

# Uncompahgre National Forest Travel Plan

## Record of Decision

U.S.D.A., Forest Service  
Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests  
Portions of Gunnison, Hinsdale, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray,  
San Juan and San Miguel Counties  
Colorado

Responsible Official: Robert L. Storch, Forest Supervisor

March, 2002

---

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination on all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|              |  |    |
|--------------|--|----|
| I.           | Introduction.....  | 3  |
| II.          | Decision and Reasons for the Decision.....   | 4  |
|              | Area-wide Decision and Rationale.....  | 7  |
|              | Route-specific Decision and Rationale.....   | 8  |
|              | Special seasonal or timing restrictions.....   | 9  |
|              | Winter Travel Decisions.....   | 9  |
|              | ROS (non)Decision.....   | 10 |
|              | Exceptions.....  | 10 |
|              | Specific Decisions and Rationale on Selected<br>Routes of Particular Public Interest .....                   | 10 |
| III.         | Required Mitigation and Monitoring.....  | 15 |
| IV.          | Public Involvement.....  | 16 |
| V.           | How Selected Key Issues Were Considered.....   | 17 |
| VI.          | Alternatives Considered .....  | 23 |
| VII.         | Findings Required by Other Laws.....   | 25 |
| VIII.        | Consistency with Agency Policy .....   | 26 |
| IX.          | Environmentally Preferred Alternative .....  | 27 |
| X.           | Site-Specific Implementation, Further Travel Management Planning.....  | 28 |
| XI.          | Administrative Review, Implementation, Contact Person.....   | 28 |
| Attachments: |  |    |
|              | Tables ROD-1 and ROD-2   |    |
|              | Decision Maps  |    |
|              | Winter Travel Mountain Division (sized 8 1/2 by 11)  |    |
|              | Winter Travel Plateau Division (sized 8 1/2 by 11)   |    |
|              | ROD Map 1 - Summer Travel - Uncompahgre Plateau (foldout 1/2 inch:1 mile)                                    |    |
|              | ROD Map 2 - Summer Travel - Mountain Division (foldout 1/2 inch:1 mile, printed<br>on the back of ROD Map 1) |    |

## I. Introduction

This is the second Record of Decision (ROD) issued by the Forest Service relating to the management of travel on the Uncompahgre National Forest. Following six years of work and analysis, the Forest Service issued its first decision in April of 2000. As a consequence of a successful appeal, that decision was vacated and additional analysis was undertaken. A Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Uncompahgre Travel (FEIS) was issued in June of 2001. Public comment was received and responded to and the decisions from April of 2000 reconsidered in light of all new information. Comments on the Supplement were focused on people's preferences regarding this decision and not on the analysis contained in the Supplement itself, hence the Draft Supplement has been filed as a Final, and will not be reprinted.

Those who read the April 2000 ROD will see much in this version that is familiar. Required disclosures and rationale remain unchanged for parts of the decision. As the 2000 decision was vacated and has no legal standing, it is important to repeat positions and policies for the record. There are, however, differences in the decision itself relating to specific routes allocation to type of use. These will be seen primarily in the Decision Map, but also in text articulating rationale for selected routes.

In recent years, the Uncompahgre National Forest (UNF) has seen an explosion of motorized use. The popularity of OHV's (off-highway vehicles), including "jeeps" (sport utility vehicles) and motorcycles, has been sustained, while the popularity of ATV's (all-terrain vehicles, also known as "four-wheelers") has mushroomed. Users of these smaller four- and six-wheeled ATV's have, through their use, gained access to areas heretofore inaccessible by full-sized four-wheeled-drive (4WD) vehicles.

The consequence of current open travel and the physical capability of these vehicles, coupled with their increasingly wide-spread use by hunters and recreationists, is that routes which have always been single-track hiking, or game/livestock, trails are being converted to ATV trails. New routes are being pioneered in places where none have ever existed before. This proliferation of access is changing the face of the National Forest.

During this same time period all forms of recreation use of the Forest have increased. Conflicts among users have developed. The recreation experience sought by some is incompatible with area-wide access by all. Increased travel and new access to remote areas is altering the recreation experience. It is also affecting wildlife, soils, water and vegetative resources. This use is, under the current travel direction for the Forest, essentially unmanaged on much of the UNF.

The Forest Service recognizes each category of use (from hiking, to horseback riding, to mountain biking, to motorcycling, to ATV riding, and four-wheel driving) as valid and legitimate uses of the National Forest. No one use should be accommodated at the exclusion of another. However, it has become apparent that these uses need to be managed and distributed proportionately on the landscape in accordance with factors such as: 1) minimizing the environmental damage to soils, water, wildlife, and vegetation, and 2) providing a range of opportunities for various types of recreation experience across the spectrum from primitive, non-motorized use through motorized/developed recreation use.

My Decision, documented in this Record of Decision, and the new travel management direction for the UNF that it represents, is our attempt to balance all interests, to consider all environmental factors, and to establish a reasonable plan for managing travel. As is documented here, in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, and the Supplement to the FEIS, we have conducted extensive public involvement and done comprehensive environmental analysis to support this Decision. While it is impossible to please all interests, this is our best effort to most reasonably accommodate all uses, consistent with our mandates under law, regulation, and policy for managing this National Forest.

The existing Travel Plan was developed in 1984, from direction in the 1983 Land and Resource Management Plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests (1983 Forest Plan). The existing Travel Plan consists of: an UNF Travel Map showing roads, trails and area travel regulations; the current Travel Availability Guide (TAG) listing route and area travel regulations not shown on the map; and signs located along Forest routes showing the recommended modes of travel.

The 1983 Forest Plan was replaced in 1991 by the Amended Land and Resource Management Plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests (hereinafter referred to as the Forest Plan). Both the 1983 Forest Plan and the current Forest Plan identified a need to refine travel management direction (1983 Forest Plan page II-74, Forest Plan page II-72), and this analysis is a result of that direction.

This Decision is concerned only with the travel on the Uncompahgre National Forest (UNF) and does not extend to other agency jurisdictions or to private land. Travel on the Grand Mesa National Forest and on the Gunnison National Forest were dealt with in two separate decisions, independent of this one.

|  |
|--|
| <b>II. Decision and Reasons for the Decision</b> |
|--|

Travel management decisions documented here address two levels: a) area-wide decisions, affecting large areas; and b) route-specific decisions, affecting either individual routes and/or routes which combine into transportation systems.

It is my decision to implement Alternative 3, the Preferred Alternative from the FEIS (essentially the same alternative selected in the April 2000 ROD) modified, however, in the matter of specific route designations. These modifications are the product of more specific review by all parties and by the Forest Service since the publication of the April 2000 Decision, and are well within the range of alternatives in the FEIS. These route specific designations, as well as area wide restrictions, are represented on the map attached to this ROD entitled "Uncompahgre National Forest Travel Plan Decision, March 2002". My Decision with regard to specific route designations is also portrayed in tabular form in attached Tables ROD-1 and ROD-2, which list the designated category of use for each specific route. In the event of any inconsistency in the record or in this Decision, it is first the map attached here, and second, the attached ROD tables (1, 2), and then the descriptions in the body of this ROD, and then the descriptions of Alternative 3 taken from the FEIS, Chapter 2, in that order of precedence, that constitute my Decision.

Decision Tables A and B, below, summarize the Decision, and are presented here as a matter of information.

