451* from non-motorized (in Alternative 5) to ATV trail. This depends on the short reroute of *Trail #7437* described above below to make an ATV loop. This trail can already support ATV use to just below the high ridgeline where it connects with *Trail #7437*, and up to that location, is actually a better ATV trail than the lower portion of *Trail #7437*.

The bottom end of *Trail #7451* is currently a road with some construction features, including a culvert at its low point for a small stream. Higher up on *Trail #7451* there are what appears to be trail dozer created rolling dip drainage features. *Trail #7451* is a better way to get to the Oxford Mountain south ridgeline, so if the above ATV loop / single-track suggestion can't be implemented, I would suggest closing the segment of *Trail #7437* east of the ridgeline and designating the entire length (or from a selected a location that can be physically blocked to prevent > 40" use) of *Trail #7451* as a motorized single-track.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR59

Comment: *Gunsight Peak Area* -- I have not ridden or hiked the trails (#7498, #7500, #7501, #7502), but would like to see them retained as designated in Alternative 5.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR60

Comment: *Corral Creek Trail 7061* -- The non-motorized community strongly supports closing the Corral Creek Trail to motorized use. This trail is the only trail that bisects the West Fork Mink Creek non-motorized trail system. Closing this one 3-mile trail would set aside a one large area for wildlife as well as providing a system of non-motorized trails. This trail has become rutted from excessive off-road vehicle traffic and a non-motorized designation would better protect wildlife resources.

Reply: This trail is popular with local motorized trail users and has been maintained in the past by local motorized trail users. Corral Creek is managed as a non-motorized trail in Alternative 3 and 4. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #SSTR62

Comment: *Clear Creek (No.)* -- Clear Creek is located off of the Pebble Creek Road. It is a short ATV trail that connects Pebble Road to the Boundary Trail and then dead-ends in less than a 0.5 mile. Is Clear Creek an access point to the Boundary Trail with a parking lot? If not, it should be closed. The section from the Boundary Trail to the dead-end needs to be closed to discourage the pioneering of trails beyond this point.

Reply: This trail is managed as non-motorized in Alternative 3 and 4. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #SSTR63

Comment: *Crystal Creek Trail #7025* -- In Alternative 5, Crystal Creek ATV Trailheads to the west off the Elk Meadows Road. The majority of this trail is proposed as closed, under Alternative 5. The 0.5 mile section that is open should also be closed.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR64

Comment: Concerning summer use, I would like to address some trails specifically. I strongly support keeping the following trails as single-track: *Crestline Trail 7128* (also needs rehabilitation), *Slate Mountain Trail*, *East Bob Smith 7075*, *Reed Canyon 7115*, *Lower Midnight 7058*, *Connector Trail 7052*, *Indian Creek*, *Walker Creek*, *Bell Marsh*, and *Mormon Canyon*. Also *Indian Creek area trail numbers: 7046, 7048, 7049, 7051 and Walker Creek 7071*.

Reply: Comment noted. The alternatives offer a variety of single-track motorized trails. Slate Mountain Trail is managed as a single-track motorized trail under Alternatives 2, 5 and 5R. This trail was incorrectly mapped in the Draft map packet. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #SSTR65

Comment: *Kinney Creek Road #292* -- Kinney Creek should be managed as non-motorized with motorized access for administrative purposes only. This road runs in and out of riparian vegetation over much of its length, and eliminating motorized use would help reduce additional damage. Also illegal motorized entry beyond the road's end would be further reduced by creating non-motorized status.

Reply: This road is managed as non-motorized in Alternatives 3 and 4. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #SSTR66

Comment: *Robbers Roost to Pebble Creek Campground Trail 7073* – The Robbers Roost motorcycle trail is steep and in numerous areas, illegal crosscutting of switchbacks has created resource damage. We strongly support closing this trail to motorized use.

