

Appendix G: Response to Comments

Comments received during the comment period:		
Comment #	Name	Organization
1	Kathy Turnham	
2a, 2b	Greg Weix	
3a, 3b, 3c	Jerome Blunck	
4a, 4b, 4c	Larry Brown	
5	Erik Broberg	
6	Joe Cottita	
7	Michael and Kathi Mansur	
8	Jim McCollam	
9	Randy Porter	
10	Mark Dustin	
11a, 11b	David Dempsey	
12a-12d	Clint Brown	
13	Ken Reitsma	
14	Neil Hamilton	
15a, 15b	Bob Sparky	OHVCC
16	Bill Detherage	SingleTrax Off-Road MC Assn
17a, 17b	Scott Jones	
18	Jim and Bridget Marler	
19a-19z, 19aa-19zz, 19aaa-19qqq	Doug Abelin, Don Gordon, Ken Salo, George Wirt	CTVA Action
20, 72a-72h, 73a-73f, 77a-77k, 78a-78c, 81, 84, 93, 98	Joanne Spivak	New Mexico Off Highway Vehicle Alliance
21, 26	Barry Kraye	
22	Johnny Romero	
23	Mike Sanchez	
24a-24f	Robert Clark	
25	Bud Latven	
27	Larry Krug	
28	Benton Phelps	
29a-29h, 100	Cliff Meier	NW4W
30a, 30b, 43	Tod Stevenson	Department of Game and Fish
31a-31f	Cassie Holmgren	First of 3789 form letters generated by a Center for Biological Diversity request. All letters received are in the project record.
32	David Witt	
33	MK Ray	
34	Trish Meyer	
35	Meredith Long	
36	Anita Walsh	

Comments received during the comment period:		
Comment #	Name	Organization
37a, 37b	Sharon Hanna	Torrance County Archaeological Society
38a-38e	Sharon Hanna	Personal Comment
39a, 39b	Ramona Gomez	
40	Constance Griffin	
41	Malcolm MacPherson	
42a-42m, 45	Jerri Trujillo	
44	Peggy Norton	
46	Kathleen Davies	
47	John Feeney	
48	William Kneedler	
49	Sherry Lewis	
50	Dave Potter	
51	Arnold Martelli	
52	Lee Winslow	
53	Donn Nay	
54	Mary Hebblewhite	
55	John Otter	
56	Irene Lopez	
57	Stephen Elston	
58a, 58b	Steve Sanchez	
59	Roger Peterson	New Mexico Natural History Institute
60, 112	J. Capozzelli	
61a-61e, 62-71, 79a-79g, 80a-80e, 83	Mark Werkmeister	New Mexico Off Highway Vehicle Alliance
74a-74d	Richard Simms	
75a-75f	Mark Lopes	Form Letter/NM Wilderness Society
76a-76c	Paul Davis	
82a-82t	Bob Funkhouser	
85	Joanne Spivak	Personal Comment
86a-86f	Miranda Gray	
87a-87q, 113	Cyndi Tuell	Center for Biological Diversity
88a-88c, 89, 90a-90b, 91	Robert Telepak	
92a-92h	Robert Norton	
94-96, 97a-97e	Mark Wolf	
99	Chris Lish	
101, 102	Tony Louderbough	
103a-103h, 104-110	Terry Rust	
111	Tashia Tucker	Master form letter of 18,510 submitted by the Wilderness Society. All letters are in the project record.

Comments received after the comment period ended: h		
Comment #	Name	Organization
114a, 114b	Delilah Walsh	Socorro County
115a, 115b	Joe Cottita	
116	John Schnorr	Wisconsin Off-Highway Vehicle Association

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Response to Comments

What follows are individual or summarized comments for each of the subject codes identified through the content analysis process, as well as the response to those comments. If numerous similar comments were received on a topic, they were summarized into a single comment and response. Comments have been edited in this version for length, but all original comments were reviewed by the ID team and the responsible official. Copies of the original comment submissions are available in the project record. This response to comment document was prepared as an aid to the responsible official in considering comments.

Alternatives Comments

This section is a summary of the comments received regarding preferences and concerns for the alternatives described in the EA.

<i>Comment #</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Miscellaneous Alternative Comments	
92d	I am totally against taking roads proposed to be open for all vehicles in Alternative 1 and only allowing their use by vehicles 65" in width or less in Alternative 3. These roads are currently passable for full size 4x4 vehicle and should be designated for their use too. These include Forest Roads 415, 205, 205A2, the north/south Unauthorized Road to be Designated, 205AZ5, 422I, 422I1, 528, 528D, 528D1 in the Manzano Unit and 167F,G,H, 126C, 458T5, 458T7 in the Gallinas Unit.
Response: We have noted your preferences for designating these routes open for all vehicles. Alternative 3 was developed in response to requests for a motorized trail system. Variations are analyzed in the Recreation section beginning on p. 73 of the EA.	
19d	We ask that management for sharing of these lands for multiple-use be selected as the preferred alternative. Sharing would include a 50/50 sharing and equal opportunity of nonmotorized to motorized trails.
Response: In the preamble to the Rule, the Department asserts that the "Provision of recreational opportunities and access needs are two of several criteria the responsible official must consider under § 212.55 of the final rule in designating routes for motor vehicle use. National Forests are popular with many Americans for many uses. It is not possible to accommodate all user demands on all National Forests while also protecting water quality, wildlife habitat, and other natural resources that people come to enjoy. Forest Service managers must balance user interests against the other criteria." Federal Register /Vol. 70, No. 216 pg. 68271	
92a	It is disheartening to learn that what is being called Travel Management in "Alternative 1: Proposed Action," as well as Alternatives 3 and 4 are, in reality, massive Travel Elimination.
Response: We have noted your concern.	
92c	The Forest Service fails to provide justification that the quantity of road closures is necessary in the Mountainair Ranger District in any of the Alternatives 1, 3, and 4. "The Forest Service recognizes motorized use on national forests and grasslands as a legitimate and appropriate way for people to enjoy these lands." Neither the "Proposed Action" or other Alternative options contribute to adequate options to enjoy this activity. More motorized opportunities are needed. On page 18 is a comparison of proposed changes to the Mountainair Road System. Alternative 1 and Alternative 3 include new opportunities in the following Designation Types: "miles of closed roads changed to open roads", "miles of decommissioned roads added to the system", "miles of unauthorized roads added to the system", "miles of road reroutes". The Mountainair Ranger District should adopt and designate all of these additional routes, including the largest amount of motorized dispersed camping corridor miles.

Comment #	Comment
Response: The analysis of all system roads can be found in the Travel Analysis Process (TAP). We have noted your preferences.	
103d	6) These roads are clearly identified on (printed) page 134 of the EA (Alternative 2 no-action) as "USFS System Roads". They are then shown on the EA action Alternative 1, 3, and 4 maps as "system road not designated" without adequate supporting evidence for the change in status.
Response: The alternatives were developed in response to public comments gathered during the scoping period. The supporting evidence for not designating these roads can be found in the TAP. Each road was reviewed by the ID Team and considered for their benefits and resource concerns. Additional information was obtained during public involvement and is available in the project record.	
60	Alternative 3, which includes a 25-mile motorized trail system that would put all of the district's hiking trails at risk [...] Enforcement of rules is very difficult on these narrow, dangerous trails, making them easy targets for lawless activities. Choose Alt 4 with recommendations from CBD.
Response: We have noted your preferences and concerns.	
Alternative 1 (Proposed Action)	
13	This project's Proposed Action will designate a motorized road and trail system that provides for public access and motorized recreation travel on the Mountainair District. "Designation will include class of vehicle, including ATVs and motorcycles, and time of year for motor vehicle use. The decision will result in the publication of a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). After the MVUM has been released, travel off the designated system will be prohibited unless authorized by permit." I am opposed to these changes. The public should be allowed continued access to these areas.
Response: We have noted your concern.	
42a	Alternative No. 1 is too restrictive all the way around.
Response: We have noted your concern.	
Alternative 2 (No Action)	
42e	As the assessment stated, you are not considering Alternative No. 2 as there is a need to reduce the number of miles of road that are adjacent water courses, so there is little room for argument that you will be closing some roads.
Response: Alternative 2 road system can be selected for designation and the deciding officer is considering that alternative in addition to the action alternatives. The need to reduce the number of miles adjacent to stream courses is only one consideration used in developing the proposed action and alternatives.	

Comment #	Comment
87h	<p>The No Action Alternative, Alternative 2, represents the 471.4 miles of National Forest System roads on the Mountainair Ranger District open to general motorized use, plus unrestricted crosscountry travel throughout 66% of the district. Forest Service 2010:12. In our prescoping and scoping comments (February 17, 2009 and May 1, 2009), we asked that the baseline used to establish the No Action alternative be limited to system routes that have gone through NEPA analysis and have NEPA documentation. We provided a spreadsheet to identify NEPA documentation for all putative system routes. Our request was not addressed in scoping or in the DEA. While we understand that NEPA documents may not be available for every system route, we do expect that some effort be made to provide the public with some documentation of the system routes used for baseline analysis.</p>
<p>Response: The Cibola National Forest used the Region 3 guidance provided in “Guide for Collecting Route Information to Implement the Travel Management Rule” (Travel Management Inventory Subteam 2008) to determine the baseline road system considered in the No Action alternative. In particular, Appendix G of this document provides the direction for considering the baseline road system to the forest system roads that are currently in Infra.</p>	
70	<p>ERROR: The EA does not include the 106 miles of system trails on the Mountainair Ranger District in its No Action Alternative. This omission of trail mileage affects the accuracy of the baseline condition presented by the No Action Alternative.</p> <p>DISCUSSION: The EA specifically left Forest Service System trails out of the No Action Alternative. The EA states on page 7: “Motorized cross-country travel is allowed by the forest plan outside of the Manzano Mountain Wilderness, which is closed to all motorized and mechanized uses. There are no trails designed and maintained for motorized use on the district.”</p> <p>It is understood that there no trails designed and maintained for motorized use on the District. And it is also understood that a portion of the existing trail mileage on the Mountainair District is in the Manzano Mountain Wilderness. But that is very distinctly not the same as there not being ANY trails outside of the Manzano Mountain Wilderness. The EA itself, on page 77, makes it clear that there are trails outside of the Wilderness and that motorized use is currently allowed on those trails (emphasis added): “There are 106 miles of trails on the district. This represents 17 percent of the total miles of system trails located on the Cibola National Forest. All of the trails are located in the Manzano Division and they either lead to or are connected to trails that lead into Manzano Mountain Wilderness. None of the system trails are managed for motorized vehicles, however, motorized trail use is only prohibited within the wilderness. Occasionally motorized trail use has been observed on trails outside of the wilderness.”</p> <p>In careful examination of maps, there are at least two trail segments that, although they connect to trails that go into the Wilderness, would serve as motorized trail loops. Specifically, they are the trail segment that connect Ox Canyon and Box Canyon trailheads and the trail segment that connects the Fourth of July and Albuquerque trailheads. Neither of these trail segments penetrate the Wilderness boundary so both could be utilized as motorized loop trails. The trails, even though some are located outside of the Wilderness boundary, and are currently open to motorized travel, are not included in any of the alternatives presented.</p>

Comment #	Comment
	<p>This includes the No Action Alternative. The EA makes the intent of the No Action Alternative very clear. Under Alternative 2 on page 12, it spells it out exactly (again, emphasis added):</p> <p>“National Environmental Policy Act regulations require analysis of the no action alternative. The “no action” alternative is not compliant with the Travel Management Rule that requires designation of roads, trails and areas and, therefore, cannot be selected. However, the “no action” serves as a baseline for comparing the effects of other alternatives (40 CFR 1502.14(d) and Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, 23.1). No action is the continuation of existing uses for motor vehicle use on the Mountainair Ranger District , thus the changes identified under alternatives 1, 3, and 4 would not be proposed under this alternative.”</p> <p>Therefore, all motorized routes, including both roads and trails must be included in the No Action Alternative. The other reason to include all of the trails outside of the Wilderness boundary is that the presence of those trails is presented as germane to road density and its affect on wildlife and wildlife habitat in the EA. The EA, on page 27, make it clear that both roads and trails are being considered in the wildlife analysis: “For the purpose of the wildlife species and habitat analysis, route density is defined as all motorized routes, including roads (system, unauthorized, and decommissioned) and trails located outside of Manzano Mountain Wilderness.”</p> <p>To reiterate, the trail mileage outside of the Wilderness boundary has been excluded from the No Action alternative and the accompanying maps of the EA. The trails outside of the Wilderness boundary are currently legal for motorized use. They should be included in the No Action Alternative and analysis because:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) They are part of the current baseline condition that is the basis for comparison to the other alternatives. 2) The wildlife species and habitat analysis treats roads and trails the same for density calculation and its impacts. <p>RESOLUTION: Include the mileage of all current trails outside of the Wilderness boundary in the No Action Alternative. Reflect those miles in all descriptions, tables, analysis, and environmental consequences. The ability of the Deciding Officer to make a rational decision on Travel Management depends on having complete and accurate information and analysis. Excluding the trail mileage of trails that occur outside of the Wilderness boundary creates an inaccurate depiction of the existing condition and analyzed parameters that significantly affect the information presented to the Deciding Officer and ultimately the decision.</p>
	<p>Response: The two segments that this comment references are each less than two miles in length. They are both single track trails, and were not designed for and have not been maintained to meet motor vehicle standards (in this case motorcycle trail standards.) While there is not a closure in place, the recorded management in the trails database and the trail management objectives constitute a previous decision and there is no change proposed to the management of those trails that would be subject to NEPA analysis.</p>
<p>Alternative 3</p>	

Comment #	Comment
92h	I urge that the US Forest Service adopt Alternative 3, with modifications. Allow full size vehicles on all roads to be designated open, including those proposed only for vehicles less than 65" in width. Full size vehicles have been able to use most of these routes in the past. Mapping data previously provided confirmed their suitability for use by a full size 4x4. Add the roads in the Manzano and Gallinas Units that I have cited above to those to be designated as Open.
Response: We have noted your suggestions. Most of the roads shown as trails for vehicles 65" or less in width are available as roads for all vehicles in Alternative 1.	
89	<p>PROCESS ERROR: There is no scientific, factual, or other justification in EA the action Alternatives 1, 3, or 4 to eliminate forest road 253A from consideration as a motorized route to remain open to the public.</p> <p>DISCUSSION:</p> <p>1) Forest Road 253A travels between Forest Roads 253 and 244 in the central area of the Manzano Division.</p> <p>2) This road was clearly identified by myself in Scoping Comments submitted for the NM4W to the Mountainair Ranger District on April 28, 2009 as a road of very good OHV recreational potential that should be kept open to motorized travel. In addition, it provides a loop route connecting the dispersed camping area along 253 to the FS Red Cloud Campground.</p> <p>3) I believe this road was eliminated from consideration in the EA by a purposeful elimination as a road for consideration through the TAP. This is not legal under NEPA. I have described the reasons this is illegal in my "comment letter #1 and comment letter #4" which have been submitted separately. Please refer to them for additional details.</p> <p>4) Although the EA does not document this "fact", I was personally told by a high ranking Mountainair Ranger District official (KL) at the March 9, 2010 meeting in Mountainair that this road was eliminated because it followed the course of the only perennial watershed in the Manzano Division. This is not true. 253A is near the watershed of Canon Colorado. Page 67 of the EA clearly states, "Of the 41 subwatersheds, only Tajique Creek in the Arroyo de Tajique watershed is perennial." Tajique Creek is many miles to the north of road 253A.</p> <p>RESOLUTION: The decision maker should choose Alternative 3 and add FS road 253A from Alternative 2 to the roads kept open to motor vehicle use.</p>
Response: The process applied to determine whether or not to designate this route is the same as that applied for all other routes. The TAP identified road 253A as being at high risk for sediment delivery, soil productivity, and invasive plants. Additionally, its proximity to the channel of Cañon Colorado, which frequently flows, raised resource concerns. Alternative routes are considered in this area, particularly in Alternatives 1,2 and 3, to meet the needs expressed by the public.	
58a, 14, 22, 42j, 96, 97e	<p>Summarized comment: Preference for Alternative 3 because it provides for more public access, motorized big game retrieval, and/or additional camping corridors</p> <p>Specific Comments:</p> <p>"I would like to see Alternative 3 implemented, it will serve the community in all aspects. Alternative 3 seems to have more access for public, hunters, campers, hikers." (Comment 58a)</p> <p>"Of all the Alternatives, Number 3 is the most appealing as it allows for my friends who hunt to have their ATV's available to retrieve their game [...] It also allows for more motorized camping outside of the campgrounds, which is nice if I am to be limited to</p>

Comment #	Comment
	<p>where I can camp from my car at least maximize the area in which to do this.” (Comment 42j)</p> <p>“The roads allowed to remain open in the Manzano Unit of Alternative 3 are the ones that have the most interest to me and how I use my four wheel drive vehicle. There are both easy and challenging routes available in this Alternative and that is what I requested during the scoping efforts.” (Comment 96)</p> <p>“This will allow for a full size vehicle route between the north and south sections of the Gallinas Unit and a route to the one of the most interesting ruin sites in that unit. It still eliminates several miles of existing roads making it a win-win situation for both the Mountainair District road maintenance budget and the users. It also leaves open a route for any fire management that may be necessary in that area.” (Comment 97e)</p>
Response: We have noted your preferences.	
92e	<p>Manzano Unit Alternative 3 includes the connector route between County/Forest Road 55 and Forest Road 321 (east of Fourth of July Spring). I agree that this short route should be designated as open. The addition of Forest Road 525C would be very good.</p> <p>The road in the most northern part of the Manzano Unit (Forest Road 260?) should be designated open. This is an example of a user maintained route that would then be available for easy access should it be needed to fight a forest fire. Response time would be enhanced. I would like to see more motorized opportunities in the southwest corner of the Manzano Unit. For instance, the decommissioned road west of Forest Road 422 past Priest Canyon Well to the national forest boundary, and then southward (west of Rattlesnake Spring) and then west of La Casa Spring. The roads do exist and a portion was mapped and previously submitted to the Forest Service by Dr. Robert Telepak. With a short section of trail reconstruction, perhaps a few hundred yards, another of the existing routes to the south could then be used to return to FR 422, completing a back country loop. Gallinas Unit Forest Road 458 should be designated open southward to County Road 167. It is a reasonable route to access the national forest and suitable for many all wheel drive passenger vehicles. Forest Road 458Y should remain open. The road is shown on published topographical maps and is clearly marked now with a national forest sign. Erosion has cut off the very end of this road, yet it should remain open to that point.</p> <p>The Travel Management Plan will eliminate cross country travel in this region and driving on the existing road will not impact any nearby cultural heritage sites. Forest Road 120 should be open to serve as a connector between FR 142 and FR 458. The branch road off of Forest Road 142 should remain open to the Pueblo Blanco cultural heritage site. Allowing continued motorized access would allow individuals with health issues to have access to the site and be able to learn of its history as detailed on the installed sign. The ruins are fenced off, so driving up to the sign cannot harm the ruins. Forest Road 137 to County Road 167 should be designated open to allow access to that portion of the national forest.</p>
<p>Response: FR 260 was not considered for designation due to concerns brought forwards from the Pueblo of Iselta and the Chillili Land Grant of frequent trespass onto their lands from this road. This road will be available for administrative use including use by fire fighters.</p>	
<p>The route west of 422 past Priest Canyon was not considered for designation to reduce disturbance to the Big Horn Sheep in Sand Canyon. This was supported by New Mexico Game and Fish. Additional routes</p>	

Comment #	Comment
	<p>in the southwest corner of the Manzanos were not considered because they pass through private land and the Forest Service has no legal right of way.</p> <p>The southern end of FR 458 and FR 137 was not considered for designation because they cross private land at the southern end before reaching County Road 167. The Forest Service does not have right of way across the private land.</p> <p>FR 458Y and FR 120 were not considered for designation due to resource concerns.</p> <p>The road to Pueblo Blanco was not considered for designation to protect the site from vandalism and looting (see response to comment on p. 52).</p>
96, 97a	<p>After reviewing the “Proposed” alternative and the various others I find that I can only support Alternative 3. All of the Alternatives, except Alternative 2 (do nothing), are very restrictive with respect to “roads” for full size vehicles. In fact, the proposed alternative appears to remove some 80+% of the existing “roads” and that does not appear to follow the management guidelines of accepting the fact that “motorized travel is an acceptable use of the Forest”. Alternative 3 is more user friendly as far as “roads” are concerned, but still heavily restricts use.</p>
Response: The proposed action would reduce the miles of road open to the public by 62%.	
67	<p>ERROR: The EA characterizes Alternative 3 as expanding recreational opportunities. There is no rational connection between those statements and the facts presented in the EA.</p> <p>DISCUSSION: On page 85, under Environmental Consequences, the EA states: “This alternative expands motorized recreation opportunities across the district through the designation of additional roads and the conversion of some roads to trails for vehicles 65 inches in width or less. This alternative would also increase the miles of road designated for all vehicles, increasing access to areas within the Manzanos and Gallinas.”</p> <p>This is an error as facts presented elsewhere in the EA clearly demonstrate. Alternative 2, the No Action Alternative, has the greatest motorized recreation opportunities. Table 1 on page 18 lists the mileage of system roads under the various alternatives. There are a total of 471.4 miles of system roads that are open to all vehicles under Alternative 2. In addition, according to the TAP, there is an additional 48.4 miles of non-system roads that are currently available to motorized recreation. On top of that, there are technically 167,000 acres of the Mountainair District that are open to cross country travel.</p> <p>Alternative 3 ‘adds’ 51.1 miles of motorized trail but all 51.1 miles are already open to motorized recreation under the existing condition represented by Alternative 2. Alternative 3, with 188.4 miles of system roads and 51.1 miles of trail offers only 239.5 total miles of routes open to motorized recreation. Two hundred thirty-nine is less than the 519.8 miles of route open to motorized recreation that has been identified in Alternative 2. The EA cannot factually claim that Alternative 3 does “expands motorized recreation opportunities”.</p> <p>The problem then replicates itself in the summary tables presented in Table 2 of the Alternatives Chapter. On page 22, in the description for Alternative 3 under Recreation, the EA states: “This alternative expands motorized recreation opportunities. Additional roads and a motorized trail system would be designated under this alternative. The motorized trail</p>

Comment #	Comment
	<p>system would provide increased opportunities for OHVs.”</p> <p>RESOLUTION: Remove the error on page 85 by stating the correct impact to motorized recreation, “This alternative reduces motorized recreation by eliminating 280.3 miles of system and non-system routes that are currently available to motorized recreation. This alternative also eliminates cross country travel on 167,000 acres. This alternative does designate some trails for vehicles 65 inches in width or less. There are 2.7 miles of roads that would be constructed to reroute existing roads around private land. The expected effects for these reroutes are the same as those described in alternative 1.”</p> <p>Update Table 2 in Chapter 2 to reflect the same accurate assessment of the impact to motorized recreation, “There is a 53% reduction in the amount of system and non-system routes available for motorized recreation under this alternative. Cross country travel would be eliminated from 167,000 acres. There would be some motorized trail opportunities under this alternative but these opportunities already exist on open system roads.”</p>
Response: Alternative 3 was designed to expand motorized recreation opportunities compared to the proposed action.	
75f, 99, 111	Lastly, the Forest Service should not designate the off-road vehicle motorized trail system outlined in Alternative 3 as this could use more than 85 percent of the district's trails budget. Designating a fiscally unsustainable ORV trail will result in erosion, noise, and unsafe conditions and should not be a part of this plan.
Response: We have noted your preference. The deciding officer will review the effects, including the estimated costs provided in the recreation report (p. 85-85), and compare alternatives before making a decision.	
90b	RESOLUTION: The deciding official should choose Alternative 3, but change the route designations in Alternative 3 from motorized trail to road as described in detail in discussion elements 9, 10, and 11 above.
Response: We have noted your preferences.	
116b	WOHVA encourages the Forest Service to work with motorized recreational groups to develop a partnership with these groups. It is our belief that by working with motorized recreational volunteer groups the Forest Service can find solutions to some of their financial and budgetary restrictions. For the afore-mentioned reason, WOHVA supports Alternative 3 of your proposed plan.
Response: We will work with partners as opportunities arise. Thank you for your comment.	
Alternative 4	
92b	“Alternative 4” appears too much like creation of defacto “wilderness” in the ranger district. There should be no further consideration of this alternative.
Response: Your concern has been noted.	
53	I am writing to ask the Mountainair Ranger District to take the position to not adopt option 4. Keep the area open for ORV use.
Response: Your concern has been noted.	
112, 76a, 47, 51, 59, 44, 56, 54, 48, 49, 32, 33, 34, 36, 31d, 41, 31a, 75a,	<p>Summarized Comment: Preference for Alternative 4. Alternative 4 protects wildlife, wilderness values and other natural resources. The alternative reduces the currently over-extended road network and restricts ATV use on the district.</p> <p>Specific Comments: “Please do not allow off road driving. [...] I cannot agree at all with the plan to designate a motorized trail system. It will be far too damaging to local ecosystems.” (Comment 47)</p>

Comment #	Comment
31f, 82b, 35	<p>“I think that the decrease in roads offers humans to have a smaller impact on wildlife and vegetation. It also improves the ability of the Forest Service to monitor activities.” (Comment 44)</p> <p>“Personally, I feel that there should be no off road vehicles except for rescue or park services. [...] If you will not ban them all together then please take the most restrictive actions possible by putting conservation on the top of the list.” (Comment 49)</p> <p>“I urge you to manage the beautiful Manzano wilderness for quiet recreational uses and to avoid destroying it with motorized vehicle access.” (Comment 34)</p>
Response: We have noted your preferences and concerns. Cross-country travel will be restricted in all alternatives.	
57	I am particularly concerned with the long term detrimental effects of soil erosion. ORV use drastically increases the natural processes of soil loss and leads to a situation that could take hundreds of years to recover in the dry climates of the Southwest. Choose Alt 4 with recommendations from CBD.
Response: All action alternatives would reduce potential erosion and damage to soils by restricting cross country travel. We have noted your concerns.	
40	[...] encouraging ATV use in the park by opening trails for them wastes energy (gas) and places the unhealthy by-products and raw noise smack in the middle of the areas you are chartered to protect. You do not have sufficient funding to properly care for the land under your protection. Why would you compound that problem by allowing ATV traffic to further degrade that land? CBD Form Letter
Response: Currently, ATV’s are allowed on all roads and areas outside of the Manzano Mountain Wilderness. All action alternatives will decrease the number of roads open for public motorized use and restrict motorized cross-country travel compared to the existing management.	
31e, 82b	<p>Summarized Comment: High risk/low value and unauthorized roads should be closed and/or obliterated</p> <p>Specific Comment: “All "high risk/low value" roads identified through travel analysis should be permanently closed and unauthorized, 'user-created' roads should be obliterated. CBD Form Letter” (Comment 31e)</p> <p>“I am concerned, however, that existing roads (including user created routes) which will not be designated will also not be blocked or obliterated. This is an invitation for non-compliance.” (Comment 82b)</p>
Response: No roads are being proposed for decommissioning (obliteration) in this project. The road system will continue to be monitored and future actions may include decommissioning as needed and resources are available. Some roads that are not proposed for public use are needed for administrative use to manage special permits, vegetation management and fire suppression and patrol.	
35	I would gladly pay for a trails pass every year to help offset costs for keeping areas free of trail motor bikes, 4 wheelers, trucks, etc. CBD Form Letter
Response: Your suggestion has been noted.	

