



The Stanislaus National Forest is pleased to announce the release of the Motorized Travel Management Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

The Motorized Travel Management project is part of a national effort to designate transportation systems on each National Forest. The goal is to develop a sustainable network of roads and trails that provide opportunities for access and recreation while protecting natural and cultural resources. This short guide will help you gain a basic understanding of the documents and how to find more detailed information.

Background

Forest Service regulations require designation of roads and trails for motor vehicle use. To designate a road or trail for motorized use, it must first be added to the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS).

About 2,279 miles of NFTS roads and motorized trails are currently available for public motorized use on the Stanislaus National Forest. In addition, about 246 miles of known unauthorized routes exist. These unauthorized routes vary from narrow single-track motorcycle trails to wider routes passable by trucks and other full-size vehicles. Although many of these unauthorized routes are used by the public, none of them are part of the official NFTS. To designate an unauthorized road or trail for motorized use, it must first be added to the NFTS.

In accordance with Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212.56) the Stanislaus will publish a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) designating all NFTS roads and motorized trails open to motor vehicle use. If unauthorized routes are not designated, motor vehicle use on these routes will be prohibited. Once a road or motorized trail is part of the system, it will be designated by vehicle class and season of use with the publication of the MVUM. Publication of the MVUM completes the designation process. The prohibition on motor vehicle use off the designated system goes into effect and is enforceable when routes are designated on the MVUM.

To help you find your way through the EIS, the next section of this document provides an overview of the contents and organization of the three main chapters of the EIS.

Environmental Impact Statement

Chapter 1: Purpose of and Need for Action

One key aspect of the EIS is the purpose and need statement described in Chapter 1. The purpose and need statement describes the problems that need to be addressed. The purpose and need serves as the basis for developing different ways to address these problems. In the language of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), these proposed solutions are called alternatives.

Chapter 1 also helps to provide geographic and management context for the project by providing a short history of the planning process, public involvement, and some of the key issues and concerns raised by the public.

Chapter 2: The Alternatives

The EIS includes five alternatives considered in detail: four action alternatives (Alternatives 1, 3, 4 and 5) and the No Action alternative (Alternative 2). The No Action alternative represents the continuation of cross-country travel including continued use of all unauthorized routes by motor vehicles. Alternative 2, required by the NEPA implementing regulations, serves as a baseline for comparison among the alternatives.

Chapter 2 describes and compares all of the alternatives considered in detail using these four components:

1. **Cross country travel:** All of the action alternatives prohibit cross-country travel.
2. **Additions to the NFTS:** The alternatives vary in the numbers of unauthorized roads and trails (routes) proposed for addition to the NFTS as trails with each identified by a trail number. EIS Appendix I (Route Data) shows the specified vehicle class, season of use and mitigations for all proposed additions to the NFTS.
3. **Changes to the existing NFTS:** The action alternatives vary in changes to the existing NFTS in terms of vehicle class, season of use and wheeled over snow use. EIS Appendix I (Route Data) shows the specified vehicle class, season of use and mitigations for all proposed changes to the existing NFTS.
4. **Forest Plan Amendments:** Some of the alternatives include Forest Plan Amendments.

Chapter 2 also describes 16 other alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study.

The following information briefly describes the alternatives considered in detail. Table 1 (see page 3) shows a side-by-side comparison of the features of each alternative.

Alternative 1 (Proposed Action)

This is the Proposed Action, as described in the Notice of Intent (72 Federal Register 222, November 19, 2007; p. 64988- 64991), with corrections based on updated data and map information and refinements responding to the administration, motorized recreation, private property, recreation and resource issues raised during scoping. These corrections and refinements provide additional motorized recreation opportunities, reduce conflicts and provide additional resource protection. Motor vehicle travel off NFTS routes by the public would be prohibited except as allowed by permit or other authorization. Parking is allowed within one vehicle length off of NFTS routes unless otherwise prohibited. 151.64 miles of unauthorized routes would be added to the NFTS as motorized trails. Vehicle class changes would occur on 616.80 miles of NFTS roads. Season of use on all routes based on elevation and wet weather closures on native surface routes replace existing seasonal closures and restrictions. Alternative 1 (Proposed Action) is the Forest Service preferred alternative.