Reply: This route is managed as non-motorized in Alternatives 3 and 4. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #SSTR67

Comment: *Trail Creek Summit Area Trail 276, 280, 280B, 281, 282-7107 and 7001* – There are several trails that parallel each other in this area. This area along with the BLM and City of Pocatello property is turning into a motor-cross area. Some of these routes need to be closed to minimize pioneering of trails while still allowing access to the forest. Trail 276 would provide this access while helping the BLM and City of Pocatello enforce the closures on land adjacent to the CTNF.

Reply: Comment noted. Some of these routes are proposed as non-motorized in Alternatives 3 and 4. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #SSTR68

Comment: *Backside of Pebble Creek* – In Alternative 5, the Forest service has expanded this area to include Strawberry Fields. Presently snowmobiles access this area through the edge of Strawberry Fields and the bottom of the Tron area which is located on the immediate backside of Pebble Creek Ski area. We supports extending the boundary over to Inkom Pass and along the 7000 foot.

Reply: Comment noted. See the Alternative 5 and 5R maps for winter or snow season travel in Chapter Two of the FEIS.

Comment #SSTR69

Comment: *West Fork Mink Creek Complex and Gibson Jack* – In Alternative 5, the West Fork Mink Creek area was expanded to include all of the Gibson Jack drainage. This protects the Research Natural Area in the North Fork of Gibson Jack.

One area that needs a better definition on the map is along the Crystal Summit Snowmobile Trail and the upper Porcelain Pot/Parity Ski Trail. We would like to see this boundary defined by closing the area off to the east of the road in the Crystal Summit area. This will protect the area around Corral Peak where snow machines access the Parity Trail.

Reply: Comment noted. See the Alternative 5 and 5R maps for winter or snow season travel in Chapter Two of the FEIS.

Comment #SSTR70

Comment: *North Fork (#159) and South Fork (#60) of Gibson Jack Creek Trail* -- Illegal and uncontrollable motorized access has resulted in excessive soil erosion and negative impacts to ungulate populations. It is recommended that the main Gibson Jack Trail (#20008) remain closed to motorized traffic due to excessive disturbance to wildlife from non-motorized user, foot, and horse traffic.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR71

Comment: *Valve House and the Nordic Ski Area* -- Alternative 5, the City of Pocatello's Nordic Ski area was added to the areas closed to winter motorized access. In addition we would like to define the upper end of Valve House Draw to include parts or all of the following trails: 1) #7042 Valve House to East Fork; 2) #7154 the upper part of the Windago/Box Canyon and; 3) #7167 Upper Valve House to East Fork Mink Creek Trail.

The addition of these trails would create new ski and snowshoe loop opportunities in the upper Valve House and Windago/Box Canyon area as well as creating an enforceable boundary with the East Fork Mink Creek Trail and Box Canyon snowmobile trails as basic boundaries.

Reply: Comment noted. See the Alternative 5 and 5R maps for winter or snow season travel in Chapter Two of the FEIS.

Comment #SSTR72

Comment: *Crestline Trail on Westside Ranger District* should be managed as a motorcycle trail.

Reply: Alternatives 3, 4 & 5R manage this trail as a motorcycle trail. Upgrading this route to a two-track all-terrain vehicle trail would require construction and relocation, or removing existing rock obstructions.

Comment #SSTR73

Comment: *Horse Lake (no number)* -- The un-named trail that travels south for approximately .75 miles. There is an ATV trail on every ridge from this point to the Midnight Creek Trail and big game security areas are compromised.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR74

Comment: *Cusick Creek Trail (#20010)* -- Currently, off-road motorized vehicles are traveling across Cusick Creek and following a very rough four-wheel drive trail to Kinport Creek. This road has become extremely rutted during the past two years due to soil erosion from excessive vehicle travel during wet periods.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR75

Comment: *Elk Meadows (#20304)* area un-named, south traveling trail. This pioneered motorized trail is built through elk security habitat and allows ATV travelers to loop into trail systems on Midnight Creek and Crystal Creek.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR81

Comment: *Power Line Trail* should remain open as an all-terrain vehicle trail.