Comments Related to the Significant Issues

Issue 1: Designation of Unauthorized (user-created), closed, decommissioned, or new roads and motorized dispersed camping corridors

<i>Comment #</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<i>Concerns about Motorized Dispersed Camping and Motorized Big Game Retrieval</i>	
31b, 75c, 86e, 99, 111	<p><i>Summarized Comment:</i> No motorized dispersed camping or motorized big game retrieval should be allowed.</p> <p><i>Specific Comments:</i></p> <p>“Driving off-road for car camping or motorized big game retrieval should not be allowed. Instead the public should park a car length off the side of the road and walk to their chosen campsite or retrieve game..using horses, outfitters, or a group of friends to dress and carry the elf or deer back to the road or camp.” (Comment 31b)</p> <p>“allowing a cross-country driving corridor for motorized vehicle-facilitated dispersed camping, or for retrieving downed big game, should not be allowed. This will cause resource damage and will be unenforceable.” (Comment 75c)</p> <p>“If the Forest Service proceeds to implement dispersed camping corridors, there is a significant area that will require NEPA and 106 compliance before it can be implemented. It is doubtful that a DN/FONSI would adequately address this issue, thus involving staff in a lengthy survey process.” (Comment 86e)</p> <p>“The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance opposes any designation of Motorized Big Game Retrieval corridors. We feel that this activity will not be an aid to the true sportsman, but rather a disruptive mechanical interference with the stalk and pursuit of game animals which is such a vital part of the hunt. Furthermore, most of the 3,137 acres of forest land that would be open to MBGR in alternative 3 will require NEPA and 106 compliance before it can be implemented. It is doubtful that a FONSI would adequately address this issue, thus involving staff in a lengthy survey process.</p> <p>We recommend the forest engage with State Fish and Game officials and sportsmen in a cooperative public information program emphasizing the spirit of the hunt and the sense of accomplishment which comes with traditional hunting practices. The New Mexico Wilderness Alliance opposes MBGR across the entire district, but would especially like to emphasize the dangers of designating big game retrieval zones in close proximity to wilderness.” (Comment 86e)</p>
<p><i>Response:</i> There is a long history of motorized dispersed camping on the District. While there is some compaction and disturbance at commonly used sites, there are seldom new sites created and existing sites are reasonably stable. These sites were analyzed for resources concerns and selected with resource considerations.</p> <p>Section 106 surveys of all proposed motorized dispersed camping areas was completed during the summer of 2009 and the effects of this activity are analyzed in the Heritage Resources section of the EA starting on p. 97.</p> <p>Off road motorized big game retrieval is not provided for in Alternative 1 and 4. The deciding officer will review the effects and compare alternatives before making a decision. Regarding enforcement, if motorized big game retrieval was selected only those with a hunting license and a legally downed animal will be permitted to travel cross-country for the purpose of retrieving big game within designated corridors. This provision can be enforced by both Forest Service and New Mexico Game and Fish law</p>	

enforcement.	
<p>This Environmental Analysis does review Motorized Big Game Retrieval in compliance with NEPA. Per the Region 3 First Amended Programmatic Agreement with the New Mexico SHPO in Appendix I – Standard Consultation Protocol for Travel Management Route Designation specific limited use authorizations such as those for game retrieval are exempt from consultation.</p> <p>We have noted your suggestions for public education in cooperation with New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.</p>	
76c	<p>3. I do not support distributed camping. Please only allow use in the current campgrounds. Everyday the Manzanos are becoming more and more like the Sandias with increasing surrounding development and daily use. In light of this it is not unreasonable to be managed like the Sandias and have only a few developed locations and no dispersed car/camping use.</p>
<p>Response: There are limited locations that provide for motorized dispersed camping on the Sandia Ranger District under the 2008 Travel Management decision.</p>	
86e	<p>We also recommend disposing of all language in the EA that affirms the feelings of discouraged recreationists (e.g. “These (dispersed camping) sites have been heavily used for years and these users could feel displaced and discouraged from camping on the district.” p.81, Environmental Assessment for Travel Management, Mountainair Ranger District.) Rather, in the good spirit of the Travel Management Rule, the district should emphasize how less motorized access can enhance the visitor experience and protect the areas these users love.</p>
<p>Response: We have noted your suggestions.</p>	
30b	<p>However, the Department would still like you to reconsider some additions and removals to designated camping areas. Camping within the Mountainair District could become an issue in areas where either no opportunity exists at all or if the current designated areas are not suitable for various reasons.</p> <p>The southern portion of the Manzano Mountains gets heavy perennial use but the current plan offers little to no designated camping opportunities in this area. For this reason, the Department would support the designation of a portion along FR422, near the recommended closure listed above, to dispersed camping since it has been a historical camping area (see Attachment #1). Within other areas, however, the Department has identified concerns regarding the expansion or removal of roadside camping in areas that are either not suitable or has demonstrated historic use (see Attachment #1). We believe some of these changes/additions to areas designated for roadside camping would better serve the public as they have been existing camping areas in the past, and are well suited for that activity, which would minimize enforcement and other issues that are likely to arise with the implementation of the plan.</p>
<p>Response: These locations are not part of the proposed action or the other two action alternatives. However, changes can be made to the designations through subsequent NEPA analysis and decisions. Proposals can be made to the district to consider changes to the dispersed camping corridors in the future. The MVUM is reprinted annually, and any future decisions that revise travel management can be made at that time.</p>	
871	<p>B. Motorized Dispersed Camping Corridors</p> <p>There is no alternative that would protect natural resources by utilizing spur roads rather than dispersed camping corridors. The lack of an alternative that does not utilized the corridor, despite our specific recommendation that corridors be prohibited, is a violation of NEPA because there is not a reasonable range of alternatives analyzed in this DEA.</p>

We are including our comments regarding dispersed camping again for your reference and have highlighted our specific request that an alternative be developed that does not allow the use of motorized dispersed camping corridors. We incorporate by reference our concerns regarding a reasonable range of alternatives. Center for Biological Diversity et al., 2009:17-19.

The plan to designate 300 foot dispersed camping corridors along 16.5 miles of open system roads on the Manzano Division and 600 feet on the Gallinas Division is inappropriate, unnecessary and is not in keeping with the letter or spirit of the TMR. This designation will open up between 600 and 1,200 acres of land to unlimited motorized use.

We note that the Forest Service must “[a]pply the provision for...dispersed camping sparingly . . .” FSM 7703.11(4) (emphasis added). As explained in the Federal Register notice announcing the dispersed camping rule: “Responsible officials may include in the designation the limited use of motor vehicles within a specified distance of certain designated routes, and if appropriate within specified time periods, solely for the purposes of dispersed camping or retrieval of a downed big game animal . . .” 73 Fed. Reg. 74,612, 74,612-13 (Dec. 9, 2003) (emphasis added). Moreover, the Forest Service Manual directs the Forest Service to “consider designating routes, including existing terminal facilities (FSM 7716.1), to dispersed camping sites, instead of authorizing off-route motor vehicle use.” FSM 7715.74(5). The Forest Service should have demonstrated compliance with this requirement by including an alternative that would designate spur routes instead of motorized dispersed camping corridors. Dispersed camping opportunities are appreciated and utilized by many forest goers.

However, allowing excessive motorized cross-country travel to maintain these opportunities is inappropriate and causes resource damage. Designating fixed distances from open routes in which motorized cross-country travel is allowed for dispersed camping is difficult to enforce and maintain. Given the limited resources for enforcement, if users are allowed to travel off route to find a camping spot, user-created routes will increase and the “car camping corridor” will continue to increase each season. Below, we have included a satellite photo of a forest in Region 3 that is currently using this management technique without success. The photo shows camping occurring well beyond the 300 foot corridor, up to 800 feet from the road in some places, the development of a user-created ORV “race track,” and demonstrates that forest users have difficulty complying with this type of management regime. This particular camping location occurs within a riparian area. Rather than the dispersed camping corridor approach, we urge the MRD to adopt a policy of designating dispersed camp sites and spur routes to them, and to do so sparingly. Designation of these sites and spur routes should take into account resource protection and not just defer to what already exists on the ground. Dispersed camping sites were not chosen by Forest Service professionals with resource protection in mind and are often placed in sensitive areas. Dispersed camping sites have a tendency to expand over time with more and more ground becoming denuded and disturbed as users push the boundaries of existing sites. This means that the designating spur routes to dispersed camping sites will only work to reduce damage if rigorous monitoring and enforcement occurs.

Designating sites sparingly will serve to protect the environment and other users and will not detract from a visitor’s camping experience. Recent studies and polling reveal that many, if not most, ORV recreationists at times ignore route restrictions and deliberately travel cross-country¹. The MRD must develop and analyze an alternative that does not

	<p>make an exception for motorized dispersed camping corridors. We have attached a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix D) demonstrating that this problem is widespread on National Forest lands and needs to be addressed appropriately through travel management planning. See especially slides 9-11 which show a time-lapse of the impacts of motorized dispersed camping.)</p>
<p>Response: As referenced in your comment, “Responsible officials may include in the designation the limited use of motor vehicles within a specified distance of certain designated routes, and if appropriate within specified time periods, solely for the purposes of dispersed camping or retrieval of a downed big game animal...” Under the current management motorized dispersed camping is allowed throughout the district outside of the Manzano Mountain Wilderness. This is a common and traditional use of the Mountainair Ranger District. The proposed action would change from a policy where motorized dispersed camping is allowed throughout the district to restricting this activity to 14.7 miles of corridors, 150’ wide in the Manzano Mountains and 300’ wide in the Gallinas Unit. Alternative 3 provides for 24.1 miles of corridors and Alternative 4 provides for 10.4 miles. Considering that the existing condition allows for motorized dispersed camping along all system and unauthorized roads, this change constitutes a limited use for a specified distance in compliance with the Travel Management Rule.</p>	
<p>Concerns about Motorized Big Game Retrieval</p>	
<p>38b, 38d, 42b</p>	<p>Summarized Comment: Against motorized big game retrieval proposed in Alternative 3.</p> <p>Specific Comments:</p> <p>“According to New Mexico hunting regulations, road hunting is illegal except in certain instances of permitted handicapped hunters. This policy would encourage road hunting, and I don't consider road hunters sportsmen! The people who road hunt are often the type of people who aren't concerned about preserving the forest.” (Comment 38b)</p> <p>“Do NOT implement the plan allowing for game retrieval in certain areas. Follow NM Department of Game and Fish regulations for hunting on state land.” (Comment 38d)</p> <p>“We support the alternatives that do not make exceptions to the ban on cross-country travel for motorized big game retrieval. We provided detailed comments on this issue during scoping and incorporate them by reference here.</p> <p>The analysis in the DEA shows that MBGR will have negative impacts for all species and habitat types and for hunters as well: there is the potential for some displacement of elk or deer and MBGR may allow increased hunter opportunity for elk or deer, but may also result in lower hunter success in mountain grassland, mixed conifer, piñon-juniper, and mountain shrub (pp. 37, 39, 40, 41), could displace black bear (pp. 43), turkey (pp. 44), juniper titmouse (pp. 47), pygmy nuthatch (pp. 48), hairy woodpecker (pp. 49), northern goshawk (pp. 52), loggerhead shrike (pp. 54). MBGR would occur on over 4,800 acres of soils with severe erosion potential and more than 2,800 acres of soils with severe mass wasting potential in Alternative 3 (pp. 71). Hunters who prefer solitude and minimal noise intrusion would benefit from Alternatives 1 and 4 (pp. 81). Allowing MBGR in the Manzanos is likely to result in motorized trespass into the Manzano Mountain Wilderness as well as the Isleta Pueblo and Chilili Land Grant (pp. 85).” (Comment 42b)</p>

Response: Off road motorized big game retrieval is not provided for in Alternative 1 and 4 (which is consistent with Department of Game and Fish recommendations). The deciding officer will review the effects and compare alternatives before making a decision. The effects to wildlife related to MBGR were displayed in the analysis on pages 32 to 67.

Regarding enforcement, if motorized big game retrieval was selected only those with a hunting license and a legally downed animal will be permitted to travel cross-country for the purpose of retrieving big game within designated corridors. This provision can be enforced by both Forest Service and New Mexico Game and Fish law enforcement.

Concerns about User Created Roads

2b	Do not fall for the belief that motor vehicles will not travel cross country... I can assure you that everywhere that these things are allowed, they disobey the trail usage designations and create their own trails, and rules.
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Response: We have noted your concerns.

Concerns about Decommissioning Process

75e, 86c, 99, 111	<p>Summarized Comment: There is a concern that decommissioning roads was not addressed in the EA.</p> <p>Specific Comments:</p> <p>“The Forest Service should develop a restoration plan that includes timelines for decommissioning and obliterating those roads it has identified for closure as a part of this planning process. Simply putting these roads in storage for some undisclosed, potential future use is not sufficient, especially when the agency itself has determined that many of these roads are unneeded.” (Comment 75e)</p> <p>“All alternatives in this EA propose to restrict an extensive system of undesignated roads to “administrative use only”. This restriction should occur only where there is historical and anticipated administrative use. There is currently no plan to eliminate any of these proposed undesignated routes and their impacts to the land. Just because the roads are not on a map does not mean they aren’t on the landscape. We encourage the district to consider the costly consequences that could arise from forgoing any NEPA analysis (i.e. from continued unauthorized use). Furthermore, it would be in the best interest of law enforcement to decommission roads that will not be needed for administrative use.” (Comment 86c)</p>
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Response: We have noted your concern and suggestions. No roads are being proposed for decommissioning in this project. Future actions may include decommissioning as needed and resources are available. Some roads that are not proposed for public use are needed for administrative use to manage special permits, vegetation management and fire suppression and patrol. The risks and benefits of using these roads for administrative use were analyzed in the TAP.

Issue 2: Loss or Reduction of Motorized Recreation Opportunities

Comment #	Comment
	<i>Need for Access</i>

<p>5, 10, 26, 39a, 24a, 4a, 8, 9, 12b, 17a</p>	<p>Summarized Comment: There is a concern about closing roads on the district. This project will close too many roads and will reduce access to National Forest lands, therefore not providing for motorized recreational experiences.</p> <p>Specific Comments: The Forest Service exists to manage the use of the wilderness by the American people. [...] Reverse this ridiculous decision [...] Reverse this 'Travel Management' proposal. In its current form it isn't 'management,' it is 'elimination.' (10)</p> <p>[...] you come up with a[.]travel plan that starts from the point of view that all roads are evil and close 85% of them. Then you write [...] you don't have the \$\$ to maintain them, we do not want them maintained we just want access (26)</p> <p>471 miles of open roads and your best alt. (#3) closes 283 miles as starting point and it gets worse from there, how about a fair starting point like closing 20 or 30 miles for the American people to comment on. You seem to have started from the premise that all roads are bad and cause problems, they do not cause problems as each and every mile provides access or a recreation opportunity for the public. (39a)</p> <p>There is a need to provide for this legal and popular activity. Motorized use is a legitimate use of public lands yet the agency is proposing significant closures. The agency has responded to the increase in motorized uses by proposing drastic reductions in that use, this is totally unacceptable. (24a)</p> <p>[...]the access to public lands is being restricted to keep the public off them. Closing off trails and roads just makes the process worst. [...] Your answer is to just block access. It just creates more friction and more resentment from the public. You should be finding ways to open new areas of access instead of closing them off. (4a)</p> <p>How can this 'public' land be enjoyed by the public if we cannot access it? The access to this lands should be managed. Closing it is not managing it. (9)</p>
<p>Response: Public motorized access to the National Forest would continue under all of the alternatives. Alternative 2 would maintain the existing NSF road system but would restrict cross-country travel. Alternatives 1, 3 and 4 would reduce number of miles designated for public motorized use by 64%, 53% and 72% respectively. Please refer to the Recreation section of the EA for an assessment of the effect of each alternative on motorized recreation opportunities (p.73).</p>	
<p>116a</p>	<p>Motorized recreation is the fastest growing type of recreational activity in the country and WOHVA appreciates the stress that this growth is putting on the roads and trails in all of our National Forests. WOHVA encourages all OHV enthusiasts to recreate responsibly and enjoy the great outdoors. This increase in use has put additional congestion on already crowded roads and trails, With this additional and growing demand for motorized recreational opportunities, WOHVA does not support and Forest Plan which does not list as an alternative the expansion of motorized recreational riding opportunities.</p>
<p>Response: We have noted your preferences and concerns.</p>	
<p>Economic Concerns</p>	
<p>114a</p>	<p>Continued off-highway access for other recreational activities such as horseback riding, biking, fishing, hunting, camping, and birding are important economic contributors to our County and are major cultural and lifestyle contributions to our constituents. Additionally, we would like to ensure that activities such as recreation, mineral exploration and hunting are given continued access.</p>
<p>Response: The impact of this decision on the economy was analyzed in the Social and Economic Considerations section of the Environmental Assessment (p. 103); in particular please refer to the effects</p>	

	<p>analysis on p. 105.</p> <p>The public will continue to have access to National Forest lands for recreation and hunting. Mineral exploration will continue to occur through the special use permit process.</p>
<p>3c, 11a, 12d, 24b</p>	<p>Summarized Comment: There is a concern that closing roads/areas to motorized recreation will have an effect on the local and national economy.</p> <p>Specific Comment: [...] Also the closure of more roads eventually has a serious effect to the economy based on OHV use. The roads are for the public and we should be able to use them to explore our great outdoors. (3c)</p> <p>Apparently the state of the economy is not as much of a concern as I thought it was. If these groups have their way, there will be no public lands accessible to motorized recreation in this great United States of America. As this happens, there will be many jobs lost in the manufacturing industry as well as all related retail business, including gasoline and other petroleum products. A little bit of research will produce some staggering figures of lost jobs and revenue (tax revenue as well). (11a)</p> <p>The economic restraints resulting from the poor condition of our Government can be addressed by willing volunteers such as myself and my family who donate hundreds of hours yearly to maintain public lands here in Arizona. (12d)</p> <p>We fear that given the current economic climate our Nation faces your decisions may negatively impact the very sector that is capable of helping to turn around this financial crisis. (24b)</p>
<p>Response: The impact of this decision on the economy was analyzed in the Social and Economic Considerations section of the Environmental Assessment (p. 103); in particular please refer to the effects analysis on p. 105. The Forest Service will work with volunteers as opportunities arise.</p>	
<p>Loss of Existing Roads and Trails</p>	
<p>3a, 27, 28, 12a, 9, 12b, 16</p>	<p>Summarized Comment: Some people are against the closure of roads and areas on the district and feel that it would lead to the elimination of multiple use recreation on the Forest.</p> <p>Specific Comments:</p> <p>“We need more access to our public lands and not a reduction. Closures of areas contribute to more concentrated use of other areas. I have seen the growth of the OHV community and at the same time there has been a consistent reduction in areas to escape to the outdoors through OHV. Why must the closure of existing road continue? We are not proposing new roads only that the existing roads remain open.” (Comment 3a)</p> <p>“[...] would like to ATV and camp in the Cibola National Forest. But now I read that the Forest Service plans on closing many of the roads and trails to ATVs, I do not understand how not allowing ATVs on roads and trails that already exist can harm anything. I hope that we do not lose the opportunity to enjoy this area.” (Comment 28)</p> <p>“As a long-time motorized back-country user and camper, I am shocked at the lengths this proposal goes to virtually eliminate multiple use recreation in the Cibola national Forest by responsible citizens of this Country. [...] Please revise the draft proposal to maintain all existing motorized trails for continued usage so as to provide for meaningful motorized recreational opportunities in your district. [...]” (Comment 12a)</p>
<p>Response: In the preamble to the Rule, the Department asserts that the “Provision of recreational opportunities and access needs are two of several criteria the responsible official must consider under §</p>	

212.55 of the final rule in designating routes for motor vehicle use. National Forests are popular with many Americans for many uses. It is not possible to accommodate all user demands on all National Forests while also protecting water quality, wildlife habitat, and other natural resources that people come to enjoy. Forest Service managers must balance user interests against the other criteria.” Federal Register /Vol. 70, No. 216 pg. 68271

No forms of recreation, motorized or non-motorized, would be eliminated through this process. Motorized recreation would be allowed on the designated system and non-motorized recreation (hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, etc.) would be allowed across the district.

Seasonal Closures

29a	<p>ERROR: Not including seasonally open roads in the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM).</p> <p>Discussion: On page 4, under Previous Decisions, the EA states: “Seasonal road closures may be used to prevent damage to resources and routes during sensitive times of the year, such as winter or monsoon seasons. Since these roads tend to be weather dependent, they will not be included on the MVUM. Closures will be posted in the field when they are in effect. The District currently closes some routes during winter months to prevent resource damage“ Under the NEPA process, if a road is not list on the MVUM, it closed by definition, therefore the seasonally closed roads will never be open. Furthermore, the statement “Closures will be posted in the field when they are in effect.” Is redundant because the roads are already closed. Example of these roads, FR 422 and 275, are major entry roads into the District for motorized travel and as the referenced paragraph of the EA is currently written would close the public’s access.</p> <p>Resolution: Corrections that will satisfy this comment: 1. The referenced paragraph should be rewritten to state “the seasonally closed roads will be included in the MVUM but will be posted in the field when seasonal closures are in effect.”</p>
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Response: The text on page 4 states that the “seasonal road **closures**...will not be included on the MVUM.” These **closures** will not be included on the MVUM because they are weather dependant. The roads with these weather dependant seasonal closures **will** be shown on the MVUM. The MVUM includes a statement that: “Designated roads and trails may also be subject to temporary, emergency road closures, and visitors must comply with signs notifying them of such restrictions...Such temporary and/or emergency closures are consistent with the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212.52 (b); 36 CFR 261 subpart B.)”