| <b>Decision Table A. Comparison Of Alternatives,<br/>Area-Wide Options</b> |                     |                     |                                 |                     |                     |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Descriptor</b>  | <b>Alternatives</b> |                     |                                 |                     |                     |
|  | <b>1</b>            | <b>2</b>            | <b>3 (and the<br/>Decision)</b> | <b>4</b>            | <b>5</b>            |
| <b>Area-wide Travel Options (Summer - Fall)<br/>in acres and %</b>         |                     |                     |                                 |                     |                     |
| <b>OPEN<sup>1</sup></b>  |                     |                     |                                 |                     |                     |
| Plateau  | 550,819(95%)        | 0 (0%)              | 0 (0%)                          | 0 (0%)              | 0 (0%)              |
| Mountain   | 101,209(22%)        | 0 (0%)              | 0 (0%)                          | 0 (0%)              | 0 (0%)              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>652,028(63%)</b> | <b>0 (0%)</b>       | <b>0 (0%)</b>                   | <b>0 (0%)</b>       | <b>0 (0%)</b>       |
| <b>RESTRICTED<sup>2</sup></b>  |                     |                     |                                 |                     |                     |
| Plateau  | 0 ( 0%)             | 550,819(95%)        | 550,819(95%)                    | 550,819(95%)        | 550,819(95%)        |
| Mountain   | 224,997(49%)        | 326,206(71%)        | 326,206(71%)                    | 326,206(71%)        | 326,206(71%)        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>224,997(21%)</b> | <b>877,025(84%)</b> | <b>877,025(84%)</b>             | <b>877,025(84%)</b> | <b>877,025(84%)</b> |
| <b>CLOSED TO<br/>MOTORIZED/<br/>MECHANIZED<sup>3</sup></b>                 |                     |                     |                                 |                     |                     |
| Plateau  | 27,929 ( 5%)        | 27,929 ( 5%)        | 27,929 ( 5%)                    | 27,929 ( 5%)        | 27,929 ( 5%)        |
| Mountain   | 135,573(29%)        | 135,573(29%)        | 135,573(29%)                    | 135,573(29%)        | 135,573(29%)        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>163,502(16%)</b> | <b>163,502(16%)</b> | <b>163,502(16%)</b>             | <b>163,502(16%)</b> | <b>163,502(16%)</b> |
| <b>Area-wide Travel Options (Winter)<br/>in acres and %</b>                |                     |                     |                                 |                     |                     |
| <b>OPEN<sup>1</sup></b>  |                     |                     |                                 |                     |                     |
| Plateau  | 550,819(95%)        | 454,004(78%)        | 433,852(75%)                    | 433,852(75%)        | 258,318(45%)        |
| Mountain   | 292,029(64%)        | 220,802(48%)        | 204,291(44%)                    | 196,997(43%)        | 198,787(43%)        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>842,848(81%)</b> | <b>674,806(65%)</b> | <b>638,143(61%)</b>             | <b>630,849(61%)</b> | <b>457,105(44%)</b> |
| <b>RESTRICTED<sup>4</sup></b>  |                     |                     |                                 |                     |                     |
| Plateau  | 0( 0%)              | 96,815(17%)         | 116,967(20%)                    | 116,967(20%)        | 292,501(50%)        |
| Mountain   | 34,177( 7%)         | 105,404(23%)        | 121,915(27%)                    | 129,209(28%)        | 127,419(28%)        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>34,177( 3%)</b>  | <b>202,219(19%)</b> | <b>238,882(23%)</b>             | <b>246,176(23%)</b> | <b>419,920(40%)</b> |
| <b>CLOSED TO<br/>MOTORIZED/<br/>MECHANIZED<sup>3</sup></b>                 |                     |                     |                                 |                     |                     |
| Plateau  | 27,929 ( 5%)        | 27,929 ( 5%)        | 27,929 ( 5%)                    | 27,929 ( 5%)        | 27,929 ( 5%)        |
| Mountain   | 135,573(29%)        | 135,573(29%)        | 135,573(29%)                    | 135,573(29%)        | 135,573(29%)        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>163,502(16%)</b> | <b>163,502(16%)</b> | <b>163,502(16%)</b>             | <b>163,502(16%)</b> | <b>163,502(16%)</b> |

**1 OPEN** - All modes of travel are allowed both on and off routes yearlong.

**2 RESTRICTED** - Travel by motorized and mechanized vehicles during the spring/summer/fall seasons is only allowed on designated routes. Non-motorized travel is not restricted.

**3 CLOSED TO MOTORIZED/MECHANIZED** - Motorized and mechanized travel is not allowed. Foot and horse travel is allowed. (These areas are Congressionally designated Wilderness and Special Areas, Research Natural Areas, Dry Mesa Dinosaur Quarry.)

**4 RESTRICTED (Winter)** - Motorized travel is restricted to designated routes only in specific areas (i.e., big game winter range, cross-country ski areas). Non-motorized travel is not restricted (except in Alt. 4 in specific area).

## Decision Table B. Comparison Of Alternatives, Route-Specific Options (miles by route type)

| Route Type  | Base System 12 | Alternatives (Values reflect Base miles + additional routes) |            |            |            |            |            |
|---|----------------|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|   |                | 1  | 2          | Decision*  | 3          | 4          | 5          |
| <b>PASSENGER CAR ROADS <sup>1</sup></b>                               |                |  |            |            |            |            |            |
| Plateau   | 4              | 4  | 4          | 4          | 4          | 4          | 4          |
| Mountain  | 70             | 70 + 3   | 70 + 6     | 70 + 1     | 70         | 70 + 3     | 70 + 3     |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>74</b>      | <b>77</b>  | <b>80</b>  | <b>75</b>  | <b>74</b>  | <b>77</b>  | <b>77</b>  |
| <b>PASSENGER CAR ROADS (unlicensed vehicles allowed) <sup>2</sup></b> |                |  |            |            |            |            |            |
| Plateau   | 186            | 186  | 186        | 186        | 186        | 186        | 186        |
| Mountain  | 63             | 63 + 9   | 63 + 6     | 63 + 16    | 63 + 12    | 63 + 6     | 63 + 6     |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>249</b>     | <b>258</b>   | <b>255</b> | <b>265</b> | <b>261</b> | <b>255</b> | <b>255</b> |
| <b>HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES ROADS <sup>3</sup></b>                     |                |  |            |            |            |            |            |
| Plateau   | 373            | 373 + 218  | 373 + 38   | 364 + 32   | 373 + 25   | 373 + 13   | 373 + 3    |
| Mountain  | 133            | 133 + 54   | 133 + 2    | 127 + 7    | 133 + 3    | 133        | 133        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>506</b>     | <b>778</b>   | <b>546</b> | <b>530</b> | <b>534</b> | <b>519</b> | <b>509</b> |
| <b>4-WHEEL DRIVE ROADS <sup>4</sup></b>                               |                |  |            |            |            |            |            |
| Plateau   | 100            | 100 + 308  | 100 + 127  | 93 + 86    | 100 + 70   | 100 + 10   | 100 + 4    |
| Mountain  | 71             | 71 + 17  | 71 + 3     | 70 + 5     | 71 + 4     | 71         | 71         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>171</b>     | <b>496</b>   | <b>301</b> | <b>254</b> | <b>245</b> | <b>181</b> | <b>175</b> |
| <b>ATV TRAILS <sup>5</sup></b>  |                |  |            |            |            |            |            |
| Plateau   | 24             | 24 + 72  | 24 + 108   | 24 + 90    | 24 + 90    | 24 + 37    | 24 + 74    |
| Mountain  | 14             | 14 + 23  | 14 + 33    | 14 + 8     | 14 + 10    | 14 + 2     | 14 + 2     |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>38</b>      | <b>133</b>   | <b>179</b> | <b>136</b> | <b>138</b> | <b>77</b>  | <b>114</b> |
| <b>MOTORCYCLE TRAILS <sup>6</sup></b>                                 |                |  |            |            |            |            |            |
| Plateau   | 1              | 1 + 137  | 1 + 122    | 1 + 80     | 1 + 95     | 1 + 10     | 1 + 26     |
| Mountain  | 12             | 12 + 41  | 12 + 42    | 12 + 20    | 12 + 26    | 12 + 5     | 12 + 16    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>13</b>      | <b>191</b>   | <b>177</b> | <b>113</b> | <b>134</b> | <b>28</b>  | <b>55</b>  |
| <b>MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS <sup>7</sup></b>                              |                |  |            |            |            |            |            |
| Plateau   | 12             | 12 + 3   | 12 + 5     | 9 + 42     | 12 + 26    | 12 + 156   | 12 + 80    |
| Mountain  | 60             | 60 + 18  | 60 + 21    | 52 + 52    | 60 + 12    | 60 + 39    | 60 + 20    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>72</b>      | <b>93</b>  | <b>98</b>  | <b>155</b> | <b>110</b> | <b>267</b> | <b>172</b> |
| <b>HORSE TRAILS <sup>8</sup></b>                                      |                |  |            |            |            |            |            |
| Plateau   | 92             | 92 + 24  | 92 + 31    | 90 + 65    | 92 + 61    | 92 + 114   | 92 + 141   |
| Mountain  | 271            | 271 + 22   | 271 + 14   | 271 + 52   | 271 + 53   | 271 + 57   | 271 + 65   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>363</b>     | <b>409</b>   | <b>408</b> | <b>464</b> | <b>477</b> | <b>534</b> | <b>569</b> |
| <b>FOOT TRAILS <sup>9</sup></b>                                       |                |  |            |            |            |            |            |
| Plateau   | 2              | 2  | 2          | 2          | 2          | 2          | 2          |
| Mountain  | 9              | 9 + 1  | 9          | 9 + 13     | 9          | 9          | 9          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>11</b>      | <b>12</b>  | <b>11</b>  | <b>14</b>  | <b>11</b>  | <b>11</b>  | <b>11</b>  |
| <b>ADMINISTRATIVE USE <sup>10</sup></b>                               |                |  |            |            |            |            |            |
| Plateau   | 57             | 57 + 1   | 57 + 24    | 54 + 66    | 57 + 38    | 57 + 37    | 57 + 43    |
| Mountain  | 33             | 33 + 3   | 33 + 4     | 29 + 10    | 33 + 7     | 33 + 7     | 33 + 7     |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>90</b>      | <b>94</b>  | <b>118</b> | <b>159</b> | <b>135</b> | <b>134</b> | <b>140</b> |

## Decision Table B. Comparison Of Alternatives, Route-Specific Options (miles by route type)

| Route Type                      | Base System 12 | Alternatives (Values reflect Base miles + additional routes) |            |            |            |            |            |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                                 |                | 1  | 2          | Decision*  | 3          | 4          | 5          |
| <b>DECOMMISSIONED ROUTES 11</b> |                |  |            |            |            |            |            |
| Plateau                         | 83             | 83 + 6   | 83 + 318   | 123 + 414  | 83 + 367   | 83 + 395   | 83 + 401   |
| Mountain                        | 43             | 43   | 43 + 63    | 55 + 124   | 43 + 66    | 43 + 73    | 43 + 75    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                    | <b>126</b>     | <b>132</b>   | <b>507</b> | <b>716</b> | <b>559</b> | <b>594</b> | <b>602</b> |

**1 PASSENGER CAR ROADS** - All vehicles licensed for highway use are allowed. This includes passenger vehicles, high clearance vehicles, four-wheel drive vehicles, some motorcycles. Also allowed are: mountain bikes, horse/pack animals, foot travel. [NOTE: ATVs are not licensed vehicles and are prohibited.]