Reply: Alternatives 2, 5 and 5R manage this trail as an all-terrain vehicle trail. Alternatives 3 and 4 manage this trail as non-motorized. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives.

Comment #SSTR82

Comment: The *Boundary Trail* on the **Westside Ranger District** should remain open to all-terrain vehicle use.

Reply: Alternatives 1, 2, 4, 5, and 5R manage this route as open to all-terrain vehicle (ATV) travel. Alternative 3 manages portions of the trail as closed. This is one of the few long distance ATV trails available close to Pocatello, and it receives heavy use.

Comment #SSTR83

Comment: The **Westside Ranger District** already has an extensive ATV network on both the Portneuf Ranges and Oxford Peak. The Elkhorn Trail System could use some improvement on the north half of the system.

Reply: Alternatives 2, 5 and 5R manage Trail #331 as a motorcycle trail to maintain needed motorized access to this area and to provide a single-track motorcycle experience.

Comment #SSTR84

Comment: The **Westside Ranger District** needs to consider more non-motorized mountain bike opportunities. The north half on Inman Canyon, up Webb Creek and the South Fork of Toponce Creek are all foot trails. These trails were closed to mountain bike use before mountain bike use was prevalent on the Caribou National Forest. We recommend that the Westside Ranger District further examine the feasibility of providing more mountain bike trails in this area.

Reply: Alternative 5 and 5R offer additional non-motorized trails for mountain bike travel. Trails in the Toponce area remain foot/stock trails to provide quite, non-mechanized trails for horse travel and hiking on the Westside District.

Comment #SSTR86

Comment: The *Mormon Canyon Trail #7108* is designated for single-track motorized across the range of action alternatives. The Caribou-Targhee National Forest should consider designating this trail for ATV use. Most of the trail is currently ATV accessible. This upgrade to ATV use, would allow ATV recreationists to access the top out of Goodenough Campground.

Reply: The Mormon Canyon Trail offers a single-track motorized experience on the Westside District. The preferred mix of single-track and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails varies from user to user. Additional ATV opportunity is desired by some people using this campground. The District preferred to manage this trail for existing use and setting at this time.

Comment #SSTR87

Comment: Alternative 5 proposes to designate the *Goodenough/Walker Trail #7052* as an ATV route. This trail should be retained as single-track motorized. This trail is one of the few single-track trail opportunities on this section of the forest.

Reply: The preferred mix of single-track and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails varies from user to user. The District wanted to create more ATV opportunity in this area.

Comment #SSTR88

Comment: *Trail #7331* is identified as single-track motorized in Alternative 5. This trail is hard to find in many spots and needs spot reconstruction. In order to provide an ATV loop opportunity and lessen reconstruction costs, we recommend that this trail be reconstructed to ATV standards. This would provide ATVs with a looping opportunity out of the Summit Campground using the Wright Creek National Recreational Trail or Indian Mill Trail.

Reply: The preferred mix of single-track and all-terrain vehicle trails varies from user to user. The District preferred to manage this trail for existing use and setting at this time.

Comment #SSTR89

Comment: *Trail #7308* is a narrow, well-defined, single-track trail. As the trail climbs out of Secret Canyon, it traverses steep side slopes and is not suitable for ATV use. It is suitable for motorcycle use and should be designated as such. The trail would help complete a looping opportunity around the southern half of Elkhorn Mountain.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR90

Comment: *Trail #7451* on the Oxford Mountain side is the only through trail from the south end of the ridgeline portion of *Trail #437 to the Five Mile Road #051*. All alternatives designate this trail to be non-motorized when it should be open to ATV use. Designating this trail for ATV use would allow ATV recreationists to make a loop using a portion of *Trail #7437*. A portion of this trail is an old road, which would not lead to any widening of a single-track trail.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR91