Request for More Motorized Trial Opportunities and/or Challenge – Single Track

19t & v	<p>12. The availability of motorized single-track trails has declined dramatically. At the same time, nearly all of the single-track trails see very little hiking or other use. It is not reasonable to segregate users on single-track trails. We can all get along and have done so for years. It is also consistent with the desegregation of public places as required by the Civil Rights Act of 1964.</p> <p>Therefore, it is a reasonable alternative to designate all existing single-track trails on multiple use lands within the project area open to motorcycle use. Additionally, single-track challenge trails are needed for expert riders and trials type motorcycles.</p> <p>14. National Forests in Idaho have a long and successful history of sharing single-track trails with motorcycles and we request that this strategy be used in the project area.</p>
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	15. Motorcycle trail riders enjoy riding single-track trails. Motorized single-track recreation trails are limited at this time and continue to decline.
<p>Response: The trail use is analyzed in the recreation section of the EA beginning on page 73. As mentioned on page 77, all of the 106 miles of system single track trails on the district are located on the Manzano unit. The majority of these trails (74 miles) are located in the Manzano Mountain Wilderness, where mechanized vehicles are prohibited by law, and therefore could not be designated for motorized use. The remaining mileage provides direct access (each segment of trails outside the Wilderness is generally less than one mile) to access the trails in the Wilderness. There is only one single track trail, the Albuquerque Trail that does not directly access the Wilderness. This trail is 3.5 miles. Our research into motorcycle trail system recommendations indicate that a quality system of single track trails needs to provide at least 30 – 80 miles of riding opportunities. Designating the Albuquerque Trail for single track motorized use would not provide the opportunity that most motorcycle riders are seeking.</p> <p>Segregating uses on roads and trails is not a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Civil Rights Act applies to people in protected classes as specified in the act. Choice of recreation mode of travel is not a protected class.</p>	
<p><i>Request for More Motorized Trial Opportunities and/or Challenge – More Through Routes, Loops</i></p>	
4c	More through routes and full circle trails and roads should be opened.
<p>Response: In alternative development phase, the ID team reviewed the system to identify through routes and loops of varying lengths. Alternative 3 includes most of the routes that were identified through public involvement for motorized vehicle designation.</p>	
<p><i>Requests for Additional Designations of Motorized Dispersed Camping Corridors</i></p>	
79b, 12c, 15a, 17b, 21	<p>Summarized Comment: A concern that the corridor limitations are too restrictive and do not provide for sufficient motorized dispersed camping opportunities.</p> <p>Specific Comments:</p> <p>“Camping in the Forest is a time-honored tradition for many New Mexican families. What happens to the very social experience of dispersed camping when the allowed mileage that allows dispersed vehicle camping is reduced from 476 miles to less than 15 miles...it must have a social impact.” (Comment 79b)</p> <p>“The proposal also will have the effect of terminating nearly all available back-country dry-camping opportunities for those who don’t backpack or camp by horseback.” (Comment 12c)</p> <p>“Forest Service wants to close 80% of the existing roads and trails, which will eliminate about 90% of dispersed camping. This is not an acceptable means of sustainable public use. The proposal virtually eliminates using a motor vehicle for camping alongside roads.” (Comment 15a)</p>
<p>Response: The ID team considered commonly used dispersed camping sites when proposing motorized dispersed camping areas. The dispersed camping corridors represent most of the commonly used dispersed camping locations. The number of miles where motorized dispersed camping will be prohibited is not an accurate assessment of the situation. The terrain and vegetation often limits the suitability of many areas as camping site. The area needs to be fairly open and less than 5% grade before people select sites a site to camp. Vegetation and topography constraints define suitable dispersed camping locations and this was also taken into account when defining the proposed corridors. The impacts to motorized dispersed camping are included in the recreation section of the EA and the recreation specialist’s report.</p>	
38a, 94	<p>Summarized Comment: There is a concern that both the reduction in motorized dispersed camping locations and the widths of the corridors will result in a reduction in the quality</p>

	<p>and safety of motorized dispersed camping.</p> <p>Specific Comments:</p> <p>“My personal concerns with the alternatives for motorized vehicle route designation include that it will prevent people from being able to truly enjoy the forest. Camping along a public road is no fun, and leaves the camp accessible to anyone who sees it while the campers are away trying to enjoy the forest. To me the purpose of going camping is to ‘get away from it all’...Packing the camp gear away from the vehicle to a site in the forest leaves the vehicle at the mercy of anyone traveling the road day or night.” (Comment 38a)</p> <p>“I believe that the restrictions on dispersed camping are too far reaching and I see a potential for widespread failure to comply with the rule. I think the USFS needs to reconsider this part of the EA and make additional dispersed camping sites available.</p> <p>Alternative 3 offers additional camping locations and this is a step in the right direction. Camping along a major route is not conducive to a good camping spot. Some remoteness is of interest to me as I don’t care for heavy traffic disturbing my camping location with dust. Also, the closer to a major route the camping location is the harder it is to secure the camp. The remote locations are much more favorable for a secure camp. Divide the dispersed camping spots such that a portion of them are remote and not close to a major route. This allows the forest user to enjoy the camping on a higher level.</p> <p>Both the Manzano and Gallinas Units have very little dispersed camping available throughout the forest in the Proposed Alternative. Therefore, Alternative 3 is friendlier to those who camp in the forest and it is the one that should be chosen for final approval. However, additional areas should be provided to allow one to camp in a remote area.” (Comment 94)</p>
	<p>Response: Motorized dispersed camping was analyzed in the Recreation section of the EA beginning on page 74. When motorized dispersed camping corridors were being considered for the Proposed Action, locations were selected because they are commonly used for this activity. Alternative 3 expanded the motorized dispersed camping corridors, responding to concerns shared during the scoping process. While not every known dispersed camping location is being considered for designation due to resource or management concerns, there is a variety of settings and locations available for motorized dispersed camping in Alternative 1 and 3 on both the Manzano and Gallinas units.</p>
38c	<p>If camping has to be limited to places near roadways, why not provide some decent camping spaces in interesting places, such as scenic spots on top of Gallinas Peak or Lackey Point?</p>
	<p>Response: Parking within one car length of the edge of any designated road is permitted (approximately 20’), including parking along the road for purpose of camping. The road to Lackey Point is steep, with high cut and fill slopes along the edge of the road. This location is not suitable as a motorized dispersed camping corridor. However, parking next to the road and setting up a tent would be permissible.</p> <p>The top of Gallinas Peak is a Forest Service administrative site, with the lookout and other equipment. Administrative sites are not appropriate for dispersed camping. As with Lackey Point, it would be permissible to park along the road going to Gallinas Peak and set up a tent away from the road.</p>
42h	<p>It is a shame that in the Forest Service could not have made more 4x4 roads available for American’s with Disabilities that can no longer hike to places they once used to camp, because that area no longer is within the designated “Motorized Camping Corridor”.</p>

Response: The locations for motorized dispersed camping considered sites that are known to be used for motorized dispersed camping. Many of the traditionally used locations are included in corridors in Alternative 1, with additional corridors considered in Alternative 3. In these alternatives, there is a variety of opportunities for motorized dispersed camping where it will not be necessary to hike to a suitable location.

Issue 3: Lack of Availability for Motorized Big Game Retrieval

<i>Comment #</i>	<i>Comment</i>
72e	<p>We remind the Cibola that they manage the land, not the animals or the hunters. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish manages the game animals and hunters. They make the rules about how motor vehicles can be used during the hunt. The Cibola National Forest must not overstep it's authority to manage vehicle use by hunters. Its authority is limited to 'where' vehicles can be used. Department of Game and Fish is in charge of the 'when' and 'how'.</p> <p>We also remind the Cibola that sound is inherently a short lived phenomenon. They are on 'thin ice' if they start assigning values to the side effects of various forms of recreation. The manure from horses remains on the trail a lot longer than the sound from my dirt bike. Other users have to deal with the manure for weeks after the horse and rider have left. In terms of time span, the horse manure lasts millions of minutes longer than the motor sound, and has impacts many more users.</p> <p>The Semi Primitive Motorized designation for the Travel Management project area means the area is multiple uses open to all recreationists. Every form of recreation has impacts and interactions between users vary according to their personalities. The Cibola has no authority to arbitrate, attempt to 'solve', or take sides in philosophical arguments over whose recreation is more 'pure', 'appropriate', "environmentally sensitive", 'ethically superior', etc.</p>
	<p>Response: Your comment that New Mexico Department of Game and Fish manage the wildlife is correct. However, the Forest Service manages motor vehicle use on National Forest Lands, including use of vehicles during hunting seasons. The New Mexico Dept. of Game and Fish has been active throughout this project, and have been submitting written comments on travel management documents.</p> <p>The effects to wildlife are analyzed in the EA beginning on page 27. Research on the impacts related to noise disturbance to wildlife has been referenced in the analysis.</p> <p>The Travel Management Rule directs that “the responsible official shall consider effects on the following, with the objective of minimizing: conflicts between motor vehicle use and existing or proposed recreational uses of National Forest System lands or neighboring Federal lands.” (CFR§ 212.55.3) The direction is clear that user conflicts between motor vehicle use and other recreation uses be considered by the responsible official when making decisions on designations.</p> <p>Conflicts between different types of users were identified during the public involvement conducted prior to development of the proposed action and in subsequent public involvement for the project. The discussions in the EA are consistent with the legislation enabling the Forest Service. Use conflicts are to be considered by the responsible official in designating a transportation system. Conflicts are discussed in the Recreation Resources section of the EA on pages 73-88.</p>

42b	No Game retrieval for hunters is a poor way to manage your forest.
Response: Your comment has been noted.	
95	<p>While hunting, the ability to retrieve downed game should be available to prevent injury to myself or other hunters. Making it legal for a hunter to retrieve game up to 300' on either side of an established road should be allowable throughout the forest. Hunting is a very limited activity (once a year) and therefore travel beyond the roads would only happen as game is downed (check NMG&F permits available and harvest success rates for this area to determine the actual effect on the area). I believe it is a condition that all can enjoy and it will not lead to gross damage to the forest. Besides, older hunters cannot carry heavy loads over mountains without risk of personal injury.</p> <p>Allowing the hunter to exercise the right to travel up to 300' from either side of any open road would limit emergencies in the forest. I do not believe that cross-country travel should be allowed, only the restrictive use of retrieving downed game. In the Proposed Alternative for the Manzano and Gallinas Units there are NO allowable game retrieval areas available. This is not supporting the hunter and does not provide the sportsman the opportunity to quickly retrieve game from the forest. Please reconsider this request as specified above. Hunting is a limited time frame sport and not many permits are available in</p>
Response: Motorized big game retrieval is proposed in Alternative 3. The EA analyzes the various effects of designating for motorized big game retrieval in Alternative 3, unrestricted motorized big game retrieval in Alternative 2 (No Action) and not providing motorized big game retrieval in Alternatives 1 and 4.	

Issue 4: Environmental Impacts

<i>Comment #</i>	<i>Comment</i>
General Environmental Impacts	
2a	Do not open the area to motorized vehicles. Allowing motor vehicles of any kind will ruin the natural experience that so many of us enjoy, not to mention the impact it has on the flora and fauna in the area.
Response: Motorized vehicles are currently allowed on 471.4 miles of NSF roads and cross-country driving is allowed on 167,000 acres outside of the Manzano Mountain Wilderness. All of the alternatives would restrict cross-country travel and Alternatives 1, 3, and 4 would reduce the number of miles of road open to the public for motorized travel.	

77e	<p>FALSE: Despite the pervasive vague claims of 'extensive resource damage', there are no statements in the underlying specialist reports pointing to any specific damage caused by motor vehicle use. We find that for some resource reports (notably wildlife and the soils-water resources) there are serious flaws.</p> <p>The Wildlife report states there are no MIS population declines (except mule deer, attributed to fire suppression), but the EA misrepresents that conclusion and persists in saying wildlife as being somehow threatened by motorized use. Table 2 Comparison of Alternatives (EA p 19) compares alternatives for 'habitat displacement', 'fragmentation' etc., and refuses to acknowledge what the MIS report facts plainly show: that under current management (No Action Alternative 2, with cross country travel allowed), the wildlife populations are stable or increasing.</p> <p>This provides misinformation to the Designated Official.</p> <p>The Soils and Water Report errors, (as described in item 2 above; 'Poor Locations'.) are another source of erroneous assumptions about resource damage. The EA carefully avoids disclosing that the scale of alternatives and the scale of the differences between them are absurdly tiny, less than one percent of the land area. To give an example: Table 2 (on EA p19) compares Alternative 1's 374 acres occupied by motorized routes, versus 906 acres for Alternative 2. This looks significant, because Alternative 2 routes occupy twice as much land as Alternative 1. But this is a deception on two levels. First, the amount of land is trivial for either alternative.</p> <p>Alternative 1's 374 acres is .002 of the 169,000 acre project area. This is two tenths of a percent (one quarter of one percent). Alternative 2's 906 acres represents .005 of the 169,000 acre project area. This is five tenths of one percent (one half of one percent). Both numbers are so small it is preposterous to claim that either is significant, and the difference between them is even more absurdly small and insignificant. The truth is that there is not a hair's width of difference between the Proposed Action and the No Action alternatives. On the other hand, the massive closures of forest roads impose a huge burden on the public, depriving them of the use and access to their public lands, and for what reasons? How much damage can there be to any resource from roads that occupy one half of one percent of the land area?</p> <p>The EA fails to disclose the true relationships between alternatives. Most critically it fails to disclose there is almost no difference between them, but attempts to make it look as if there are large differences. The EA fails to make the proper CEQ required disclosure of accurate comparison between the baseline 'No Action' and the action alternatives.</p> <p>The second aspect of the deception is in how the EA frames the comparison of alternatives, as if roads were going to 'go away'. The decision only regulates the users; the roads themselves remain for administrative, permitted and allowed uses. Whatever impacts there are from the existence of roads, will remain. The EA attempts to obscure that fact rather than making it clear.</p> <p>We also note there is not a single statement anywhere in the EA or supporting documents that demonstrates any causality between actual specific resource damage and the use of motor vehicles in the Forest. There is NO site specific information presented, and none in the Project Record. There is no presentation of any actual damage. All discussion of resource damage is framed in the terms 'might, may, could, and 'potential for causing'.</p>
<p>Response: The EA includes analyses required by the National Forest Management Act for project-level documents. We disagree that the EA does not analyze the specific effects of the motorized use</p>	

designations on the various applicable resources. Table 2 shows differences between alternatives, while Tables 8-12 compare effects to various wildlife species and issues related to each alternative (p. 19, 34, 35, 37, & 51).

The Watershed and Air resource section of the EA does disclose the differences between the alternatives, particularly in Tables 14 and 15. We feel that there is a difference between each of alternatives, especially the action alternatives and existing conditions. Also, the inclusion of motorized big game retrieval in Alternative 3 results in obvious differences between that alternative and the others. An example of the differences in alternatives is the miles of routes within 300 feet of streams; while the differences may not appear large, even the reduction of a single mile of stream along a road can lead to important resource benefits such as less sediment delivered to the stream.

Although the roads would remain on the ground for limited administrative use, many routes would see a significant reduction in vehicle traffic since they would no longer be available to everyone. Problem areas will continue to be addressed through the watershed improvement program, other monitoring (outlined in Appendix E and the Forest Plan), and through routine day to day fieldwork.

Please refer to the TAP for site specific information regarding road locations and natural resource damage, particularly the risk analysis for categories wildlife and rare plants, sediment delivery, and soil productivity. In addition, site specific information was considered in the development of the alternatives.

Climate Change

87j	<p>There is no response to our concerns regarding climate change. We incorporate by reference our scoping comments regarding this issue. Center for Biological Diversity et al., 2010:24-26.</p> <p>Of particular concern is that the DEA does not seem to address the November 20, 2009 directive of USFS Chief Tom Tidwell, which ordered Regional Offices to develop and implement landscape conservation plans with desired outcomes, strategies, and specific actions to address the impacts of climate change on National Forest resources, especially watersheds.</p> <p>As noted in the recent (February 18, 2010) “Draft NEPA Guidance on Consideration of the Effects of Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions” issued by the Council on Environmental Quality, “Federal actions may cause effects on the human environment that are not significant environment effects, in isolation, but that are significant in the aggregate or that will lead to significant effects . . . Agencies then should consider the affected environment by looking for effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable change in combination with the direct and indirect effects of the proposal for agency action . . .”</p>
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Response: As described in the air quality section, the proposed actions are not expected to increase emissions to the air. This includes greenhouse gas emissions. Motor vehicle use is the main non-natural contributor to greenhouse gas occurring on the forest. The assumption was made that motor vehicle use on the designated roads will increase no more than 10% after the motor use vehicle map is published. This increase in use is related to motorized use shifting from closed roads to open roads and not from increased numbers of motor vehicles utilizing the roads. Therefore, increases in emissions are not expected to increase under any alternative. The February 18, 2010 letter provides NEPA guidance for the consideration of the effects of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions, including their aggregate effect. The cumulative effect of climate change is that there is an established change in climate that is occurring to which greenhouse gases and other airborne emissions contribute to. While there are emissions produced from motor vehicle use within the project area, these emissions are not expected to

increase as a result of any of the alternatives.	
19qqq	<p>71. Page 113 in the draft EA refers to climate change. Climate change is mentioned far more than any other issue. This apparent focus is not balanced with objective science and the needs of the public. The existence of climate change and any positive or negative impacts are simply not known at this time. There are many in the scientific community that support this position (http://www.sepp.org/Archive/NewSEPP/LttrtoPaulMartin.html , http://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/admin/publication_files/resource-2803-2010.06.pdf , http://www.climatewatch.org http://epw.senate.gov/speechitem.cfm?party=rep&id=263759). The climate has always been changing. Twelve thousand years ago North American was covered by ice. Before that dinosaurs roamed the area in a humid climate. The planning rule should not create impacts on the human environment because it “presumes” that the climate is changing any more or less than it always has. The planning rule must be based on extensive long-term credible scientific study. The quality of people’s lives cannot be compromised by a ghost issue without adequate basis. We only get one shot at this life and we want to experience the positive benefits of OHV recreation. Extensive long-term credible scientific conclusions on climate change do not exist at this time and, therefore, it would be unreasonable to make any assumptions about climate change and use those assumptions to impose any impacts on the human environment including motorized recreation in the planning rule.</p>
Response: Thank you for your comments regarding climate change. There is Forest Service NEPA direction that requires the consideration of climate change during project development (letter dated January 13, 2009), however, climate change was not identified as an issue and did not drive the development of any alternatives.	
Fire and Fuels	
46	I live a mile from the forest and have already witnessed the damage wrought by those OTVers who ignore the laws, please don't give them further license. The forest here is fragile and we've had many fires. The wildlife is already under great stress. Choose Alt 4 with recommendations from CBD.
Response: Each action alternative reduces the amount of potential motorized use compared with the existing situation or No Action. Alternative 4 would result in the least amount of potential habitat impacts to wildlife.	
Fragmentation and Wildlife Disturbance	
87i	There is no response to our concerns regarding wildlife corridors and the impacts of this plan on wildlife utilizing those corridors. We incorporate by reference our scoping comments regarding this issue. Center for Biological Diversity et al., 2010:23.
Response: The wildlife analysis focused on wildlife habitat loss, fragmentation, indirect disturbance, direct mortality and route densities. Although the CBD identified the need to address wildlife corridors, they did not identify such corridors as occurring on the Mountainair Ranger District. There are no known wildlife corridors within the planning area so the issue was not analyzed.	
29e	<p>Erroneous Issues: Fragmentation and Wildlife Disturbance. Discussion: On page 8, Issue 4a This issue states; “There is a concern that designating a system of roads, particularly unauthorized roads, may fragment wildlife habitat and create barriers to movement. There is also a concern that the addition of such routes will reduce wildlife habitat capability to sustain populations and increase areas of disturbance.”</p> <p>This issue is not supported by the data, where it exists, in Chapter 3, Wildlife Habitat and</p>

	<p>Special Species. This section of Chapter 3 includes numerous tables that either state the species do not exist in the area, have not been observed or contain qualifiers such as “may, potential, etc. As an example, Table 6 has 15 animal/bird species and 2 plants listed. Of those listed only 1, the Mexican Spotted Owl has a habitat in the area of concern and that is only partially in the analysis area. Overall, the tables include references to “potential” impacts, not actual data. There is a mixture of upward and downward trends for animal plant/tree populations, again without any hard data. Many of the potential wildlife/plant impacts would be tied directly to the level of recreational vehicle activity. No where in the EA is there any reference to the current/base level of such activity, without this type data it is impossible to accurately forecast future impact on wildlife/plants.</p> <p>Resolution: Corrections that will satisfy this comment: Remove any references to impact of recreational vehicles form the EA unless supportable valid wildlife/plant data and baseline vehicle use data is included.</p>
<p>Response: The EA includes analyses required by the National Forest Management Act for project-level documents. Tables 8-12 lists the various species which occur within the analysis area. Management Indicator Species (MIS) are analyzed at the Forest level. At the project level, the trend threshold is so high that there is rarely a trend up or down from the forest level. Analysis of the No Action Alternative (Alternative 2) describes the base level.</p>	
30a	<p>The Department recognizes that roads to access National Forests are an important component of the multiple use philosophy for management for public lands. However, the Department is concerned that a potential outcome of the Travel Management process may contribute to the problem of high road densities and increased motorized traffic on the National Forest System lands. These increase have the potential to contribute to wildlife disturbance/harassment and habitat fragmentation.</p> <p>The Department generally concurs with the plan as it is currently proposed and is in favor of closing many roads to motor vehicle traffic to protect habitat fragmentation and disturbances from increased motorized traffic.</p>
<p>Response: The EA analyzed habitat fragmentation, indirect disturbance as well as other factors such as direct habitat loss, direct mortality and route densities on page 32-36. Concerns related to route density were incorporated into a range of alternatives and analyzed in the EA. Each action alternative shows that route densities will be reduced from the current situation and Table 2 compares habitat fragmentation due to route density by alternative.</p>	
80b	<p>The clearest way to demonstrate the shortcoming of the EA in meeting the cumulative effects requirements is to use a section of Chapter 3 as a typical example. The Cumulative Effects for MIS, TES, and High Priority Migratory Birds is found starting on page 65 of the EA. It states, for Alternative 2 (the No Action Alternative): “Under alternative 2, motorized travel off of existing roads and trails would be allowed to be reduced even further, as the habitat becomes increasingly more fragmented.</p> <p>Unrestricted spring, summer, and fall use of routes and off-route areas would increase disturbance (noise) impacts to wildlife incrementally over time. Impacts would become additive, as OHV use increases and private land development increases as well. When only the steepest areas (where OHVs cannot go) become refuges for wildlife, there could be increased energy costs to wildlife associated with foraging and traveling in steep terrain.</p> <p>User-created trails can be expected to increase erosion, which can have impacts to surrounding habitats far greater than just the trail surface itself (down-cutting and side</p>

channeling, as a result of heavy rains causing soil erosion). New user-created trails would receive increasing use from all types of recreation users over time (mountain bikes, horses, OHVs) adding to the current density of trails and roads by an as yet unknown amount. This could also create unwanted trails to wildlife watering areas that are built away from roads so wildlife can water with little disturbance. These trails could increase human disturbance to wildlife.

Ongoing projects or programs such as WUI treatments, cattle grazing, and forest health treatments are expected to continue as regeneration takes place. Unrestricted OHV use off of roads and trails may create routes through these treatments after they occur (since habitat would be more open). This potentially reduces forage recovery (and wildlife security) in the thinned areas. In areas such as washes and areas of more gentle terrain (low ridges between the washes), loss of vegetation could potentially be severe in these dry habitats, reducing forage for wildlife and increasing erosion. Areas where mineral exploration occurs, and possibly actual mining in the future, may also have an impact on wildlife. Noise disturbance from equipment used within the mine may keep wildlife away from surrounding areas of suitable foraging habitat. Cumulative impacts over time to wildlife from noise disturbance and habitat loss would be greatest under alternative 2.”

Sounds horrible, doesn't it? But it is all a fabrication because the current resources don't exhibit deleterious trends that would continue or accelerate under current conditions.

Remember, current condition allow motorized use on all routes on the District and even include the legal provision for cross country travel. SEE TABLE. MIMIS populations? All species are exhibiting an upward or stable trend except mule deer and juniper titmouse (the house wren trend shown as 'donw' is a typo as the underlying Specialists' Report shows the trend as stable). The same underlying Specialists' Report clearly states that neither the mule deer or the juniper titmouse populations trends are not related to motorized use: Page 15 of the Management Indicator Species Assessment: SEE TABLE. We have no established that the MIS populations are stable, upward, or not affected by motorized use by examining the underlying Specialists Reports. If the baseline condition is stable or upward under current management, why would the cumulative effects show such dire results from continued motorized use? The facts, as presented in the EA, do not logically or rationally support the results of the cumulative analysis.

