

# South End Motorized Recreation Management Project

## Summary of the Proposed Action

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*February 28, 2010*

In 2005 the U.S.D.A. Forest Service adopted Final Rule for Travel Management. The Travel Management Rule requires that each national forest designate routes<sup>1</sup> and areas that are open to motor vehicle use. Designations are made by class of vehicle and time of year on a motor vehicle use map (MVUM). Upon the creation of a MVUM, motorized travel off of designated routes and outside designated areas would then be prohibited.

In the spring of 2008, the Colville National Forest adopted Forest Plan Amendment #31 – Clarification of Forest Plan Direction Regarding Motor Vehicle Use, and issued a forest-wide Motor Vehicle Use Map. The 2008 MVUM did not include any new trail construction nor existing unauthorized roads<sup>2</sup>.

### **Final Rule for Travel Management**

‘Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use’ (Travel Management Rule) was published in the Federal Register (Nov. 9, 2005). This rule is reflected in the Federal Code of Regulations (CFR) at 36 CFR 212, 251, 261, and 295. Both the Federal Register and the Code of Federal Regulations are available at the Government Printing Office website ([www.gpoaccess.gov/index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/index.html)).

The Travel Management Rule does not address over-snow vehicles or motorized wheelchairs.

### **Purpose and Need**

Located closest to the population center of Spokane, the south-central part of the Forest receives a very high level of recreation use. High use areas include the North Fork Chewelah Creek, North Fork and Middle Fork of Calispell Creek and Tacoma Creek. Resource damage is currently high in portions of the project area due to uncontrolled motor vehicle use, proliferation of cross-country motor vehicle trails, and heavily-used dispersed camping sites in sensitive areas.

Environmental problems that have been observed in this area include eroding soil, damage to vegetation and meadows, damage to stream banks, impaired water quality, damage to fish habitat, impacts to wildlife habitat and use of the area, spread of noxious weeds, and damage to sensitive plant and wildlife habitat. Livestock management is made more difficult due to the proliferation of motor vehicle trails. Motor vehicle trails allow cattle to move more easily to places such as riparian areas where they cause or contribute to unacceptable resource damage.

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<sup>1</sup> Routes may include both roads and trails.

<sup>2</sup> Unauthorized roads are roads that are not part of the National Forest Road and Trail, and are not temporary roads. These routes are not managed as part of the designated transportation system. This includes historic roads and abandoned travelways.

The primary objective of this proposal is to manage and direct motorized recreation in the south-central part of the Colville National Forest. The project goals are to

- Designate an improved system of routes for off-highway vehicles (OHV) that would provide for public safety, protect natural resources, and minimize user conflicts.
- Address impacts from dispersed camping accessed by motorized vehicles in high impact areas.
- Develop a system that can be maintained to standard within anticipated budgets.

### **Off-high Vehicle Access**

Based on public comments , this project emphasized the development of a system that would:

- Link the communities to the OHV opportunities. Since County roads ultimately link the Forest to the communities, the Forest Service looked at linking the OHV routes on the National Forest to the County Roads that allow OHVs.
- Provide long loop rides. According to the riders, they like to ride loops ranging from about 25-75 miles in length. No one watershed would provide long enough loops; in order to create long loops, the Forest Service looked at OHV routes that link the various watersheds together.
- Allow OHV access to camping sites. Many riders camp nearby, and they want to be able to begin and end their rides directly from their campsites. The Forest Service looked at ensuring that popular camping roads were included in the OHV routes.
- Trailheads. The Forest Service recognized a need to provide trailheads.

### **Dispersed Camping**

While the public provided no comments on dispersed camping, the Forest Service had identified dispersed camping as significant source of resource degradation. Under the current Motor Vehicle Use Map, vehicles are allowed to leave open roadways to access dispersed campsites – for a distance of 300 feet from the centerline. Some roads are less than 300 feet from perennial streams (e.g., North Fork Chewelah, North Fork & Middle Fork Calispell, Tacoma, Cusick, Ruby Creeks). Most of the campsites are accessed by undesignated spur roads off the main roads -- some are historic roads, and some are user-created roads.

The Forest Service looked at various ways to manage dispersed camping in some areas to reduce environmental impacts.

## The Proposed Action

### Off-highway Vehicles

Currently the planning area has about 460 miles of motorized vehicle routes. The following table summarizes the current and proposed Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). The proposed action would increase total miles of motorized road and trail by about 3%.