Comment: *Trail #7423 on Oxford Ridge* is a dead-end route that confuses ATV and motorcycle riders using *Trail #7424*. The trail should be obliterated to reduce route-density in the Oxford Peak area and make the trail system more understandable.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR92

Comment: Out of the Cherry Creek Campground, there is a non-system trail, labeled Mal-23 in the Trail No. column. This trail is located on a ridge top and should be incorporated as an ATV trail to create a looping trail system out of the Cherry Creek Campground.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR93

Comment: For winter, the *Parity Trail* needs to be closed to snow machines, this will keep them going along the groomed road back into the areas open for snowmobiles. There needs to be a sign on the road. On the back side of Pebble Creek, please include Strawberry Fields and enforceable boundaries extending to lower elevations. We ask that you expand the Valve House closure over to the East Fork Mink Creek Road to include the Nordic Ski Area. This would include *Trail #7042 Valve House to East Fork*.

Reply: Comment noted. See the Alternative maps for Winter Travel in Chapter Two of the FEIS. See the snow-season discussion in the Recreation section of Chapter Four of the FEIS. These discussions consider these areas by alternative.

Comment #SSTR94

Comment: In addition, we would like to see the following trails open to bicycles and preferably kept single-track in the **Westside Ranger District**: *7001 Outlaw Draw, 7062 Wild Horse to Midnight, 7045 Crestline to Lead Draw, 7015 Trail Creek to Kinport, 7025 Power Line, Gibson Jack 7060, West Fork Mink Creek 7059 and 7025, and Windago/Box 7154*.

Reply: Comment noted. See the Alternative 5R maps for snow-free travel. This Alternative provides the most mountain bike opportunity on non-motorized trails on the Westside District.

Comment #SSTR95

Comment: The Old Tom Road on Scout Mountain **Westside RD** should be left open to motorized traffic. It is solid rock and on top of the world where nature does its thing and erosion and displacement is the norm. Vehicles would not damage anything. Alternative 2 shows this open to vehicles under 50" yet Alternative 5 closes it to everything except snowmobiles. Something is wrong with the reasoning here.

Reply: This trail is managed as an all-terrain vehicle trail in Alternatives 2, 5 and 5R. The original Map 13 for the Westside Ranger District had both red and blue lines on some routes. A corrected Map 13 was mailed to people who requested a map package and to others who had picked maps up at the office. We regret the confusion. The corrected Map 13b has been included in the new map package available for the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Comment #SSTR96

Comment: Kinport Peak is winter range for mule deer and elk, and, due to harassment and IDFG's Mule Deer Initiative in southeastern Idaho, we recommend all motorized travel (including snow machines) be prohibited during the winter periods.

Reply: The area directly adjacent to Kinport Peak is not managed as big game winter range under Revised Forest Plan prescriptions. Portions of the area are managed as non-motorized during the winter under all alternatives. (See the 2002 Travel Plan Map.)

Comment #SSTR97

Comment: We encourage the Caribou-Targhee National Forest to manage *Trail #331* as an ATV trail. The trail would have to be upgraded for ATV use.

Reply: Alternative 1, on paper, designated Trail #331 as an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trail. However, this trail needed maintenance and reconstruction to allow ATV travel. Alternatives 5 and 5R propose to manage this route as a motorcycle trail which would require some re-alignment. Alternatives 3 and 4 propose to manage this route as a non-motorized trail. The Deciding Officer can choose any alternative or a combination of alternatives. (See Chapter Three and Four under Recreation of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for specific discussion of this travel route.)

Comment #SSTR98

Comment: I would like to protest the proposed plan to allow motorized vehicles on Kinney Creek, which is off of Mink Creek, south of Pocatello. This canyon is close to Pocatello, and I regularly see well over ten hikers and mountain bikers using it every weekend, as well as cross-country skiers when conditions are appropriate. It offers a quiet, usually windless place to enjoy birds and other wildlife. The presence of ATVs and other motorized vehicles will create a danger for non-motorized users, as well as a noisy disturbance.