And where did the habitat trends in Table 4 come from? They contradict the cited 2005 MIS Cibola National Forest Report. Here is what that report says about each habitat type listed in Table 4 (page numbers refer to page numbers in the 2005 MIS Cibola National Forest Report):

Mountain Grassland – “an expected upward trend in this habitat type .” (page 4)

Mixed Conifer – “the trend for this habitat is stable.” (page 5)

Pinon Juniper – “Under current conditions, the trend for pinyon-juniper habitat is expected to remain stable.” (page 4)

Mountain Shrub/Oak Woodlands – “The change in the amount of this habitat type is due primarily to fire suppression and trend is expected to continue to decline” (page 4)

Spruce Fir – “the trend in this habitat is expected to remain stable” (page 5)

Ponderosa Pine – “the trend in the ponderosa pine habitat type will continue to show an increase in quantity and improvement in quality” (page 3)

Riparian – “the habitat trend is expected to continue to improve” (page 3)

Here, the facts as presented in the underlying Specialists' Report completely contradict

	<p>the information shown in Table 4. Let's review. The populations trends are upward or stable (except for species impact attributed to other factors) and the habitat trends are all upward or stable (except the one impacted by fire suppression activities). If this is the resource condition under the current management conditions, how does a direct cause-and-effect relationship cause all of the dire habitat and species cumulative effects listed in the EA?</p> <p>The simple truth is that it doesn't. There is no rational connection between the facts before the agency and the stated cumulative effects of the alternatives. In wildlife resource after wildlife resource, the EA lists dire predictions in the cumulative effects descriptions if motorized use is continued but the current conditions of the Forest as described in the EA and its underlying documents don't bear this out.</p>
	<p>Response: The purpose of describing effects to MIS (Management Indicator Species) is to determine consistency with the Cibola Land and Resource Management Plan, and to determine project level effects to habitat and the relationship and magnitude of these effects on <u>the Forest-level</u> species and population trend.</p> <p>Since MIS trends are determined at the <u>Forest-wide</u> scale for both species and habitat, the threshold for impacts occurring at the project level is very high. A project level analysis determines how project alternatives will affect the observed <u>Forest-wide</u> habitat and population changes. Table 10 displays a summary of those changes for each species determined to have habitat in the analysis area. Table 10 describes habitat quantity and quality of <u>Forest-wide</u> habitat for each MIS and documents how project alternatives will affect <u>Forest-wide</u> population trend therefore meeting the requirements of an MIS analysis. A project would have to result in high percentage of habitat conversion in order to result in a change in habitat or population trend. The project level MIS report and summarization in the EA show that trend will remain stable for species and habitat except in Mountain Grassland habitat where route densities are high on the Mountainair Ranger District.</p>
82a	<p>Reading through your EA, I was impressed with the attention to detail, especially the direct and indirect impacts on wildlife from off-highway vehicles. In particular, the effects of sound on wildlife were explained in some detail. I wish the other ranger districts would be so detailed.</p>
	<p>Response: Thank-you for your comment, the EA and literature review has been shared with other Ranger Districts in the Region.</p>
82d	<p>See pg. 35 of EA: Kudos on this level of route density, and for combining roads and trails in route density computations.</p>
	<p>Response: Thank-you for your comment.</p>
82i	<p>See pg. 34 of EA: 153 square miles is 45% of non-wilderness area. This seems an enormous area of not only wildlife disturbance, but displacement. And the 153 square mile figure is likely underestimating the problem, as stated on page 35, "The effects on wildlife behavior and habitat utilization due to noise pointed out shortcomings in experimental studies of noise on wildlife (Fletcher and Busnel, 1978). They stated that using decibel scales keyed to the relatively narrow range of human hearing may miss important, unobserved impacts to wildlife species that have a much greater hearing range."</p>
	<p>Response: Very few studies have been conducted on the effect of noise to wildlife. The noise disturbance analysis combined with other analysis compares the effects by alternative. These effects are displayed in Tables 8 to 12 (p. 34, 35, 37, & 51).</p>
82n	<p>See pg. 53 of EA: This is a situation of concern. It may be necessary to limit the number of dispersed camping sites and/or uses. Suggest that enforcement officers give these 4 miles of goshawk foraging sufficient attention to ensure that the vast majority of users are keeping to the dispersed camping boundaries.</p>

Response: Each alternative has variable amounts of motorized routes within PFAs with Alternative 4 having the least amount and Alternative 3 having the most. All of the action alternatives reduce the number of miles of motorized routes in PFAs.	
92f	On page 18, stating that motorized route designation will contribute to wildlife habitat loss and displacement is erroneous. Eliminating cross country travel and closing existing open roads will have the opposite effect.
Response: Extensive literature review shows that wildlife species are affected by motorized use which causes habitat loss and displacement, habitat fragmentation and direct mortality. Effects to wildlife are documented on pages 32-67 of the EA. References regarding effects to wildlife are provided in the EA.	
86d	<p>Route Density Standards</p> <p>We encourage the Mountainair district to apply route density analysis to other applicable environments, as was done for the Wildlife Habitat and Special Status Species Analysis. The Wildlife analysis reflects the bottom-line fact that it is the impact of a route – and the impact caused by the route’s use by motorized vehicles – that is important to wildlife protection and management, not whether it is classified as a “road” or “trail”. It also acknowledges the presence of known non-system routes in calculating route densities, because the impacts of a route will be the same regardless of the designation, whether system, user-created, or designated as open or closed. In particular, applying comparative route density analysis in this manner to the Air and Watershed analysis would highlight the improvements to air and water protection that will arise from the final decision.</p>
<p>Response: Route density analysis was conducted for the wildlife specialist report. Additionally, the heritage resources specialist report considered all routes regardless of whether they were considered roads or motorized trails.</p> <p>Route density analysis was not one of the measures selected to assess effects of the alternatives. The decision about what metric to use to assess effects was made after the existing condition and issues was determined. To decide whether or not route density was a concern, a route density analysis was done for the existing condition at the 6th code watershed scale as described in the revised hydrology and soils report. This analysis was done for the entire HUC 6 watersheds including all roads. With the exception of one watershed, all 6th code watersheds were below 5 mi/mi² - the level at which research has determined that significant impacts begin to occur (CWP, 2003). One watershed, La Canada de La Loma de Arena – HUC130202030409, has 7.1 mi/mi² due to roads in an old subdivision on private lands on the west side of the project area. Since all but one of the watersheds were already below the threshold at which watershed effects can be detrimental, road density at the watershed level was not a useful measure. Other measures provided more useful information, such as the miles within 300 feet of a stream and dispersed camping areas within 300 feet of a stream.</p>	
68	<p>ERROR: Table 2 (Comparison of alternatives – environmental consequences) in Chapter 2, Subsection Wildlife, contains a major error in describing the affects for each Alternative.</p> <p>DISCUSSION: In Table 2, Chapter 2, Resource Area – Wildlife, Effects – Potential indirect displacement due to motorized route use and associated noise, the EA lists the following for the Alternatives: These numbers have their source in Chapter 3, page 33 in the section discussing Indirect Disturbance on Wildlife. The EA states (emphasis added): “While the totals of direct habitat loss are relatively low, there is an indirect habitat loss that includes the area around motorized routes where wildlife would avoid using habitat (table 8). This can be thought of as a “buffer” around the route that wildlife would generally avoid while the routes are in use (see the discussion of noise impacts in the associated biological assessment and evaluation (BAE); the management indicator species</p>

	<p>(MIS) report; and the migratory bird (MB) report). This does not mean the animals never use these areas, only that the majority of animals tend to avoid these zones while the motorized route or motorized cross-country area is in use. For purposes of this analysis, 700 meters will be used as an indicator average for displacement off motorized routes or use areas (from Gaines et al., 2003).”</p> <p>The analysis calculations used to populate Table 2 proceed like this (we will use Alternative 2 as an example): Length – 471.4 miles of road/trail on the District x 5,280 feet/mile = 2,488,992 linear feet of road/trail Width - 700 meters on each side of a road/trail = 1,400 meters = 4,592 feet multiplied by Multiply the Length (2,488,992 feet) by the Width (4,592 feet) to get total square feet impacted = 11,429,451,264 square feet There are 27,878,400 square feet (5,280 by 5280) in a square mile. Dividing the total square feet (11,429,451,264) impacted by the number of square feet in a square mile (27,878,400) gives us total impacted area in square miles = 410 square miles</p> <p>This doesn't exactly match the 'answer' in Table 2 (395 square miles) but it is close (Note: We haven't been able to recreate the math used in the EA calculation, we expect that a slightly different conversion of feet to meters or slightly different mileage figures from an earlier draft were used for the calculations in the document). Regardless of the specific conversion or mileage, there is still a BIG problem with the answer...there are only 169,000 acres in the analysis area or 264 square miles. The EA lists the impact as 395 square miles of impact. There can't be nearly twice as many 'square miles of potential wildlife displacement' as there are square miles in the entire analysis area.</p> <p>Obviously the simplifying assumptions made in calculating the affected area are not accurate due to road orientation and density. These assumptions and careless use of unverified numbers has a substantial impact on the results presented. The results of the calculations used do not accurately reflect the relative impact of the area of potential habitat displacement between the alternatives. The important comparisons and their summaries are then polluted with the same error. The Deciding Officer, trusting the EA to be an true reflection of the Alternatives impact, is not given accurate information and the quality of the decision is directly impacted.</p> <p>RESOLUTION: Accurately calculate and document the areas of potential habitat displacement or entirely remove the square miles of potential habitat displacement as found on in Table 2 in Chapter 2 (page 19) in Table 8 in Chapter 3 (page 34). To repeat, the accuracy of the square miles of potential habitat displacement is important. The Deciding Officer uses the numbers in Table 2 to make relative comparisons in square miles impacted by the alternatives. Inaccurate numbers used to compare impacts can significantly alter the decision of the Deciding Officer.</p>
Response:	A 700 meter buffer was used in the EA to describe the effect of wildlife habitat displacement resulting from motorized route use. The intent of the analysis was to compare and contrast the variable effect of each alternative related to wildlife habitat displacement. Motorized routes located near the analysis area boundary were buffered 700 meters which in some cases extended beyond the analysis area boundary.
55	The Manzanos are a raptor flyway. I have enjoyed viewing these birds there and want the

	area spared impacts from off road vehicles. Also I have seen fine archaeological sites in the area that deserve to be free from ORV impacts. Choose Alt 4 with recommendations from CBD.
Response: The HawkWatch Site near Capilla Peak has been used for raptor migration monitoring for over 25 years. The Forest Service is a cooperator in this monitoring effort. This site is described as an Important Bird Area (IBA) and affects to the IBA were analyzed in the EA (page 65).	
82s	See pg. 89: This is very troubling. The district's need for road maintenance is underfunded by 85%. It is well known that unmaintained roads lead to braiding, widening, rutting, and erosion -- all of which affects wildlife, plant life, and soils. Vehicles struggling to get through rutty, muddy, or washed out sections of road are likely to emit several times the sound level than if the road were in good condition, thus exacerbating the negative effects on wildlife.
Response: The current condition of roads is considered in the description of existing conditions for each resource area and reflects the shortfall in road maintenance dollars. Additionally, the EA analyzed a variety of route densities describing effects to wildlife, vegetation, and soils. See pages 32-88. Table 2 on pages 19-25 compares alternatives for each resource area. Seasonal closures are used on the Mountainair Ranger District to prevent vehicles from damaging roads during wet seasons.	
Wilderness	
42f	The Cibola National Forest is very large and hosts huge amounts of wilderness land to remain pristine for those outdoor enthusiasts that wish to not hear motorized vehicles.
Response: Your comment has been noted.	
82h	Comment: See pg. 21 of EA: Suggest moving parking areas a minimum of 700 meters from Wilderness boundaries. As stated on page 33 -- "there is an indirect habitat loss that includes the area around motorized routes where wildlife would avoid using habitat." ... "For purposes of this analysis, 700 meters will be used as an indicator average for displacement off motorized routes or use areas (from Gaines et al., 2003)." Allowing vehicles within 700 meters of Wilderness has the effect of disturbing wildlife (and humans) within the Wilderness areas thus effectively shrinking that area. Also, placing dead-end roads right at Wilderness entrances entices some OHV riders to trespass into Wilderness.
Response: Public Law 96-550 Sec. 105 state that: "Congress does not intend that designation of wilderness areas in the State of New Mexico lead to the creation of protective perimeters or buffer zones around each wilderness area. The fact that nonwilderness activities or uses can be seen or heard from areas within the wilderness shall not, of itself, preclude such activities or uses up to the boundary of the wilderness area."	
Hydrology	
77d	FALSE: Individual roads might have sections which need maintenance or relocation. However the EA creates a major error because of its reliance on the Soils and Water Report October 2009. I refer you to my comment on the Soils and Water Report which the EA relies on for its assessments of 'poorly located'. The hydrologist's report is hugely flawed because the entire report relies on false premises. At page 67 the EA repeats these statements found in the report: -there are only 4.2 miles of perennial stream (p 10, ' Of the 41 watersheds within the project area, only 1 has perennial water. Tajique Creek in the Arroyo de Tajique watershed has approximately 4.2 miles of perennial waters. The remaining streams in the project area are ephemeral or intermittent.')
	-there are no streams with impaired water quality (p 14 ' A review of the 2006-2008 State of New Mexico's Integrated Clean Water Act §303(d)/§305(b) Report indicates that no streams or freshwater reservoirs are within the project's analysis boundaries.')
	-the road density on the average is well below the 1.90 standard (p 11, ' The overall open

road density for the entire project area is 1.2 miles/square mile.) Then he proceeded to analyze the entire project area using the explicit assumption that all stream channels are riparian and have impaired water quality. In the EA, p 67, ' For the purposes of this project, riparian areas are considered lands within 300 feet of streams. Streams are any water course located in the Mountainair Ranger District (data from the Cibola National Forest GIS database; ephemeral, intermittent, or perennial). There are approximately 39,332 acres of land within 300 feet of streams within the project area.' He applies the proximity standard of 300 feet across the entire project area. The TAP states that 300 ft proximity to roads is applicable only to impaired perennial streams.

In other words, the hydrologist applied an entirely false and unwarranted assumption that all stream channels in the project area are 'impaired perennial' (the worst possible condition), instead of 'unimpaired ephemeral/intermittent' (the best possible condition, which he acknowledges is the true condition of the area). No wonder so many roads have been tossed aside as 'poorly located'. Any road within 300 feet of an ephemeral or intermittent stream channel was deemed 'poorly located'. This falsely disqualified a huge number of roads.

Response: The hydrologist report does not make the assumption that all stream channels in the project area are 'impaired perennial'. As explained in the Hydrology and Soils Report, impaired refers to the listing on the State of New Mexico's water quality 303d and 305b report which assesses whether or not designated uses are met. None of the waters in the project area have been assessed by the State of New Mexico for impairment to water quality. Water quality is only one aspect of a stream's condition. Streams should be in proper functioning condition according to their capability. This includes all streams in a watershed's network – perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral. Properly functioning means that channels have adequate landform, vegetation, or woody material in order to reduce high flows, filter sediment, aid floodplain development, and improve groundwater recharge. Channels that are eroded, filled with sediment, or otherwise unstable are not properly functioning. Locations where roads have contributed to these conditions have been identified in the TAP. In many cases, these are locations where streams and roads are in close proximity and/or are located on high erosion hazard areas. This data was just one of many factors used to develop alternatives.

It is true that the Hydrology and Soils Report makes the assumption that riparian areas are lands within 300 feet of all streams and used this information to determine effects to riparian areas. This measure serves as a proxy for the issue of impacts to drainage channels so, although the report calls these areas 'riparian, it is the effect of impacts to stream channels that is being assessed by comparing the miles of routes and the acres of dispersed recreation, OHV use, and big game retrieval within 300 feet of streams. The measure in the TAP of 300 feet within a water quality listed stream was just one of several criterion used to categorize the risk of sediment delivery as part of the overall risk and value assessment for travel management. The EA is a different process used to disclose the effect of the proposed alternatives.

19ff	26. A sense of magnitude must be used when making decisions about road closures based on indicators such as sediment production. For example, a route should not be closed because it is estimated to produce 10 cubic yards less sediment. The sediment yield must be compared to naturally occurring conditions which includes normal runoff, floods, and fires. The recent fires in the Cibola National Forest discharged thousands of cubic yards of sediment to the area streams which is more than all of the motorized routes in the project area for the next 100 years. Another example is the assertion that groomed snowmobile trails affect the lynx. Groomed snowmobile trails cover less than 0.001% of the total area and the impact on the lynx is of a similar magnitude. Additionally, if snowmobile trails affect the lynx, then so do cross-country and snowshoe ski trails. Again, we doubt that these impact the lynx but if snowmobiles do, then so do trails packed by non-motorized uses. Quite often non-motorized impacts are equal or greater and they must be fairly assessed also.
Response: Categorizing the risk of sediment yield was one of the criteria used in the TAP. The criterion used to determine the risk was based on a number of factors including proximity to a route and number of stream crossings. These risk factors pose a continuing impact from sediment delivery, above naturally occurring conditions. While it is true that natural factors contribute to sediment delivery, this process was designed to assess the potential for routes to contribute to sediment delivery in order to assist in decisions about the road system.	
19ii	30. The Stream Systems Technology Center found that installing water bars at a reasonable spacing was a very effective way to reduce the sediment discharge from trails and roads (July 2007 Stream Notes at http://www.stream.fs.fed.us). Many other best management practices are available to control sediment production at demonstrated by the bibliography at http://www.fs.fed.us/t d/programs/wsa/pdfPubs/road_bmp.pdf .
Response: Thank you for your comment. Water bars are one of the best management practices used to control sediment and runoff from trails and roads. This type of practice is used on the Cibola National Forest as part of its regular operations. The effectiveness of this practice is dependent on implementation and maintenance. Since there is not enough money to maintain the existing road system, these types of BMPs are not always implemented and maintained correctly, leading to impacts from road drainage on streams.	
Watershed	
42i	It breaks my heart that you assume that we would do more damage than cows that will be allowed to graze like the earth moving maggots that they can be eating every limb off of every tree they can reach. No limits on grazing, but take away our forest, which does seem right. Studies have shown that true Watershed improvements cannot take place unless the cows are stopped from stomping through the creeks.
Response: Thank you for your comment. Impacts from grazing and cows are assessed through a different process.	

1	<p>The Water Soils Air Report (WSA) has a fundamental and pervasive error which misrepresents the project area and entirely distorts the conclusions carried forward into the EA. The WSA clearly states that the project area is almost entirely ephemeral and intermittent stream channels with the sole exception of 4.2 miles of Tajique Canyon. The WSA clearly states there are no impaired waters in the project area. But for unknown and undisclosed reasons, the WSA then proceeds to analyze the entire project area under the strictest possible standard, which is applicable only to impaired perennial streams.</p> <p>In other words, the WSA acknowledges the project area is almost entirely ephemeral-intermittent with no impaired streams, Then the WSA deliberately conducts an analysis of the entire project area under the presumption that all stream channels are perennial, have riparian areas and have impaired water. This is an extremely flawed methodology. The WSA even makes an explicit statement that the analysis was done under a presumption that all stream channels are perennial streams with riparian areas. The statements in the WSA about the extent of riparian areas wildly contradict the statements from the Wildlife Biologist and the information in the TAP which is identified as coming from the Forest's GIS layer.</p> <p>The result of the WSA error is that some large but unknown number of roads have been wrongly assessed as being 'too close' to stream channels. These roads have wrongly been assigned 'high risk' assessment which increases the likelihood of the road being recommended for closure. The information being presented to the Deciding Officer about roads being 'too close' to stream channels is substantially wrong.</p> <p>WSA Statements Identifying the Existing Condition: At page 16 of the WSA says there are no impaired streams: Currently, according to the State of New Mexico, there are no impaired water bodies on the Mountainair Ranger District. This indicates that the existing management strategy is keeping streams within the project area within accepted thresholds. At pages 8-9 of the WSA says there are only 4.2 miles of perennial waters, and the rest, 638 miles, are ephemeral or intermittent. Of the 41 watersheds within the project area, only 1 has perennial water. Tajique Creek in the Arroyo de Tajique watershed has approximately 4.2 miles of perennial waters. The remaining streams in the project area are ephemeral or intermittent. Overall, within the Mountainair Travel Management project Area there are 638 miles of ephemeral or intermittent stream channels. For a list of the stream miles in each of the watersheds, please see the planning record.</p> <p>Identifying where the error starts: At page 67 of Chapter 3 of the MRD EA (bold added), riparian areas are defined: Riparian areas are defined by the Forest Service as the aquatic ecosystem and portions of the adjacent terrestrial ecosystem that directly affect or are affected by the aquatic environment. But then something very peculiar happens. The very next statement (p 67 Chapter 3 EA) says that lands within 300 feet of all streams will be considered as riparian, including the ephemeral and intermittent streams. For the purposes of this project, riparian areas are considered lands within 300 feet of streams. Streams are any water course located in the Mountainair Ranger District (data from the Cibola National Forest GIS database; ephemeral, intermittent, or perennial). There are approximately 39,332 acres of land within 300 feet of streams within the project area.</p> <p>At first we thought this was a grammatical error. But then we thought about the acreage numbers for lands within 300 feet of streams. The EA claims there are 39,332 acres of land within 300 feet of streams. But that would be 23% of the project area; it didn't make</p>
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any sense. We reviewed the WSA to see if this statement originates there, and it does. At pages 12-13 the WSA says:
To deal with riparian ecosystems, lands within 300 feet of streams will be analyzed to determine which alternative(s) would have the greatest impact/benefit to this resource. There are approximately 39,332 acres of land within 300 feet of streams within the project area.

The WSA has discarded the distinctions between ephemeral-intermittent and perennial. The WSA is clearly making the statement that lands within 300 feet of ANY stream are riparian. We realize this is a very serious accusation of scientific misconduct, and we wanted to compare the WSA statement and numbers with the rest of the EA.

HOW MANY ACRES OF RIPARIAN AREA ARE IN THE PROJECT AREA?

WSA says 39,332 acres

Cibola GIS Layer: 2,810 or 3,677 acres (both numbers cited as being from GIS)

Wildlife Biologist's measurement: 51 acres

The WSA assertions of riparian acreage are contradicted by the wildlife biologist's statements in the Biological Assessment, at page 4: (bold added)

We provide this lengthy excerpt to show the rationale the wildlife biologist uses for his assessment of riparian areas.

D. ECOTYPES PRESENT

The following acres (by ecotype) were derived from the Cibola national Forest Geographic Information System (GIS) General vegetation layer. It provides a relative "snapshot" of the major ecotypes; however, it is broad scale in nature and needs refinement (see discussion on riparian types).

Mixed conifer 17,056

Mtn. Grassland 962

Pinyon-juniper 103,102

Mountain shrub 1,692

Ponderosa pine 41,918

Riparian 2,810

Unclassified* 1,492

Total 169,029

*1,492 acres in the Cibola general vegetation layer do not have an associated ecotype classification and so are not associated with any habitat type.

As previously noted in the Management Indicator Species and Migratory Bird Reports (see both), there is only one de facto riparian area on the Mountainair Ranger District, Tajiue Creek. The other drainages (while consistently typed as riparian on the Cibola General Vegetation GIS layer) are ephemeral (flowing in response to precipitation) and only small segments of them (primarily on the west side of the Manzano Mountains in the wilderness area) have patches of riparian vegetation. For the purposes of Mexican spotted owl habitat analysis, the total acres of riparian considered for restricted habitat is only what is contained in Tajiue canyon. The drainage also contains two large inholdings within the District boundary; the acreage figure is only what is contained within USFS lands. Based on digitizing a shapefile (ArcGIS) on an orthophoto of the Tajiue riparian area, the total acres are approximately 51.

In the MIS Assessment, page 3, is this statement about riparian areas: (bold added)

*** The Cibola National Forest GIS general vegetation (CNF general vegetation) layer

used to analyze habitat types in the project area shows 3,677 acres of riparian; little true riparian (wetland vegetation such as willows, sedges, cottonwoods) occurs in the project area. Tajique Creek (along FR 55 in the Manzano Mountains) and some of the west side drainages in the Manzanos (small, dispersed segments) contain portions of true riparian vegetation. All drainages in the general vegetation layer are often typed as riparian even if no true riparian vegetation is present. The majority of drainages in the project area are ephemeral (flowing only in response to precipitation).

How did the WSA come up with 39,322 acres within 300 feet of streams? Going back to the earlier statements, the WSA says there are 638 miles of ephemeral-intermittent stream channels and 4.2 miles of perennial. We calculated the number of square feet 300 feet on either side of 640 miles (a band 600 feet wide and 640 miles long). This is 2,027,520,000 square feet. Then divide by 43,560 (the number of square feet in an acre). The result is 46,545 acres of land within 300 feet of 640 miles of stream. Not exactly 39,322. But it gives us an order of magnitude.

How did the WSA come up with the 300 foot standard as the critical proximity for 'distance from road to stream'? The figure of 300 feet from a stream comes from the TAP. At page 25 is this table for sediment delivery. Note the description of High risk. Close proximity is defined as 50 feet on either side of an intermittent-ephemeral stream, and 75 feet on either side of a perennial channel. Then it says 'for water quality impaired' the number is 300 feet on either side of a perennial channel. This is the information that confirms the error of applying the 'impaired perennial stream' standard to non-impaired ephemeral-intermittent streams. Page 9 of TAP Appendix Economic Considerations confirms the information on the distances for proximity. This quote from the TAP reinforces our statement that the WSA is using the wrong standard and wrong methodology: wrong to abandon the channel classifications which differentiate between intermittent, ephemeral and perennial. Roads with the greatest risk of contributing pollutants to the stream channel are those closest to the stream out to those within 300 feet of a watercourse. To be conservative, roads with 50 feet of intermittent and ephemeral stream channels or 75 feet of perennial channels were considered as potentially contributing pollutants. Approximately 5000 acres (3%) of the Mountainair Analysis Area is this close to stream channels. A total of about 20 miles (4%) of roads are within the above areas considered as potentially contributing pollutants directly to the stream. TAP Sediment Delivery.JPG

The WSA methodology for characterizing stream channels is clearly at odds with the assumptions made in the TAP and by the wildlife biologist. The EA is supposed to rationally integrate the reports of specialists into the statements of Existing Conditions, Cumulative Effects and Environmental Consequences. A rational integration is not possible when the individual specialist reports contradict each other in both data and methodology. These errors are very significant, and not just because of their sheer proportion, and the acres/miles mis-analyzed. The WSA's exaggerated numbers for 'at risk' acreage affects the discussion of maintenance and maintenance costs. The topic of maintenance costs also affects the decision to designate roads to remain open. Looking back at the known fact that there are no impaired streams, there seems that even with a large backlog of maintenance, there are no impaired streams. In fact, this even begs the question of whether the water quality has benefitted from reduced maintenance, since road maintenance is known to be a major source of sedimentation. In any case, the current management of 476 miles of open road and less maintenance is apparently working well. The WSA presents no compelling case for a 'need improve' the water resource by closing over 60% of the roads.

The WSA methodology of lumping all streams as riparian also conflicts with the methodology in the TAP. The TAP (page 25) discusses sediment delivery in terms of the distinct classifications of ephemeral, intermittent and perennial. The TAP rates 'Proximity' of a road to a stream according to the type of stream. The TAP shows that the 300 ft Proximity standard is ONLY supposed to be applied to IMPAIRED, PERENNIAL streams. The standards for intermittent/ephemeral channels and non-impaired channels of all types are 50 feet and 75 feet. A 300 foot standard is SIX times larger than a 50 foot standard. Accordingly, as a rough estimation, the WSA number of 39,322 acres of potentially impacted land around streams is six times greater than it should be. An error of 600 % cannot be overlooked or just waved aside as being 'insignificant'.

