

June 4, 2007

**Deschutes and Ochoco National Forest and Crooked River
National Grassland
Travel Management Strategy
PAC Recommendations**

In 2006 the Deschutes Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC) agreed to charter a subcommittee and working group under the authority of the PAC charter and the guidance of the PAC operating agreements. The purpose of the Subcommittee was to:

- fulfill the PAC's guidance of including a designated PAC representative participating with chartered Working Groups,
- to serve as the "core" representative interests in a community-based collaborative process to implement the 2006 Travel Management Rule and
- to facilitate the full PACs recommendation to the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forest Supervisors

The Subcommittee and Working Group were chartered to complete recommendations on how to provide access for those national forest uses that will be most affected by the implementation of the 2006 travel management rule. Those uses are:

- A. designated specialized motorized trails
- B. motorized access for dispersed camping

The Working Group met 12 times between December 2006 and May 2007, contributing more than 1400 hours to discussing these topics and developing consensus recommendations. The Working Group's final consensus recommendations were time-limited, and are primarily focused on designated specialized motorized trails. Details about the meetings and the wealth of thoughts and opinions of the working group and subcommittee members are available from the meeting reports.

A. DESIGNATED ROUTES FOR SPECIALIZED MOTORIZED TRAILS

The Working Group was asked to help identify the geographic areas that were most important and had the most community support for the Forests and Grassland to focus their initial efforts to modify existing designated routes to provide for specialized motorized trails. Geographic areas were discussed by "landscape areas" that had been identified by the Forest Service. A map of these landscape areas is attached to this recommendation.

The group developed consensus that many areas were "important" to the participants but not all had community support for considering modifying the existing designated system to provide for specialized motorized trails. The consensus recommendation therefore separates areas considered into:

A1 - "Important Areas" where there is agreement that there is a problem/need/or demand for addressing unmanaged motorized recreation, but no agreement at this time on how to address the problem

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A2 - “Community Support Areas” where there is conditioned support for considering modifying the existing designated system to provide for specialized motorized trails

A3 - Areas Discussed, Agreed Not to be Considered in Detail at this time

A4 - Areas that were not discussed or considered in detail during this process

A1 - IMPORTANT AREAS

Consensus Recommendation

Some areas are very important to people because of the nature of the resources and the current, and often increasing, popularity of the destination. These areas have sensitive resources that are currently perceived to be adversely affected by the unmanaged use of off-highway vehicles. The group agrees that the following are “important” areas for management attention:

- Ochoco West – McKay Creek
- Maury Mountains
- Meadow Lakes
- Melvin Butte portion of Three Creeks Landscape Area

Two areas were moved to this category because there was *no consensus* on whether motorized recreation was a problem.

- Sage Grouse habitat on Pine Mountain
 - In the Pine Mountain area there has been ongoing work with the Pine Mtn. Observatory and the Bend Ft. Rock Ranger District to develop a Class II system.
- Edison OHV Trail System
 - The Edison OHV Trail System is a designated motorized trail system. Some of that existing designated system falls within an inventoried roadless area. Oregon Wild would like to have that portion of the motorized trail system within the roadless area considered for relocation outside of the inventoried roadless area as a part of designating trails in the Community Support area (polygon A) of Lookout Mountain/Edison. There was no agreement with motorized users about this concept.

A2 – COMMUNITY SUPPORT AREAS

Consensus Recommendation

Some areas may have community support for designating trails where:

- There is a suitable and desirable recreational opportunity/experience provided
- Effects on natural resources and other users from motorized use would be improved over existing condition
- Development of a trail system would meet multiple interests
- Development could utilize existing infrastructure

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- “6 Es” - Education, engineering, enforcement, economics, environment, and evaluation are integral parts of any newly designated trail system
- There is a recognized need and commitment for continued opportunity to consider and discuss the specifics of a proposed trail system in any area before community support for any specific designation can occur
- Other specific conditions may be met such as Forest Plan Standards – especially Forest Plan open road densities – and legal procedures
- The working group has strong feelings and agreement that the participation of a number of members was based on the belief that the FS intent as part of the travel management process was to reduce the road density to meet Forest Plan standards in so far as practicable
- The working group has strong feelings and agreement that the participation of a number of members was based on the belief that wildlife and wildlife habitat is important. There was, however, no agreement as to how to describe the size and configuration of unfragmented habitat
- Other areas and existing designated areas may be considered or re-considered in the future.

Crescent Landscape Area

The group supports considering the areas within the two polygons (Two Rivers and Boundary Springs) in the Crescent landscape area, under the following conditions:

- Support for investigating opportunity for designated trail system to help deal with Two Rivers problem with unmanaged use (avoid creating a sacrifice zone around Two Rivers)
- Consider creating a small play area to deal with problems
- Work with locals to identify areas of interest
- Primarily a low density, long distance system with connections to users
- Management process was to reduce the road density to meet Forest Plan standards in so far as practicable.