I maintain 15 bluebird boxes up this canyon. Every year I have to repair or replace at least five of them that have been shot or knocked down. I know that they are not damaged or destroyed by hikers or mountain bikers. I also regularly pick up litter when the gate is opened in the summer and fall.

Reply: The District would like to maintain this road as open to public use, and for administrative purposes, including fuel treatments for fire and fire suppression activities.

Comment #SSTR99

Comment: Soda Springs Ranger District -- In general the Soda Springs Ranger District has taken the balanced approach towards travel and recreation management. In particular, Alternative 5, for the Caribou City and Stump Roadless Area are good, especially the recommendation to maintain the *Winchell Dugway, Trail 092*, as a non-motorized route. The Caribou City Roadless Area is separated by a single Forest Service road from the Bear Creek Roadless Area to the north and by State Highway 34 from the Stump Creek Roadless area to the south provides a significant block of about 200,000 acres of secure habitat for fish and other wildlife, and provides for significant solitude, primitive recreation opportunities, and superb backcountry hunting experiences for people.

There are two areas where the recommendations for the Soda Springs Ranger District could be improved. First, we still believe that routes 117 and 118 in the Stump Creek Roadless Area should be closed to motorized use. Leaving these routes open will surely lead to the unauthorized use of

motorized vehicles within the Suicide Pass area of Stump Creek. We also believe that route S67 is redundant and should be closed for the same reason as 117 and 118.

Reply: Comment noted. Alternatives close some segments of these trails, but portions are left open to retain some motorized access to this area. Signing, education and timely law enforcement patrols will improve travel plan compliance.

Comment #SSTR100

Comment: The ATV trail from the Diamond Flat Road to the old Lanes Creek Road may have value in providing access into the area, but I feel strongly that the motorized access should stop at the old Forest Service gate on the old Lanes Creek Road to protect upper Lanes Creek, Brush Creek and the North Fork of Stump Creek trout spawning potential, insure wildlife security and provide some solitude for forest users.

The upper portion of the Browns Canyon Trail is open to motorized travel in Alternative 5. I am concerned with erosion in trout spawning beds and wildlife security.

The old logging road on the east side of Diamond Flat Road that goes into the head of Browns Canyon shows open for ATV travel. It will be difficult to manage, allowing travel down the ridge between Stump Creek and Flat Valley Creek, then into the closed Stump Creek area. It would take away from the semi-primitive state of the first section of the Stump Creek Trail as it basically follows the same drainage in some areas only a few hundred yards apart. I strongly urge that this road remain closed to motorized travel.

We are concerned with the ATV trails in the Webster Ridge causing conflict between non-motorized and motorized users. The ATV trail should go no further than the top of the ridge in Bear Creek and definitely not down Timothy Creek where it will cause landowner conflicts.

The proposed Winschell Dugway ATV trail reduces the semi-primitive non-motorized area of Caribou Mountain. Again this cuts down on semi-primitive use in one of the only available areas.

Reply: Comment noted. This connector route does provide important motorized access into this area, after access was lost through adjacent private land. Alternatives close some segments of these trails, but portions are left open to retain some motorized access to this area. Signing, education and timely law enforcement patrols will improve travel plan compliance.

Comment #SSTR101

Comment: On the Soda Springs District, we would like the following trails opened up to motorcycles; #020, #001, #023, #024, #142, #629, #630, #632 and #015. Also, we would like Grunder Hollow M26, #092 Winschell Dugway and #049 from dead-end on West to road on the Soda Springs District, left open to ATV's.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR102

Comment: The Big Elk Mountain Trail #130 in Township 2 South Range 44 East (T2SR44E) is marked as an ATV trail. This trail is currently single-track to non-existent. We recommend that the status of this trail be changed to single-track motorized (tom) from Big Elk Mountain to Little Elk Mountain. The trail should also be identified for reconstruction. It provides a valuable looping opportunity in the Bear Creek drainage. The steep terrain keeps motorcycles on the trail. From Little Elk Mountain down, it should be designated ATV.