There is no scientific justification for reclassifying ephemeral and intermittent watercourses as riparian. We don't simply decide to 'consider' grasslands as forest, or valleys as mountains 'for the purpose of this project'. The Forest Service uses the categories of ephemeral, intermittent and perennial because these differences matter. It is incomprehensible for the hydrologist to just toss this aside and apply the most stringent standard to the entire area. The hydrologist never admits to this or explains it.

The terms ephemeral, intermittent and perennial are well established in the USFS research studies. The point is that accurate classifications are important. Best Management Practices depend on accurate assessments. Assessments cannot be accurate when a hydrologist chooses to ignore the classifications of 'ephemeral, intermittent and perennial'. This is exactly what the hydrologist did in the MRD EA Soils and Water Report.

Pages 14 and 15 of the Soils and Water Report repeat this unsupportable assertion that road closures will improve watershed conditions. Not only are the roads not a threat to the water, neither is the off-route cross-country travel which is currently allowed. Travel Management Rule aside, there is no water quality issue requiring the banning of cross-country travel. The WSA earlier admitted that the streams, roads and cross-country travel have been co-existing for decades without ill effects to the stream. There is no logic to these statements in the Soils and Water Report:

Implementation of any of the action alternatives would improve general watershed conditions by reducing open motorized routes and by reducing the acres available for motorized dispersed recreation, motorized big game retrieval and cross-country OHV use. Alternative 4 would reduce use the most, followed by Alternative 1 (proposed action), and then Alternative 3.

Alternative 2 (no action) would reduce use the least. (page 14) Table 5 shows that implementation of any of the action alternatives (1, 3 or 4) would reduce the use of areas within 300 feet of stream channels. Currently, 119 miles of routes are available to motorized travel within 300 feet of streams. This would be reduced to 61 miles in Alternatives 3, 54 miles in Alternative 1, and 36 miles in Alternative 4. This represents a decrease of between 49 (Alternative 3) to 70 (Alternative 4) percent of the existing condition. Alternative 1 would be reduced by 55%. (page 15) The WSA created Table 5 by applying his totally wrong 300 ft 'Proximity' standard to his totally wrong 'everything is riparian' assumption about watercourse mileage. One error multiplies the other. This results in numbers that bear no relationship to reality: More Inconsistency with other parts of the EA, other flawed statements Page 30 Management Indicator Species report also speaks to the lack of perennial streams which support riparian habitat. The dispersed

and intermittent riparian areas are in the Wilderness area on the west side of the Manzano Mountains.

Effects to habitat: Due to the almost complete lack of perennial systems in the analysis area, the Proposed Action and other Action Alternatives are expected to have no affect/no change to the existing riparian habitat, whether in Tajique Canyon, or in the dispersed and intermittent riparian areas in drainages on the west side of the Manzano Mountains. The WSA says there are currently 119 miles of road within critical distances of riparian area. The wildlife biologist says there are 26 miles of route in riparian habitat.

From page 4 of the MIS Report: Currently there are 26 miles of motorized route in riparian habitat with a route density of 3.51 miles of route per square mile. At page 16 (bold added) the WSA says there are no impaired streams, but continues to insist on phantom 'benefits' from alternatives which would reduce phantom 'problems'. This begs the question 'why would close roads to 'further improve water' when there is no water quality problem? Apparently the roads aren't hurting the streams, and the current management strategy with 476 miles of road, (even with allowed cross-country travel), is maintaining water quality. What's the problem that needs to be solved? Currently, according to the State of New Mexico, there are no impaired water bodies on the Mountainair Ranger District. This indicates that the existing management strategy is keeping streams within the project area within accepted thresholds. This is not to say that there are not localized water quality effects from the current management. Reductions of motorized routes located within 300 feet of streams as well as reductions of motorized dispersed recreation, cross country OHV use, and motorized big game retrieval acres within 300 feet of streams big game retrieval acres within 300 feet of streams (proposed in all three action alternatives) would further improve water quality and riparian resources. P14-15 also refers to improved protection for the phantom 'riparian' areas which he has refused to identify.

Implementation of any of the action alternatives would improve water quality and riparian resources by decreasing the acres of open route miles within 300 feet of streams and decreasing the motorized dispersed recreation, cross country OHV use and motorized big game retrieval within 300 feet of streams. Of the action alternatives, Alternative 4 would protect water quality and riparian resources the most followed by Alternative 1 (proposed action), and Alternative 3 in that order. Alternative 2 (no action alternative) would protect water quality the least.

Alternative 2 would 'protect it the least', but if there is no damage being done under the current management, why close anything? What additional protection is needed? There is no description or context for what 'more' or 'least' mean. There is nothing telling us whether the difference between more and least amounts to any significant difference. Free-floating non-specific terms like 'More and least' do not belong in a legitimate analysis.

The insistence on 'benefits' is stated again at page 15 of the WSA: Table 5 shows that implementation of any of the action alternatives (1, 3 or 4) would reduce the use of areas within 300 feet of stream channels. Currently, 119 miles of routes are available to motorized travel within 300 feet of streams. This would be reduced to 61 miles in Alternatives 3, 54 miles in Alternative 1, and 36 miles in Alternative 4. This represents a decrease of between 49 (Alternative 3) to 70 (Alternative 4) percent of the existing condition. Alternative 1 would be reduced by 55%. Soil erosion and sedimentation is

identified as an 'Issue' in the TAP at page 18, and used to support the maintenance cost issue, which in turn is cited to justify the closures. However, since there are no impaired streams, it appears that this is an imaginary problem which was manufactured to support the desired closures. Insufficient resources for maintenance of the existing system roads Inadequate maintenance reduces access for National Forest users and management, accelerates soil erosion by concentrating surface water flow, and affects water quality by increasing sediment into water courses and intermittent drainages. Funding for road maintenance is not adequate to maintain the existing system and perform needed monitoring. (See Appendix H for more information on Road Maintenance Costs) (TAP page 18) Page 17 refuses to admit the No Action Alternative would meet air quality goals, not just the action alternatives. This is a sin of omission, aimed at reinforcing the misconception that only the action alternatives are acceptable.

Effects on Air Quality

Currently, all airsheds within the project area are meeting National, State and local air quality standards. Current travel management (Alternative 2) has not contributed to non attainment in terms of air quality. Current levels of use are expected to continue or decline. Reductions in the miles of motorized routes available for travel as well as off highway areas available for use will reduce the possibility for detachment of soil particles through wind erosion. Therefore, it is anticipated that implementation of any of the action alternatives would sustain acceptable air quality standards.

Soils Contradiction

The figures given by the WSA for erosion and mass wasting contradict the figures in the TAP. At page 9, the WSA says: Approximately 33,242 acres of the project area, or 13%, has soils with severe erosion potential. Currently, approximately 55 miles of open road are located on soils with severe erosion potential. (page 11) But the TAP says there is less acreage and far fewer miles of road in the areas of erosion and wasting potential. Page 7 TAP Appendix B: There are 20,300 acres (12% of the analysis area) of soil in the Mountainair Analysis Area that have severe erosion potential (Strenger et al. 2007). Overall, roads located on soils with high erosion potential pose an increased risk for surface erosion. There are 36 miles (8%) of all mapped roads on high erosion potential soils within the analysis area on the Mountainair Ranger District. The percentage of road and trail miles on severe erosion potential soils is lower than the percentage of land area with this designation. This is likely the case because most roads are built in river valleys and on flatter areas and this coincides with lower erosion potential on the Forest. Nonetheless roads up channel bottoms can destabilize the channel bed causing increased channel erosion and even extreme gullies to cut up channels. The WSA claims 55 miles on soils with severe erosion potential, the TAP says 36 miles. That 19 mile difference represents 35% of the 55 miles claimed by the WSA. This cannot be ignored.

RESOLUTION:

Because of the pervasive, fundamental methodology errors, the WSA Report, along with its results and recommendation, gives wrong information to the public and the Deciding Officer. The flawed information is significant since it is misleading; wrongly assesses roads as being a risk to stream channels when they are not. The Water, Soils, Air Report must be rescinded in its entirety. It cannot be corrected by merely amending or editing. The recommendations that have been carried forward into the EA from the Report must be removed from the EA, especially in the chapters on Environmental Consequences and Cumulative Effects. Any erroneous assessments of "risk" to roads because of the flaws of this report should be removed from the risk-benefit analyses. There is no rational

	<p>connection between the facts presented and the conclusions and recommendations presented in the Water, Soil, and Air Report. The CEQ says the public must be able to easily and clearly ascertain what the current conditions are, and what the EA is proposing to change, and what the impacts of those changes would be. The Mountainair Ranger District's WSA, TAP and EA have the effect of making this less rather than more clear.</p>
<p>Response: The figures in the WSA report are not correct. The existing condition is 20320 acres of severe erosion hazard lands in the project area with 60 miles of routes located on these soils.</p>	
<p>It is not accurate to say that roads are not a risk to stream channels. There are many risks posed to stream channels from roads. These have been described in the TAP and are supported by many scientific references (Forman, etal 2003, Gucinski, etal, 2001, and Sheridan and Noske, 2007).</p>	
<p>The issue being assessed in the WSA is effects to drainage channels which includes all stream channels, perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral. As discussed in the response to comment 77d, no impaired water as assessed by the State of New Mexico does not mean there are no impaired streams in the project area. No streams in the project area have been assessed by the State of New Mexico. In addition, water quality is only one of many attributes which contribute to the condition of a stream.</p>	
<p>In lieu of a riparian database which doesn't currently exist on the Forest, the hydrologist who completed the WSA made an assumption that the lands within 300 feet of all streams are riparian areas. It is true that this assumption overestimates riparian areas in the project area. However, this measure is used to assess the impacts to drainage channels, one of the issues identified during the NEPA process. As a measure of impacts to drainage channels, lands within 300 feet of a stream channel is an accurate way to measure effects. The Wildlife Report has different acreage of riparian area because they used the general vegetation GIS database for riparian areas. This database is not a true riparian database, but the wildlife biologist determined that this was the best data source for their needs. To avoid confusion, it would be more accurate to refer to what is called riparian in the WSA report as stream channels, not riparian areas. The 300 foot zone is a zone of potential impact based on research that shows when roads are within 300 feet of a stream, impacts are likely (Forman, et al, 2003). The WSA report will be updated to clarify this confusing assumption.</p>	
<p>The terms ephemeral, intermittent, and perennial area are terms which describe the flow regime of a stream. These terms are not analogous with riparian. A riparian area can be ephemeral, intermittent, and perennial.</p>	
<p>The WSA report does say that there are no impaired water bodies on the Mountainair Ranger District and that this indicates the existing management strategy is keeping streams within the project area within accepted thresholds. This statement is an error and will be corrected in the WSA report. This is because the State of New Mexico has not assessed any waterbodies in the project area and furthermore water quality is just one of many parameters which are considered when determining the condition of a stream.</p>	
80c	<p>And the lack of rational connection or meaningful analysis is not limited to MIS species and their habitat. Here are a few more examples: Watershed and Air Resources – Cumulative Effects (page 73 of the EA): “Alternative 4 would be the most beneficial in terms of cumulative effects, followed by alternative 1 and then alternative 3.” But the underlying Specialists’ Report says this (page 16): “Currently, according to the State of New Mexico, there are no impaired water bodies on the Mountainair Ranger District. This indicates that the existing management strategy is keeping streams within the project area within accepted thresholds.”</p>
<p>Response: As explained in the response to comment 77d, no listed impaired water bodies refers to the</p>	

State of New Mexico’s assessment process to determine if designated uses are met. None of the streams in the project area have been assessed through this process so it is not accurate to say that the existing management strategy is keeping streams within the project area within accepted thresholds based on this information. In addition, water quality is only one of the measures used to determine the condition of a stream and hydrologic network it is part of.

86b

The Watershed cumulative impacts analysis fails to actually analyze any impacts of the proposed alternatives, by rendering all alternatives no worse than current conditions: “With this said, any alternative that reduces the combined open miles of road and trail use as well as the acres of motorized cross-country travel below the existing condition is an improvement to the soil and watershed resource within the project area. Therefore, there would be no deleterious cumulative effects from any of the action alternatives.” (p.73, Environmental Assessment for Travel Management, Mountainair Ranger District).

By only affirming that the status quo is not breached, the district fails to 1. Justify road closures and elimination of dispersed camping and motorized big game retrieval and 2. Develop measures that improve watershed quality in the project area.

For example, Forest Service road 55 along Tajique Creek, the only perennial stream in the project area, receives heavy use by recreationists. Alternatives 1 and 3 propose dispersed camping along a segment of this road, with no analysis of the impacts to streambed degradation, aquatic habitats, etc. Other conditions that may arise through travel management implementation, such as road construction, increased OHV use, and deteriorating road conditions, also warrant analysis of the impacts to watershed resources.

As stated in the Travel Analysis Report, 4% of the roads and trails are in close proximity to streams throughout the analysis area (p.10, Appendix B, Mountainair Ranger District Travel Analysis). These roads and trails put streams at risk of not meeting their beneficial “designated uses”. Identifying what designated uses can be affected by proposed actions to the road system is crucial to maintain or improve stream values. A key element of the Clean Water Act (CWA) Water Quality Standards (WQS) is the CWA’s anti-degradation protections. These protections are defined in both federal law and refined by New Mexico WQS (40 C.F.R. § 131.12; 20.6.4.8 NMAC). We strongly encourage the Forest Service to adhere to anti-degradation protections, as one way to make sure streams in the project area are meeting their designated uses.

Response: Every alternative proposes to reduce the amount of roads, dispersed camping and motorized big game retrieval, and OHV use in the project area. By doing so, the activities which are currently causing impacts would be reduced. This has a beneficial effect to watersheds and the stream networks within them.

Currently, dispersed camping is allowed along the entire reach of Tajique Creek. All alternative proposed to reduce the amount of dispersed camping allowed in this area to different degrees. The sections of Tajique Creek where dispersed camping would not be allowed would experience natural recovery. There is potential for increased use in the areas that remain open to dispersed camping. These areas would be monitored as described in the EA.

The State of New Mexico determines the designated uses for surface waters of the State. The perennial reach of Tajique Creek is not included in a classified water of the state (20.6.4.99 NMAC), so its designated uses are aquatic life, livestock watering, wildlife habitat, and secondary contact. Intermittent and ephemeral streams in the project area are also not included in a classified water of the state. The designated uses for these streams are livestock watering, wildlife habitat, and secondary contact.

Intermittent streams have aquatic life for a designated use, while ephemeral streams have limited aquatic life for a designated use. Antidegradation requires that the designated uses and the level of water quality needed to protect those uses will be maintained and protected.

The analysis presented in this EA is not intended to justify road closures or elimination of dispersed camping or motorized big game retrieval or develop measures that improve water quality in the project area. The purpose of this document is to disclose the effects of the alternatives. As described in the EA and specialist's report, decreasing the amount of roads, dispersed camping, and big game retrieval within 300 feet of streams would decrease the amount of impact to streams. In locations where roads would be closed, the assumption is made that these areas will begin the recovery process, including regrowth or vegetation, accumulation of litter and duff, and reduction of sediment yields. Where natural restoration is not adequate, areas will be addressed through the watershed improvement program.

Impacts to Soils

82r	See pg. 71: The miles of roads and dispersed camping acreage with "severe" negative effects on soils is troubling. Given that the district's road maintenance needs are underfunded by 85% (page 89) it seems illadvised to designate so many miles of roads which are known to have severe erosion or wasting potential or severe slopes.
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Response: While it is a challenge for roads and dispersed camping areas to be located on soils with severe erosion hazard rating, the alternatives proposed to reduce this amount thereby improving the watershed condition.

19n	Road density does not equal motorized trail density. Impact information developed based on roads should not be used to estimate impacts from ATV and single-track motorcycle trails. ATV trails has far less impact than roads in all resource areas and motorcycle single-track trails have far less impact than roads in all resource areas. Motorized trails have less impact than roads and this condition must be recognized during the analysis and decision-making.
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Response: The Water and Soils Report refers to route density, not road density. Route density includes roads and trails, regardless of type. Roads and trails have similar effects on the water and soil resources. Except where roads are paved, size is the biggest difference between trails and roads. Watershed effects related to the presence of routes, regardless of whether they are trails or roads are similar. These include capturing and concentrating runoff, causing impacts at stream crossings, and mobilizing sediment. All of these effects have been observed on the Mountainair Ranger District. (LC)

General Impacts to Air Quality

86a	The EA states that any alternative would produce negligible effects to air quality because current levels of motorized use are expected to continue. However, a forest-wide trend in New Mexico has shown motorized use steadily increasing in the last few years, mainly due to the popularity of OHVs. The forest should quantify air quality degradation based on future projections that follow this trend. Most importantly, this quantitative analysis should be done in light of Alternative 3, for which 50 miles of motorized trails are proposed. A system with designated trails specifically for OHVs and motorcycles will likely draw more use to this area, causing more harmful emissions and fugitive dust than current levels.
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Response: Any of these alternatives will decrease the amount of OHV use on the Forest since it is currently allowed in most areas.

Air Quality – Fugitive Dust

87o	<p>The impacts of fugitive dust are inadequately analyzed in this DEA and can be found in a single paragraph:</p> <p>Motor vehicles cause fugitive dust on unpaved road surfaces by mobilizing soil particles into the air. This dust is short lived and local in nature and, therefore, would not impact natural resources, human health, or quality of life for residents in the area. The implementation of any of the alternatives would not cause a noticeable change in the levels of fugitive dust. Forest Service 2010:72. We do not agree that the amount of fugitive dust generated from the proposed road system in the action alternatives would not be noticeably different from the current, existing system. Currently, there are over 400 miles of roads open to public use and unlimited crosscountry travel. While the number of miles of road on the ground will not change under any alternative because no roads are scheduled for decommissioning or obliteration, the use of the roads that will remain open to the public will change which could result in a change in the amount of dust generated by those routes.</p> <p>Additionally, there is no information on the impacts of fugitive dust to vegetation or snow pack melt rates, implicating impacts to ecosystems and wildlife, both issues we raised in our scoping comments. Center for Biological Diversity et al., 2010:19-21.</p> <p>We are concerned by the Forest Service’s failure to model the impacts of fugitive dust emissions that will result from this plan. Fugitive dust suspended in the air has the potential to impact more total area than any other impact of roads (paved or unpaved) and it can have significant effects on ecosystems and wildlife habitat. Forman et al., 2003; Westec, 1979. In fact, according to the National Emissions Inventory, road dust is the single greatest source of PM10. EPA, Draft Integrated Science Assessment for Particulate Matter, at 3-171 (Dec. 2008). Attached as Appendix C. Fugitive dust accounts for approximately 50% of primary PM2.5, with 40% of that arising from unpaved roads. EPA, Air Quality Criteria for Particulate Matter, at 3-94 (Oct. 2004). Attached as Appendix D. Dust is created and raised into the air as motorized vehicles travel on unpaved roads and through cross country travel, such as in the proposed dispersed camping and big game retrieval areas, and is then dispersed along roadsides or carried further afield via wind currents. An example of fugitive dust plumes caused by OHV traffic is documented in 1973 satellite photos. These photos show six dust plumes in the Mojave Desert covering more than 1,700 km² (656.2 mi²). These plumes were attributed to destabilization of soil surfaces resulting from OHV activities. Nakata et al., 1976; Gill 1996. In a study prepared by Walker and Everett, along Alaskan roads heavily traveled by various types of vehicles, they found that dust had buried mosses and very low-statured vegetation in the 10-m-wide area adjacent to each side of the road; dust blankets measured up to 10 cm (3.9 in) deep. Road dust and Its Environmental Impact on Alaskan Taiga and Tundra, Walker and Everett 1987, attached as Appendix H.</p> <p>According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “[n]umerous scientific studies have linked particle pollution exposure to a variety of problems, including increased respiratory symptoms, such as irritation of the airways, coughing, or difficulty breathing, for example; decreased lung function; aggravated asthma; development of chronic bronchitis; irregular heartbeat; nonfatal heart attacks; and premature death in people with heart or lung disease.” http://www.epa.gov/pm/health.html, last accessed March 9, 2010. The Forest Service made no attempt to analyze the effects of fugitive dust on human health in the project area, and it failed to assess how airborne fugitive dust would travel and affect human health beyond the boundaries of the ranger district.</p> <p>In September 2009, Dr. Jane Belnap of the United States Geological Survey gave a presentation to the Colorado Water Conservancy District.2 Dr. Belnap’s presentation</p>
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addressed the connection between increased temperature, disturbance, invasive species and dust. This presentation focused much attention on the impacts from ORVs and noted the cycle of increasing temperatures, which increases dust, which is exacerbated by ORVs, which increases the effects of climate change (temperature increases), with the key indicator of these problems being earlier snowmelts.

Attached as Appendix E. Dr. Belnap also cited dust concerns in her testimony at congressional hearings on June 5, 2008. Of particular concern is the amount of dust that results from motorized routes, which settles upon snow pack and alters the melt rate which, in turn, alters the availability of warm season infusion of water into streams and lakes, when such water is critical to wildlife. We have attached the Senate oversight hearing testimony as Appendix F and ask that the Forest Service specifically review pages 3-7, and see also pages 14, 18, 19.

Recently, a study was released in California clearly demonstrating that ORV activity is a major contributor to high PM concentrations in nearby airsheds because of destruction of soil crusts and vegetation. Craig, Cahill, and Ono 2010. This study is attached as Appendix G. While dust is bad for the health of people, it can also affect plants and animals. The Forest Service should address the impact of fugitive dust on vegetation, including the disruption of photosynthetic and respiration processes, leading to reduced plant growth, reproduction, and survivorship. The information on fugitive dust is also necessary for understanding the likely contributions to regional climate change caused by this plan.

The Forest Service must comply with all federal, state, and local environmental laws, including that it must maintain “air quality at a level that is adequate for the protection and use of National Forest System resources and that meets or exceeds applicable Federal, State and/or local standards or regulations.” 36 C.F.R. § 219.27(a)(12). This means, for example, that the Forest Service may not permit activities that will result in exceedances of national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS), prevention of significant deterioration (PSD) increment limits, air quality related values (AQRVs), and standards for hazardous air pollutants. The Clean Air Act itself also requires that the Forest Service not license, permit, approve, engage in, or support in any way an activity that will not conform with a state implementation plan (SIP). 42 U.S.C. § 7506(c)(1). State implementation plans are developed in order to achieve NAAQS and to observe PSD increment limits. See *id.* § 7410. Conformity with a SIP includes eliminating violations of NAAQS and ensuring that activities the Forest Service approves will not violate air quality standards such as NAAQS and PSD increment limits. Finally, NEPA requires that the Forest Service understand the environmental impacts of its actions, including analysis of air pollution in order to understand if the plan will comply with federal and state air quality standards, as required by Forest Service regulations and the Clean Air Act.

The Forest Service has made no attempt to calculate the amount of dust that will be generated by the proposed open road system or any alternative. The Forest Service should, at the very least, analyze the amount of dust that will be generated from the road system by using modeling and sample routes to inventory the particulate matter pollution for PM10 which will be generated by fugitive dust from ORVs on designated routes. This has been done for Bureau of Land Management projects (the West Tavaputs Plateau Natural Gas Full Field Development Plan, DEIS February 2008 and the Enduring Resources’ Saddletree Draw Leasing and Rock House Development Proposal, FEA December 2007.)

