

CHAPTER II

ALTERNATIVES BY TRAVEL PLANNING AREA

Introduction

This chapter provides information on how travel would be managed under each of the 7 alternatives by travel planning area. A “travel planning area” (TPA) is a subunit of the Forest with specific travel features and unique travel management goals and objectives. The Gallatin National Forest is divided into 39 TPA’s as displayed on Map II-1. Direction to be established for these areas include the following:

Establishment of Travel Planning Area Goals, Objectives, Standards and Guidelines.

For each travel planning area the Forest Service proposes a unique set of goals, objectives, standards and guidelines. Goals and objectives would serve the same purpose as they do forest-wide except that they are tailored to apply to specific locations. Goals and objectives set desired end results and measurable targets to be achieved with travel management activities within the travel planning area.

Similarly, standards and guidelines established for travel planning areas would serve the same purpose as forest-wide standards and guidelines, but again they are unique to that area. Standards and guidelines would be used to set sideboards on future projects and activities related to travel in order to insure protection of various resources. At the travel planning area scale, standards and/or guidelines are proposed due to a unique resource protection need in that area.

Designation of the Modes of Travel Permissible and Managed For In Specific Areas and on Specific Roads and Trails of the Gallatin National Forest

In the Travel Plan the Forest Service is proposing to identify and regulate the means of public travel across the Gallatin National Forest, including travel that occurs on specific roads and trails. The proposed travel planning area direction discussed in this chapter includes a map of the road and trail system within it and a table that specifically describes how each route would be managed under each alternative. Travel planning area direction also includes proposals for area and seasonal restrictions on snowmobiles. This chapter summarizes the amount of restriction proposed by alternative but does not display the location of these closures. Please refer to the forest-wide alternative maps for winter uses.

Overview of Travel Planning Area Direction

Summary of Opportunities

Each travel planning area includes tables, tied to objectives for summer and winter recreation use that display the miles of opportunity to be provided for each mode of travel by alternative. Essentially these tables summarize the proposed management of the roads and trails within that area. Public comments received on the draft alternatives, which were released in the summer of 2003, indicated that these tables were confusing. Tables II-1 and II-2 below summarize the road and trail opportunity by alternative for the Forest as a whole. An explanation of these tables follows. The same principles also apply to the tables included within each travel planning area discussion.

Table II – 1 Summary of Summer Opportunities By Miles							
All mileages are approximate							
Recreation Opportunity	Current	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 6	Alt. 7
Pleasure Driving							
Miles of Road	321	326	422	416	398	402	400
Backcountry Roads (4x4)							
Miles of Road	417	412	354	360	326	289	343
ATV							
Miles of Road	77	73	372	342	310	285	361
Miles of Trail	680	281	225	234	130	51	167
Total Miles	757	354	597	576	440	336	528
Motorcycle							
Miles of Road	3	8	14	7	9	0	14
Miles of Trail	69	457	393	194	149	0	238
Total Miles	72	465	407	201	158	0	252
Mountain Bike (Use Emphasized)							
Miles of Road	1071	1071	509	496	488	488	516
Miles of Trail	1313	1267	786	743	612	610	767
Total Miles	2384	2338	1295	1239	1100	1098	1283
Mountain Bike (Use Allowed)							
Miles of Trail	19	17	449	475	353	358	387
Pack and Saddle Stock (Use Emphasized)							
Miles of Trail	2113	2032	1766	1750	2016	2032	1795
Pack and Saddle Stock (Use Allowed)							
Miles of Trail	0	81	342	354	113	109	289

Table II – 1 Summary of Summer Opportunities By Miles							
All mileages are approximate							
Recreation Opportunity	Current	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 6	Alt. 7
Hiking (Use Emphasized)							
Miles of Trail	2107	1998	2044	2034	2052	2112	2015
Hiking (Use Allowed)							
Miles of Trail	0	117	139	149	128	63	141

Table II – 2 Summary of Winter Opportunities In Miles							
All mileages are approximate							
Recreation Opportunity	Current	Alt. 2	Alt. 3	Alt. 4	Alt. 5	Alt. 6	Alt. 7
Pleasure Driving (Plowed Road)							
Miles of Plowed Road	160	168	174	166	171	169	167
Snowmobiling							
Miles of Groomed Trail	320	333	374	346	336	327	344
Miles of Marked Trail	80	80	147	136	85	87	118
Total Miles	400	413	521	482	421	414	462
Cross-country Skiing							
Miles of Groomed Trail	48	50	71	79	52	54	52
Miles of Marked Trail	166	160	181	179	152	181	192
Total Miles	214	210	252	258	204	235	244