Alternative 2 (No Action)

The No Action Alternative provides a baseline for comparing the other alternatives. Under the No Action alternative, current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area. This alternative would not change the use of any NFTS roads and would not add any miles of NFTS motorized trails. Under this alternative the agency would take no affirmative action (no change from current management or direction) and cross country travel with continued use of unauthorized routes would occur. It would include only existing closures and would not include any restrictions on motorized dispersed recreation access. No changes would be made to the current NFTS and no cross country travel prohibition would be put into place. The Travel Management Rule would not be implemented and no MVUM would be produced. Motor vehicle travel by the public would not be limited to NFTS routes. Unauthorized routes would continue to have no status or authorization as NFTS facilities.

Alternative 3 (Cross Country Prohibited)

Alternative 3 responds to the administration and resource issues by prohibiting cross country travel without adding any new facilities to the NFTS. This alternative also provides a baseline for comparing the impacts of other alternatives that propose changes to the NFTS in the form of new facilities (roads and motorized trails). None of the currently unauthorized routes would be added to the NFTS under this alternative. Alternative 3 would not change the use of the NFTS and would not add any miles to the NFTS. It would include seasonal closures on routes with

existing seasonal closures and restrictions and prohibit motorized access beyond existing NFTS routes. Motor vehicle travel off NFTS routes by the public would be prohibited except as allowed by permit or other authorization. Parking is allowed within one vehicle length off of NFTS routes unless otherwise prohibited.

Alternative 4 (Recreation)

Alternative 4 responds to the motorized recreation opportunities issue by providing additional routes and reducing restrictions. This alternative would maximize motorized recreation opportunities. Motor vehicle travel off NFTS routes by the public would be prohibited except as allowed by permit or other authorization. Parking is allowed within one vehicle length off of NFTS routes unless otherwise prohibited. 175.97 miles of unauthorized routes would be added to the NFTS as motorized trails. Vehicle class changes would occur on 367.94 miles of NFTS roads. Season of use on native surface routes based on elevation and wet weather closures on native surface routes replace existing seasonal closures and restrictions. All surfaced routes, except wheeled over snow routes, are open year round.

Alternative 5 (Resources)

Alternative 5 responds to the administration, private property, recreation and resource issues by limiting additions to the NFTS and increasing restrictions that would reduce conflicts and provide additional resource protection. This alternative would limit motorized recreation opportunities by providing greater protection for forest resources. Motor vehicle travel off NFTS roads and NFTS motorized trails by the public would be prohibited except as allowed by permit or other authorization. Parking is allowed within one vehicle length off of NFTS routes unless otherwise prohibited. 28.37 miles of unauthorized routes would be added to the NFTS as motorized trails. Vehicle class changes would occur on 525.73 miles of NFTS roads. Season of use on all routes based on elevation and wet weather closures on native surface routes replace existing seasonal closures and restrictions.

Chapter 3: Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

Motorized use may cause both beneficial and harmful effects to forest resources. Some routes provide important access to remote campsites, hunting grounds, and a wide variety of other desirable recreation destinations. On the other hand, motorized use of routes can also result in adverse effects such as damage to streambanks, spread of invasive weeds, and recreation use conflicts.

This EIS discloses the effects of proposed additions and changes to the existing NFTS on forest lands, resources and uses. For purposes of NEPA, "consequences", "effects", and "impacts" mean the same thing. They include ecological, aesthetic,

historic, cultural, economic, social, or health impacts, whether adverse or beneficial.

The Forest Service must avoid impacts to cultural resources and minimize damage to resources such as soil, rare plants and wildlife. At the same time, the alternatives must also provide access to dispersed recreation opportunities such as camping, hunting, fishing, hiking, and exploring. Chapter 3 presents both the beneficial and adverse effects of the alternatives on the ten different resource sections listed below.

- Botanical Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Recreation Resources
- Roadless and Special Areas
- Society, Culture and the Economy
- Soil Resource
- Transportation Facilities
- Visual Resources
- Water Resources
- Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic Species

Each resource section in Chapter 3 includes the Affected Environment and the Environmental Consequences (or effects). The Affected Environment describes the current or existing conditions of a resource, such as the number of wildlife or rare plant populations near unauthorized routes. The Environmental Consequences describe the possible effects of implementing each of the alternatives on those existing conditions.

Under NEPA, the Forest Service must analyze the full range of possible effects of the alternatives. This includes effects caused by the alternatives either immediately or later in time (direct and indirect effects), as well as those which could result in "snowball effects" when added to effects caused by other unrelated activities such as livestock grazing and wildfire (cumulative effects).