As part of the “hard look” requirement, NEPA demands that the Forest Service determine

	<p>and accurately describe baseline air quality conditions, so that it, as well as the public, can fully understand the implications of the existing and proposed travel system. There is no analysis of the current levels of dust generated by the road system. Rather, there is simply conclusory statement that because air quality standards have not been violated, this will continue: Current levels of motorized use are expected to continue. Currently, all airsheds within the project area are meeting National, State and local air quality standards. Current conditions (alternative 2) have not contributed to nonattainment in terms of air quality. Therefore, it is anticipated that implementation of any of the action alternatives would sustain acceptable air quality standards. Forest Service 2010:72. This utter lack of analysis is inadequate. Without preparing near-field, farfield, and cumulative air quality analyses, the Forest Service will not understand the level of the pollutants the road and trail network and its use will emit, thereby violating NEPA and its requirement that the Forest Service understand the environmental impacts of its plan. In addition, the Forest Service must model pollution concentrations and dispersion in order to understand if this plan will comply with federal and state air quality standards and protect air quality related values.</p> <p>The Forest Service must prepare a comprehensive emissions inventory, which includes fugitive dust emissions, and then model these figures in near-field, far-field, and cumulative analyses. Without doing so, the Forest Service cannot know what impact these activities will have and whether it is complying with federal and state air quality standards.</p>
<p>Response: There are currently over 400 miles of road (471.4 miles) exists on the Mountainair Ranger district. While the number of miles of road present on the ground would not change under any alternative, the number of miles open for public use would change if an action alternative is selected. The remaining roads would only be available for limited administrative use and not public use. Additionally, the district would be closed to motorized cross country travel under all alternatives. These two changes both reduce the amount of dust which would be expected to occur since there are fewer areas where dust could be mobilized into the air. In addition, motorized use on the District is not expected to increase more than 10% on the roads that remain open. This increase is offset by the proposed closure of cross country OHV use (100% reduction), and 49%-73% less open routes, depending on the alternative chosen.</p> <p>Most roads on the Mountainair Ranger District are closed during the winter months when the effects of dust on snow could occur.</p> <p>By closing the Mountainair Ranger District to cross country motorized use, ORV (OHV) activity off roads where soils crusts and vegetation can be destroyed is not allowed and prevented. Past activity would begin the restoration process as vegetation and crusts reestablish.</p> <p>The Cibola National Forest is complying with federal, state, and local laws. The Mountainair Ranger District currently does not exceed any air quality standards. Since all of the action alternatives proposed to reduce the miles of routes and closes the District to OHV motorized use, the amount of dust associated with these roads, the Mountainair Ranger District will continue to meet air quality standards. Bernalillo County does have fugitive dust regulations. The small part of the Mountainair Ranger District located in Bernalillo County does not have any routes located on it. Further, unpaved roadways within USDA Forest Service Lands are conditionally exempt from this regulation.</p> <p>Baseline air quality conditions were described in the EA. Dust was not identified as an issue that required further analysis.</p>	
<p>Impacts to Heritage Resources</p>	
<p>37b</p>	<p>Most importantly the trees need to be trimmed back from the roads and the roads repaired.</p>

	It is true that the present condition of the roads keeps some people out, namely the Site Watch volunteers who want to help reserve sites. It doesn't stop the looters, If looters are observed, by the time law enforcement people can navigate the forest roads and get to the site the looters are long gone, so the present road conditions actually protect the looters and leave the Site Watch volunteers in danger.
Response: The Forest Service will work with the Site Watch volunteers to ensure that they continue to have access to these sites for monitoring purposes.	
38e	My personal feelings regarding the three pueblos in the section of the forest south of Willard is that if the Forest Service and Site Watch aren't able to protect the pueblos, we need to close the roads to vehicle traffic in that section of the forest (north of the road to Gran Quivira). If necessary for wildlife management, they could be opened during hunting seasons, possibly to licensed hunters only. Again, this is my personal opinion, not that of the Torrance County Archaeological Society. I'm sure many of those members would be opposed to such action.
Response: The roads that access these sites are not designated in any alternative. Your preferences for road closure have been noted.	
92g	Page 23: Driving on existing open roads cannot impact or damage historic properties. A road through Pueblo Blanco has long ago been closed and fenced off. Cross-country will be prohibited. The act of driving on a designated road to a ruins cannot cause damage.
Response: Roads facilitate looting activities by providing individuals with a way to access cultural resources with excavation equipment (such as screens and shovels) and to carry out more material than if they were accessing the site by foot, horseback or on an OHV.	
97b	I have concerns that the Planning Team was directed to eliminate "roads" prior to their true evaluation. This does not follow the intent of the TAP as it eliminates "roads" prior to a proper review. During my attendance at one of the Scoping meetings in Belen, NM a high level USFS employee at the meeting responded to a comment about travel on the Gallinas Unit. I had pointed out that travel between the northern and southern sections of this unit would be a good idea to prevent one from exiting the forest and traveling great distances to get between the areas. I had noticed several routes in this area that appeared to be satisfactory to support travel in a full size vehicle. The USFS employee stated that they did not want any roads left open in that area because there were several Native American archaeological sites and a large potential for theft of resources. This employee made it clear that they intended to prevent any roads from being left open in this area as they had a Native American heritage and felt it was their duty to protect these ruins.
Response: Travel between the northern and southern sections of the Gallinas is provided for in Alternative 3. There are several other routes that appear to connect the two units however, private land along county road 167 prevents people from making this connection. The Forest Service does not have legal rights-of-way through private property in this area. There are several roads in the northern Gallinas that were ranked in the TAP as medium risk, low benefit (ML) or low risk, low benefit (LL). The TAP recommends that roads with these rankings be decommissioned, closed or converted to trails. Some of these roads were ranked as high risk for cultural resources and may have been excluded to preserve sites.	

<p>88c, 97d, 103a 103c, 103f, 103h</p>	<p>Summarized Comment: FR 458W and 458Y and the southern portion of 458 are listed as “system roads not Designated” in all 3 action alternatives. These roads provide access to a large pueblo that should remain open to the public. Additionally, road 458 provides access to another large pueblo site (Pueblo Colorado). There was no discussion of mitigation measures for these roads or justification for why these roads were not designated in the EA. It is believed that these roads were not designated due to unspecified heritage concerns.</p> <p>Specific Comments: “Closure should not even be considered until mitigation has been attempted in earnest, and failed.” (Commenter 88c)</p> <p>“In addition, there is a route to one of the ruin sites that should remain open for all to enjoy. It is FR 458W and Y which leads to a very interesting and elaborate ruin. This ruin is a great history lesson to all who visit. Once again, I believe that the USFS employee I refer to made sure this was eliminated from the inventory prior to the review of the established routes in the area. I think this is illegal and therefore it compromises the entire EA as written. The EA does not describe these routes or their potential damage to the forest. Mitigation could be established if potential damage would occur, but this is not addressed in the EA either.” (Commenter 97)</p> <p>“3) The existence of ruins at this large mesa-top site (and at Pueblo Blanco) is not a secret. There is no need to close roads 458W and Y to keep it hidden from the public. The sites are acknowledged publically by the US Government on the USGS “quad” map of the area which show the map designation “ruins” at these sites.</p> <p>11) The section of the EA dealing with Heritage Resources from pages 94 to 103 is vague at very best. While the EA discusses mitigation involving road surfaces in this region, no mention specifically is described for 458W or 458Y or the southernmost portion of 458, or the region next to them such as this large mesa-top ruin site. No specific mitigation need or plan was identified as having been considered and/or rejected.</p> <p>12) No confirmation of actual damage (such as looting) was disclosed with regard to dates, locations, degree, or number of incidents. This is true not just for roads 458W and 458Y, but for any roads in the Mountainair District, whether in the Manzano or Gallinas Divisions.</p> <p>13) On page 98 of the EA there is the statement, “.....roads that travel to or through heritage resources with a known history of looting and/or vandalism would not be designated under any of the action alternatives.” But there is no indication that this mesa-top site (or Pueblo Blanco or Pueblo Colorado) are such sites. However, even if there was a history of such activity, there is no proof presented indicating that it was trivial or was quite significant. There is no indication that ANY form of mitigation was ever needed or tried, let alone failed or was deemed not achievable. This is prejudicial against one section of the public to close these roads to motorized use and leave them open to non-motorized users. It reveals a presumption by the FS that motorized users are more likely than others to loot and vandalize a historical site.</p> <p>14) The EA fails to consider the protective effect of keeping roads 458W and Y open to the public. The great majority of visitors are law-abiding citizens who value this historical forest resource. When the road to the site is open, the eyes of the public are helping to watch over it. Keeping the area accessible to the public makes it harder for criminals to do</p>
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their looting. Crimes like this need privacy to be successful. Closing the roads will not stop the criminals from looting. It instead gives them the privacy they want.

15) It is acknowledged that Native Americans have been granted special considerations for some heritage sites (e.g. via AIRFA and NAGPRA). However, non-Native Americans equally have the right to visit such heritage sites, with reasonable, in this case, road access.” (Commenter 103)

“16) In addition, pages 101-103 of the EA discusses in great detail the numerous consultations with Contemporary American Indian Users/Tribal Consultation. 6 tribes were contacted, but only the Navajo Nation responded with a written reply, and then subsequently indicated on p. 102 that “...they had no further need to participate” and ... that the undertaking would not impact Navajo traditional cultural properties.”

17) Pages 102-103 of the EA show that for all of the alternatives including Alternative 2 the no-action alternative, no tribe contacted has indicated a problem, and that “There would be no effect to places or properties of cultural and religious significance or to traditional use of the area by practioners as a result of Alternative 2” (the no-action alternative).” (Comment 103g)

Response: All Forest Service system roads were analyzed in the TAP. FR 458X was ranked as low risk, low benefit (LL) and FR 458Y was ranked medium risk, low benefit (ML). The TAP recommends that roads with these rankings be decommissioned, closed or converted to trails. In addition FR 458Y ranked as a high risk for cultural resources because they access a large pueblo site with a known history of looting. Roads to sites can facilitate looting activities by allowing individuals to get close to sites with vehicles that can carry excavation equipment and the artifacts removed. FR 458X will continue to provide access to the western portions of this area. FR 458 dead ends at private property and therefore, the southern end was not designated.

There has been significant looting of the three pueblo sites, Pueblo Blanco, Pueblo Colorado and Pueblo de la Mesa, located in the Gallinas Unit. The history of looting extends back over thirty years with the most recent case occurring in the summer of 2008. The looting of these sites goes beyond the surface collection of artifacts. Illegal excavations have occurred within the roomblocks, evidenced by the holes exposing walls, and within the middens. It is not possible to give an exact count of the number of times the site has been damaged by illegal excavations since it has occurred for many years, likely before the initiation of heritage resource programs within the Forest Service, and the fact that there can be overlapping incidences within a brief time period. This makes it difficult to determine if the damage was caused during one or multiple episodes.

The Forest Service has gone to great lengths to protect these sites and has used both electronic and human surveillance to catch looters. These techniques have not been effective due to the remoteness of the area; by the time law enforcement can get to the sites the looters are gone. The Forest Service has backfilled looters pits in order to stabilize the site and is currently working with New Mexico SiteWatch site stewards who monitor these sites for damage and illegal activities. More recent topographic maps should not show these sites as site location is protected under 36 CFR 296.18.

Although encouraging visitation to archaeological sites can be an effective tool for preservation it is not applicable in this situation. The northern portion of the Gallinas is not heavily used by the public or visited by Forest Service personnel or law enforcement. Additionally, the roads in this area further restrict visitation to the sites, particularly during wet times of the year. Historical sites need to be visited frequently and consistently in order for visitation to provide protection. Therefore, encouraging access to these sites by leaving the roads open does not offer increased protection to these sites. The best method

currently available to the Forest Service is to discourage motorized travel to these sites and continue monitoring. The Forest Service will continue to provide SiteWatch volunteers access to these sites. By restricting public access to these roads the Forest Service will be able to monitor them for unauthorized use and if use is detected, inspect the sites for any damage. Unauthorized use of the roads will serve as a warning to the site stewards that they may encounter people at the site.

All members of the public will continue to have access to these sites as long as they visit them on foot or horseback. Although Tribal concerns for specific heritage resources are considered in the designation of roads, they were not the only consideration. The issues cited above were also important in determining whether to designate these roads. The Tribes did not indicate that the designation or non-designation of these roads would impact their traditional use of the area.

88a, 103e	<p>Summarized Comment: The TAP was misused to filter out roads from the environmental assessment. Particularly, roads 458W, 458Y and 458 were not designated without any justification.</p> <p>Specific Comments: “Forest Roads 458W and 458Y and the southernmost portion of 458 are listed as “system road not designated” (i.e.closed) in all 3 action alternatives of the EA. There is a very significant lack of proof or justification for this action in Chapter 3 Environmental Consequences for the action alternatives.</p> <p>I believe that the Travel Analysis Process (TAP) has been mis-used by the Mountainair Ranger District to pre-filter many roads out and eliminate them from analysis in the EA, which is supposed to consider ALL possibilities, but cannot because they are purposely omitted from all of the action alternatives. “ (Comments 88a and 103e)</p> <p>“The EA says that roads were or were not 'brought forward' into the proposed action. This indicates that some roads were dropped without public participation in the filtering process. Roads were dropped unless there was specific public support for designating those individual roads.” (Comments 88a and 103e)</p>
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Response: Please see the response to the above comment for an explanation of why roads 458W, 458Y, and 458 were not designated.

Public input on roads was sought both before the development of the Proposed Action during the travel analysis process and during scoping. Responses received during public meetings and scoping and the TAP were two sources of information used to develop the proposed action and alternatives. This information was coupled with district staff knowledge of road condition and specific resource concerns to identify roads to include in the alternatives. We do not agree that an unreasonable burden was placed on the public. Similarly, we do not agree that the EA must disclose the disposition of every road – the purpose of the EA is to disclose the effects of the alternatives. No Action considers all the roads (there would be no changes to the current designations on system roads, making all those roads at maintenance level 2 or higher available for motorized use) – and that portion of No Action could be selected by the responsible official.

Concerns and Suggestions Regarding OHV Recreation

<i>Comment #</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<i>Enforcement</i>	

48, 74c, 76b	<p>Summarized Comment: There is a concern that there is not adequate funding/staff to enforce the designated system.</p> <p>Specific Comments:</p> <p>“I am particularly concerned that there be adequate funding and staffing for enforcement of regulations restricting ORVs in recent years, the National Forest Service's and BLM's resources for achieving this function have been inadequate to the extreme.” (Comment 48)</p> <p>“Because the Forest Service has limited funding and will be unable to effectively police these closed areas, those who abuse our forests will continue unabated, with much less worry about being seen or caught.” (Comment 74c)</p>
<p>Response: We have noted your preference and concerns. The Law Enforcement section of the EA has addressed this issue. Please refer to the effects analysis beginning on page 108.</p>	
82m	<p>See pg. 30 of EA: While Alternative 1 provides what seems to be a substantial improvement for these species, that will only be the case if OHV users observe the designated system of roads. In other words, the provisions for Threatened, endangered, candidate or sensitive wildlife species are only as good as the ability to ensure that motorized users stay on the designation routes and within designated dispersed camping areas. This underscores the need for education and enforcement.</p>
<p>Response: Education is a key component of enforcement for all action alternatives. Please see the Law Enforcement section of the EA starting on page107 and particularly the effects section starting on page 108.</p>	
82k	<p>See pg 24 o EA: Experiences in other states have shown that there is typically a spike in off-route riding following the implementation of designated routes as this typically involves the closure of some popular routes. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish has been made aware of this dynamic and was suggested that NMGF coordinate enforcement efforts with the various national forests of New Mexico to assist during this anticipated spike.</p>
<p>Response: Your recommendation has been noted.</p>	
82o	<p>See pg. 34 of EA: 153 square miles is 45% of the non-wilderness area in this RD. Since disturbance and displacement is largely driven by sound levels, it is suggested that enforcement officers be equipped with sound meters and that vehicles suspected of exceeding the 96 dba limit for New Mexico (via the OHV Act) be tested and ticketed/removed from the forest as necessary. Note that the NMDGF is planning to add sound meters to their enforcement equipment.</p>
<p>Response: We have noted your recommendation.</p>	
82p	<p>See pg. 70 of EA: There is potential that off-route riding along these 54 miles could result in OHVs riding into riparian areas and/or streams. Suggest that enforcement personnel give priority to these areas.</p>
<p>Response: We have noted your preferences and concerns.</p>	
82q	<p>See pg. 70: There is great potential for wildlife disturbance and displacement, and for resource damage in these dispersed camping areas if users do not comply with distance regulations. Since users prefer to take their vehicles directly to their campsites, any campsite close to the riparian area beyond the allowed distance will have direct negative effects on the ecology and on wildlife. Recommend that enforcement personnel regularly monitor these areas.</p>
<p>Response: We have noted your recommendation.</p>	

87g	<p>There was no response in the DEA to our recommendation that peer enforcement or provisional designations of routes be utilized to improve enforcement of the MVUM. We are therefore including the comments we made during scoping again here, in full. We are also attaching Wildland CPRs 6 Strategies for Success as Appendix I.</p> <p>Given that areas covered by the TMP are vast, and that enforcement dollars and personnel are scarce, the only way to achieve meaningful peer enforcement is by providing clear consequences for route trespass and/or cross country travel violations. The situation now, unfortunately, is that violators know that they will not be caught and that there will be no consequences for riding illegally. The following strategy would encourage riders to comply and to urge "bad apples" within their ranks to comply by making all aware through language printed in the EA and on the MVUM that violations will result in temporary or permanent route and/or area closures. If the Forest were to print language suggesting route designations are provisional, and should abuse occur, then the Forest actually closed a route or area, the off-roading public would be much more likely to respect route designations.</p> <p>As the Forest Service may be aware, there is no special procedural or NEPA hoop necessary to jump through to institute temporary or permanent closures on routes where damage is occurring or is likely to occur, so the proposed policy below is well within current authority.</p> <p>We endorse in particular the printing of the following (or similar) phrase on MVUMs: PLEASE NOTE: The routes listed on this MVUM are open provisionally. Use of these routes that adversely impacts sensitive resources or any unauthorized use facilitated by these routes may result in route designation revisions or closures. Agency management may need to revise the designation of this route (e.g., by utilizing adaptive management techniques, including monitoring and maintenance or closure without further notice) in order to avoid, minimize, mitigate adverse effects that may occur or in order to halt unauthorized uses.</p> <p>While we support the implementation of Alternative 4, we note that Alternative 4 was not analyzed by the law enforcement specialist. This Alternative should be analyzed by the law enforcement specialist before the district makes a decision for this project.</p>
	<p>Response: As noted in FSM 7700, motorized recreation is one use of the Forest transportation system. There are other uses that the ID team considered when developing alternatives include administrative needs, access to private lands, and access across the National Forest to private lands within and beyond the forest boundaries. Damage is assessed on a case by case basis, and management solutions are considered. Depending on the needs for a road, closures are often not feasible. Damage may be best addressed by redesign or maintenance.</p> <p>The MVUMs are directed to be reprinted annually, and reviewed for changes. If a route is open or closed for motorized use through a decision, the changes will be incorporated into the annual reprint. This could include a route being closed for damage to the road surface or the surrounding area.</p> <p>Regarding changing the language in the MVUM. The MVUM base is a template. Agency policy prescribes the language that is included in this template, and the local units are not given the discretion to change the contents. We will forward your suggestion to the Off-Highway Vehicle Program Manager in the R3 Regional Office.</p> <p>Alternative 4 was included in the law enforcement section of the EA, under "Effects Common to All</p>

Action Alternatives.” There was additional effects discussion for Alternative 2 (No Action) and Alternative 3 because of the cross country travel provided in those two alternatives.	
52	Tighter regulations are needed and stiffer penalties if caught, including confiscation of vehicles. Choose Alt 4 with recommendations from CBD.
Response: We have noted your preference and recommendation.	
4b	You should be teaching the public the correct ways of traveling (courtesy, staying on roads, not making new trail, etc.) You should be showing them what happens if they don't keep on the trails and roads with proper fines if they don't.
Response: All action alternatives include user education as an enforcement tool during the first 2-3 years after the MVUM is released after which fines will be issued for violations. Please see the Law Enforcement section of the EA starting on page 107.	
Funding	
19gg	27. With respect to the position that there is not enough money to mitigate problems, motorized recreationists can work with the Forest Service as partners to obtain many different grants. 28. Also, motorized recreationists generate significant levels of funding that would be available if the agency would pursue them and the system was working to distribute them equitably. Basically OHV recreationists generate a significant amount OHV gas tax. These monies should be used to maintain, develop, and mitigate issues but, unfortunately, it is being diverted elsewhere. This significant issue must be addressed.
Response: This is outside the scope of the proposal, which is to designate roads, trails, and areas available for public motorized use. The maintenance cost was one factor considered in the analysis.	
19hh	The most common maintenance requirement for 4x4 and OHV routes is the construction and maintenance of water bars/dips/mounds to divert runoff from the route. This maintenance could easily be provided by running a SWECO trail machine with a trained operator over each route once every 5 years. OHV trail maintenance and gas tax monies are available to fund this maintenance. Each region could set up a program similar to the Trails Unlimited program (http://www.fs.fed.us/trailsunlimited/). AmeriCorps type labor could also be used. The SWECO could not be used on motorcycle single-track trails but they typically require less maintenance and water bars/dips/mounds can usually be constructed on these trails by hand work.
Response: While this may develop in the future as a way to address maintenance, it is outside the scope of the proposal.	
Illegal Activity	
74a	1. I fully understand the USFS motivation to limit travel along more remote and less traveled forest vehicle trails because of 4-wheeler and off road vehicle damage, illegal wood cutting and rock and plant removal.
Response: We have noted your preferences for limiting travel.	
Volunteers	
3b, 74d, 24c&d, 11b	Summarized Comment: Volunteers can help with enforcement and implementation of travel management. Specific Comments : “If management is a problem [...]can you come up with alternatives such as asking for help from the OHV community? You could even use special use permits.” (Comment 3b) “Please consider this possible solution: I am a member of a USFS Site Stewardship program helping to protect endangered historic and prehistoric sites located within the National Forest boundaries. Why not promote a similar program allowing citizen volunteers (under contract), such as myself,

	<p>who use these areas frequently, to be the Forest Service’s “eyes and ears” to report forest misuse. In my opinion, this is a way to allow law abiding citizens to continue free use of these back country roads and areas while, at the same time, reducing forest abuse and misuse.” (Commenter 74d)</p> <p>“We in the OHV Community generally support the idea of travel being limited to designated roads, trails and areas. We are also in support of a thorough environmental review and analysis during the route designation process, as well as ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the OHV infrastructure. In many cases we have voluntarily taxed ourselves in order to provide funds to agencies so they can actively and effectively accomplish these tasks.” (Commenter 24c)</p> <p>“There are many local groups who are willing to step up and volunteer their time to assist the NFS in performing trail maintenance and cleanup. They are willing to be self enforcing in issues such as OHV noise reduction, remaining within allowed OHV boundaries, safety compliance, and education of users in the area.” (Commenter 24d)</p> <p>“It is time for the Forest agencies to stop this land grab and come up with better management and maintenance plans. Most all of us are willing to pay our fair share to keep our recreation intact. We are willing to work hard on the trails and campgrounds, etc. to keep them up. We have proven this over the years, but the government has turned a blind eye to it. We do our best to police our own ranks.” (Commenter 11b)</p>
<p>Response: The Forest Service will work with volunteers to monitor resources as opportunities arise. On page 68270 of the Travel Management Rule Public Comments on Proposed Rule and Department Responses, it states:</p> <p>“The Forest Service utilizes a mix of agency personnel, contractors, volunteers, and cooperators to accomplish many elements of its mission. Without the support of cooperators and volunteers and the services of contractors, the agency would be unable to provide the same level of service to the public or care for the lands entrusted to it within its current budget. Like all law enforcement agencies, the Forest Service depends on citizen reports of violations as a critical component of its enforcement program.”</p>	
<p>Please contact the district office if you are interested in volunteering.</p>	
<p>Education</p>	
<p>24e</p>	<p>Regarding management of this area and the possible missed opportunities for OHV access, we would like to suggest that your agency address any legitimate maintenance, resource and environmental concerns by incorporating a training protocol into your travel plan that would train agency staff on how to effectively manage volunteer programs, apply for grants, use the challenge cost share program and learn about and apply for other funding sources.</p>
<p>Response: Your suggestion has been noted.</p>	
<p>Special Use Permits and Fees</p>	
<p>42d</p>	<p>We have enjoyed taking our motorcycles up there for decades and never go off trail as there are enough cut roads to accommodate a day of fun on a two-track. Why not put up a pay station, and give people a place to recreate? That is what our forests are supposed to stand for.</p>
<p>Response: Your suggestion has been noted.</p>	

18 Nancy/Erin	We are avid rockhounds and nature photographers so are very unhappy to hear that you are planning to close a large number of roads in your district to vehicle use. [...] Charge us a reasonable fee for road use and maintenance and keep the roads open !
Response: Your suggestion has been noted.	
Maintenance and Monitoring	
39b	A reasonable approach would be treat all forest users equally and not try to circumvent the law and create a de facto wilderness by closing 85% of the roads. If you really had any interest in a fair plan you could mitigate the perceived impacts of roads and trails on water quality by implementing a little repair work, Congress has already given the district money for this, I feel you are diverting this money to other projects.
Response: Your comment has been noted.	
Need for Non-OHV Access	
37a	<p>Most of these volunteers are retired people who possess more than just a passing interest in preserving historical and archaeological sites. They make an effort to learn more about these sites and their place in history by attending regular meetings to hear guest speakers, they study books about the history and archaeology of the area and they attend state Site Watch meetings and seminars.</p> <p>As retired people, few of them have the ability or interest to hike long distances through dense brush and up steep mountainsides. The climb up the mesa to visit Pueblo de la Mesa is probably near the limit for many of them to hike on a recurring basis.</p> <p>The time required is another significant factor for consideration. These volunteers are generous with their time, but with the present access it is difficult to visit all three of the pueblos in one day. Limiting access and expecting volunteers to hike long distances to visit the sites will require more than one day to inspect all three sites. We already spend more time driving between sites than we invest in doing our job when we get there! Inspecting the sites in a short time requires more than just two or three people. When trying to visit all three sites in one day, six-eight people are necessary to cover Pueblo Colorado or Pueblo Blanco completely in less than one hour. For safety reasons, it is wide to use two vehicles for these visits in the event one vehicle gets stuck or has mechanical problem. Not being able to travel the roads without tree damage and the strong possibility of undercarriage damage to vehicles keeps most of our volunteers out of the Cibola forest. TCAS people are willing and able to be active Site Watch volunteers, but not at the expense of our vehicles.</p>
Response: Volunteers will continue to have motorized access to the areas that they monitor through their volunteer agreement with the Forest Service. All volunteers who wish to drive to these sites must have a signed volunteer agreement in their possession. Special field trips to these sites can be arranged with the District staff.	
74b	2. By limiting travel on these roads or in these areas you are restricting the majority of the law abiding citizens who use our forest lands respectfully.
Response: Your comment has been noted.	
Noise	
73f	RESOLUTION for Correcting the Errors: Remove the words ' and impacts to quiet recreational experiences such as hiking.' from Purpose and Need, Chapter 1 page 4. Remove all statements referring to noise, sound or solitude affecting other users from the entire EA including from all the tables. Remove all of those statements from the Recreation Report.