**2 PASSENGER CAR ROADS (unlicensed vehicles allowed)** - Allowed uses include passenger vehicles, high clearance vehicles, four-wheel drive vehicles, ATVs, motorcycles, mountain bikes, horse/pack animals, foot travel.

**3 HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLE ROADS** - Allowed uses include high clearance vehicles, four-wheel drive vehicles, ATVs, motorcycles, mountain bikes, horse/pack animals, foot travel.

**4 FOUR-WHEEL DRIVE ROADS** - Allowed uses include four-wheel drive vehicles, ATVs, motorcycles, mountain bikes, horse/pack animals, foot travel

**5 ATV TRAILS** - Allowed uses include ATVs, motorcycles, mountain bikes, horse/pack animals, foot travel. Contrary to definitions in the FEIS Appendix B, an ATV is now considered to be a trail vehicle of less than 50 inches in width. A more complete definition is found in Forest Service Handbook 2309.18.

**6 MOTORCYCLE TRAILS** - Allowed uses include motorcycles, mountain bikes, horse/pack animals, foot travel.

**7 MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS** - Allowed uses include mountain bikes, horse/pack animals, foot travel.

**8 HORSE TRAILS** - Allowed uses include horse/pack animals, foot travel.

**9 FOOT TRAILS** - Only foot travel allowed.

**10 ADMINISTRATIVE USE** - Only travel authorized by permit allowed.

**11 DECOMMISSIONED ROUTES** - No travel allowed.

**12 BASE SYSTEM** - Roads and trails where no changes in current use or design will occur under all alternatives. This includes the major roads on the UNF, trails within designated Wilderness and Special Areas, and select trails where the existing recreation use will be continued. Small changes in the base occurred between the Final EIS and this Decision. These were the product of additional detailed review, and corrections to reflect existing situations.

A part of the Preferred Alternative (3) in the FEIS entailed amending the Forest Plan to adjust one small portion of the 3A Management Area in the area of Blaine Basin, to accommodate motorcycle use along the Dallas Trail (#200). As the Dallas Trail is designated for non-motorized use only in this Decision, this amendment is no longer necessary.

### RATIONALE FOR ELEMENTS OF THIS DECISION:

**1) Area-wide Decision for Spring/Summer/Fall:** It is my decision to restrict motorized and mechanized travel to designated routes during the spring/summer/fall season of the year on the entire UNF. This includes prohibition of ATV off-route travel for retrieval of game.

Rationale: As is made clear in my introduction to this ROD, I believe that unmanaged use of this National Forest by the popular and increasing numbers of motorized recreation vehicles is resulting in unacceptable impacts. The health of watersheds is being threatened. Wildlife habitat is being impacted. Recreation experiences are being affected. There is a need to manage this use to obtain a purposefully chosen desired condition on this National Forest, rather than to accept the default condition that results under the current open travel. As the

agency official responsible for managing this National Forest, I feel these actions are warranted.

The restriction of motorized and mechanized travel to designated routes, of all aspects of this decision, most meets the purpose and need as I have described it above and as articulated in Chapter 1 of the FEIS. Of the points of the Purpose and Need in Chapter 1, restricting use in this manner most particularly responds to these points:

- There is a need to reduce adverse resource impacts caused by unrestricted vehicular use in order to restore the health of ecosystems and watersheds.
- There is a need to specify which routes (roads and trails) may be used by off-highway vehicles.
- There is a need for coordination between various uses and the Forest Service in developing and maintaining recreational transportation systems to provide a spectrum of premier settings and experiences for all types of recreation uses.

The overwhelming majority of participants in our public involvement (both early meetings, and in scoping and comment on the FEIS) were convinced of the need to restrict travel to designated routes. Representatives of all sides of the motorized vs. non-motorized debate came to agreement that unrestricted use is causing resource damage and is unacceptably altering the National Forest. They, and I, concluded that the only appropriate answer is to restrict use to designated routes, and then to designate a proper mix of routes to respond to the desires of people who travel on the Forest. Some may see this as closure of the Forest, but I do not. It does represent restriction of summer motorized use to selected routes. No area of the Forest is closed to foot travel, either on routes or off, with the single exception of a portion of the developed ski area at Telluride during facilities construction. Decision Tables ROD-1 and ROD-2 summarize the availability of the Forest for types of travel. The second half of this decision addresses route-specific decisions.

**2) Route-specific Decision(s):** The scope of this Decision does not include any substantial (more than maintenance activities) ground-disturbing actions. Additional site-specific environmental analyses will be done prior to implementing either road decommissioning or new route reconstruction where those activities involve ground disturbance beyond the measures contemplated in the FEIS.

It is my Decision to restrict certain uses on specified routes, thereby designating them for those uses portrayed in the Map and Tables attached to this ROD.

**Rationale:** Routes considered in this decision process were carefully identified. These were first displayed on 1:24,000-scale maps, reviewed and discussed in public meetings, area by area. These were then mapped using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology and reviewed and checked by District personnel. Then, with the publication of the FEIS, these routes were reviewed and commented on by the public in general. Since the April 2000 Decision, we have reviewed every route once again, and considered all information from the FEIS, information presented to us during appeals, information presented in the Supplement to the FEIS, and information coming from comment following release of the Supplement.



My Decision is responsive to the points of the Purpose and Need in Chapter 1 of the FEIS, and to all of the information listed just above. The new plan for travel on the UNF will provide a mix of route and area opportunities to accommodate all types of users. I have designated systems of routes to accommodate motorized users' desire for loops and for routes long enough, and interesting enough, to meet this demand. This decision provides a mix of challenge levels for motorized users.

I believe that this plan for travel provides reasonable access to the Forest by various means. Many areas of this Forest are remote and not accessible by motorized means. Until recently, this has often been dictated by terrain and by our roads and trails investment choices. Now, and through this decision, keeping these areas remote and non-motorized is a well-reasoned and balanced choice.

Some of these route designations were quite difficult to decide, as user preferences were strongly expressed to us by both motorized and non-motorized users; each side wanted particular routes designated for their use. Using both the FEIS and the public comments gathered through the process for each of these routes, I have weighed the advantages and disadvantages, the environmental effects and the opportunities offered or lost, and assessed each route in terms of the larger picture. This mix of route designations represents what I believe to be the most appropriate one.

**3) Special seasonal or timing restrictions:** It is my decision to impose the seasonal or timing restrictions, which restrict motorized travel on selected routes outside of the July 1 through Labor Day weekend period. These routes are: Buck Trail (FDT 149), Clear Creek (FDT 120), Snowshoe (FDT 607), portions of Long Canyon Trail (FDT 621), Blaine Trail (FDT 202), Paradox Trail (FDT126), Red Canyon (FDT 118), Beaver Dam (FDT 627), and Nate Creek (FDT 221).

**Rationale:** Generally, I have applied these restrictions in very limited situations to ensure the protection of wildlife during particularly sensitive times, such as during elk calving and bird nesting. Restrictions in fall on these selected routes will provide for big game security, and will result in big game animals remaining on the National Forest longer. These restrictions are consistent with Forest Plan direction for 4B Management prescription areas as well as Travel System management direction (Forest Plan pages III-76 through III-78).

**4) Winter Travel Decisions:** In addition to the decisions above, which relate to the entire UNF, it is also my Decision to restrict motorized use on selected areas in winter. This focuses on over-the-snow travel by motorized means. My Decision is to restrict travel to designated routes through the areas indicated in the Winter Decision Map attached to this ROD. I have stopped short of making area-wide, or route-specific decisions specifying type/category of use for the remainder of the Forest. This level of decision is, and has been from the beginning (see Decisions to be Made, Chapter 1 of the FEIS), outside the scope of this decision process.

**Rationale:** It is my intention to protect big game winter range against the impacts of motorized use, and at the same time to facilitate better access of snowmobilers to higher elevations and better snow conditions. These restrictions are consistent with Forest Plan direction for Big Game winter range (Management Prescriptions 5A and 5B). Also, by designating routes for motorized use around Ironton Park, Priest Lake and Dave Wood cross-country skiing areas

user conflicts will be reduced and recreation experiences enhanced. Also, I am required to protect habitat for endangered species such as Canada lynx.

**5) Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (non) Decision:** In discussions during public meetings and during the early analysis phase of this process it was hoped that we would be able to make decisions assigning each area of the Forest to one specific Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class as an objective condition for management. Midway through the analysis it became apparent to me that the ramifications of such a decision extended well beyond travel management. Restriction on use and management necessary to attain certain ROS Class categories, such as Semi-Primitive Motorized or Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized would essentially impose new Forest Plan level direction, and would be significant in terms of the effects on the Forest Plan. The analysis and decision process that would be required to undertake such a change goes far beyond the scope of this Travel Planning process, and hence I deferred making the ROS decision here. That is better addressed in the upcoming Forest Plan Revision.