Lookout/Edison (Within the Lakes Landscape Area)

The group supports considering the areas within the polygons identified as A, B, C, D, and E in the “Lookout Mountain/Edison” portion of the Lakes landscape area under the following conditions:

- Many criteria to be applied (TES, cultural)
- Consideration of experimental forest and wildlife issues. Consider realignment of polygon for trail consideration to exclude more area around the experimental forest boundary.
- Protection of Fall River
- Address bats and access
- Number of trail miles needs to be defined (miles/acre, miles/square mile) – Density.

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Fort Rock – Including portions of the Horse Butte, Lava Cast, Hole-in-the-Ground and East Fort Rock Trail Landscape Areas

The group supports considering areas within the polygon identified within the Horse Butte, Lava Cast, Hole in the Ground, and East Ft Rock Trail landscape areas, under the following conditions:

- Using existing roads if possible
- Avoiding user conflicts at Horse Butte
- Trail needs to be of quality so people stay on it
- Where cross a horse/walking trail → signage and speed limits
- Recognize that many Buttes have special values for wildlife and other uses that need to be managed carefully. Avoid Buttes if there is a resource concern or wildlife issue.
- Stay away from guzzlers
- Three low density trail systems with increased opportunities (Horse Butte, Lava Cast, and Kweo Butte). Low density trail systems connecting these areas. Designed for class I, II, and III. “Low density” was not defined.

Grassland East

The group supports considering an expansion of the Henderson Flat OHV area into the polygon identified in the Grassland East landscape area under the following conditions:

- If only single route, south of Morris Lane
- Needs to be sufficient amount and difficulty to hold interest for at least 4 hours or a minimum of 35-50 miles of trail, including what is already there (in the designated OHV area), for Class I and III.
- Seasonal closures for soils (dust meter or soil moisture sign) and wildlife protection is currently in place in the Henderson Flat OHV area and should be considered in any expansion. Take hard look to determine whether a seasonal closure for soil is needed. Consider soil moisture criteria.
- Many conditions apply (TES [i.e., Pygmy Rabbit], cultural, first foods, etc.)
- Keep north of non-motorized area (horses, pedestrians, bikes)
- Consider weed management program to expand flexibility in red areas in future
- Design trail system away from weed problem for those who “can’t stay in the lines”
- Consider other access – Cyrus horse camp a problem with motorized use and horses. Need to protect horse trails (speed limits, crossings)
- Consider North and South staging areas
- Consider patch size and trail density (miles/square) because of effects on wildlife

Ochoco East

The group recommends considering the polygon within the Ochoco East landscape area under the following conditions

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- Keep in mind the plethora of wildlife issues, including the elk winter range donut around Big Summit Prairie (as identified by Crook County - ODFW) with a seasonal OHV closure (Dec 1 – March 31).
- If seasonal closure is implemented, maintain some existing roads/routes open during this closure period
- Any action taken in regards to seasonal restrictions on motorized use is not intended to affect existing designated snowmobile routes/uses in area

A3 – AREAS DISCUSSED, AGREED NOT TO CONSIDER IN DETAIL

On the Ochoco National Forest, all landscape areas were discussed in some detail. The group agreed not to consider trail systems in detail at this time in the following landscape areas:

- Grassland West
- Sunflower

A4 -Areas not Discussed

On the Deschutes National Forest, not all landscape areas were discussed in detail during this process. Those that were not discussed at this time include:

North portion of East Sisters (Green Ridge)

North Sisters

River Group

Ft. Rock

B – MOTORIZED ACCESS TO DISPERSED CAMPSITES

The 2005 Motor Vehicle Use Rule generally provides for four options concerning motorized access to dispersed (undeveloped) campsites:

- Route Adjacency – an area of up to 300’ adjacent to a designated route open to motorized travel where ingress and egress specifically for the purposes of camping is allowed.
- Designated Routes – designating new (in some cases existing unauthorized) routes in the National Forest system of roads and trails to access specific sites.
- Open Areas – designated areas that are smaller, in most cases much smaller, than a Ranger District, that provide for specific ingress and egress to designated sites.
- Permitted Access – access by written permit is exempt from designation under the 2006 Motor Vehicle Use Rule. This could include access for the purpose of dispersed camping.

Working Group Recommendation

Time did not allow for completing a detailed consensus recommendation on motorized access for dispersed camping. The group did generally agree that:

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- with limited exceptions, permitted access and “open areas” would not be preferred.
- “route adjacency” could/should be used in “most areas” of the forests.
- “designated routes” made sense to use in areas where resource sensitivity presented potential conflicts with using a “route adjacency” option

The working group developed some criteria to consider for applying each of the four options. This criterion was discussed in several small groups, but final consensus on the criteria was never reached by the whole group.