Comparison of Alternatives

Table 1 Comparison of Alternatives: Alternative Components and Outputs

Component	Alternative 1 (Proposed Action)	Alternative 2 (No Action)	Alternative 3 (X-C Prohibited)	Alternative 4 (Recreation)	Alternative 5 (Resources)
Cross Country Travel	prohibited	not prohibited	prohibited	prohibited	prohibited
Parking allowed off NFTS	one vehicle length	no restriction	one vehicle length	one vehicle length	one vehicle length
Add existing unauthorized routes to the NFTS (miles)	151.64	0.00	0.00	175.97	28.37
Convert NFTS roads to NFTS motorized trails (miles)	62.17	0.00	0.00	99.28	21.45
Change NFTS roads from Closed to Open (miles)	67.37	0.00	0.00	101.24	11.66
Change NFTS Roads from Open to Closed (miles)	45.98	0.00	0.00	10.66	59.03
Change NFTS roads from HLO to ALL (miles)	93.36	0.00	0.00	99.52	0.00
Change NFTS roads from ALL to HLO (miles)	400.56	0.00	0.00	145.69	440.93
Existing Closures and Restrictions	replaced	remain	remain	replaced	replaced
Season of Use	Elevation 1	year round	none	year round	year round
	Elevation 2	4/1-11/30	none	4/1-12/31 ¹	4/15-11/15
	Elevation 3	5/15-11/30	none	4/1-12/31 ¹	5/15-11/15
Wet Weather Closures (native surface routes)	close during the season of use when 1" rain occurs in a 24 hr period and allow 72 hrs drying	none	none	same as Alternative 1	same as Alternative 1
Wheeled Over Snow Routes (miles)	105.92	none	none	105.92	none
Forest Plan Amendments (miles)	10.36	0.00	0.00	13.80	0.00

¹ Native surface routes only

Record of Decision

The Forest Supervisor decided to implement Alternative 1 (Proposed Action) as modified and described in the ROD as Modified Alternative 1. The decision includes modifications made in response to public comments. Modified Alternative 1 best meets the purpose and need and responds to the issues identified during public scoping by providing access to motorized recreation opportunities while protecting resources. The decision includes the following four main components. Table 2 (see page 5) shows a summary of the decision and reasons for the decision.

- 1. Cross Country Travel:** motor vehicle travel off NFTS routes by the public is prohibited except as allowed by permit or other authorization. Parking is allowed within one vehicle length¹ off of NFTS routes unless otherwise prohibited.
- 2. Additions to the NFTS:** 136.77 miles of unauthorized routes are added to the NFTS as motorized trails.
- 3. Changes to the existing NFTS:** Vehicle class changes will occur on 616.80 miles of NFTS roads including: opening 67.37 miles of closed roads; closing to public use 45.98 miles of open roads; converting 93.36 miles of roads from highway legal only to all vehicles; and, converting 400.56 miles of roads from all vehicles to highway legal only. This also converts 62.17 miles of the 616.80 miles of NFTS roads to motorized trails.

Season of Use: except as allowed by permit or other authorization (i.e. wheeled over snow routes), NFTS motorized routes are open to motorized use during the season of use shown below, unless specifically prohibited. Roads open year round are not maintained for winter travel; however, they are available for over snow travel consistent with the vehicle class designation.

- Lower Elevations Open year round
- Other Elevations Open 4/15 – 12/15²

Wheeled Over Snow Routes: wheeled over snow use is prohibited, except by ATVs when 12 inches or more of snow is present, on the 60.33 miles of routes dual designated as Snow Trails.

- 4. Forest Plan Amendments:** includes three amendments to the management direction contained in the Forest Plan:
 - a. Forestwide:** amends Forestwide Standard and Guideline for Restricted Motor Vehicle Management to prohibit motor vehicle travel off NFTS routes and allow parking within one vehicle length off of NFTS routes.
 - b. Western Pond Turtle:** amends Forestwide Standard and Guideline for Restricted Motor

Vehicle Management to allow motor vehicle use on 9 motorized trail segments (1.53 miles) in areas adjacent to waters with known populations of western pond turtle.

- c. Non-Motorized:** amends Forestwide and Wild and Scenic River Standard and Guidelines for ROS Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, Closed Motor Vehicle Travel Management and Restricted Motor Vehicle Travel Management to allow continued highway legal vehicle use on existing NFTS roads 4N80Y and 5N02R.

Implementation Date

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, the 5th business day following the close of the appeal filing period [36 CFR 215.9(a)]. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition. In the event of multiple appeals, the implementation date is controlled by the date of the last appeal disposition [36 CFR 215.9(b)].

Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215. In accordance with the April 24, 2006 order issued by the U. S. District Court for the Missoula Division of the District of Montana in Case No. CV 03-119-M-DWM, only those individuals and organizations who provided comments during the comment period are eligible to appeal [36 CFR 215.11(a), 1993 version]. Appeals must be filed within 45 days from the publication date of the legal notice in the Union Democrat. Notices of appeal must meet the specific content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. An appeal, including attachments, must be filed (regular mail, fax, e-mail, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service) with the appropriate Appeal Deciding Officer (Regional Forester) [36 CFR 215.8] within 45 days following the publication date of the legal notice. The publication date of the legal notice is the exclusive means for calculating the time period to file an appeal [36 CFR 215.15 (a)]. Those wishing to appeal should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Appeals must be submitted to Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, 1323 Club Drive, Vallejo, CA 94592, (707) 562-8737. Appeals may be submitted by FAX [(707) 562-9091] or by hand-delivery to the Regional Office, at the address shown above, during normal business hours (Monday-Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm). Electronic appeals, in acceptable [plain text (.txt), rich text (.rtf) or Word (.doc)] formats, may be submitted to appeals-pacificsouthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us with Subject: **Stanislaus Motorized Travel Management**.

For electronically mailed appeals, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgment from the agency as confirmation of

¹ Vehicle length includes the vehicle along with the trailer it tows.

² Except certain roads open year round.

receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgment of the receipt of the appeal, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means [36 CFR 215.6(a)(4)(iii)].

In accordance with the April 24, 2006 order issued by the US District Court for the Missoula Division of the District of Montana in Case No. CV 03-119-M-DWM, only those individuals and organizations who provide comments **during the comment period** are eligible to appeal [36 CFR 215.11(a), 1993 version]. Each individual or representative from each organization submitting comments must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request.

Information Contact

The Stanislaus National Forest website (<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/stanislaus/projects/ohv>) includes the latest project updates, schedules for public meetings, and other information. To request additional information regarding this project, contact Sue Warren, Team Leader; Stanislaus National Forest; 19777 Greenley Road; Sonora, CA 95370; or, e-mail swarren@fs.fed.us (to ensure a timely response, it is important to include "Information Request" in the subject line).

Summary of the Decision

Table 2 Summary of the Decision and Reasons for the Decision

Component	Alternative 1 ¹ (Proposed Action)	Modification	Decision	Reasons for the Decision	Effects Disclosed	
Cross Country Travel	prohibited	no change	prohibited	manage recreation and protect resources	Alternative 1	
Parking allowed off NFTS	one vehicle length	no change	one vehicle length	provide safe access to dispersed recreation	Alternative 1	
Add existing unauthorized routes to the NFTS (miles)	151.64	drop 14.86	136.77	provide diversity of motorized recreation and protect resources	Alternative 1	
Convert NFTS roads to NFTS motorized trails (miles)	62.17	no change	62.17	provide diversity of motorized recreation	Alternative 1	
Change NFTS roads from Closed to Open (miles)	67.37	no change	67.37	provide diversity of motorized recreation	Alternative 1	
Change NFTS Roads from Open to Closed (miles)	45.98	no change	45.98	protect resources and reduce conflicts	Alternative 1	
Change NFTS roads from HLO to ALL (miles)	93.36	no change	93.36	provide diversity of motorized recreation	Alternative 1	
Change NFTS roads from ALL to HLO (miles)	400.56	no change	400.56	provide diversity of motorized recreation and reduce conflicts	Alternative 1	
Existing Closures and Restrictions	replaced	no change	replaced	provide consistent and up-to-date restrictions	Alternative 1	
Season of Use	Elevation 1	year round	no change	year round	provide year round access	Alternative 1
	Elevation 2	4/1-11/30	4/15-12/15 ²	4/15-12/15 ²	provide year round access where appropriate and protect resources with consistent dates across the Forest	Alternative 4 (15-days less at either end for resource protection)
	Elevation 3	5/15-11/30	4/15-12/15 ²	4/15-12/15 ²		
Wet Weather Closures (native surface routes)	during the season of use when 1" rain occurs in 24 hours and allowing 72 hours for drying	not implemented	not included	difficult to implement and enforce	Alternative 3	
Wheeled Over Snow Routes (miles)	105.92	drop 45.49	60.33	provide winter motorized recreation opportunity	Alternative 1	
Forest Plan Amendments (miles)	10.36	drop 7.13 miles consistent with additions to the NFTS above	3.28	provide diversity of motorized recreation and Forest Plan consistency	Alternative 1	

¹ The information presented here in this column, as described in EIS Chapter 2.02, does not reflect the decision

² Certain roads are open year round with effects disclosed under Alternative 3