(It should be noted that portrayal of ROS in both the DEIS and in the FEIS are representations of possible effects of decisions being made here, and are not decisions establishing direction. This is explained in those documents. )

**6) Exceptions:** There are certain exceptions allowed to the restrictions imposed by this decision. Motorized administrative access is allowed in all areas outside Wilderness. Administrative access may be allowed in Wilderness under special circumstances, as determined on a case-by-case basis. This access will be by means of equipment suited to the routes in the area accessed, i.e., if all routes in an area are single-track, access will be by motorcycle, if ATV routes exist, access will be by ATV.

This Decision does not alter fire suppression or emergency access. Existing policies relating to these are still in effect. Emergency access for fire suppression or search and rescue activities are exempt from use restrictions except in Wilderness or Congressionally-designated special areas.

Special events such as are authorized by special use permit on a one time basis, or over a very limited and specific period of time may be considered outside of this decision. An examples might include a bicycle race from one point to another, across the Forest.

## **7) Specific Decisions and Rationale on Selected Routes of Particular Public Interest:**

Spring Creek Trail (#116) reroute around private property - It is my decision to implement the proposal displayed in Alternative 3 of the FEIS. This entails rerouting the trail to the north of private land in Section 35 T.47 N, R. 11 W. This reroute has essentially already been done by existing use. The new trail is on National Forest and is located as far from the private property line as topography permits. One proposal was to require travelers to use an alternative route which would entail travel of several additional miles to reach the same destination. This would, in my view, be unreasonable and unenforceable, and would amount to reserving the National Forest adjoining private property for private use. The rerouted trail will keep public recreation use off of private land and will still provide a trail connection on the National Forest.

Nate Creek Trail (#221) - This route was also one which was the focus of considerable comment on the part of the public. Motorized users accustomed to riding this trail strongly expressed the desire for the use of this route as a motorcycle route over all others being considered. The Colorado 500 has repeatedly requested improvement of this route to single track trail standards and to be allowed to have some of its riders use this route as part of the Colorado 500 official ride at the end of the summer. As I respond to clear public preference on the Dallas Trail (below), I am inclined to respond to the clear expression of preference in motorized users' request for the use of Nate Creek trail. This is a request that can be met in an environmentally sound manner.

My Decision is to manage this trail as a motorcycle route with a seasonal restriction. This use may occur during the July 4 weekend through Labor day. All other uses below this on the user hierarchy (foot, horse, mountain bike) may occur at all times of the year, as long as resource and snow conditions allow.

I am aware that this trail lies within an elk calving area and elk summer/fall concentration area and that the public land affected is a fairly narrow band of habitat situated between the lower elevation (with no tree cover) private land and the cliff band that is Cimarron Ridge. The Colorado Division of Wildlife and members of the public have expressed concern over the movement of elk off the Forest onto private land in response to human disturbance. Our environmental analysis reveals the same thing. Habitat effectiveness will be affected.

However, I do believe that there is hiding cover and habitat above the trail to provide for security for elk during use periods. Sometimes elk disturbed by human presence move down and off the Forest in this area, sometimes they move up and out of sight further onto the Forest. Most motorcycle use will be occurring during the day after elk have already moved up to cooler stands of spruce and fir above the Nate Creek trail. Overall use during the 60-day window allowed will be concentrated on a very few weekends and is likely to be light even at that. This route is currently open to motorcycle use and in recent (mid-summer) visits to this trail use is observed to be very light.

If the Colorado 500 does obtain authorization to use this route, that impact will be concentrated into one weekend a year, will occur at the time when elk are least sensitive and will not have a lasting effect. Any additional trail construction or reconstruction will also have to undergo a NEPA process with environmental analysis and public comment.

Long Canyon Trail System - Individual trails of concern in this system include Long Canyon Trail #621, Upper Bench Trail #625, and Beaver Dam Trail #627. The preferred alternative in the FEIS proposed the entire Long Canyon Trail as motorcycle, and Upper Bench Trail for mountain bike use. The Upper Bench Trail is within the 1/2-mile influence zone of the Divide Road (FDR 402), while the Long Canyon Trail is lower on the slope, bisecting a large area of big game habitat. Upper Bench Trail offers an easier ride. Long Canyon Trail is for expert riders.

My Decision differs from the Preferred Alternative in the FEIS. My decision is to allow motorcycle use to continue on Upper Bench Trail (approximately 7.7 miles), but to allow horse and foot use only on the portion of Long Canyon Trail between Campbell Point Road (FDR 411) and its intersection with the Upper Bench trail (approximately 6.4 miles). To reduce confusion, this section of the Long Canyon Trail will be renamed and renumbered.

This will keep the motorized use close to the Divide Road and remove it from the wildlife habitat lower on the slope. The easier Upper Bench Trail will provide single-track motorized opportunities to more users than would be available on Long Canyon Trail.

The northern portion of Long Canyon Trail and Beaver Dam Trail will remain open to motorcycle use, to provide the challenge that expert riders desire. These trails have been system trails since the 1940's. They are single track trails. There have never been restrictions to motorized use on Long Canyon or Beaver Dam trails, and motorized use has been occurring on them since the 1980's.

Because the upper end of Long Canyon Trail and Beaver Dam Trail lie within an elk calving area, and because this is an important security area during the fall hunting season, a seasonal restriction will be implemented for the portion of the motorcycle system north of Campbell Point Road (FDR 411). Motorcycle use will be allowed from July 1 to Labor Day. Only non-motorized uses will be allowed outside this time period.

Unawweep Trail (#601) - This route has been one of the most contentious of all routes addressed by this Travel Plan. It has been the subject of much debate and deliberation.

The preferred alternative in the FEIS designated this route open to motorcycles, but not to ATV's . That was my decision in the April 2000 ROD. Many commenters recommended this route be designated for non-motorized uses because of its location on a topographic bench in important wildlife habitat. This area is currently inventoried as semi-primitive non-motorized, but is not shown in the Forest Plan as a Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Management Area. The management area emphasis for this area is Wildlife Habitat. This route is within an area inventoried as roadless in the second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II) .

This route was also the focus of many comments from motorcycle interests. It provides a challenging route offering remoteness and outstanding scenery, in the kind of loop they value. As with the Long Canyon Trail, the Unawweep Trail has been a system trail for many decades (since the 1930's). It is a single-track trail. There are not currently, nor have there ever been, any restrictions to motorized use on this trail, and motorcycle use has been occurring here in limited numbers since the early 1980's.

After further deliberation I have decided to depart from my April 2000 decision. It is my decision to restrict use to horse and foot travel only (see FEIS, Chapter 1 Hierarchy of uses) on the segment of route #601 west of Road #660L. It is my decision to allow motorcycle use on other parts of this trail system analyzed in the FEIS (page 3-54 and 3-55). See the ROD Map for specific detail. My rationale is as follows:

I believe the importance of the area along Route #601 for wildlife habitat deserves greatest weight in this decision. This area provides elk security and hiding cover, and is also used heavily by other species preferring undisturbed habitats, such as black bear. The Forest Plan emphasis for the area is wildlife which calls upon me to choose for wildlife over other resource values when given the opportunity.

The area's semiprimitive non-motorized character is relatively rare on the Uncompahgre Plateau, and I would like, for now, to preserve this area against the "creep" of ROS discussed in the FEIS. While I do not believe that single track motorcycle use necessarily alters the character of the area in terms of future wilderness qualification, none-the-less, motors in an area are inconsistent with the primitive experience. By designating this area for motorcycle use, and showing it on maps, it is likely that we would attract more use to it.

Although this trail has never had travel restrictions and motorcycle use has occurred here on a limited basis, use would only increase with designation and advertisement as a motorcycle trail. Identifying this route for motorcycle use on the new Travel Map would also attract use by a variety of users including families with children, and with varying levels of skills. The public's safety is of utmost concern to me. I am very concerned that this route is simply unsafe for use by most riders. Particularly, there is a portion of the trail along the rim of Unaweep Canyon with steep drop-offs and no opportunity for recovery, too dangerous to encourage use as a motorcycle trail.

The Unaweep Trail along the canyon rim did provide a loop opportunity for those few skilled riders who used it. However a loop ride will still be available in the immediate area by having riders use Big creek Road #403, the section of #601 to #660 to #603 to the top of the Snowshoe Trail #607. See the Travel Map attached to see these routes and the loop they offer. This preserves for motorized users the use of a portion of the original Unaweep ride they have expressed interest in being allowed to use. By allowing motorcycle use on the balance of the trail as indicated on the ROD Map the opportunity for this use in the North end of the Plateau is offered. Opportunity for this is limited in the area and I do wish to accommodate that end of the use spectrum as well.

Dallas Trail (#200) - What has come to be known as the Dallas trail actually is a system of connected routes and trails that allow for travel from Ouray all the way across the front of the Mt. Sneffles range to and beyond Box Factory Park. Travel across this "system" utilizes the Dallas (#200), Wilson Creek (#202) and Blaine (#203) Trails. Trails 202 and 203 are mostly road-like, with the exception of the saddle which connects the two trails.

The Dallas trail has been the very most contentious of all routes to be decided here. There has been intense interest from local non-motorized recreation interests. People living in the area have strenuously objected to the designation of this route as a motorized route allowing motorcycle use for 60 days a year. Arguments were advanced that the area is somehow unusually fragile and unusually scenic, compared at times with the Grand Teton range in Wyoming. I have consulted with resource specialists across a range of disciplines, and I simply do not find that this trail either is more fragile than others we manage for motorized use, or that it is unusual or special in terms of the recreation or scenic opportunity it offers. In the area of Ouray there are numerous trails that offer higher quality recreation experience than Dallas trail.

