

NEWS RELEASE

PACIFIC NORTHWEST REGION



Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest

3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR www.fs.fed.us/r6/rogue-siskiyou

Contact: Virginia Gibbons, Public Affairs & Partnerships 541.618.2113
David Krantz, Forest Planner 541.618.2126

Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest Announces Release of Draft Supplemental Document for Motorized Vehicle Use

SOUTHWEST OR—Forest officials have announced the availability of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for Travel Management Planning (motorized vehicle use) on the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest. This document provides additional analyses and clarifications based on appeal issues raised after the release of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision for the first phase of Travel Management Planning (January 2009).

“In this planning effort, we are striving to provide a good balance between motorized and non-motorized access to the forest, as well as a diversity of recreational opportunities, while minimizing potential impacts to our natural resources,” said Forest Supervisor Scott Conroy.

Extensive public meetings were held in the earlier stages of the Travel Management Planning process; the DSEIS provides yet another opportunity for the public to review and make comments on this supplemental document and the preferred alternative. The DSEIS provides revised analyses for water quality, soils, potential wilderness and other undeveloped areas, naturally occurring asbestos, aquatics, botany, wildlife, air quality, environmental justice and civil rights disclosure, invasive pathogen, and wild and scenic rivers.

The Travel Management Plan process establishes a baseline forest transportation system for public motorized vehicle use on the forest. As identified in the DSEIS, the Preferred Alternative (Alt 5) will prohibit all cross-country motorized use on 275,000 acres, as required for all national forests, under the Travel Management Rule of 2005.

The existing transportation system that is currently available for public use is approximately 4,512 miles of road, 256 miles of motorized trails and 774 miles of forest roads utilized primarily for forest administrative purposes such as emergency and intermittent access on an as-needed basis. The 774 miles of road are not maintained for purposes of public use, although they currently receive some use because the roads are not officially closed. Alt 5 proposes to close these administratively used roads to general public use.

Alt 5 also proposes that 4,505 miles of road and 221 miles of motorized trails will remain open to the public, as will an existing 15-acre designated motorized play area (Woodruff) near Prospect. Approximately 3,160 of the open roads will allow for mixed use (includes both highway-legal and non-highway-legal motor vehicles). The Siskiyou and Rogue River National Forest Land and Resource Management Plans will also be amended to make motorized use along portions of several trails consistent with Standards & Guidelines for the land allocations they pass through. This includes the Game Lake Trail, Lawson Creek Trail, Illinois River Trail, Hobson Horn Trail, McGrew Trail, Boundary Trail and two Boundary connector trails.

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The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to State and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. The USDA is an equal opportunity employer.

Other Attributes of This Decision:

- No route decommissioning is proposed under Alt 5 and any new construction or maintenance activities required to make other routes available for public use may require additional environmental analysis
- It is important to note that motorized vehicles will NOT be allowed to travel cross-country for purposes of fuelwood gathering, hunting or big game retrieval
- Any activities associated with contract, permit, lease, notice-level mining activities, or other written authorization, is exempt from designation under the Travel Management Rule. Access for permitted activities on National Forest System lands is independent from general public access. Individuals or groups with special permits are allowed to conduct their business according to conditions outlined in their permits. If a permit does not stipulate exemptions to the Forest's travel regulations, the general travel regulations will apply
- Seasons of allowed motorized use and distance restrictions will be subject to change and are needed for a variety of considerations, including wildlife avoidance, wildlife winter range, elk calving areas, protection of fragile soils and meadows. Motor vehicles will not be allowed off any designated route with the exception of parking (not to exceed 20 feet from the road surface) or camping (up to 300 ft from the centerline of any route will be allowed to access an existing dispersed camping site)
- Additional site-specific closures and seasonal restrictions may be implemented for purposes of forest and fire management, wildlife and resource protection through authorized forest closures
- Alt 5 does not propose any motorized route construction through inventoried roadless or wilderness areas, nor does it designate public motorized routes through private lands

A Notice of Availability for the DSEIS has been published in the Federal Register, starting the 45-day public comment period. Comments may be sent via email to comments-pacificnorthwest-rogueriver-siskiyou@fs.fed.us or via hard copy mail to: c/o Travel Management Plan, Medford Interagency Office, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504

Substantive public comments will be addressed in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. A Record of Decision is expected to be signed in February 2012, followed by an appeals/resolution period. Once a decision is finalized, a Motor Vehicle Use Map will be published showing the open roads and trails across the forest and the types of motorized use allowed.

The DSEIS, map and errata sheet is currently available on the forest website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/rogue-siskiyou/projects/travel/index.shtml> Hard copies of the DSEIS are also available at all Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest offices. Please contact the Medford Interagency Office at 541.618.2200 for additional information.

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