



Roads Analysis

Mendocino National Forest

Forest-scale RAP Newsletter #2

August 13, 2002

Road Management Issues

The roads analysis team has identified the significant issues to be addressed in the forest-scale roads analysis. The issues were developed through analysis of available road and resource information from both Forest Service and outside sources. Outside sources included comments and information from the public, advisory committees, and other agencies. Forest Service information sources included Watershed Analysis Reports, Geographic Information System, various databases, miscellaneous resource data, and the Forest Plan.

The issues have been divided into forest-wide issues and localized issues. Forest-wide issues are those that are widespread and substantial, and therefore of greatest importance in shaping an overall strategy for improving the road management situation. The bulk of our effort will go into developing information and guidance to assist in focusing our limited resources on the most productive solutions for these issues.

Localized issues are important in localized areas or in certain situations, but are not substantial problems when viewed on a Forest-wide basis. For consistency, these need to be addressed at the forest scale, but do not require the level of attention at this time that forest-wide issues do.

Forest-wide Issues

- Affordability – Current and anticipated future funding levels are inadequate to maintain the existing road system in a stable and environmentally sound condition. Prioritized use of the limited funding to strategically reduce the maintenance workload will be essential to halt or reverse

the degradation of road and environmental conditions.

- Access – Road access is essential for the public's use and enjoyment of the Forest as well as for the management, protection, and utilization of forest resources. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to entirely avoid impacts to road access, whether from continued inadequate maintenance or from changes in management. Road managers and users, working together, face the challenge of minimizing impacts on the quality and quantity of access while improving affordability and resource conditions.
- Water Quality and Aquatic Habitat – Certain portions of the existing road system generate sediment that impairs water quality and aquatic habitat. Such impacts are more detrimental when they occur in watersheds that provide habitat for Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive anadromous fish species.
- Terrestrial Habitat – Excessive road density (miles of roads per square mile) in some areas adversely affects the quality of wildlife habitat. Roads also serve as invasion routes for noxious weeds, which can have severe, long-term impacts on ecosystem conditions and processes

Localized Issues

- Heritage Resources and Traditional Cultural Uses – Some significant sites are experiencing vandalism that is facilitated by nearby road access. Certain roads provide access for traditional cultural uses, for which continued road access is desired.
- Health and Safety – Roads that are located on serpentine or ultramafic rock types may pose a potential asbestos hazard

for adjacent campers or residents, road maintenance workers, and others who travel such roads frequently. Some members of the public have expressed concern regarding the effects of inadequate maintenance on safety on certain roads. Native Americans and others who gather plant materials are concerned about potential health effects if herbicides are applied to roadside vegetation.

- Effects on Roadless Areas – There are some unclassified roads known to occur within inventoried roadless areas. Forest Service policy requires such roads to eventually be either closed or added to the classified road system. The potential need for new road construction within inventoried roadless areas during our current Forest Plan period is low.

The roads analysis team is currently developing guidelines and identifying opportunities to deal with these issues. They are also developing information to assist in prioritizing future road management and watershed-scale analysis work.

Did You Know...?

- Closing roads is not the only way to reduce resource impacts and maintenance workload. Many of our roads have outboard berms, in-sloped surfaces, and inboard ditches that tend to increase erosion by concentrating runoff water. This results in greater sediment delivery to streams, and higher maintenance workload. Reconstructing such roads to eliminate the berms, convert to out-sloped surface, and install 'rolling dips' (gentle dips that direct rainwater off of the road) can significantly reduce runoff concentration and erosion.
- Reconstructing roads is generally much less expensive than obliterating them, and can often achieve greater sediment reductions per dollar spent.
- Although converting a road to out-slope with rolling dips usually reduces the maximum safe driving speed, it is a way

to preserve access while reducing maintenance and resource costs.

Reminder

If you are interested in keeping track of road-related proposed actions on the Mendocino National Forest, the best way is to check our Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA). This is a listing of all of the management activities that the Forest Service is proposing to do on the Mendocino. It is updated quarterly and available three ways: 1) on the web (www.fs.fed.us/Mendocino/sopa.htm), 2) by email, or 3) by regular mail. To be placed on the email or regular mail list for the SOPA, contact Mike Van Dame (see contact info at the end of the newsletter).

Correction

In the previous edition (#1) of the RAP newsletter, there was a typo in the address for obtaining copies of the Roads Analysis book. The correct address is: Publications distribution, Rocky Mountain Research Station, 3825 E. Mulberry Street, Fort Collins, CO 80524-8597.

Road Management Info On the Web

Mendocino N.F. roads analysis web page:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/mendocino/roads.htm>

Forest Service Washington Office road management web page:
http://www.fs.fed.us/eng/road_mgt.

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