Reply: Big Elk Mountain Trail #130 to be changed to single-track motorized. The trail is shared between the Palisade District and the Soda Springs District. The majority of the trail will remain single-track motorized with a small segment open to motorized less than 50 inches in width.

Comment #SSTR103

Comment: *The Pole Creek Trail #2046 in T3S. R43E* is identified for closure in the preferred alternative. This trail provides a valuable looping opportunity in the McCoy Creek area for ATVs. This trail should remain open to ATVs at least seasonally. If hunting pressure is a problem, then a seasonal closure, not a year-round closure is needed. (Idaho Department Parks and Recreation Letter)

Reply: The Pole Creek Trail was evaluated for motorized designation and determined as having negative impacts on Pole Creek for trail proximity to the creek, standing wet areas and the general inability to maintain the trail in the riparian.

Comment #SSTR104

Comment: *The Della Basin Trail #2601 in T3S. R43E* is also identified for closure across the range of alternatives. This trail should remain open to ATV use because it provides a valuable loop opportunity between Della Basin and Barnes Creek. The trail mostly side-hills the ridgeline. The vegetation in the area helps keep riders on the trail.

Reply: The Della Trail is within the restricted motorized area and has never been designated as motorized trail.

Comment #SSTR105

Comment: *Road #20381A near Caribou Mountain in T4S. R44E* is identified for closure across the range of alternatives. This road should remain open to ATV use. The road is located well outside of any riparian issues, so soil erosion into streams shouldn't be a problem. If the road needs stabilization, we could reconstruct the road as an ATV trail with our Trail Cat Program.

Reply: The District would prefer Road #20381 to remain open to public travel to the old Robinson Mine. The road section past the Robinson Mine was constructed for gold exploration and was obliterated following the completion of exploration.

Comment #SSTR106

Comment: Alternatives 3, 4 and 5 recommend closure of the *Winschell Dugway Trail #2092 in T4S. R44E*. This trail should be reconstructed to ATV use. The trail provides a critical segment of an ATV looping opportunity around Caribou Mountain. Reconstructing this trail would take pressure off the remaining single-track trails in the Caribou National Forest. Of course, reconstruction would require a separate NEPA analysis.

Reply: Under Alternatives 2, 5 and 5R, management of the Winschell Dugway Trail #2092 will be analyzed in a separate site-specific document.

Comment #SSTR107

Comment: The DEIS on Page 134 mentions the Winschell Dugway reconstruction in Alternative 2 as requiring a 60-inch trail tread. Most of the trails that we reconstruct for ATV use have a 48-inch trail tread. This width accommodates most ATVs and discourages traditional passenger four-wheel drive vehicles. If this route is reconstructed to a 60-inch trail tread, 4x4s could start to use this trail. (Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Letter)

Reply: Comment noted. Often, the Forest constructs a trail width at a wider tread, with the understanding that with time the actual tread will narrow from soil movement and vegetation encroachment.

Comment #SSTR108

Comment: Table 4.9 on Page 123 covers indicators for Alternative 5. The table lists the Winschell Dugway as being managed as an ATV Trail in this alternative. Elsewhere in the DEIS, on Page vi and Page 128, Alternative 5 does not manage the Winschell Dugway as an ATV trail or a designated trail. The Winschell Dugway should be identified as a potential ATV opportunity that could only be available after further NEPA analysis and reconstruction.

Reply: Table 4.9 in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement contained an error concerning the Winschell Dugway. This error was corrected in the Errata sheet posted on our website and mailed to all interested parties. Alternative 5 does not manage the Winschell Dugway as a system route due to maintenance concerns. Alternative 5R does not manage the Winschell Dugway as a system route. To bring this route to standard for non-motorized or motorized use will require additional public involvement of analysis within one year of Revised Travel Plan implementation.