Insert discussion which compares and evaluates the alternatives based on their ability to satisfy the objectives for Semi Primitive Motorized and Roaded Natural Areas, as described in the Forest Plan. Insert this wording at the beginning of Chapter 2 to disclose to the public and the Deciding Officer that critical information is missing. 'The EA presents no data at all on the numbers of recreational users of any kind. The significance of the missing information is that all the statements about user impacts to resources are purely conjecture. Every statement that there 'may, could or might' be impacts, must also be read as meaning there 'may not, or might not' be impacts. Identified impacts such as erosion, are caused by the cumulative effects of natural processes (fire, rain etc.) and human uses including all recreation, timber harvest, grazing, and agency actions such as thinning and prescribed burns. The EA does not differentiate between impacts from various sources. The EA does not identify or scale what type or amount or proportion of impacts are caused by the use of motor vehicles, either on or off roads and trails.'

Re-evaluate the Alternatives once the improper discussions are removed and appropriate discussion is inserted. Re-assign values and ratings to the alternatives, based on criteria appropriate for Roaded Natural and Semi Primitive Motorized areas.

Response: *Concerns related to references to sound and recreation conflicts:* The Travel Management Rule provides specific criteria that the decision maker must consider prior to making a decision: § 212.55 Criteria for designation of roads, trails, and areas.

(a) General criteria for designation of National Forest System roads, National Forest System trails, and areas on National Forest System lands. In designating National Forest System roads, National Forest System trails, and areas on National Forest System lands for motor vehicle use, the responsible official shall consider effects on National Forest System natural and cultural resources, public safety, provision of recreational opportunities, access needs, conflicts among uses of National Forest System lands, the need for maintenance and administration of roads, trails, and areas that would arise if the uses under consideration are designated; and the availability of resources for that maintenance and administration.

(b) Specific criteria for designation of trails and areas. In addition to the criteria in paragraph (a) of this section, in designating National Forest System trails and areas on National Forest System lands, the responsible official shall consider effects on the following, with the objective of minimizing:

- (1) Damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, and other forest resources;
- (2) Harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats;
- (3) Conflicts between motor vehicle use and existing or proposed recreational uses of National Forest System lands or neighboring Federal lands; and
- (4) Conflicts among different classes of motor vehicle uses of National Forest System lands or neighboring Federal lands.

In addition, the responsible official shall consider:

- (5) Compatibility of motor vehicle use with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account sound, emissions, and other factors.

(c) Specific criteria for designation of roads. In addition to the criteria in paragraph (a) of this section, in designating National Forest System roads, the responsible official shall consider:

- (1) Speed, volume, composition, and distribution of traffic on roads; and
- (2) Compatibility of vehicle class with road geometry and road surfacing.

Sound and conflicts between motor vehicle use and existing or proposed recreational uses of all types are

criteria that the responsible is directed to consider, and needs to be included in the assessment.

Concerns related to the source of impacts: The purpose of this project is to analyze roads and trails for designation for public motorized use, considering the criteria from the Rule. Part of that analysis included reviewing each road and trail outside of the Wilderness through the TAP process, identifying risks and benefits of each route. One of the risks was erosion of the road or trail. Most erosion on roads occurs from the repetitive disturbance as the result of motorized use. Given the goal of the TM to designate a system of roads, trails and areas considering the criteria established in the Rule, the level of analysis is commensurate with the purpose of the project.

Concerns related to recreation data: FSH 1909.15 section 12.3 identifies the framework for EA analysis. Data can be derived from resource databases, other analysis, field investigations and a variety of other sources. As documented in the specialist report, a variety of data was used for the recreation analysis, including literature review of applicable research, comments received from the public, specialist and other agency staff observations and social science research such as the NSRE and NVUM studies. This data is used to analyze the anticipated effects of each alternative. When terms such as “may” are used, based on the data there is a probability that there will be effects to the recreation experience or opportunities for a segment of forest recreationists.

Concerns related to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum: In GTR PNW-98 (Forest Service 1979) ROS defines the recreation opportunity setting as the combination of physical, biological, social, and managerial conditions that give value to a place. In FSH 2311.1 forests are directed to apply the criteria involving the physical, social, and managerial environments found in the ROS Users Guide to delineate the different ROS classes of land. The Cibola Forest Plan provided ROS class delineation, but generally did not supplement the delineation with additional standards and guidelines related the management of the ROS classes. One related standard applicable to all areas include: “ORV closures or restrictions will be implemented to protect resources from unpredictable damage. These actions may vary from a seasonal restriction for specific vehicles to yearlong closures for all vehicles. User enjoyment and safety will be considered as well as needs for resource protection as outlined in Section 2355.12 of FSM dated January 1981.” This standard provides for closures related to resource protection in all ROS classes.

The definition of Semi Primitive Motorized (SPM) includes that within the setting there will be evidence of primitive roads and motorized use of trails this class is characterized by predominantly natural or natural appearing landscapes. Visitors can also expect a strong feeling of remoteness. Based on both forest plan direction and the management suggested for SPM it is appropriate to reduce the density of the available roads or motorized trails for the purposes of safety or resource protection or to maintain a feeling of remoteness. The ROS does not specifically identify guidance for optimizing the quality of any one specific recreation activity, including motorized recreation.

While within the Roded Natural (RN) settings, roads and motorized equipment are considered common in this setting, the density of recreation use is often low compared to the Rural class. As with the SPM areas, the plan provides for ORV closures or restrictions to protect resources. Consideration of user enjoyment and safety applies to both motorized and non motorized recreationists in both ROS classes when defining motorized use.

<i>Nonmotorized Recreation and User Conflicts</i>	
79d	Page 21 describes the potential for conflict of uses: “The multiple use objectives of the US Forest Service set the stage for conflict when, with some exceptions, both motorized and non-motorized recreationists have access to the same trails or areas of public lands.” And a very much related statement at page 22

	<p>says there is currently no conflict of uses because the current extensive system disperses the users: “Extensive shared use is most accepted with lower use levels on a more extensive system. The use of roads and trails are seldom congested on the Mountainair Ranger District. The lack of reports for safety and conflict concerns can be attributed to the extensive system, relative segregation by types of uses, and dispersion of use by both motorized and non motorized recreationists.”</p> <p>Closing over half the roads and 90% of the dispersed camping will inevitably result in crowding. What is the social impact of crowding? What is the associated loss of quality of experience?</p> <p>The massive closure will have a social impact far beyond those who come to the Forest for a motorized experience. It also impacts those who use a vehicle to access the forest for non-motorized activities. There is not a single mention any place in the EA of how closing over half the forest roads will decrease access for non-motorized recreation and make it harder to get into large areas of the forest.</p> <p>Activities such as backpacking, day hiking, primitive camping, and mountain biking are not considered 'motorized'. But these users often use vehicles to get deeper into the forest to a location to start their activity. Without the quick access by vehicle into the forest, activities that used to be day trips become impossible.</p> <p>Neither the Social nor the Recreation analysis asked, ”What happens to day trips when the round trip becomes 20 miles instead of 10 miles because of road closures?”</p>
<p>Response: Alternative 1 and Alternative 3 maintain public access to all of the primary arterial and collector level 2 and 3 roads. The one area where there is potential loss of access in the Sand Canyon area, where roads are not proposed for designation to respond to resource concerns as described in the EA. Neither alternative is likely to noticeable reduce access for non motorized recreation opportunities.</p> <p>As a result of not proposing the reroutes, there would be some loss of access for non motorized recreation routes in Alternative 4.</p> <p>The EA does identify a reduction in the quality of motorized dispersed camping as a potential effect of designating corridors for this activity. See the Recreation section pgs. 72-88 in the EA and the Recreation Specialist report.</p>	
<p>Speed Limits</p>	
82i	<p>See pg. 107 of EA: Suggest a forest-wide speed limit be posted or otherwise known to users. Suggest lower speed limits be established and posted where conditions (wildlife, road conditions, other users) warrant.</p>
<p>Response: Thank you for your suggestion. On low standard roads, speed limits are generally not used to manage the forest transportation system due to the difficulty in enforcing these limits and the variable condition of these roads. Our law enforcement officers do have the authority to cite for careless and reckless use of a motor vehicle per 36 CFR § 261.54 (f).</p>	
<p>Passive Controls</p>	
50	<p>[...] we most strongly ask for less and not more roads and ATV trails in National Forests.</p> <p>I am against off-road driving as said above. Do not allow it, please. The Plan should include funding for passive controls, placing boulders to close roads for example, to stop the cancer of off-road hooligans. Choose Alt 4 with recommendations from CBD.</p>

Response: The decision will include monitoring for compliance. The result of that monitoring may include placing boulders, gates or other physical controls when determined to be necessary and after the appropriate level of analysis and documentation.	
Property Owners	
6	[...]on the map of forest roads I received along with the EA notice, Forest Road 260 was not even marked. This road is vital to the property owners of LaJara Springs subdivision west of Chilili, not only as alternative access to their property but as a lifesaving escape route if there is a forest fires in the area. It should be maintained as much as the roads leading up to it, please give this matter some of your attention.
Response: FR 260 was not considered for designation due to concerns brought forwards from the Pueblo of Iselta and the Chillili Land Grant of frequent trespass onto their lands from this road. This road will be available for administrative use including use by fire fighters.	
7	My wife and I live at 61 FR 322, which is off the Torreon loop Road in Tajique. We lost our home in the Big Springs fire in June, 2008, and have since rebuilt. Our road (322) is on private land, and Alan, who works for Karen Lassard, cut down all the trees on the forest service side of our land boundary, blocking off the remaining dead end of 322. This is to protect our house from falling trees all killed in the fire. We see on the map that this road 322 is showing active on the vehicle use map. We do not want any public access across our land to access what is left of 322. The road no longer physically exists. Please see that this road is deleted from the public travel maps. Our road is gated, and the other landowners do not want anyone crossing their land as well for the same reasons. We have suffered enough by the loss of our home and land to this fire, and have to maintain the road ourselves. Karen has told us that the FS has no legal right of way, so there should be no need to include this road on the upcoming public travel maps.
Response: This road is marked as a county road on the maps provided with the EA. It is not a Forest Service road and would not be designated for public use as part of this project.	
23	Road 131BA closed by private land owner.
Response: The portion of 131 that has been gated at private property is not considered for designation in any of the alternatives. A small segment of decommissioned road and a small segment of unauthorized roads are considered for designation in Alternatives 1 and 3 in order to bypass this gate.	
115b	There has been a locked gate across La Jara Road for at least 5 years or more. The district courts have rules that La Jara Road is a public road and should be kept open by the sheriffs of both Bernalillo and Tarrant Counties and that the road departments of both counties should maintain La Jara Road. This has not been done for years. [...] Now you say we should help pay for maintenance of a forest road that could be the only access to our property but isn't! [...] I know that once you close the road or refuse to maintain it, or put up a locked gate, only an act of god will be able to change it.
Response: Your concerns have been noted.	
Wood Cutting Permits	
58b	I would like to see more wood cutting permits since the economy is so bad right now it would help people of Mountainair and the surrounding communities. Woodcutting is a way of life for a lot of people and would help the forest and would also help the economy and the people in Mountainair.
Response: Thank you for your comment. Woodcutting permits would be available as the district identifies areas for personal fuelwood.	
Recreation	
19a	All of these multiple-use visitors use roads and motorized trails for their recreational purposes and the decision must take into account motorized designations serve many recreation activities, not just recreational trail riding. We have observed that 97% of the

	visitors to this area are there to enjoy motorized access and motorized recreation.
	Response: The Recreation section of the EA (pgs. 73-88) and the Recreation Specialist report analyzes the effects of the alternatives to motorized and non-motorized recreation.
19b	Adequate recreational opportunity for all visitors is the supreme issue that must be addressed by this action. The relative importance of recreation on a national basis is demonstrated by the Bureau of Economic Analysis statistics for spending on recreation. In 1979 the index for recreation spending was 32.537 (year 2000 = 100, http://www.bea.gov/national/nipaweb/TablePrint.asp?FirstYear=1979&LastYear=2004&Freq=Year&SelectedTable=33&ViewSeries=NO&Java=no&MaxValue=155.606&MaxChars=7&Request3Place=N&3Place=N&FromView=YES&Legal=Y&Land=). In 2004, the index was 113.695 for an increase of 349%. No other sector has increased this dramatically. Clearly, the public wants and needs adequate recreational opportunity and this should be the over-arching theme of this evaluation and decision.
	Response: The Recreation section of the EA (pgs. 73-88) and the Recreation Specialist report analyzes the effects of the alternatives to motorized and non-motorized recreation.

<p>19c, 19e</p>	<p>19c. Many federal actions have led to the continual closure of motorized recreational opportunities and access and at the same time the number of OHV recreationists has grown to 50 million and at the same time other outdoor activities have declined 18 to 25% (Journal of Environmental Management 80 (2006) 387–393, http://www.redrockinstitute.org/uploads/PNAS.pdf and http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22998037/).</p> <p>Multiple uses of the forest are marginalized every time a forest plan or travel management plan comes up for action. The motorized closure trend has created significant cumulative effects and has reached the point where it is causing severe public distress. Reasonable alternatives to motorized closures must be pursued. The continual loss of motorized recreational opportunities is our primary concern. Because of the significant cumulative effect of motorized closures at this point in time, we feel strongly that there can be “no net loss” of motorized recreational opportunities with the Mountainair Ranger District Travel Management Project. We would ask that this project address the attached checklist of issues and address the goals and needs identified. Using this checklist will help identify and address concerns and, hopefully, the needs of the public will be adequately met by implementing a more reasonable multiple-use alternative.</p> <p><i>19 e.</i> Our comments document that the current management trend towards massive motorized closures (25 to 75% of the existing routes) is not responsible to the public’s needs for motorized access and recreation and is contrary to the multiple-use management directives specified by congress. The agency can no longer ignore that motorized access and recreation are the largest (over 50 million) and fastest growing group of visitors. The agency can no longer ignore the needs of motorized recreationists and act irresponsibly by continuing to close a large percentage of existing motorized access and recreation opportunities. The agency can no longer ignore the need for new motorized recreational opportunities. The agency can no longer ignore the significant cumulative effect that all of the motorized closures over the past 30 years have had on motorized recreationists. We cannot tell you how many times we have met motorized recreationists (many of them families from the project area) and they have asked us “What is going on?” This question will be even more prevalent if the travel plan is pushed by the public in a short time frame. In all of the hundreds of federal actions in the past 7 years, we have yet to see a meaningful evaluation this cumulative effect. It seems that both the BLM and Forest Service are using forest planning and travel management planning as an opportunity to close as many motorized recreational opportunities as fast as possible. We are asking that this project establish a baseline evaluation and address this significant impact.</p>
	<p>Response: While the management of motorized recreation is changing with all action alternatives, all of the alternatives provide for continued motorized recreation in a variety of settings, providing a variety of experiences and challenges. The Rule directs forests to designate a system of roads, trails and areas for motorized use. The Cibola National Forest currently has few restrictions in place to manage motorized recreation, and cross country travel is permitted on all of the Mountainair Ranger District outside of the Manzano Mountain Wilderness. Complying with the Rule will result in a net loss since restricting use to a designated system will include the loss of cross country travel. Considering motorized recreation was one of the issues that drove the development of alternatives and the effects are analyzed in the EA.</p> <p>Related to including a national scope for the cumulative effects, 40 CFR 1508.7 provides guidance for establishing the cumulative effects area to be considered. “The analysis of cumulative effects begins with consideration of the direct and indirect effects on the environment that are expected or likely to result</p>

from the alternative proposals for agency action. Agencies then look for present effects of past actions that are, in the judgment of the agency, relevant and useful because they have a significant cause-and-effect relationship with the direct and indirect effects of the proposal for agency action and its alternatives.”

The cumulative effects area that was determined for the recreation analysis in this EA is those areas within a three hour drive of the district. This includes the Albuquerque metro area. There has been no indication through employee observations, public comments, or online research that the Mountainair Ranger District is a regional or national destination for motorized recreation. Most of the observed use is from the local communities and Albuquerque. This distance was determined to be relevant and useful based on the use and distance that most people drive for motorized recreation on the district. While management is changing on the National Forests within this area, there will still be motorized recreation available throughout the cumulative effects area, as well as BLM, and other lands.

<p>19j, 19k & 19m</p>	<p>19j. Overall, we are extremely concerned about the unequal allocation of trail resources and we do not see anything in the document that justifies the current imbalance of 28% motorized trails to 72% non-motorized trails in the Cibola National Forest. The current alternative preferred by the Forest Service worsens this imbalance by eliminating high quality motorized trails. The facts presented in our comments clearly supports a motorized trail allocation of 50% or greater.</p> <p><i>19k:</i> The following facts are documented in the information and comments that we have provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The public has a great need for motorized trails. 2. Under existing conditions there are considerably more non-motorized trail opportunities than motorized trail opportunities. 3. The public needs more motorized trail opportunities and not less. 4. The Forest Service has proposed less motorized trail opportunities. 5. Motorized recreationists are the only ones to lose in this proposal. 6. Motorized recreationists are the only one to lose in every travel plan action. 7. The National OHV policy was not intended to be a massive motorized closure process but that is how it is being used. <p>As documented in our comments, every Forest Service travel planning action has resulted in less motorized access and motorized trails. Motorized recreationists have become extremely frustrated with this disconnect between their needs and Forest Service actions. We often hear others say that the Forest Service is going to close our trails regardless of what we say or do. This is a sad statement for a federal agency with a stated commitment to equal program delivery. We are extremely concerned because the Forest Service is not providing equal program delivery to motorized recreationists.</p> <p><i>19 m:</i> 2. A motorized travel plan is a plan that specifically designates roads, trails and areas for motorized use, designates which vehicles will be allowed on which routes and if seasonal restrictions apply. A comprehensive trail designation plans does the same thing except it includes all trail uses, including mountain bike, equestrian and hiking. This is a very important distinction because the anti-access groups will attempt to convince the planning team to develop a "comprehensive" travel plan by using only the existing inventory of motorized routes. They do this by identifying existing motorized trails that are good for mountain bikes, equestrians and for bird watching... or whatever. The current approach is inequitable because it takes the current motorized route inventory and tries to make it the route inventory for all users. It leaves out possibilities for constructing or otherwise developing non-motorized trails and ignores existing non-motorized trails that exist in both the planning area and adjacent lands. Now, that doesn't mean the agency can't take into consideration the effect each alternative will have on nonmotorized visitors. It can - and it should be part of the NEPA analysis. But that is totally different from specifically providing a non-motorized trail system via the existing inventory of motorized routes. We support the creation, designation and management of non-motorized trails, but not at the expense of motorized visitors. We request that the agency not use the existing motorized trail inventory for designating non-motorized trails. Instead, if there is a need for nonmotorized trails, then the agency should consider options that do not reduce the existing opportunity for motorized users.</p> <p>3. An adequate and reasonable preferred alternative would include an adequate quantity and quality of beginning, intermediate, and advanced routes and trails for a wide cross-section of motorized visitors including motorcycles, ATVs, and four-wheel drive vehicles. Additionally, the quantity and quality of motorized routes would be at least</p>
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	equal to the quantity and quality of non-motorized routes. This is the yard stick that the team should measure travel plan alternatives by.
<p>Response: There are currently no trails managed for motorized use on the Mountainair Ranger District. The majority of the trails are either located in the Manzano Mountain Wilderness, or they are short segments outside of the Wilderness that are less than one mile long providing direct access to the Wilderness. (See the Proposed Action map in Appendix A of the EA.) There are no motorized trails being eliminated in any alternative. There are motorized trails being considered in Alternative 3. All of the motorized trails being considered in this alternative would be system roads or unauthorized routes that would be designated as trails.</p> <p>In the preamble to the Rule, the Department asserts that the “Provision of recreational opportunities and access needs are two of several criteria the responsible official must consider under § 212.55 of the final rule in designating routes for motor vehicle use. National Forests are popular with many Americans for many uses. It is not possible to accommodate all user demands on all National Forests while also protecting water quality, wildlife habitat, and other natural resources that people come to enjoy. Forest Service managers must balance user interests against the other criteria.” Federal Register /Vol. 70, No. 216 pg. 68271</p> <p>Equal program delivery as directed in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 applies specifically to federal agencies and protects qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability. The law states that no person can be denied participation in a program or activity that is open to other people solely because that person has a disability, unless allowing that participation would fundamentally alter that program or activity. The ratio of non motorized to motorized recreation opportunities is not a provision of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.</p>	
19m	<p>1. The current trend of excessive motorized access and motorized recreational closures is having a significant impact on the number of visitors to the forest as shown in the recently released NVUM report (http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/nvum/nvum_national_summary_fy2007.pdf, http://billingsgazette.net/articles/2008/12/04/features/outdoors/18-woods.txt) and the following graphic based on that data. This trend has created significant issues in regards to adequate public access and adequate motorized recreation which much be analyzed adequately during the process.</p>
<p>Response: The NVUM report that is referenced states that nationally 4.6% of forest visitors reported participating in OHV recreation, and 1.9% indicated that the OHV use is their primary activity during that visit. There is no finding published in the report that indicates that there has been a reduction in visitation related to motorized recreation closures. Actually there are no historic trends reported in this document. The Billings Gazette article is no longer available at the link that was provided.</p>	
19q	<p>9. Because of the shortage of OHV routes necessary to reasonably meet the needs of the public, every existing motorized route is extremely important.</p>
<p>Response Your comment is noted. Some of the system routes have not been used in many and have been naturally decommissioned through erosion or vegetation growing in the road prism. Other routes that are not being considered for public use have natural or cultural resource concerns that have been disclosed in the EA. The effects related to reducing access are also disclosed in the EA.</p>	
19s	<p>11. The needs of the public for motorized recreational opportunities include a variety of trails for different skill levels. Also, routes with minimal traffic are needed as practice routes for beginning riders.</p>
<p>Response: Providing for a variety of motorized recreation opportunities from the District road system was taken into account when developing the proposed action and alternatives. Some of the district roads have minimal traffic, and would be suitable as practice routes for beginning riders.</p>	

19u	13. The loss of high quality motorized routes in the Cibola National Forest is not a reasonable alternative given the historic use of these routes and the needs of the public for access and motorized recreation.
Response: Your concern has been noted.	
19cc	23. We have been keeping observations of the types of visitors in multiple-use areas since 1999 and have found that 97% of the visitors are motorized recreationists. The public comments and votes by how they use the forest, and more motorized access and recreation is what they are asking for with every visit.
<p>Response: While the majority of visitors to access recreation opportunities using motorized vehicles, not everyone is participating in motorized recreation where use of the vehicle is the primary recreation activity. During the 2006 National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey (NVUM) on the Cibola National Forest, the volume of motorized recreation was assessed through three different questions. Twenty percent indicated that they participated in driving for pleasure, and 4.5% indicated that this was their primary activity. Among people who indicated that they were there to participate in OHV use, 1.5% indicated that they participated in this activity. Another 0.9% indicated that they participated in a motorized trail activity.</p> <p>Considering some of the non motorized recreation activities, 63% of respondents indicated that they participated in hiking or walking, 7% participated in bicycling, and horseback riding accounted for 0.3% of use.</p>	
19jj & ll	<p>31. The Cibola National Forest has far less than the desired number of motorized trails. This creates two problems. First, the public will tend to “explore” closed routes in an attempt to salvage a decent outing. Secondly, it produces an unsatisfactory OHV experience.</p> <p>33. Note that non-motorized recreationists can use routes that are both open and closed to motorized recreationists including roads and the evaluation of the opportunities available to non-motorized recreationists must be based on the total of all existing roads and trails. Additionally nonmotorized recreationists can use an infinite amount of cross-country opportunity and motorized recreationists can not. A reasonable evaluation of this condition will conclude that motorized recreationists are already squeezed into insignificant and inadequate system of routes. This point must be adequately considered in the allocation of recreation resources.</p>
<p>Response: The effects of each alternative are analyzed in the recreation section and the specialist report. Alternative 3 does consider converting system roads to trails to provide for a motorized trail system that does not currently exist on the district. At this time, while motorized recreation does occur on the Mountainair Ranger District, this area is not a major destination for motorized recreation beyond the local area. The NVUM responses indicated that about 1.5% of visitors are participating in OHV recreation forest wide. Any alternative is anticipated to provide for the expected motorized recreation, although Alternative 3 provides for the most variety.</p>	

19nn & oo

35. Basically, as shown in the table below, there is too little motorized access and too few motorized trails in the Cibola National Forest. Therefore, every mile of existing road and motorized trail is very, very important. The evaluation must adequately consider and address the fact that motorized access to the Cibola National Forest is relatively limited as shown by the miles of roads versus the number of acres in the following table. The miles of motorized trails are exceptionally inadequate for the thousands of OHV recreationists looking for those opportunities. Additionally, the miles of motorized trails and especially single-track is way out of balance with the needs of thousands of motorized recreationists in the region surrounding the Cibola National Forest. At the same time, the miles and percentage of non-motorized trails is excessive compared to the use that they receive and this does not consider the endless crosscountry opportunities that available. The total route opportunity available to non-motorized recreationists is 4292 miles and the total miles of exclusive non-motorized trails are 444 (72.08%) and the cross-country miles are infinite. The total miles of roads open to motorized recreationists are 3574 and the total miles of trails open to motorized recreationists is 172 (27.92%) and the miles of cross-country opportunity is zero. Existing motorized single-track trails total about 0 miles or 0%.