None-the-less, it is apparent that the clear preference of most who use this trail is that it be non-motorized. At the same time we did not hear strong desire from the motorized community for continued use of this trail. Their interest was better satisfied by the designation of Nate Creek Trail for their seasonal use (see discussion above under "Nate Creek Trail").

Hence it is my Decision to designate the Dallas Trail as a mountain bike trail (foot and horse use also allowed) with the exception of the segments that are now being used for full-sized 4WD traffic from the Forest boundary to the Burn Hut, and ATV traffic from Blue Lakes trailhead in the Blaine Basin area. See the ROD Map for specific designations. We believe this responds to clearly expressed local preference.

Aspen Trail (#125) - The preferred alternative in the FEIS would have designated this trail as a mountain bike trail, with no motorized use allowed. This trail is ideal for mountain biking, in terms of length and setting. However, my decision is to make this trail open to single-track motorcycles. We received many comments about this route providing an easy motorcycle opportunity for beginners, and I want to be responsive to these comments. Based on discussions with bicycle and motorcycle users, I have decided to post this trail as a slow-speed motorcycle trail, to allow the continued use by both groups.

Trout Lake (Trestle Road #626) - It is my Decision that this route be managed as open for all uses, including full-sized passenger vehicles. This is an important route for many of the area residents. It is a road, and its historic use is as a road. The physical impasse at the closed bridge over Sheep Creek has been remedied by San Miguel County through the maintenance/replacement of the bridge with a culvert. To reserve this route for non-motorized use would not make full use of this facility as it was constructed, and would further interrupt historically established patterns of travel. To reserve this route for motorcycle use would not be responsive to a local demand. There is a large number of high quality, non-motorized trails in the area available for both hiking and bicycling use. This route is more important as part of a passenger-vehicle transportation system than it would be as a recreation trail. I am aware that this is a segment of the Galloping Goose Trail, a mountain bike loop system. Mountain bikers will be asked to share this segment of this route with full-sized vehicles. Signs will be posted along the road to warn of mountain bike traffic.

Yankee Boy Basin (#853.1B) - There is essentially no change in travel management in Yankee Boy Basin. Ouray County has installed a gate to seasonally manage access. The purpose of the gate is to keep full-sized vehicles off the routes when they are wet during/following spring snowmelt. The preferred alternative in the FEIS had proposed to only allow ATV's beyond this gate. As a result of public comment and consideration of management options, I believe that a better location for this gate is 1/4 mile further up the road, and that restriction of full sized vehicles is not necessary. The gate will be opened when the entire road is dry and damage will not occur from motorized use. District personnel will determine when the gate will be opened.

Angel Creek Road (#853.1A) - The preferred alternative in the FEIS proposed to decommission this road due to erosion concerns. Since the FEIS was written, the Forest Service has been working with the County to develop a dispersed camping program in the Canyon Creek area. This road accesses several dispersed campsites. My decision is to

change the preferred alternative to keep this 4WD road open to access these campsites, and to invest in physical mitigation to correct erosion concerns.

Craig Point ATV System - This system is modified to avoid areas where no public right-of-way exists across private land.

Parallel Trail - A trail parallel to the Divide Road has been discussed for many years. The purpose would be to get recreational users (ATV's, motorcycles, mountain bikers, horses, hikers) off the Divide Road, thereby eliminating the safety concerns associated with mixing traffic on this main Forest Development Road. The intention is to use as many existing routes as possible, and only construct connections where needed. I believe this is a good idea. In the FEIS, we discuss the effects of this ATV trail within a 1/2-mile corridor along the Divide Road from Columbine Pass south to the Dave Wood Road, tying in with the existing section of Parallel Trail (WT 2) near the head of Roubideau Canyon. A section of Parallel Trail will also be located within a 1/2-mile corridor along the Divide Road between Love Mesa Road (FDR 500) and the Dominguez Road (FDR 408) to pull Tabeguache Trail traffic off the Divide Road. An additional section of parallel trail is proposed between the Dry Creek Trail (#114) and Spring Creek Trail (#116). With this Decision I am choosing to establish these segments of the Parallel Trail, subject to the site-specific environmental analysis that is required to actually construct them.

Failes Creek Trail (#230) - I am affirming the preferred alternative in the FEIS to designate this route as non-motorized, with use restricted to horse and foot travel. Portions of this route are within a riparian area. This also located in a large summer concentration area/fall security area for elk. Other segments have steep switchbacks. It is also in an area which is a fairly large consolidated area that is Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized in character.

This represents a change from the existing situation. Currently this trail is designated open for motorized travel. I am aware that there will be a loss of a loop opportunity for motorcycle and ATV users by eliminating motorized use on this trail.

Alpine Trail (#225) - I am affirming the preferred alternative in the FEIS to maintain the entire length of this trail for motorcycle travel. Currently ATV travel has been occurring on the portion north of the Alpine Guard Station, and in Big Park resulting in damage to riparian areas and meadows. Switchbacks along the trail currently prevent ATV use of this route in its entirety.

Divide Forks ATV Complex - After further field review, I have made changes to the preferred alternative. Little Bear Lake (#660L) is currently a 4WD road and should continue as a road. Cabin Trail (#606T) is currently a 4WD road and should continue as a road. ATV opportunities will continue to be available on these routes.

|  |
|--|
| <b>III. Required Mitigation and Monitoring</b> |
|--|

Mitigation measures I am requiring, in part, are the timing and seasonal restrictions listed under "3) Special seasonal or timing restrictions" above. These are designed to protect soil, water, and wildlife resources against impacts during periods when they are most vulnerable. Some soils which can bear relatively high traffic when dry are vulnerable to rutting and erosion when wet. Wet routes lead to the development of parallel routes created by users going

around mud or water. In applying seasonal restrictions in selected areas for wildlife, it is my intention to protect calving elk, and deer and elk using winter range, against stress during the times of the year when stress caused by motorized access can affect survival. These mitigation measures also provide hunting season security for animals to keep them on the Forest longer, reduce recreation-user conflicts, limit use levels to keep routes primitive, help prevent the spread of noxious weeds, and may correct erosion concerns.

In addition, selected specific mitigation measures presented in the Chapter 3 of the FEIS are to be implemented. Many of these are built into my Decision, while others are additional requirements. I have considered all that were examined in that document and make a part of my Decision the requirement to implement the following measures (references here tie to mitigation tables in Chapter 3 of the FEIS:

Soils 1 through 5; Water 1 through 10; Air 1 and Air 2; Rec 1, 3 through 6, and 8; WL 1 through 11; Veg 1 through 6.

As part of the annual Forest Plan monitoring, the effectiveness of this new Travel Plan in meeting the stated purpose and need will be monitored and reported to the public. The monitoring section of the FEIS presents a plan for monitoring to be implemented.

#### **IV. Public Involvement**

The UNF travel planning effort began in 1994. We decided to use a new public involvement process called Open Decision-making in Communities of Interests, which allowed anyone who wanted to be involved an opportunity to participate.

An initial interagency scoping meeting was held February 3, 1994, to bring resource managers together from all the different units involved: Uncompahgre NF Ranger Districts (Grand Junction, Ouray, Norwood and Cebolla), San Juan NF Ranger Districts (Mancos, Dolores, Columbine), Grand Junction BLM District (Grand Junction Resource Area), and Montrose BLM District (Uncompahgre, Gunnison and San Juan Resource Areas). Managers identified resource and management concerns.

Invitation letters were sent out to 977 parties, including elected officials (Federal, State, County, City), State agencies, timber companies, livestock permittees, outfitters and guides, recreational user groups, environmental organizations, private landowners, and hundreds of individuals who had expressed past interest in Forest management. News releases were sent to radio, television and newspaper media in all communities surrounding the UNF to reach as many people as possible. The initial public meeting was held April 21, 1994, in Montrose, Colorado; 122 people attended.

Between April 1994 and June 1996, 38 public meetings were held. All meetings were advertised through news releases, and were open to anyone wishing to attend. Forest Service and BLM personnel facilitated the meetings and provided information. Discussions included defining common goals for the travel plan, establishing ground rules for meetings, identifying issues, gaining background information on resource management (i.e. wildlife, recreation opportunity spectrum, existing resource conditions), listing criteria for travel management decisions, and suggesting alternative strategies to resolve issues. Meetings were recorded in



minutes and video tapes. Meeting attendance varied with some people coming regularly, and others just coming for discussions on specific areas. Throughout this process, written comments were also accepted, and these comments were shared at the meetings.

At the last meeting held June 18, 1996, the interdisciplinary team (ID Team) described the decisions expected to be made in the Travel Plan, and the criteria that would be used to reach these decisions. They also summarized the alternatives that were developing from the information gathered through the public involvement. The ID Team incorporated all information gathered through these public meetings into the analysis process.

At one point it was thought that an Environmental Assessment would suffice to document the environmental analysis to support this Travel Management Decision. However, it was subsequently concluded, after considerable environmental analysis and deliberation, that the proposed action is a major federal action which could significantly affect the quality of the human environment, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is the appropriate document.

For the purposes of NEPA, the series of public meetings was considered early scoping. A Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS was filed in the Federal Register on May 8, 1997 (Vol 62, No. 89, pg. 25162). Responses to scoping were further examined to identify issues to be addressed in the environmental analysis to support this decision. Following this scoping the ID Team proceeded to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) documenting analysis of alternatives in terms of the significant environmental issues identified.