TABLES II-1 and II-2; EXPLANATION

While forest-wide summary tables are useful they often don't accurately reflect true differences among alternatives. It is important to understand that these tables are designed to portray the opportunity for a recreational experience. The "miles of opportunity" displayed in these tables are not the same as miles of route where use is allowed. For example, horses and street legal ATV's are allowed to use the Hyalite road, but that would not be included in the table as 10 miles of either horse or ATV opportunity because it does not provide that type of experience. The following is a general explanation of what the variations in each row of the table reflect.

Passenger Car Road. Alternatives 1 and 2 reflect current passenger car roads. The other alternatives show an increase due to improved maintenance of historical car roads that have reverted to backcountry roads. Alternatives 5, 6 and 7 retain more of these roads as backcountry roads the increase in mileage is less than for alternatives 3 and 4.

Backcountry Roads. The miles of opportunity identified in this row do not include the passenger car roads so the actual miles available for travel in a high clearance vehicle is the total of passenger car roads plus backcountry roads. Alternatives 3, 4 and 7 decrease backcountry roads somewhat because they have been upgraded to passenger car roads. The decrease in alternatives 5 and 6 generally reflects increasing efforts in these alternatives to reduce open road density.

ATV/Motorcycle Routes. The values in this row do not include passenger car roads which would be available to street legal ATV's and motorcycles. In the travel planning alternatives ATV use is not encouraged on passenger car roads but it is also not prohibited if street legal. ATV route mileage in the table includes some backcountry road that would also be considered an opportunity for 4 X 4, high clearance vehicles.

Table II-1 shows a large drop in ATV opportunity between Alternatives 1 and 2. The primary reason for this is that Alternative 1 includes some trails where the current visitor map shows no restrictions to ATV's regardless of whether they actually receive or are capable of such use (the current 1999 Gallatin Forest visitor map groups ATV's and motorcycles). Single track routes are currently not legally open under the Montana-Dakota OHV decision (Jan. 2001). Alternative 2 does not show motorcycle routes that are not suitable for ATV's as ATV routes.

Motorcycle Only Routes. This row represents additional miles of trail that would be open to motorcycles but not ATV's. Mountain biking, foot and horse travel are also managed for on these routes. Opportunities provided on these trails are generally for skilled riders. In this case, Alternative 2 shows a large increase over Alternative 1. This is the reverse of what happened between these alternatives for ATV's. The current visitor map groups ATV's and motorcycles where Alternative 2 attempts to split out those trails that are only suitable for motorcycle use. In comparing alternatives this row shows a declining emphasis on motorized trail use from Alternative 2 to Alternative 6. Alternative 7, the current preferred alternative, would provide about 54% of what is available today.

Mountain Bike. This row identifies routes where mountain biking is considered an emphasis (E) for management. Mountain biking is allowed on additional Forest trails in all alternatives as well as on passenger car roads. The significant drop in miles from Alternatives 1 and 2 to Alternatives 3 and 4 is due to a travel planning distinction being used between trails where a use will be emphasized (actively managed for) versus routes where a use is allowed (accepted but not managed for). Only those routes where mountain bike use is emphasized were included in the totals.

The drop in miles from alternatives 3 and 4 to alternatives 5 and 6 reflect a mountain bike prohibition within the Hyalite/Porcupine-Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area. Alternative 7 restricts mountain bikes on some trails within this area but not all.

Snowmobiles. As the table indicates snowmobile opportunity on groomed and marked routes did not vary much between alternatives. There are differences among alternatives however in the amount of area that would be restricted to snowmobiles (see Alternative Maps). In travel planning snowmobiles would not be restricted to designated routes as is summer motorized use.

Cross Country Ski/Snowshoe. This row reflects trail opportunities where skiing and snowshoeing are a management emphasis (E) (i.e. trails would be cleared, marked and/or groomed). There are no trails in any alternative where this use is prohibited.