**Table 1. Comparison Current Motor Vehicle Use Map with MVUM Upon Completion of the Proposed Action.**

Motorized Vehicle Designation	Miles current MVUM	Miles Proposed MVUM
<b>Routes open only to motorcycles (year round)</b> Batey-Bould Trail System	<b>41</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Routes open only to vehicles 50 inches or less (off-highway vehicles, all terrain vehicles)</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>
Roads open year-round	0	11
Roads open only part of the year	0	13
<b>Routes open only to highway-legal vehicles</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>157</b>
Roads open year-round	99	38
Roads open only part of the year	248	119
<b>Routes open to all types of vehicles including OHV</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>251</b>
Roads open year-round	6	66
Roads open only part of the year	57	185
	461	474

This proposal would link all the primary OHV use areas so that riders can go from Calispell all the way to Ruby Creek; from there, existing routes can take them to the Heritage Lake area. Using county and National Forest Routes, riders can go from near Cusick to Chewelah. Trailheads would be developed in the North Fork Chewelah, Calispell and Tacoma Creek areas.

**Table 2. Summary of Proposed Activities**

Proposed Actions	Miles
Roads that are currently open on the MVUM that would be closed or removed from the MVUM	1.2
NFS roads that are currently closed that would be opened	6.7
Unauthorized roads/user created trails that would be added	5.7
New construction	1.7

Roads proposed for 'closing' are FR2600326 (Tacoma Creek), 2615451 (Tacoma Creek) and 3116165 (Smalle Creek).

- Road 2600326 is 0.12 miles long. It is near Tacoma Creek and is eroding excessively. Currently the road sign is located in the wrong place.
- Road 2615451 is 0.66 miles long. It appears on the MVUM as open, but is in fact grown closed. Currently the road sign is located in the wrong place.
- 3116165 is 0.42 miles long. It appears on the MVUM as open, but is, in fact, closed with berms at each end.

Some aspects of implementing the proposed action are contingent upon other actions.

- Connecting the Middle Fork Calispell OHV trails with the Boyer Ridge Road (FR 3520) requires an easement with Washington State Dept of Natural Resources.
- The proposal to link FR 3116500 to FR 3118001 requires an easement on private land.
- The proposals surrounding Phillips Lake require improvements in the riparian conditions at the lake.

In addition, money to implement the proposal is not currently budgeted or assured.

## Dispersed Camping

The Forest has recognized dispersed camping as a one element that is damaging sensitive resources for some time. The damage observed includes:

- compaction, runoff and erosion from campsites,
- damage to surrounding vegetation including both meadow vegetation and trees,
- compaction and erosion from roads accessing the campsites,
- people breaking down the stream banks and modifying streambeds,
- improper disposal of human waste, and
- litter.

The Forest recognizes that, in many areas, livestock grazing and dispersed camping has a cumulative effect on resources.

The planning area has about 240 inventoried dispersed campsites. The Interdisciplinary Team (ID team) identified the specific areas where dispersed camping is damaging resources, or has a high potential to damage resources. Based on the ID Teams analysis, the most of the resource damage is caused by campsites located too close to the creeks, user-created routes to the campsites, and the sheer density of campsites in some areas. The proposed action would control camping near about 47 miles of road.

### Chewelah Planning Area

- The Twelvemile Creek and Homestead Meadow area – parts of Forest Roads 9535 and 9535300 for a total of about 2.8 miles.
- The North Fork Chewelah including Drummond Creek to Calispell Basin and Hartill Creek to Hartill Meadows – County Road 2998 and parts of Forest Roads 9521, 9521015, 9521099, 9521160, 9521164, 9521169, 9521190, 9521198, 9521230, 9521900 for a total of about 11.5 miles.
- The Phillips Lake area – Forest Road 2521120 for a total of about 0.5 miles.

### Calispell Planning Area

- The lower part of the North Fork of Calispell Creek, the Middle Fork Calispell Creek, and Bartlett Road –County Roads 2030 and 2022; and parts of Forest Roads 3520, 3540, 4370004, 4370020, and 4370470 for a total of about 11.7 miles
- Winchester Creek road to the old bridge – Forest Road 9517 for about 3.6 miles.

### **Tacoma Planning Area**

- The Cusick Creek area – County Road 2441 and part of Forest Roads 3128030, 3128070, 3128140 for a total of about 5.2 miles.
- The middle portion of Ruby Creek – Forest Roads 2700004 and 2700008 for a total of about 2.9 miles.
- The Tacoma Creek area including Sportsmens Pond – County Road 2389 and Forest Roads 2600010, 2600301, 2600326, 2600346, 2600350 for a total of about 9.0 miles.

About 175 campsites are located along these roads..

The South End Project proposes to designate campsites along these roads. Camping would only be allowed at designated sites. Motorized vehicles, including off-highway vehicles, would be limited to the roadway. Routes to campsites and parking for campsites would be designated on the ground – probably using carsonite markers.

South End would designate 130 campsites along the restricted roads. About half would be designated essentially 'as is' and about half would require restoration before they could be designated. About 20 new sites would be developed and designated. About 40 campsites would be closed to further use.

The public would continue to be able to use dispersed campsites along all other routes, and would continue to be able to travel up to 300 feet from the centerline of the open roads for the purposes of dispersed camping.