
APPENDIX F ROADS ANALYSIS PROCESS

Introduction	F - 1
Roads Analysis	F - 1

Introduction

This Appendix provides detail on the analysis of the road systems process that was used in Forest Plan Revision. In August 1999, the Washington Office of the USDA Forest Service published Miscellaneous Report FS-643, "Roads Analysis: Informing Decisions about Managing the National Forest Transportation System" (USDA 1999). The objective of roads analysis is to provide decision makers with critical information to develop road systems that are safe and responsive to public needs and desires, affordable and efficiently managed, have minimal negative ecological effects on the land, and are in balance with available funding for needed management actions. Roads analysis is not a decision process nor does it constitute a federal action. It will serve to guide future project-scale analyses by identifying conditions, changes, and effects relevant to implementing forest plans.

In January 2001, the agency published the Transportation Final Rule and Administrative Policy, authorizing units to use, as appropriate, the road analysis procedure embodied in FS-643 to assist land managers in making major road management decisions (USDA 2001).

Roads Analysis

Process

Roads analysis is a six-step process. The steps are designed to be sequential with the understanding that the process may require feedback among steps, over time, as an analysis matures. The amount of time and effort spent on each step differs by project, based on specific situations and available information.

The process provides a set of possible issues and analysis questions for which the answers can inform choices about road system management. Decision makers and analysts determine the relevance of each question, incorporating public participation as deemed necessary. The six steps are:

- Step 1. Setting up the Analysis
- Step 2. Describing the Situation
- Step 3. Identifying Issues
- Step 4. Assessing Benefits, Problems and Risks
- Step 5. Describing Opportunities and Setting Priorities
- Step 6. Reporting

Products

The product of a roads analysis is a report for decision makers and the public that documents the information and analyses used to identify opportunities and set priorities for future national forest road systems. Included in the report is a map displaying the known road system for the analysis area, and the risks, needs, and opportunities for the Forest. The Roads Analysis Process Report is available online at: http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl/nepa_planning/plan_revision/rap/pubdocs.html

The report will:

- Identify needed and unneeded roads
- Identify road-associated environmental and public safety risks
- Identify site-specific priorities and opportunities for road improvements and decommissioning
- Identify areas of special sensitivity or any unique resource values

Key Analysis Results and Findings

As this analysis is at a broad, Forest-wide scale, the road system as a whole was reviewed. Site-specific improvements will be identified in smaller scale analyses. In general, the transportation system on the Green Mountain National Forest is currently meeting the strategic intent of the guidance in the 1987 Forest Plan (USDA 1987). As with most road systems, however, there is always room for improvement. The main issues are related to budget, road management, the environment, recreational opportunities *and forest access*. Improvements to forest jurisdiction roads as well as providing financial assistance to State, local, and other federal agencies could be implemented with increased budgets. Improving road conditions would in turn improve resource concerns, such as reducing sediment delivery into waterways. Specific results and findings are:

- The Green Mountain National Forest receives approximately \$240,000 annually from the Eastern Region of the USDA Forest Service for road maintenance, construction, and reconstruction. The Forest Service estimate of the most efficient budget level is \$400,000. The Green Mountain National Forest cannot meet maintenance requirements of the existing road system with current budgets.
- 57% of the roads on the Green Mountain National Forest are Forest Service system roads; 43% are state, local or private jurisdiction. The Green Mountain National Forest should continue to work forming cooperative agreements with local governments provided the additional needed funds are made available.
- Some roads are not listed under the appropriate jurisdictions. A preliminary review of the database shows roads listed under questionable jurisdiction. This was based on data that had not been updated as the Forest acquired legal jurisdiction on roads. During research for this analysis, the Forest Service lands staff reviewed and updated some of the jurisdiction information in the database. Efforts to update and correct the data files will continue.
- The Green Mountain Forest is currently following the strategic intent of the Forest Plan. Management decisions at the project, watershed, and Forest scale meet guidance in the Forest Plan.
- There are potential environmental impacts from the road system that need to be prioritized and evaluated for future analyses at a sub-Forest level scale. This roads analysis process identified potential high risk areas for the environment; however, not all high-risk areas are identified at this Forest-scale review.
- ATV/Snowmobile and Mountain Bike recreational users of the Forest would like to see more designated trails for their use. At this time there are no designated ATV trails and very little designated areas for mountain bike users. Snowmobile enthusiasts would support additional trails on the Forest.
- An extensive transportation network serves the Green Mountain National Forest. Although the existing road system is meeting current access needs, the Forest Service could do a better job of providing access points for dispersed recreation, providing additional trailhead parking, and allowing access to water bodies for the elderly or disabled.
- Decommissioning of unneeded roads (permanent closure) is a controversial issue. In general, residents and road system users oppose decommissioning roads, but would support closing roads and preserving them for use in the future should the need arise.

Recommendations and Opportunities

Specific opportunities identified in this analysis are:

- Conduct a Roads Management Objectives (RMO) analysis on the entire road network to determine needs and deficiencies. Prioritize the list of needs to optimize the use of limited funds. Once complete, the proper maintenance level for each road segment will be determined and assigned. Roads creating environmental risk which provide limited benefit should be considered for closure or decommission.
- Conduct a Roads Analysis Process (RAP) at the watershed or project scale to determine if roadway construction and maintenance efforts are consistent with the intent of the revised Forest Plan.
- Inventory and evaluate road signs, and install signage that meets Forest Service or highway standards.
- Assist towns in maintenance of road system. This could include installation of proper drainage structures including ditches, surface treatments, and snow removal through cooperative agreements.
- Seek and obtain National Forest System (NFS) funds to assist towns in road maintenance and reconstruction.
- Seek and obtain other funding sources such as Capital Improvement or Road and Trail Deposit Fund (10% funds).
- Relocate or reconstruct segments of roads that do not have adequate buffer strips or that constantly wash out.
- Review existing special use permit roads to see that road construction and maintenance requirements protect soil and water.
- Conduct studies at transportation facilities near recreational areas to determine if adequate parking and access exist, and where additional facilities should be located if needed.

Literature Cited

USDA Forest Service. 1999. "Roads Analysis: Informing Decisions about Managing the National Forest Transportation System." FS-643

USDA Forest Service. 2001. "Transportation Final Rule and Administrative Policy." FS-643.

USDA Forest Service. 1987. Forest Land and Resource Management Plan: Green Mountain National Forest.