Pack and Saddle Stock. Generally most all trails are open to pack and saddle stock in all alternatives. There are however some trails in certain alternatives where stock use is prohibited or tightly restricted for facility protection. The drop in opportunity from alternatives 1 and 2 to alternatives 3 and 4 mostly represents that stock use is not a management emphasis (E) on trails that receive motorized or heavy mountain bike use. Stock use is still permissible. In alternatives 5 and 6 the amount of opportunity displayed increases because there are more restrictions on motorized trail use and mountain bike use and therefore there is a corresponding shift in emphasis to pack and saddle stock use.

Hiking. In travel planning there are no restrictions considered on hikers in any alternative. Opportunities remain about the same. The variations within the table reflect differences in management emphasis for other uses (e.g. ATV, motorcycle, mountain biking) that may diminish hiking experiences on some trails.

Seasonal Restrictions

The route tables included with each travel planning area section also identify any seasonal restrictions that may apply to various uses. The following tables provide the rationale for the variety of restricted periods for certain activities.

Table II-3. Seasonal restrictions to protect facilities (roads and trails) from damage during spring break up.

Date Restricted	Activity Restricted	Rationale
April 1 – May 15	Wheeled vehicles, mountain bikes and stock on designated routes	Facility protection, erosion control (generally low elevation and/or south slopes)
April 1 – June 1	Wheeled vehicles, mountain bikes and stock on designated routes	Facility protection, erosion control (generally low elevation and/or south slopes)
April 1 - June 15	Wheeled vehicles, mountain bikes and stock on designated routes	Facility protection, erosion control (generally mid-elevation)
April 1 – July 15	Wheeled vehicles, mountain bikes and stock on designated routes	Facility protection, erosion control (generally high elevation and/or north slopes)

Table II-4. Seasonal Restrictions for Winter Routes and Areas

Date Restricted	Activity Restricted	Rationale
December 2 – March 31	Wheeled vehicles, vehicles wider than 50 inches including snow coaches and snow cats on groomed or marked snowmobile or ski trails.	Trail surface protection, user safety
December 20 – March 31	Wheeled vehicles, vehicles wider than 50 inches including snow coaches and snow cats on groomed or marked snowmobile or ski trails.	Trail surface protection, user safety.
March 15 – December 1	Snowmobiles in open areas.	Grizzly bear den emergence, wintering wildlife.

Date Restricted	Activity Restricted	Rationale
June 1 – December 1	Snowmobiles in open areas.	Wildlife security, endangered species, moose habitat, and erosion control, recreation conflict.
October 15 – December 1	Snowmobiles in open areas.	Wildlife security, endangered species, moose habitat, and erosion control, recreation conflict.

Table II-5. Seasonal Restrictions for Summer Motorized Routes.

Date Restricted	Activity Restricted	Rationale
August 15 – spring open date (5/15,6/1, 6/15, or 7/15)	Motorized wheeled vehicles on designated routes (roads or trails)	Grizzly bear foraging in WBP habitat, elk security, user conflicts during hunting seasons
Tuesday after Labor Day – spring open date (5/15, 6/1, 6/15 or 7/15)	Motorized wheeled vehicles on designated routes (roads or trails)	Grizzly bear foraging in WBP habitat, elk security, user conflicts during hunting seasons
September 15 – spring open date (5/15, 6/1, 6/15 or 7/15)	Motorized wheeled vehicles on designated routes (roads or trails)	Grizzly bear foraging in WBP habitat, elk security, user conflicts during hunting seasons
October 15 – spring open dates (5/15, 6/1, 6/15 or 7/15)	Motorized wheeled vehicles on designated routes (roads or trails)	Big game security, user conflicts during hunting seasons
December 2 – spring open date (5/15, 6/1, 6/15 or 7/15)	Motorized wheeled vehicles on designated routes (roads or trails)	Wildlife security, conversion to winter trails for xc ski or snowmobile.
May 15 – June 15 or July 15	Motorized wheeled vehicles on open roads or trails	Elk calving.
Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays July 15 – September 15	Motorcycles on designated open routes	User safety/congestion

Table II-6. Seasonal Restrictions for Summer Non-Motorized Trails

Date Restricted	Activity Restricted	Rationale
Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays July 15 – September 15	Mountain Bikes	User safety/congestion
Yearlong	Pack Stock	Resource protection/erosion and user safety/congestion
Yearlong	Mountain Bikes	User safety, Wilderness Study Area constraints

