

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service Santa Fe National Forest



**For Immediate Release:
July 10, 2008**

**CONTACT: DOLORES MAESE
(505) 438-7877**

Forest Releases Proposed Action for Travel Management Motorized Cross-Country Travel Targeted

(SANTA FE, NM)---Santa Fe National Forest released its Proposed Action for Managing Motorized Travel today as part of a nationwide effort by the United States Forest Service to address unmanaged motorized recreation on national forests. The Proposed Action, or “scoping phase” is the first step under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

“This reflects what the forest has heard from the public for the past couple of years combined with an initial analysis of what would best protect natural and cultural resources, minimize conflicts between users, and still provide access and motorized recreational opportunities on the forest,” announced Forest Supervisor Daniel Jiron, “We are asking the public to stay engaged through the process by providing comments and ideas within these next 45 days, and attending one of the thirteen public meetings scheduled. Public input is important and will add value to the environmental impact statement.”

“This proposal, is merely that---a proposal, a starting point,” said Jiron, “We’d like people to read the Proposed Action, view the maps on the website: www.fs.fed.us/r3/sfe/travelmgt, at Ranger Stations, at local libraries and let us know, preferably in writing, if you’d like to suggest changes.”

The Proposed Action includes amending the Forest Plan to prohibit “off-road” driving across most of the Forest. The Proposed Action will also propose to close numerous roads that are unnecessary or redundant, or that cannot be adequately maintained, or that compromise the integrity of sensitive resources. However, adding some currently unauthorized or “user-created” routes to the forest transportation system are also proposed in order to provide access to points of interest and to maintain some loop-riding opportunities.

The Proposed Action will:

- Continue to provide motorized access to the Forest;
- Prohibit cross-country motorized vehicle use off designated roads, trails, and areas;
- Reduce the miles of roads open to motorized travel;
- Increase the miles of trails designated for motorized vehicles;
- Designate motorized access to dispersed camping;
- Limit the use of motor vehicles to retrieve downed game to designated routes only; and
- Amend the Santa Fe National Forest Plan to comply with direction in the Rule.

Throughout this process, the Santa Fe National Forest has been committed to protecting values and traditional uses such as getting firewood, picking piñon and managing livestock operations. “These activities and traditions are important and will continue on the Forest,” added Jiron.

-more-

-add one-

Category	Existing Direction -Current Forest Policy-	Existing Condition -where motorized use occurs-	Proposed Action
Roads available for motorized use [To reduce the negative effects to national forest system lands and resources from excessive or poorly situated roads and still provide motorized access]	4,924 miles	4,477 miles	2,309 miles – 53% reduction
Trails available for motorized use [To provide opportunities for managed motorized recreation]	300 miles	591 miles	247 miles ATVs and motorcycles 105 miles Motorcycles only = 142 miles
Area available for motorized cross-country use [To reduce the negative effects caused by vehicles traveling cross-country]	821,664 acres (53%)	250,400 acres (16%)	50 acres (less than 0.01%) of areas 21,099 acres (1.4 %) of dispersed camping corridors
Motorized access to dispersed camping [To reduce the risk of future damage to natural and heritage resources]	4,924 miles of road 300 miles trail	450 to 600 miles of roads and trails	508 miles of road with a corridor 8 miles of trail with a corridor
Motorized access to retrieve downed game [To reduce the potential to stimulate additional unintended use and subsequent habitat degradation]	4,924 miles of road 300 miles of Trail 821,664 acres (53%)	No data	No corridors specifically for big game retrieval

The development of the Proposed Action is the start of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The scoping period (45-day comment period) is for the public to provide information on resource issues and concerns with the proposed action. The agency will next develop alternative proposals, based on public input received. The proposed action, alternatives, and a full analysis of the environmental effects of each alternative comprise the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). During the preparation of the DEIS (usually about 8 to 12 months), the Forest Service will continue to welcome public comments. When the DEIS is completed, the public will have another 45-day “notice and comment” period. Based on the analysis and public input, the agency will make a decision which will be published as a record of decision. The Forest plans to have the record of decision completed in 2009.

Jiron added, “We are making a sincere effort to reach as many people as possible who have an interest in recreating and traveling in the national forest.” The public meeting schedule is as follows:

Community	Date	Time	Location
Mora-Cleveland area	Monday July 28, 2008	6 – 8:30 p.m.	CHET Fire Department, Hwy. 518, Cleveland, NM
Coyote	Tuesday July 29, 2008	6 – 8:30 p.m.	Coyote Elementary School, W. Hwy. 96, Coyote NM
Las Vegas	Wednesday July 30, 2008	6 – 8:30 p.m.	West Kennedy Hall, NMHU, University Ave., Las Vegas, NM
Jemez	Thursday July 31, 2008	6 – 8:30 p.m.	Valles Caldera Conference Room, 18161 Hwy. 4, Jemez Springs, NM
Rowe-Pecos area	Saturday Aug. 2, 2008	10 am. – 12:30 p.m.	Pecos Middle School Cafeteria, N. Hwy. 63, Pecos, NM
Peña Blanca	Tuesday Aug. 5, 2008	6 – 8:30 p.m.	Peña Blanca Community Center Gym, 778 Hwy. 22, Peña Blanca, NM
Glorieta, Eldorado, Cañoncito, Hondo	Wednesday Aug. 6, 2008	6 – 8:30 p.m.	Hondo Volunteer Fire Department, 645 Old Las Vegas Hwy., Santa Fe, NM
Cuba	Thursday Aug. 7, 2008	6 – 8:30 p.m.	Cuba Senior Center, 16A Cordova St., Cuba, NM
Santa Fe	Tuesday Aug. 12, 2008	6 – 8:30 p.m.	Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 107 W. Barcelona Road, Santa Fe, NM
Los Alamos	Thursday Aug. 14, 2008	6 – 8:30 p.m.	Fuller Lodge, 2132 Central Ave., Los Alamos, NM
Española	Monday Aug. 18, 2008	6 – 8:30 p.m.	Espanola Ranger Station, 1710 N. Riverside Drive, Española, NM
Rio Rancho	Tuesday Aug. 19, 2008	6 – 8:30 p.m.	Destiny Center, 4401 Northern Blvd. NE, Rio Rancho, NM
Albuquerque	Wednesday Aug. 20, 2008	6 – 8:30 p.m.	UNM Conference Center-Room B, 1634 University Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, NM