The DEIS was released for public comment on September 18, 1998. The comment period set at first for 75 days, was extended 60 days in response to requests from the public. Notice of Availability appeared in the Federal Register September 18, 1998 (Vol 63, No. 181 pg. 49911). A public meeting was held September 30, 1998, in Montrose to present aspects of the DEIS and to answer questions. Approximately 80 people attended this meeting.

As many as 850 comments were received. These comments were catalogued and organized into subject areas consistent with content analysis techniques and subsequently reviewed by both the ID Team and myself. Each comment was reviewed, and where appropriate, responded to in the FEIS by respective experts on the ID Team (see Appendix N of the FEIS).

I published a Record of Decision in April of 2000. That decision was challenged in an appeal and subsequently reversed by the Regional Forester. We then conducted additional analysis in response to the appeal decision and released a Supplement to the FEIS in June of 2001. An initial 45 day comment period was extended to 60 days. Informal meetings were held with interested publics. Comments received were reviewed and responses to them prepared. It is my opinion that the Forest Service has been diligent in attempting to involve people of every interest in this decision process. We have spent considerable time and tax dollars with the specific intention of seeking the best balance of use on this National Forest.

## **V. How Selected Key Issues Were Considered**

**Unrestricted travel versus restriction of motorized/mechanized travel to designated routes:** One of the main reasons for revising the Uncompahgre National Forest Travel Plan

was to reduce the adverse resource impacts caused by unrestricted off-route vehicle travel. This was an issue with the public and forest managers alike. One product of the early public meetings was almost uniform agreement that vehicle travel should occur on roads and trails. Through this scoping the proposed action and the decisions to be made were refined so that restricting motorized/mechanized travel to designated routes was common to all the action alternatives considered in this analysis.

**The conflict between motorized use and non-motorized use/gradual loss of semi-primitive ROS:** Throughout this process the issue of the conflict between motorized and nonmotorized use (or values served by no use) has been thematic and deserves to be addressed here. I have made clear at other locations in this ROD and in the FEIS that the Forest Service acknowledges as appropriate ALL uses being considered in this Decision (see hierarchy of uses in Chapter 1 of the FEIS). Each category of use has valid basis to wish to be allowed access to portions of the UNF. However, the recent increases in recreation in general, and in particular the increases in the use of motorized recreational vehicles on the National Forest, are threatening the sustainability of the very natural resources and recreational values that users appreciate and that I am charged to protect.

Hence I am faced with the difficult matter of being responsive to a range of competing interests.

It is my belief that, as it is reasonable for motorized users to expect to find challenging and diverse systems of travel routes available for their enjoyment, it is equally reasonable for non-motorized recreationists to desire settings, outside of Wilderness, which offer absence of motors and a reduced chance of encounters with others. The solution to these competing and conflicting demands for the use of National Forest is the reasonable segregation of uses according to landscape capability. It is our hope that all users will find opportunity to pursue their favorite type of recreation on the UNF, and that natural resource values will be protected, as the result of this Decision.

**Restrictions targeted at motorized only:** A number of commenters felt, at times quite strongly, that the analysis (and hence, this Decision) is unfairly biased against motorized use of the National Forest. I do not believe this is accurate. As I said in the introduction to this ROD, motorized use of the National Forest for recreation is a legitimate and valid use and I welcome it. However, as has been almost unanimously agreed upon by participants in this process, and as has been evidenced by the environmental analysis documented in the FEIS, unmanaged motorized use is causing significant harm to the environment and to the very character of our National Forests. This use must be managed. My commitment is to manage this use through this decision and its implementation in a way that fairly distributes opportunities for all groups seeking use of the National Forest. The Decision also provides for the sustained health of ecosystems. Decision Table 2 compares the miles of routes available in each use category.

Motorized interests justifiably feel as though they have the most to lose from this Decision, as they are being denied the unlimited access they have had up until now. In meeting my responsibility to all users and to the natural resources, I have weighed the loss of this freedom against the benefit to be gained from imposing these restrictions and I conclude that this Decision, and the restrictions it imposes are necessary and fair.

**Effect of the Decision on local economies:** Discussions and analysis reported in the FEIS relating to the impact of this Decision on local economies suggest that there may be an impact on some jobs and local income, or there may not. We received comments from motorized users claiming that restriction of motorized use would cause loss of recreation, and consequent loss of income, locally. We received comments from non-motorized users claiming that the removal of motor vehicles from areas of the Forest would attract non-motorized recreation use, and therefore produce a positive economic benefit. It is difficult, at best, to determine the correct answer, in this regard. We have acknowledged this in the FEIS and in responses to comments. We have displayed and considered the potential for job and income loss.

These effects, whether they be positive or negative, are small. However, the benefit to the natural resources we are managing, and to the long-term recreation resource we are attempting to provide on the Forest, far overshadow any of these economic effects. In making this decision, I am exercising the authority vested in me to manage these lands for the benefit of the public, while being made aware of potential secondary social and economic effects.

**Wildlife effects of motorized access/Meeting Forest Plan Standards for Habitat Capability and Habitat Effectiveness:**

Failure to sufficiently demonstrate compliance with Forest Plan standards for wildlife was the basis for the appeal and reversal of the April 2000 Decision.

Since that time we have come to a much clearer understanding of the standards applicable to travel management and to this decision. The Preface of the Supplement to the FEIS for the Uncompahgre Travel Plan represents the current view of the Forest Service in this matter. We believe that this decision is consistent with the requirements of the Forest Plan in that levels of habitat effectiveness is the applicable standard, and are stated in the Forest Plan as objectives to striven for, but which may be weighed and balanced against other management objectives. Detailed analysis in the Supplement to the FEIS allowed us to consider the habitat effectiveness results of alternatives in terms of objectives Forest wide and for management areas.

We believe this puts the results of HABCAP (the model used to calculate Habitat Effectiveness) in proper perspective. The intended use of HABCAP is to provide quantitative information for the comparison of alternatives in terms of habitat effectiveness and habitat capability. It has been useful in understanding the differences among alternatives. While Habitat Effectiveness for elk has been a significant factor in my decision process, it is not the ultimate or only determining factor as it would be had we been forced to adopt the harsher language of Plan standards applying to Habitat Capability. The reader is referred to the Supplement for more detailed discussion of the differences between Habitat Effectiveness and Habitat Capability and our rationale for determining which applied here.

In terms of real effects to wildlife, this Decision will significantly improve habitat conditions in terms of both the physical environment (prevention of damage to habitat), and disturbance factors (motorized access). This clearly results in moving habitat effectiveness for elk, and habitat quality for all species of wildlife, in a positive direction. Indeed, protection of wildlife habitat from the effects of unmanaged motorized access has been a driving factor in the need for this decision.

**Impact of motorized travel during hunting season:** A secondary issue that relates to habitat capability, and to understanding of the existing situation, is the difference in motorized use during hunting season and the rest of the summer recreation season. I do recognize the increased impact of motorized use during the hunting seasons. The proliferation of routes is attributable in large part to hunter use. However, beyond the seasonal restrictions on those few routes listed under mitigations above, I can find no reasonable basis to restrict hunters during their season of use only. It seems to me most reasonable and most fair to restrict all motorized use to designated routes in all seasons, and conversely to not impose special restrictions during the hunting season, beyond the seasonal restrictions addressed on page 9.

**Right of access:** Beyond the desire of many to perpetuate unlimited access to all areas as almost a right, there has been concern over whether this Decision would affect either private land access or permitted access (such as to reservoirs, grazing allotments, etc.).

Access granted under a private or forest road easement or other permitted authority is not affected by this decision. Access granted to special use permit holders is affected only if they need motorized access into areas that are restricted by this Decision.

Existing special use permit holders are required to obtain additional access authorizations or permits for intermittent access and work that requires a different mode of transportation than is allowed for the general public on the travel route. This also includes off route access.

If permanent or ongoing access is required that is different from the general public's access, then an amendment to the existing special use permit may be necessary.

The access authorization or permit will be in possession of the permit holder when travelling on the authorized route. In the past these have been free of charge and are anticipated to remain so.

Access and work will be limited to that which is necessary to conduct permitted business. These situations will be addressed through administration of the individual permits.

State dam inspectors and water commissioners (State employees) are exempt from travel restrictions when acting in their official capacities. To minimize potential resource damage, the Forest Service will meet with these State employees to review travel routes, when necessary. This "right of access" may not apply to congressionally-designated areas such as Wilderness Areas and the Tabeguache and Roubideau Areas.

**R.S. 2477:** There have been a number of discussions and comments about the rights and responsibilities under "R.S. 2477." Revised Statute 2477 43 U.S.C. Sec. 932, repealed, adopted in 1866, states that "*the right-of-way for the construction of highways over public lands, not reserved for public uses, is hereby granted.*" Although R.S. 2477 was repealed with the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) in 1976, its impact is still being felt because highways constructed before the repeal were not extinguished by the new law. Under the original Act, Congress invited, or made the offer to, states and counties to construct public highways across the public domain to facilitate settlement of the West.

