

## **Santa Fe National Forest Travel Management Planning Temporal Bounds and List of Projects for Cumulative Effects Analysis**

March 10, 2010

The way the Santa Fe National Forest manages its road system forms the basis for the temporal bounds of the cumulative effects analysis for all resources. The time for analyzing the cumulative effects to all resources is 38 years, from 1987 to 2025. The interdisciplinary team chose this period because during this time, the Forest's road system and management of it was, and is expected to be, more or less consistent.

The reason the interdisciplinary team chose 1987 as its starting point is because this is the year the Santa Fe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) was adopted. The Forest Plan provided the first snapshot of the Forest's road system, estimating an inventory of 4,800 miles (p. 13). With the adoption of the road system, the Forest also started actively managing its road system, with set maintenance levels and goals for closing or decommissioning roads. The management structure set in place with the adoption of the Forest Plan is still in place today.

The discrepancy between the road system described in the Forest Plan, about 4,800 miles, and today's inventory, about 7,000 miles, bears explanation. There are three reasons for the discrepancy:

1. Due to limited mapping capability in the late 1980s, the Forest likely underestimated the miles of roads on the landscape.
2. The Forest's 1987 definition of a road may have been restrictive so that miles in the official system and database excluded some on the landscape.
3. In the early to mid-1990s, the Forest added to its inventory by examining aerial photos and including everything that looked like a road. It added roads existing on the landscape to its official system.

In sum, it is highly likely that the miles of roads on the landscape in 1987 are within 5 to 10 percent of the miles that exist today. This estimate includes the unauthorized roads, called "uninventoried" in the Forest Plan. The Forest has constructed very few miles of roads since the adoption of the Forest Plan; after the mid-1990's, almost no roads were constructed because timber extraction essentially ceased.

The reason the interdisciplinary team chose 2025 as the end point for the cumulative effects analysis is because this is our best estimate of when the Forest would reassess its *overall philosophy* on managing the route system. This is separate and different from its annual revision of the motor vehicle use map, due for its first publication in 2010. The Forest will revise its motor vehicle use map on an annual basis.

In sum, the following list contains actions have affected, or could affect, the management of the road system from 1987 to 2025. Individual resources may have additional actions to consider, depending on their spatial bounds for the cumulative effects analysis.

### *Past Actions (1987 – 2009)*

On June 24, 2005, the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality provided guidance to agencies on the consideration of past actions in cumulative effects analysis (Connaughton 2005):

*"The environmental analysis required under NEPA is forward-looking, in that it focuses on the potential impacts of the proposed action that an agency is considering. Thus, review of past actions is required to the extent that this review informs agency decision-making regarding the proposed action... Generally, agencies can conduct an adequate cumulative effects analysis by focusing on the current aggregate effects of past actions without delving into the historical details of individual past actions."*

This list of past actions, compiled by the interdisciplinary team on August 18, 2009, is actions that shaped the forest's route system from 1987 to the present. These actions form the baseline for the cumulative effects analysis.

<i>Past Actions (1987 – 2009)</i>	
<i>Action</i>	<i>Effect or trend</i>
Subdivision and development of private inholdings	Added roads to the national forest because landowners required vehicular access to their property.
Road construction for timber sales	Added roads to the national forest for timber extraction. Some temporary roads were decommissioned; others kept.
Mining claims and development of mining	Added roads to the national forest.
Roads to access oil and gas developments and pipelines	Added roads to the national forest.
New Mexico Senate Bill 379 (Increased safety and registration requirements for people under 18; restricted OHV use on state game commission and state park lands, except where designated; provided for the addition of state OHV parks; provided for the closure of OHV trails causing irreversible damage; provides for the development of overall enforcement across the state; and creates a fund for education, monitoring, and enforcement)	Likely to restrict motorized cross-country travel on state lands. Increases monitoring, education, and enforcement capabilities statewide.
Jemez National Recreation Act	Reduced the miles of roads on national forest. Also reduced the acres available for motorized cross-country travel.
Wild and Scenic Rivers – Pecos, East Fork, and Rio Chama	Reduced the miles of roads and motorized cross-country travel on the national forest.
Creation of the Valles Caldera National Preserve	Restricted the amount of motorized travel, on- or off-road, on public land.
Land transfers from the Santa Fe National Forest to other entities: San Ildefonso Santo Domingo Pecos National Historic Park	Removed land from the public domain, resulting in less motorized access and travel on the national forest.
Respect the Rio program	Increased public awareness of the effects of motorized use on the national forest, especially near water.
Lower Jemez Complex Development Restoration	Reduced the amount of routes and dispersed camping on the national forest.
Acquisition of lands by the Santa Fe National Forest	Increased motorized access to the national forest. Slightly increased the miles of routes on the system in most cases.
Road obliteration or natural closure (e.g., trees growing in the middle of roads)	Reduced the miles of routes on the national forest system.
New list of sensitive species	Likely to have the effect of reducing the miles in the route system.