Comment #SSTR109

Comment: The entire range of action alternatives recommends creating a new non-motorized area between *Highway 34 and Stump Creek in the South Fork of Tincup Creek drainage*. The closure of these trails is the primary reason for the huge loss in single-track motorized trail opportunities. In 1999 through 2001, we supplied the Soda Springs Ranger District with a \$24,000 grant (G4300M07.00) from the Motorbike Recreation Fund to bring several of these trails back up to standard. These trails should remain at least seasonally to motorbike use. The trails should remain open at least until the start of the big game rifle season.

Keeping these trails seasonally open to motorcycle use would benefit both motorcyclists and hunters. Our Trail Ranger Program could keep these trails open for the motorcyclists, and the non-motorized hunters would still be able to use these trails in the fall.

Star Valley residents primarily use the area. These residents have ample non-motorized opportunities (450 miles) on the Grey's River Ranger District. The only motorized ATV and motorcycle opportunities they have are on the Soda Springs Ranger District. (Idaho Department Parks and Recreation Letter)

Reply: The area between Highway 34 and Stump Peak has primarily been non-motorized with the exception of the South Fork Trail. In some alternatives, the Stump Peak area was selected for non-motorized uses to reduce user conflict and provide a non-motorized recreation experience for hikers and horseback riders.

Comment #SSTR110

Comment: The preferred alternative and Alternatives 3 and 4 propose closing *Trails #50 and #2165 in T7S. R45E*. These trails are part of the Great Western Trail. These trails should remain open to ATV use. Keeping this trail open would keep ATVs off the Diamond Creek Road.

Reply: The District would prefer to manage Trail #2165 as open to motorized use to the closure in Timothy Creek. The majority of Trail #50 is within motorized travel restricted areas of Diamond Peak and Timothy Creek. Site-specific analysis would be needed in order to construct a new route from Webster Ridge to Flat Valley.

Comment #SSTR111

Comment: *The Yellowjacket Creek Trail #2023, the Cow Creek Trail #2024, and the Webster Canyon Trail #2025* should remain open to single-track motorized (motorcycle) use. These trails provide connecting loops between the Stump Creek Guard Station and the Johnson Creek Guard Station. The Horse Creek portion of Trail #2023 should remain open to ATV use. This would allow ATV recreationists to access the Great Western Trail from the Stump Creek Guard Station. All of these trails should remain open at least until the start of the big game rifle season.

Reply: The area these trails represent Trail #2023, trail #2024 and trail #2025 generates the greatest conflict on the District between user groups, that being horseback riders and motorized riders during hunting season. To reduce user conflicts, the District would prefer to close the area to motorized use. Yellow Jacket Creek Trail #2023 was evaluated for motorized all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use and rejected for safety reasons needing major relocation and reconstruction. The Horse Creek Trail #2023 was never designated as open to motorized ATV and presents safety issues as well as resource concerns near the top of Horse Creek on to Webster Ridge

Comment #SSTR112

Comment: Non-motorized recreationists would have the *Drainey Creek Trail #2088* and the *Terrace Canyon Trail #2001* as non-motorized opportunities out of the Stump Creek Guard Station.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR113

Comment: **Soda Springs District - Boulder Creek Trail (# 20107)** This trail is being used illegally by motorized vehicles and is a difficult area in which to conduct law enforcement activities. Currently, signs are being pulled out soon after being replaced, and the trail has been pioneered through the landscape and now provides a continuous loop onto Webster Ridge around Diamond Creek into Stump Creek.

Reply: Enforcement is discussed in the analysis; however, the Travel Plan revision decision cannot prevent all illegal trail use. See the enforcement discussion in Chapter Two of the FEIS.