The courts have decided that the burden of proposal and proof lies with the affected county (or state) for identifying specific roads which may qualify under R.S. 2477. (Shultz v. Department of the Army, 96 F.3d 1222, 1223 (9th Cir. 1996) (per curiam) (proponent had burden of establishing a continuous RS 2477 route or right-of-way), cert. denied, 118 S. Ct. 1511 (1998); Adams v. United States, 3 F.3d 1254, 1258 (9th Cir. 1993) (proponent of right-of-way must show that road was built before land lost its public character)).

We welcome these proposals where they are assertions of valid existing rights. Management and maintenance responsibility for those roads which are proposed and validated as legitimate public roads under R.S. 2477 would be transferred to the county or the state, depending on which entity most appropriately would claim them. However, a claim that all roads across National Forest System lands are public roads is inconsistent with agency policy and established case law. We cannot address open-ended assertions to all roads on the National Forest.

This Travel Management Plan Decision is made with the understanding that individuals and entities may have valid existing rights under R.S. 2477. While the courts have established that the Forest Service has the right and duty to regulate these rights, the Forest Service will recognize the validity of such rights when holders of such rights provide adequate evidence as to their existence. (See Washington County v. United States, 903 F.Supp. 40(D. Utah, 1995)). This Decision does not negate or infringe on any of these valid existing rights. Forest Service regulation of any occupancy occurring under these valid rights will be adjusted to a level consistent with the full protection and recognition of R.S. 2477 rights, consistent with current applicable law, once those roads are identified, proposed, and validated. This may entail the amendment or modification of this Travel Plan Decision at that time.

**Habitat Security Areas:** Habitat security areas (referred to in the FEIS as Core Reserve areas - see response to comment CO01, Appendix N of the FEIS) are provided as a consequence of this decision, not to the degree that some commenters would wish, but in sufficient amount to provide effective habitat for wildlife. While these wildlife effects are reported in the FEIS and were considered in my Decision in terms of the distribution and location of designated motorized/mechanized travel routes, this Travel Plan does not examine the broader land allocation question. The Forest Plan revision will more thoroughly explore the possibilities of allocating lands to various management emphases, one of which would be the reservation of selected lands for the purpose of, and arranged in such a pattern to best support, wildlife habitat security.

**Travel effects in inventoried Roadless Areas:** Motorized use is allowed in many of the roadless areas inventoried in RARE II but not designated as Wilderness. The Decision would allow motorized use to continue on selected routes. See analysis of RARE II areas in Chapter 3 of the FEIS for complete information. The following Tables C and D summarize the changes that will occur in inventoried roadless areas, from Alternative 1 (the existing situation) to the Decision.

| <b>Table C. Acres of Area-wide Travel Management within Inventoried Roadless Areas</b> |                          |                                |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Alternative</b>   | <b>Acres Open Travel</b> | <b>Acres Restricted Travel</b> |
| <b>Alt. 1 - Existing Situation</b>   |                          |                                |
| Mountain Division  | 34,595                   | 40,824                         |
| Plateau Division   | 99,299                   | 0                              |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>133,894</b>           | <b>40,824</b>                  |
| <b>Alt. 3 - The Decision</b>   |                          |                                |
| Mountain Division  | 0                        | 75,419                         |
| Plateau Division   | 0                        | 99,299                         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>0</b>                 | <b>174,718</b>                 |

| <b>Table D. Miles of Routes within Inventoried Roadless Areas</b> |              |                   |                               |                             |                              |                                |
|---|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Alternative</b>  | <b>Roads</b> | <b>ATV Routes</b> | <b>Single-Track Motorized</b> | <b>Non-Motorized Trails</b> | <b>Decommissioned Routes</b> | <b>Administrative Closures</b> |
| <b>Alt. 1 - Existing Situation</b>                                | 90.7         | 19.4              | 73.4                          | 96.6                        | 17.7                         | 13                             |
| <b>Alt. 3 - The Decision</b>                                      | 65.3         | 15.1              | 41.5                          | 145.3                       | 48.2                         | 19.0                           |

Currently, in roadless areas there are 133,894 acres under open travel management, where all travel can occur on and off routes, and 40,824 acres under restricted travel management, where motorized travel is restricted to designated routes. The Decision will restrict all motorized and mechanized travel to designated routes within the entire 174,718 acres of inventoried roadless areas.

The Decision will reduce roads by 25.4 miles, reduce motorized trails by 35.4 miles, increase non-motorized trails by 48.7 miles, decommission 30.5 miles of routes, and designate an additional 6 miles of administrative closure. These changes will substantially reduce the motorized use in inventoried areas, but will not eliminate all motorized use. A short section of motorcycle trail is proposed to be constructed in the Cimarron RARE II area (0.8 miles, Nate Creek Trail #221).

I believe that this Decision will protect roadless areas from further intrusion and/or degradation, and will preserve all options for their future management.

**Enforcement/implementation/effectiveness of closures to motorized use:** It has been very reasonably pointed out that implementation of this plan will require education of users and enforcement of restrictions. It has also been stated that not all closures of routes to motorized use have been effective. These things go hand in hand.

The Forest Service is committed to implementing this plan. This will include funding as a priority program of work, the signing and designation of routes open to various means of travel, and the active closure of routes not open to motorized use. During this initial period, we will print new travel visitor maps and will embark on a program of public information. Through this program of management and public information we expect to obtain a high level of voluntary compliance. Following the initial period of adjustment, we will enforce restrictions established by this decision through the Forest Service Law Enforcement Officers working on the GMUG, and in cooperation with local law enforcement agencies. As is the case with any law enforcement activities, not all violators are caught, but by establishing this presence and through example of those who are caught in violation, it is anticipated that, over time, use of the Forest will conform to this Travel Plan.

As for the effectiveness of closures, funding for closure maintenance will be provided, and this will become a specific item of focus in the annual Forest Plan Monitoring Report.

## **VI. Alternatives Considered**

Five alternatives were studied in detail and are presented here for consideration in the decision process. Each alternative provides a mix of recreational opportunities in a variety of settings. The diversity of issues resulted in a range of alternatives that vary in the emphasis given to different recreational opportunities. Each alternative was formed from a unique combination of options, as described in the Decisions to be Made section in Chapter 1 of the FEIS.

It should be noted that to have an adequate range of alternatives not every aspect (of each alternative) needs to vary. Alternatives are composed of combined responses to issues to formulate reasonable travel management strategies. The range of alternatives is defined by the range of responses to these issues.

Alternative 1 (No Action): The No Action Alternative would have been a continuation of the current Travel Plan, which has been in effect since 1984. Most of the UNF would have remained open to unrestricted, area-wide (off-route) motorized travel. The current Travel Plan is shown on the UNF Travel Map, with additional travel regulations listed in the current Travel Availability Guide (TAG). TAG modifications include: seasonal travel restrictions, changes in on-the-ground situations (i.e., route locations, land ownership, NEPA decisions), and changes in area management due to legislation (i.e., Tabeguache and Roubideau special area designation) that are not shown on the Travel Map.

Alternative 2: Alternative 2 emphasizes motorized opportunities by retaining the motorized recreational systems currently in use, and developing additional systems where possible.

The transportation system on the UNF was developed primarily in response to commodity resource management (i.e., livestock grazing, timber harvest, mining). As recreational use increased on the Forest, recreational systems (networks of roads and trails that provide specific recreational opportunities) developed primarily through public use. Many of these recreational systems were formed by connecting existing system routes. Some systems are used by a variety of uses. Others are favored by only one or two types of uses. Many of the

recreational systems that have been established by public use provide motorized opportunities for motorcycle, ATV, and 4WD enthusiasts.

Alternative 3 (Preferred): Alternative 3 attempts to provide a mix of recreational opportunities in balance with other resource concerns and management needs. Area-wide travel management for Alternative 3 is the same as for Alternative 2. Route-specific proposals for Alternative 3 included the roads and trails identified as providing additional recreational travel opportunities beyond the "base," compatible with other forest resource concerns.

Alternative 4 (Environmentally Preferred): Alternative 4 was designed to address the need to provide the public a spectrum of recreation opportunities, with an emphasis on non-motorized opportunities. This alternative focuses on maintaining areas outside Wilderness in non-motorized settings.

This alternative would have resulted in the greatest restriction to motorized travel. There was concern that the amount of land in the Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) classification is squeezed from both sides. Congressional designation of Wilderness and special areas has resulted in large amounts of SPNM acreage, nation-wide, and specifically on the UNF, being put under Wilderness management. Encroachment of motorized use under open travel regulations has changed SPNM settings to SPM settings. Non-motorized opportunities would have been provided in areas additional to just SPNM settings.

Alternative 5: The emphasis for Alternative 5 was to provide for and protect large, relatively unroaded tracts of land outside of designated Wilderness; which in turn would provide and protect habitat for plant and animal species through a full range of elevations gradients and habitat types. These large areas are called "habitat security areas" in this analysis. This alternative is similar to Alternative 4 because "habitat security areas" would provide settings for non-motorized recreation opportunities. Motorized recreation opportunities would have been provided outside of "core reserve areas." "Habitat security areas" under Alternative 5 would have been provided for large-scale habitat needs of certain wildlife species.