Forest Service Proposal

The Forest Service Travel Management interdisciplinary team considered that criteria in addition to their own resource and agency procedure knowledge and developed a mapped recommendation based upon the following general concepts:

- “Route Adjacency” would be the primary approach used on the two forests and grassland. On routes where this rule is applied, there would be a designated width not more than 300’ adjacent to open roads to provide ingress and egress for the purposes of dispersed camping.
 - This access may be seasonal
 - Route adjacency ***width*** considerations:
 - Topographic and other landscape conditions
 - Historic use
 - Resource conditions of current access
 - Quality recreation
 - Avoid creating unintentional large “open” area because of overlapping route adjacency widths
- Certain designated “exception” routes or areas would ***not*** be included in the “route adjacency” proposal. Exception routes or areas would require motorized access by designated route only directly to one or more sites.
- Exception routes would be determined based on site conditions that could include one or more of the following:
 - Open routes adjacent to sensitive or restricted areas including but not limited to:
 - Congressionally Designated Areas such as Wilderness, Newberry National Volcanic Monument, Wild and Scenic Rivers
 - Areas or routes currently under or subject to Agreement, Forest Plan, or Forest Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) temporary, seasonal, or permanent closure orders or other NEPA decisions.
 - Riparian, wetland, or other identified sensitive resource area such as Forest Service Sensitive, Threatened and Endangered Species habitats, erosive soils or unsuitable topography
 - Special resource management areas such as restoration or rehabilitation areas, weed populations, day use only areas, developed recreation sites, roadless areas

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- Areas under Special Permit such as resorts, ski area developments, observatories, or special recreation events
- Open high speed or high density travel routes including but not limited to:
 - State Highways, Major Federal,¹State, or County Arterials and Collector Roads
 - Federal or State Scenic Byways
 - Routes that access popular or high density recreation facilities
 - Routes that access population centers

The two forests proposed different widths for application of the route adjacency option, and a table of the specific exception routes that would be “exception routes” on each forest, based on a first draft application of the concepts described above. These are attached. The following descriptions summarize some of those key differences between the two forests along with rationale.

Deschutes National Forest

- Road Adjacency Width = 100’
 - High road density may create unintentional “open areas” in some places
- Exception route highlights include State Highways 97, 58, and 20, the Cascade Lakes Scenic and Newberry National Volcanic Monument Scenic Byways, within ¼ mile of developed campgrounds and major population centers, Pringle Falls and Lookout Mtn. Experimental Forests, Research Natural Areas, and Wild and Scenic Rivers, resorts and permit areas.

Ochoco National Forest

- Road Adjacency Width = 300’
 - Historic uses, most existing use can be reached within 300’ of open roads
- Exception route highlights include adjacent to Black Canyon and Bridge Creek Wilderness and Lookout Mtn adjacent to roadless area and private land, routes adjacent to Hammer Creek Roadless Area and private land, Rock Creek, Little Summit and Roba area.

The Working Group had a brief opportunity to hear the Forest Service proposal, although there was very limited opportunity to review the maps and the specific exceptions. The Working Group generated the following comments after the proposal was presented:

Deschutes Concerns and Comments – Why members of the Working Group might not agree with proposal

- 100’ too small, 300’ preferred. 100’ may not be large enough to fit trailers and trucks. Also, the Green Dot open road system to regulate travel access during hunting season has allowed dispersed camping up to 300’ from an open road (may be statewide). This rule could affect traditional hunting camps in the Fox Butte

¹ National Forest System Road Maintenance level 3-5

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(east side of Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District) and Walker Rim (SE corner of Bend-Ft Rock) travel access areas.

- Remove comments linked to map regarding East Fork Rock OHV Trail System until the specific wording in the environmental assessment (EA) is checked.
- Increase the distance from the urban growth boundary to 1 mile. Discuss with law enforcement if this would assist in preventing unauthorized camping that is more an alternative residence than a recreational experience. Recognize as part of this, that people regularly access within 1 mile of the UGB of Bend for evening walks, runs, etc.
- Increase the distance from existing developed campgrounds to 1 mile.
- Designating a specific distance can be problematic, since conditions may vary and who is going to be out there with a tape measure. Would 101 feet not be okay, or 305? Where possible, consider using topography to naturally designate areas or consider designating the number of feet from the road on a case by case basis.

Ochoco Concerns and Comments – Why members of the Working Group might not agree with proposal

- 300' too large.
- Designate the number of feet from the road on a case by case basis.