Comment #SSTR115

Comment: In *Section 7, T. 3S. R. 43E.*, you are proposing to close all of the roads and put in barriers. One of these roads, the one showing the most use, should be left open. You should also put the barriers away from the main road and leave enough space for some camping and at least a turn around spot for vehicles. The main road here is such that vehicles cannot get off the road for camping and turning around.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR116

Comment: **Soda Springs District - Spur Roads # 20367 and # 20370** -- Illegal use, resource damage, and wildlife security are the primary concerns on these roads. The Forest may want to consider utilizing closure strategies such as tank traps and heavy Gates (as was done effectively on the Targhee in the Bear Management Units) and increasing law enforcement measures and monitoring.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR118

Comment: *Stump Creek Area (# 109), Bechler Creek Trail, the North and South Fork of Tincup Creek (# 14) Trail, and Hyde Canyon trail (# 15) over Suicide Pass toward Highway 34*

These areas are experiencing pioneered off-road vehicle travel and resource damage. We recommend these areas be closed to all motorized vehicles and tied into the Boulder Creek non-motorized area to provide adequate protection to big game species. We also recommend that Horse Creek and Cow Creek trails remain non-motorized.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR120

Comment: *Bacon Creek Trail (# 20106)* -- This trail has conflicts with wildlife and horse users during the hunting seasons, and is also experiencing resource damage and excessive erosion.

Reply: Comment noted. See the Road and Trail table of Appendix B for individual route management by alternative.

Comment #SSTR121

Comment: We commend you keep Winschell Dugway closed to ORVs.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR122

Comment: *R169 – Tincup Creek/South Fork – ATV* – extend the ATV trail to include the non-motorized section and also open T612 to ATVs. This will provide a loop ride with R20177 and R20189.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR124

Comment: *T109 & R20137 – Bald Mountain – ATV* – opening this road to ATV travel, along with T156, will provide a long ATV loop ride with R20389 to the Jacknife Road (R20136) and back north via T004 (Black Mtn.).

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR125

Comment: *T156 – ATV* – opening this trail to ATV will form a loop with Roads 20137 and 20389.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR126

Comment: *T603 – Little Elk – ATV* – opening this one mile non-motorized trail to ATVs would create a six mile ATV loop ride with connecting motorized Roads 20285 and 20284.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR127

Comment: *T619 – Tincup Creek to Jacknife Creek – ATV* – this would provide a connection between Tincup and Jacknife near the forest boundary (fairly gentle terrain).

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR131

Comment: *R20119 – Eagle Creek – ATV* – This would create a loop ride with T20012 to Monte Cristo Mine and Morgan Meadows.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR132

Comment: *R20164 – McCoy Road to Little Elk Mountain – Motorized – Single-track* this would allow motorcycle travel with connecting single-track trails in the Palisades Ranger District.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR133

Comment: R20284 – ATV – Open the short non-motorized section of this road to ATVs to create the T603 loop ride mentioned above.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment #SSTR134

Comment: T21282 – Motorized – to provide for dispersed camping.

Reply: Comment noted.

Comment: (Page 163) Road Maintenance and Operation. This section explains that there will be little change in maintenance costs across the alternatives by assuming that funding will remain limited and fixed. This ignores the fact that more maintenance is needed to reduce impacts to resources and that the difference between the actual and needed amounts of maintenance does vary across the alternatives. The last paragraph under Alternative 4 (Page 167) goes to great length to explain all the negatives of reduced road access without admitting that there would be a positive effect on potential maintenance costs.

(Page 170) [Alternative 4] has the lowest risk of travel and travel routes spreading noxious weeds.

(Page 172) “All acres determined suitable for timber harvest are accessed through this transportation system [Alternative 4]. . . .”

Reply: In the Final Environmental Impact Statement, Chapter Four under Roads, it states that under Alternatives 3 & 4 the road maintenance backlog would be less than Alternatives 2, 5 & 5R.