#### Alternatives Eliminated from Detailed Study

The following alternatives eliminated from detailed study either are very similar to another alternative developed in detail, or would not meet the purpose and need articulated in Chapter 1 of the EIS. Rationale for elimination is discussed in the FEIS, Chapter 2:

- Keep open area travel ("green") on the Plateau and Naturita Divisions and designate routes.
- Require all motorized vehicle travel to remain on existing routes during the big game hunting seasons, but no other changes would occur to the Travel Plan the rest of the year.
- Modify the existing mix of restricted ("yellow") and open ("green") travel to relate more to terrain and encompass complete transportation systems.
- Restrict travel to designated routes Forest-wide, designating all existing routes open to motorized travel.
- Make all changes in management direction, and close all routes necessary to meet 40% Habitat Capability on the Forest.



## **VII. Findings Required by Other Laws**

### Consistency with/Amendment of the Forest Plan

This Decision is consistent with and implements the 1991 Amended Forest Land and Resource Management Plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests.

### The Endangered Species Act

Consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act was required. This section of the Act requires all Federal Agencies to ensure that their actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species or result in the destruction or modification of critical habitat. Species identified as requiring this consultation for Uncompahgre Travel Management were Canadian lynx. The consultation requirements have been met and the Biological Opinion from the Fish and Wildlife Service concurs with our finding, documented in a Biological Assessment, that this Decision will not jeopardize the continued survival of this species.

### Clean Water Act

No specific provisions of the Clean Water Act apply to this Decision. Wetlands or waters of the U.S. which may be affected by this decision are not proposed for dredge, fill, or any direct site-specific disturbance.

### National Historic Preservation Act

Consultation is also required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the State Historic Preservation Officer. Section 106 requires special review of any undertaking that could affect historic properties that are included or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Because travel management affects such large areas, actual survey of routes has not been done. Instead, through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) among the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Forest Service, a set of survey sampling procedures and a schedule for this survey has been established. This MOA is appended to the FEIS as Appendix J. Through compliance with this MOA Section 106 compliance is assured.

### Clean Air Act

There are no effects on any aspect of air quality covered by the Clean Air Act or associated regulations from my decision.

### Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice)

Since the early 1970's, there has been increasing concern over disproportionate environmental and human health impacts on minority populations and low-income populations. Executive

Order 12898 (February 11, 1994, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations) directs each federal agency "to make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations."

In July of 1999 the EPA issued its "Final Guidance for Consideration of Environmental Justice in Clean Air Act Reviews." The concepts explained in this guidance are applicable well beyond Clean Air Act reviews.

Concepts and "tests" of this guidance have been applied to the public, analysis and decision processes used in coming to this Decision. It is my conclusion that no minority or low-income population is negatively affected by the Decision (either proportionately or disproportionately), and that any and all people that might fall into these categories were able to fully participate in the public, analysis and decision processes. My Decision, and the processes that support it, comply fully with Executive Order 12898.

#### Required Permits, Licenses, Grants or Authorizations

No additional permits, licenses, grants or authorizations are required to implement this Decision.

### **VIII. Consistency with Agency Policy**

#### Natural Resource Agenda for the Forest Service

In February of 1999, the Chief of the Forest Service, Michael Dombeck, announced a four-point Natural Resource Agenda for the Forest Service in a speech in Missoula, Montana. Since then, this Natural Resource Agenda has been further articulated in correspondence to the field, in public statements, and releases of information. The Chief's speech, and much more detail on policy development relating to the Natural Resource Agenda, may be found on the Internet at [www.fs.fed.us/news/agenda](http://www.fs.fed.us/news/agenda).

The four points of this Natural Resource Agenda are:

- Healthy Watersheds
- Sustainable Forest Ecosystem Management
- Forest Roads
- Recreation

After a careful reading of the policies being established under this Natural Resource Agenda, and a consideration of the Purpose and Need for this Travel Plan Decision (Chapter 1 of the FEIS), and consideration of the decisions documented in this ROD, I believe that this Decision represents the very embodiment of the goals which make up the Chief's Natural Resource Agenda.

The first priority, and the first two items, of this Agenda is to maintain and restore the health of ecosystems and watersheds. The second item listed under purpose and need for this UNF Travel Plan Decision addresses precisely this National purpose.

The third item of the Agenda is the careful planning and management of roads on the National Forest. Actions called for under this agenda item include: 1) Determine the best way to provide all Americans with access to National Forests, and 2) Accelerate the pace of decommissioning unneeded, substandard roads that damage the environment. This Travel Plan addresses these actions specifically by providing a plan for access for all uses, in a manner which accommodates the needs of all, and by purposefully identifying those routes that are needed and those that are not.

The fourth item of the Agenda is to meet the Nation's growing need for outdoor recreation in a manner that protects the health, diversity, and productivity of the land. From the policy paper on this item, this includes: 1) improving the settings for outdoor recreation and enhancing visitor experiences, 2) guaranteeing visitor satisfaction with our services and facilities, 3) reaching out to rural and urban communities to capitalize on the social and economic opportunities associated with recreation on the national forests, 4) strengthening our relationships with those who cooperate with us to improve outdoor recreation for all Americans, and 5) ensuring that recreation use does not impair the land's health. This Travel Plan Decision, as well as the analysis and all the public discussion that has gone on in support of it, responds directly and specifically to these charges.

### 2000 Roadless Initiative

Any policy or management direction which comes out of the administrative or judicial review of the Roadless Initiative will be incorporated into the new plan for managing travel through appropriate processes at that time.

### Roads Analysis Process

In October 1999 the Forest Service released a new document called "ROAD ANALYSIS: Informing Decisions about Managing the National Forest Transportation System." This document and the science-based analysis procedure within were prepared by an interdisciplinary group of Forest Service scientists, resource specialists and managers. All managers were given a interim directive (FSM 7710-99-2) to use the new analysis procedure as appropriate.

The interdisciplinary team has reviewed the FEIS, and the processes that have lead to it, in light of the newly developed Road Analysis Six Step Process. The six steps in the process essentially mirror the processes we have applied to Uncomphagre Travel public, environmental, and decision processes. A summary of how each of the 71 questions of the Road Analysis has been prepared and is part of the project record supporting this Decision. Even though much of our scoping, public involvement and analysis was completed after the Roads Analysis process was published we find that we have been responsive to much of its specific process and completely with its purpose and intent.

|  |
|--|
| <b>IX. Environmentally Preferred Alternative</b> |
|--|

Alternative 5 is the environmentally preferred alternative. As documented throughout the FEIS, this alternative would impose the greatest restriction on motorized use, and would result in the largest blocks of undisturbed National Forest. While it can be argued by some (and was

strongly argued in public comment by those interested in less or no restriction of motorized use) it is our conclusion that motorized vehicle use, by ATV's in particular, is having a significant negative environmental impact on this National Forest. This is supported by our own observation, and by the large number of comments and complaints we receive from users of the Forest.

However, this alternative was not selected for implementation for several reasons. It fails to accommodate sufficiently the legitimate demand for motorized use of the National Forest. It would skew the authorized use of the Forest too far to one end of the recreation opportunity spectrum and deny a substantial portion of the current uses of the Forest use of their preferred means of travel.

Further, it is my opinion that with the implementation of the selected alternative, and through the development of cooperative understanding among all users, use of the routes designated and in the seasons designated will not result in unacceptable harm to the environment. Through this plan we have taken all reasonable measures to prevent or mitigate environmental harm. The selected alternative is an environmentally acceptable compromise which is responsive to public demands, and appropriate uses of this National Forest.

#### **X. Site-Specific Implementation, Further Travel Management Planning**

Certain specific actions are called for in the implementation of this Decision. These include signing of designated routes to show uses allowed, the closure of routes using various means, the decommissioning of selected routes, and the construction or reconstruction of still others.

Simple actions necessary for the closure of routes, and changes in use restrictions, are covered in this decision and may proceed with no further study. These types of activities require minimal ground disturbance and are typically associated with maintenance, e.g., sign and gate installation or barrier construction. The more substantial actions involved with route decommissioning, construction, and/or reconstruction are site-specific actions which will require more NEPA analysis. This is because it was beyond the scope of the EIS to undertake all the site-specific analyses needed for this field work. Each of these ground disturbing activities will be examined in individual site-specific NEPA analyses, including public notice and opportunity to comment, before they are undertaken.

Decisions made here are the product of long study and will not be revisited for some time to come. Any consideration of an overall revision to the Travel Plan that is put in place with this Decision would require a public involvement and environmental analysis process similar, though not the same as, this one. This decision may be modified on a localized basis, as a way of fine tuning in response to monitoring, new or different resource conditions, further localized project planning or future management proposals. It is intended that this Travel Plan be dynamic and retain the flexibility to be responsive to either changing resource conditions, new or better information, or even changing management objectives on a limited scale. Modification to this decision in this manner would also require public notice and environmental analysis in compliance with NEPA.

#### **XI. Administrative Review, Implementation, Contact Person**

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.7. A written Notice of Appeal must be submitted within 45 days after publication of the notice of this Decision in the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel. Appeal Notice must be sent to: USDA, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region, Attn. Appeals Deciding Officer, P.O. Box 25127, Lakewood, Colorado 80225. Appeals must meet content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14.

For further information on this decision, contact [Jeff Burch](#), 2250 Hwy 50, Delta, Colorado 81416, telephone (970) 874-6600.

If no appeal is received, implementation of this Decision may occur on, but not before, five (5) business days from the close of the appeal filing period.

/s/ Robert L. Storch

ROBERT L. STORCH  
Forest Supervisor  
Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests

3/1/02

Date