<b><i>Past Actions (1987 – 2009)</i></b>	
<i>Action</i>	<i>Effect or trend</i>
Designation of Mexican spotted owl critical habitat	Likely to have the effect of reducing the miles in the route system.
1995 injunction against woodcutting	Reduced motorized cross-country travel.
Technological advances in OHVs (e.g. 3-wheelers, 4-wheelers, side-by-sides, tracked vehicles)	Increased motorized cross-country travel because the smaller vehicles are able to go more places on more terrain.
Forest product collection	Increases motorized cross-country travel. Some occurred in conjunction with specific vegetation management projects.

<b><i>Present and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions (2009 – 2025)</i></b>	
<i>Action</i>	<i>Effect or trend</i>
Economic recession	Overall effect hard to determine. It could increase the amount of motorized travel and dispersed camping on the national forest since people might recreate closer to home. It could also reduce the amount of motorized travel if people decide not to travel at all.
Increase in state's population	Likely to increase the amount of travel to and on the national forest as more people seek recreational opportunities. Some studies, however, show a decrease in outdoor recreation in the population at large.
Preparation of travel management plans and motor vehicle use maps by other national forests and agencies	Likely to greatly reduce the amount of motorized cross-country travel on public lands. Likely to reduce the miles of routes open for public motorized cross-country travel. Likely to increase education and awareness of the effects of motorized use on public lands.
Existence or creation of private or state OHV parks	Increases the amount of motorized cross-country travel available.
Transfer of management of lands in Pecos Canyon from New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to the State Parks	Likely to decrease the amount of motorized use available on state lands.
Development of the Continental Divide Trail on the Santa Fe National Forest	The CDT is non-motorized, and its creation is likely to affect where motorized routes are designated.
Evolution of recreational preferences among the general public, e.g., mud-bogging, geocaching, hiking	Likely to increase demand for motorized access to the national forest in order to engage in the activity of choice.
Roads and trails having unclear easements on the national forest	Could result in a reduction in motorized access if a private landowner decides, in light of an unclear easement, to gate or restrict access across a forest service road or trail.
Road maintenance agreements between the Santa Fe National Forest and counties, permittees, or private landowners	Improves the condition of roads because of regular maintenance stipulated in the agreements.
Volunteer assistance on trail maintenance	Improves the condition of motorized trails.

<b><i>Present and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions (2009 – 2025)</i></b>	
<i>Action</i>	<i>Effect or trend</i>
Availability of state Regional Trail Program funds	Improves the condition of motorized trails.
Routes existing on other jurisdictions within the national forest boundary	Increases the miles of routes within the boundary of the national forest. The condition of the routes will vary by ownership; it is not possible to characterize them in general.
Closure orders	The Forest will continue to have the ability to implement closure orders. These will reduce the amount of motorized travel on the national forest.
Projects awarded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act	Will improve the condition of trails on the national forest.
Signing roads and trails on the Forest	Orients public
Projects from the Forest's Schedule of Proposed Actions (as of 10/2007) <sup>1</sup>	Decrease in routes available for motorized travel, motorized cross-country travel, or motorized dispersed camping opportunities
Projects from the Forest's Schedule of Proposed Actions (as of 10/2007) <sup>2</sup>	Increase in routes available for motorized travel, motorized cross-country travel, or motorized dispersed camping opportunities
Projects from the Forest's Schedule of Proposed Actions (as of 10/2007) <sup>3</sup>	Improves road or trail condition

<sup>1</sup> See first list below

<sup>2</sup> See second list below

<sup>3</sup> See third list below

*List 1:* Projects decreasing the amount of motorized use on the Forest:

- Peralta Watershed Improvement Project
- Oil and Gas Leasing and Roads Management
- San Antonio Watershed Improvement Project
- East Fork Jemez Wild & Scenic River Recreation Management
- Forest Road 10J Decommissioning

*List 2:* Projects increasing the amount of motorized use on the Forest:

- 2008/2009 NM Motorcycle Trials Event
- Recreation Residence Permit renewal (keeps existing motorized use in place)
- South Pit Pumice Mine Expansion
- Cerro del Pino Pumice Mine
- Gallinas Municipal Watershed WUI Project
- Boone-Duran Pumice Mine EA
- San Ignacio Joint Ventures Road Easement
- County Line Forest Products
- Rio Chama Wildlife Management Prescribed Fire Project
- Bear Paw Salvage

*List 3:* Projects improving the condition of roads or trails on the Forest:

- Resumidero Campground Improvement Project
- Reconstruction of Forest Roads 612 and 87
- Forest Road 488 Reconstruction and Road Use
- Canones Creek Watershed Restoration Project

- BMG Erosion Repair
- Headquarters Trailhead EA
- State Highway 4 Culvert Replacement (improves fish passage)
- Legacy roads and trails projects (Spence Hot Springs, FR 376, FR 27)