Given the number of motorized recreationists and the miles of routes available, it should be very obvious that motorized recreationists are already squeezed into an inadequate system of routes. Under the existing condition, 9.99% of the Cibola National Forest is set-aside for segregated exclusive non-motorized use for 26.27% of the visitors to the forest. The remaining 73.73% of the visits are associated with multiple-use. Multiple-use lands are public places. Segregation in public places has not been acceptable since the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In order to reasonably meet the requirements of integration a reasonable management goal for the remaining 90.01% of the forest would be for shared multiple-use that would produce a forest-wide 50/50 sharing of non motorized/motorized trail opportunities and correct the current imbalance as shown in the table below.

The overall allocation of existing non-motorized versus motorized access and trail riding opportunities in the Cibola National Forest is a does not reasonably meet the needs of the public for motorized access and the recreational needs of motorized recreationists. We request that this data be used to guide the decision-making to a preferred alternative that adequately meets the needs of the public by increasing motorized recreational opportunities in the project area. See Table. NOTE: This data is out of date by at least 4 years and does not reflect significant motorized closures that have occurred since this table was put together.

36. While we do not support segregation, if segregation is to be implemented on multiple-use lands (which must be considered public places), then a corresponding goal would be to demonstrate an absolutely perfect 50/50 sharing of non-motorized and motorized trails as part of that segregation. Therefore, if the proposed plan further promotes segregation on multiple-use lands, then it must include a corresponding 50/50 sharing and it must not tip the balance further in favor of non-motorized trails and at the expense of motorized routes.

37. In order to bring equality to the allocation of non-motorized to motorized trails in the Cibola National Forest must either convert 136 miles ((616/2)-172) of non-

	<p>motorized trails to motorized trails or 272 miles (444 - 172) of new motorized trail must be constructed. The proposed Travel Plan does not adequately address this imbalance and it would be a step in the wrong direction and would create an even greater imbalance. This is not a reasonable direction for the Mountainair Ranger District travel plan.</p>
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Response: We do not understand what your data reference is in the first paragraph. There are currently 471.4 miles of system roads on the Mountainair Ranger District, not 3574. There are 106 miles of trails, not 444 miles as stated in your comment.

There are not any trails managed for motorized recreation on the district, since the majority of the trail system is within the Manzano Mountain Wilderness where motorized or mechanized use is prohibited. Since most of the trail system is located in the Wilderness, or provides direct access to the Wilderness, it is not feasible or legal to manage 50% of the current trail system for motorized use. If Alternative 3 considers adding 51.1 miles of trails for vehicles less than 65” which would include ATVs, UTVs, and motorcycles. These trails would be designated from existing primitive system roads.

As referenced in the response to question 19cc, the NVUM has a response rate of 20% of visitors reporting that they are driving for pleasure, 1.5% using OHVs, and 0.9% participating in motorized trail visits forest wide. Based on information gathered through the NVUM, it is not likely that either 73.73% or the 90% of visitors are visiting the Mountainair Ranger District for motorized recreation as you suggest.

Related to your assertion that designation of roads and trails for motorized use is a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the choice of recreation vehicles is not a protected class under the Civil Rights Act.

19pp	<p>38. The following are examples of adequate OHV trail systems that should be used to guide development of this project. The alternatives for this project should be compared to these OHV trail systems. Also, it would help the project team understand the needs of OHV recreationists by visiting these area and experiencing them on an OHV. Examples of the types of systems that should be developed in the project area include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Danskin Mountain in the Boise National Forest (http://www.stayontrails.com/assets/content/maps/Danskin-Mountains-map.pdf) b. South Fork Boise River in the Boise and Sawtooth National Forests c. Winom-Frazier in the Umatilla/Whitman National Forest d. Prospect OHV area in the Rogue River National Forest e. Paiute OHV System in the Fishlake National Forest f. East Fork Rock (http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon/recreation/cohvops/efrindex.shtml), g. Mendocino National Forest (http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/mendocino/recreation/ohv/ , and h. High Lakes and Blue Lake Trail System in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest (http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/recreation/trailbikes/documents/trails5269small.pdf). i. In order to meet the public’s need for motorized recreational opportunities, the project area and every national forest and BLM district must have OHV systems comparable to these examples.
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Response: Thank you for providing these references. Constructing a new OHV trail system is not part of the purpose and need of this project to comply with the Travel Management Rule. This decision is not static. In the future individuals or groups could submit a proposal for additional motorized trails, and the district could consider this proposal and choose to embark on the necessary analysis at that time.

19ss	42. The evaluation must adequately consider the growing popularity of motorized recreation, the aging population and their needs for motorized access, and the increased recreation time that the aging population has and looked forward to enjoying public lands in their motor vehicles.
Response: The recreation analysis in the EA and corresponding recreation specialist report does analyze the observed motorized recreation trends. Motorized recreation access for all users was also considered in these reports.	
19ww	47. In many cases illegal trails are created in response to the lack of adequate motorized opportunities. If there were an adequate number of OHV trail systems, then the need to create illegal trails would be greatly diminished. Therefore, the catch-22 of the closure trend is that in the end it feeds the illegal activity. In other words, it would be a more advantageous and equitable situation to pro-actively manage motorized recreation.
Response: Lack of regulation and management contributes to the creation of unauthorized trails. The Mountainair district has not had a prohibition for cross country travel outside of the Manzano Wilderness area. Designating and enforcing a motorized system is anticipated to reduce the creation of unauthorized trails..	
19zz	50. The Ravalli County Off-Road Users Association has found that “at the end of 2006, there were approximately 2500 “stickered” OHV’s in Ravalli County. For the past five years, the growth rate of “stickered” OHV’s has been about 20% per year. If this growth rate continues, the number of OHV’s in the forest will double every four years. On the Bitterroot National Forest there have been no new OHV “system” routes designated for OHV travel since 1996. History, experience and common sense tell us that when adequate, responsible, sustainable routes with attractive destinations are provided, OHV enthusiasts will ride responsibly. On the Bitterroot National Forest this means more routes, not more restriction.” The same analysis must be done for the Cibola National Forest and it will find the same no growth trend and a lack of an adequate number of existing routes that is further made worse by a lack of new routes to address growth.
Response: The New Mexico Motor Vehicle Division that is responsible for OHV registration does not track registrations by county. Actually over the past three years new registrations state wide are substantially lower, likely as a result of the economic down turn. People are purchasing fewer OHVs, as is the trend nationally with other large purchases. The purchase of temporary out of state permits has increased, but this is likely due to increased public information that New Mexico requires nonresident OHV permits while using OHVs in New Mexico. (David Chester, OHV Program Manager, NMG&F personal communication).	

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53. The typical use of public lands and the typical needs of the public in our region are described on Table 2-7 in the Social Assessment of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest dated October 2002 (http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/bd/forest_plan/revision/reports_documents/social/Forest%20Social%20Assessment%20Masterfinal%20.pdf). This document reported that the total number of forest visitors in Forest Service Region 1 for year 2000 was 13,200,000. The total number of wilderness visits was estimated at 337,000 or 2.55%. Therefore, millions of visitors to public lands (nearly all at 97.45%) benefit from management for multiple-use and benefit from motorized access and mechanized recreational opportunities which are consistent with our observations of visitors enjoying motorized access and mechanized recreation on public lands.

The agency has overlooked one important aspect of the visitor use data. The visitor use data cited above is based on a percent of the total population. However, the percent of the total population visiting our public lands is a fraction of the total population. Public lands should be managed for those people that actually visit them. We request that this adjustment be made in this evaluation. The total number of individuals that visit our national forests is about 56 million (personal communication Don English, National Visitors Use Monitoring Program, Forest Service, November 29, 2005). Our total U.S. population is about 286 million (2000 Census Data).

Therefore, only about 20% (56 million/286 million) of the total U.S. population actually visits our national forests. This number needs to be used as the denominator (baseline) for total forest visitors. Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth recognized the true popularity and magnitude of motorized recreation in his January 16, 2004 speech which stated "Off-highway vehicles, or OHVs, are a great way to experience the outdoors. But the number of OHV users has just gotten huge. It grew from about 5 million in 1972 to almost 36 million in 2000." We agree with the Forest Chief that 36 million is a significant number of recreationists. Additionally, the USDA Southern Research Station has recently validated the growing popularity of OHV recreation in their Recreation Statistics Update Report No. 3 dated October 2004 (www.idahoparks.org/assets/content/docs/2004_usfs_RecStatUpdate3.pdf). This document reports that the total number of OHV users has grown to 49.6 million by the fall 2003/spring 2004. Based on the 2000 estimates OHV and motorized recreationists are about 64% of the population that actually visits the forest (36 million / 56 million). This is further substantiated on page 9 of a report prepared by National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE 2000) titled Outdoor Recreation Participation in the United States (<http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/trends/Nsre/summary1.pdf>) which asks the question "During the past 12 months. Did you go sightseeing, driving for pleasure or driving ATVs or motorcycles?"

The percent responding "Yes" was 63.1% and the total number in millions was estimated at 130.8 million. Additionally, NSRE is often referenced by the agency but the summary statistics are skewed against motorized recreation because driving for pleasure and OHV use are split out as separate groups. These two groups represent motorized recreation and if they are added together they are as large as any other group in the survey which correctly demonstrates the magnitude of motorized recreation.

Additionally, the Southern Research Station in their report Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation in the United States, Regions and States (http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/OHV_final_report.pdf) determined that

of the total U.S. population in the West 27.3% participated in OHV recreation and that out of the total population in New Mexico 25.60% participated in OHV recreation. It appears that the study is diluting the actual percentage of OHV recreationists by using total population and not the population actually visiting and using the forest. As discussed above only 20% of the total U.S. population visits the forest. The percentage of New Mexico residents that actually visit our national forests is higher than the national average and is estimated at 1/2 of the total state population. Based on this estimate, it is our opinion that about 51% (25.6% x 2) of the actual visitors to New Mexico national forests participate in OHV recreation.

These surveys and data demonstrates the significant popularity of motorized and OHV recreation and the tremendous public support and need for motorized and OHV recreational opportunities. We maintain that motorized recreationists are the main group of visitors out of the total population of visitors to the national forest visiting the forest 5 or more days per year. The needs and support of motorized recreationists must be adequately addressed in this planning effort by preserving all reasonable existing motorized recreational opportunities. This planning effort must also adequately address the increasing popularity by creating new motorized recreational opportunities.

64. Based on our estimate that 40% of the visitors are OHV recreationists, we estimate using the NVUM data for total visitors that the total number of OHV visits to the Cibola National Forest is 1,157,200 = (2,893,000 x .40).

65. In addition to the studies cited above, we have observed that 97% of the visitors to multiple use areas are enjoying multiple-use activities based on motorized access and motorized recreation as shown in Table 1. SEE TABLE. Data Source: Capital Trail Vehicle Association

Our observations of recreationists on multiple-use public lands from 1999 through 2009 is summarized in the table above (yearly data sheets available upon request) and demonstrates that out of 16,667 observations, 16,175 recreationists or 97% of the visitors were associated with motorized access and multiple-uses. Additionally, of the total number of people visiting public lands, 38% (6400 / 16,667) were associated with OHV recreation. Furthermore, and most importantly, out of the 7,291 (6400 + 399 + 178 + 116 + 198) visitors that we observed using trails, 6,400 or 88% were OHV recreationists and 891 or 12% were non-motorized recreationists which includes mountain bikes which are a form of mechanized travel (8:1 motorized versus non-motorized and 13:1 mechanized versus non-motorized). Therefore, nearly all (97%) of the visitors to public lands benefit from management for multiple-use and benefit from motorized access and mechanized recreational opportunities which are consistent with our observations. Therefore, 88% of the trail users are motorized and 93% when including mountain bikes and consequently, at least 88 to 93% of the trails system and public land should be managed for multiple-uses including motorized access and recreation.

Response: The National Visitor Use Monitoring survey conducted on the Cibola National Forest in 2001 and 2006 does not support an estimation of 51% of the of visitors to forest participating in OHV recreation. At most the data could only suggest that 20% participate at some point in their visit, since “driving for pleasure” could represent a variety of activities, including OHV recreation but also driving on the highway viewing scenery in a sedan. Given the large percentage that stated that one of their activities was viewing scenery or wildlife, it is likely that many who reported driving for pleasure are in the later category. Since only 1.5% stated that they participated in OHV recreation, and 0.9% participated in motorized trail recreation, the number of visitors participating in OHV recreation on the Cibola

National Forest is substantially less than other activities.

The Cibola National Forest recognized the importance of collaborating with OHV recreation user groups and conducted a substantial outreach to achieve this goal. OHV recreation user groups have participated in all phases of public involvement. The forest has also utilized a variety of methods for reaching out, including media press releases, internet, periodic emails, community workshops and workgroups. See detailed discussion in the public involvement section in the EA on pages 5-8.

The purpose and need for this project to comply with the Travel Management Rule on the Mountainair Ranger District. Analysis of national and regional recreation resources is outside the scope of this document. The Manzano Mountain Wilderness is adjacent to the project area, and effects are considered, as are effects to other adjacent lands such as local residential areas and the Isleta Pueblo.

<p>19fff, 19iii, 19hhh</p>	<p>56. The current allotment of recreation resources on all Forest Service lands is way out of balance with 44,919,000 acres out of 192,300,000 acres or 24% in wilderness designation while no more than 2.55% of the visitors are wilderness visitors. Designation as wilderness is further out of touch with the needs of the public because recreation is not a stated purpose of the wilderness act and, therefore, recreation in wilderness area can not and should not be emphasized. Note that we could oppose any recreation development in wilderness areas in retaliation to non-motorized groups that go after our recreation opportunities but we have chosen not to do so. Recreation is a stated purpose in the multiple-use laws and, therefore, should be emphasized in the purpose and action.</p> <p>58. The evaluation must adequately consider and address the fact that motorized access to the national forest is relatively limited as shown by the miles of roads versus the number of acres in the following table. The miles and percentage of non-motorized trails is excessive compared to the use that they receive and this does not consider the endless cross-country opportunities that available to non-motorized recreationists. The total route opportunity available to nonmotorized recreationists is 510,575 miles, the total miles of exclusive non-motorized trails are 93,088 or 75% of the existing total. The miles of non-motorized cross-country opportunity are infinite.</p> <p>59. The total miles of roads open to motorized recreationists are 286,445 and the total miles of trails open to motorized recreationists are 31,853 or 25% of the existing total. The cross-country miles are or will be shortly equal to zero. Therefore, the overall allocation of non-motorized versus motorized access and trail riding opportunities in the national forest system is way out of balance with the needs of the public for motorized access and the recreational needs of motorized recreationists.</p> <p>Furthermore, we request that the data in the next two tables be updated to reflect the significant reduction in miles of roads and motorized trails that decisions have produced since this data was assembled. This revised data should be used to guide the decision-making to forest plan and travel plan alternatives that adequately meet the needs of the public by increasing motorized recreational opportunities in the national forest system. SEE TABLE . NOTE: This data is out of date by at least 4 years and does not reflect significant motorized closures that have occurred since this table was put together.</p> <p>60. The evaluation must adequately consider and address the fact that motorized access to the national forest in Region 3 is relatively limited as shown by the miles of roads versus the number of acres in the following table. The miles and percentage of non-motorized trails is excessive compared to the use that they receive and this does not consider the endless crosscountry opportunities that available to non-motorized recreationists. The total route opportunity available to non-motorized recreationists in Region 3 is 62,109 miles; the total miles of exclusive non-motorized trails are 6,187 or 73.80% of the total existing miles of trail. The miles of cross-country opportunity are infinite. The total miles of roads open to motorized recreationists are 37,097 and the total miles of trails open to motorized recreationists are 2,196 or 26.20% of the total existing miles of trail. The miles of cross-country opportunity are or will be shortly equal to zero. Therefore, the overall allocation of non-motorized versus motorized access and trail riding opportunities in Region 3 is way out of balance with the needs of the public for motorized access and the recreational needs of motorized recreationists. SEE TABLE</p>
<p>Response: The purpose and need for this project to comply with the Travel Management Rule on the Mountainair Ranger District. Analysis of national and regional recreation resources is outside the scope</p>	

of this document. The Manazano Mountain Wilderness is adjacent to the project area, and effects are considered, as are effects to other adjacent lands such as local residential areas and the Isleta Pueblo.	
19jjj	61. Additionally, specific NVUM data for the Cibola National Forest shows that there were 2,893,000 total site visits to the forest and 760,000 wilderness visits (http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/nvum/revised_vis_est.pdf). This number represents almost 10% of all wilderness visits in the U.S. This value is extremely high and may reflect aerial tramway visits to the Sandia Mountains Wilderness or some other condition which should not be considered actual on the ground wilderness visits. The validity of this wilderness visitation number should be investigated by the agency as this is the highest number of wilderness visits to a single forest in the nation. The national average is 3.59% and will be used for our comments realistically estimate the number of wilderness visits to the Cibola National Forest. This percentage is equal to 103,860 wilderness visits.
Response: All of the wilderness visitation surveys were taken at trailheads that lead into the wilderness. The tram use was not included in this estimate. The high number of wilderness visits is statistically valid due to the close proximity the metro Albuquerque. Residential developments border the Sandia Mountain Wilderness along most of the western boundary, and local residents frequently hike in the Wilderness, often on a daily basis.	

19kkk	<p>62. The reported 103,860 wilderness visits in the Cibola National Forest are 3.59% of the total visits to the Cibola National Forest yet past decisions in Region 3 and the proposed plan by the Cibola National Forest have produced both a disproportionately large and an increased number of recreation opportunities for non-motorized and wilderness visitors and at the expense of the multiple-use and motorized visitors. The remaining 96.41% of the visitors are associated with multiple-uses. The public comments and votes by how they use the forest, and more motorized access and recreation is what they are asking for with every visit regardless of whether they provide comments in a cumbersome NEPA process.</p> <p>63. As demonstrated by Table 3, the ratio of acres available to wilderness/non-motorized visitors versus the acres available to multiple-use visitors is way out of balance in the existing condition with 25.13 acres per wilderness visitor and 2.19 acres per multiple-use visitor for a ratio of about 11:1. This proposed action makes this inequity even worse by providing 147.2 acres per wilderness visitor and 0.85 acre per multiple-use visitor for a ratio of about 173:1.</p> <p>The available multiple-use (MU) acres and acres per MU visitors is less than this example because even though lands are designated as MU by congress the agency is effectively managing many multiple-use acres as non-motorized/defacto wilderness. Therefore, the acres per MU visitor is significantly less than shown and the imbalance of the ratio of defacto wilderness acres per visitor to MU acres per visitor is significantly greater than this example. SEE TABLE. We recognize the desire for a quiet experience in the forest as a legitimate value. To varying degrees, we all visit the forest to enjoy the natural sounds of streams, trees, and wildlife. Forest visitors who require an absolutely natural acoustic experience in the forest should be encouraged to use the portions of the forest which have been set aside for their exclusive benefit where they are guaranteed a quiet experience, i.e, wilderness areas. Given the demonstrated underutilization of existing wilderness areas, it is entirely reasonable to conclude that there is adequate wilderness area. Given that vast areas of our forests have been set aside for the exclusive benefit of this relatively small group of quiet visitors, it is not reasonable to set aside more areas and trails for their needs.</p>
<p>Response: While the number of miles of available differs between alternatives, no alternative completely prohibits motorized use from large areas. The variety of recreation opportunities, as well as other resource concerns, is analyzed for each alternative.</p>	
19mmm	<p>66. Out of the 16,667 recreationists that were observed, 198 were hikers and all of the meetings were pleasant. We have not experienced any user conflict in ten years of observations.</p>
<p>Response: Research related to motorized and non motorized recreationists is cited in the recreation specialist's report.</p>	

19nnn	<p>67. Based on Southern Recreation Report estimates that 25.6% of the national forest visitors in New Mexico are OHV recreationists, the total number of OHV related visits to the Cibola National Forest is 1,157,200 (2,893,000 x .256) (see NVUM citation for total number of forest visitors above). Given the 172 miles of existing motorized trails, there are 4,306(1,157,200 / 172) OHV visitors per mile of motorized trail or 1 OHV visitor every 1.23 feet.</p> <p>Given the 444 miles of non-motorized trail and 103,860 wilderness visitors, there are 234 (103,860 / 444) non-motorized visitors per mile of trail or 1 non-motorized visitor every 23 feet. This imbalance of opportunity cannot be considered equal program delivery and the proposed action must address this significant issue by creating more motorized trails.</p> <p>68. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on OHV recreation has been prepared and released to the general public (http://www.gao.gov/Products/GAO-09-509). GAO investigators interviewed agency personnel, OHV rider and industry representatives and environmental group representatives. GAO issued a number of findings in terms of OHV recreation on public lands. GAO highlights include that OHV recreation is growing in popularity and that more Americans are seeking access to federal public lands via their OHVs. Second, the report found that the federal land agencies could do a better job of providing signage and general outreach to the recreating public so that visitors to public lands have a better understanding of where they can and cannot ride their OHVs. The report also focused attention on the inadequacies of law enforcement and the inconsistent scale of fines and penalties for inappropriate behavior on public lands. GAO found that the land agencies were stretched, both in terms of financial resources and personnel, and that other pressing concerns, such as fighting wildfires, apprehending drug criminals and border control issues kept agency personnel from devoting the necessary time to make public lands more accessible to recreation visitors. GAO looked into the issue of environmental damage caused by OHVs and found such damage is far less than some observers believed to be the case. Another finding was that agency personnel worked well with OHV user groups on trail maintenance projects. The report's conclusions confirm what we have known for a long time about OHV recreation on public lands and provide further reason to continue working on our priority issues. Motorized recreationists will continue to carry on our efforts to support law enforcement reform legislation as well as seek additional funding for better signage, maps and trail maintenance. Working with the Congress and our land agencies, we can create an environment where OHV recreation can continue to grow in popularity as more American families look to explore and enjoy the great outdoors.</p>
	<p>Response: There will be an implementation plan for the Mountainair Travel Management project, which will include signing routes to correspond with the designations shown on the MVUM, and increasing education and enforcement for OHV use. As to the estimate that 25.6% of the visitors are participating in OHV recreation based on the NSRE report, the NSRE report is considered as part of the analysis. However, the two NVUM surveys conducted on the Cibola National Forest in 2001 and 2006 do not show use OHV recreation use figures higher than 1.9% of recreation users.</p>

19ppp	<p>70. Sadly, one indicator of the condition of the human environment in New Mexico is the suicide rate. New Mexico ranks number 4 in the nation (http://www.suicide.org/suicide_statistics.html). This significant problem requires special attention. Motorized recreation is popular and it is a very healthy and positive human activity that can help address this significant human issue. The Forest Service can help address this significant problem by providing an adequate quantity and quality of motorized recreational opportunities. We ask that you adequately address this significant issue associated with the human environment.</p>
<p>Response: There is no information to support that the suicide rate in New Mexico is influenced by motorized recreation or the lack of access to motorized recreation. This is beyond the scope of this analysis.</p>	

73d	<p>Evidence of 'Quiet' and 'Solitude' being assigned positive value in the EA and the underlying Recreation Report</p> <p>The word 'quiet' appears eight times in the EA, and every one of them is in reference to an alternative which might result in sounds of motor vehicles having 'negative' effects on people who prefer 'quiet'. Those statements include these, with bold added.</p> <p>Page 4 of Chapter 1, Purpose and Need states: The unregulated use of motor vehicles in cross-country travel is causing damage to soils, water quality, wildlife habitat, archaeological resources, and impacts to quiet recreational experiences such as hiking. A designated and managed system of routes for motor vehicle use is needed to address the above concerns as well as meet the requirements of the Travel Management Rule.</p> <p>In Chapter 3, page 83, we read, under Alternative 2: This alternative has the greatest impacts to nonmotorized recreation where quiet and a sense of solitude are important to the recreation experience, since more areas are accessible by motor vehicles</p> <p>And then at page 84: There could be some change in the types and locations of recreation activities, particularly in “quiet” recreation activities. This alternative has the greatest impacts to nonmotorized recreation where quiet and a sense of solitude are important to the recreation experience, since more areas are accessible by motor vehicles.</p> <p>This statement is at page 42 of the Recreation Report: Alternative 1 – Proposed Action Cross country motorized big game retrieval would be prohibited on the District under this Alternative. This prohibition would also include the associated activities such as scouting and hunting from all forms of motorized transportation. Travel would be restricted to open system roads. For bow hunters and those with preference for more solitude and less noise intrusion there will be more area in which to hunt. Hunters would need to rely on pack stock or self for game retrieval.</p> <p>On page 44, under Alternative 3, we read: bold added For hunters seeking a quiet experience, this alternative may impact the quality of their hunt within and near areas where motorized big game retrieval is permitted. Also on page 44, under Alternative 4, we read: bold added. This alternative would favor the hunter looking for less noise intrusion and solitude. We see that these statements have indeed been carried forward into the EA itself. The 'fingerprints' of this error from the Recreation Report are repeated in many places in the EA.</p> <p>For example at page 21, in the tabular summary of the effects of the alternatives, we read this under Alternative 3: Motorized big game retrieval may reduce the experience of hunters seeking a quiet experience. And under Alternative 4, these words: Increased vehicle noise at these areas may be perceived as an intrusion by those entering the wilderness.</p>
	<p>Response: Criteria for designation of roads, trails, and areas (from CFR §212.55) states that: (a) General criteria for designation of National Forest System roads, National Forest System trails, and areas on National Forest System lands. In designating National Forest System roads, National Forest System trails, and areas on National Forest System lands for motor vehicle use, the responsible official shall consider effects on National Forest System:</p>

- 3) Provision of recreational opportunities
- 5) Conflicts among uses of National Forest System lands

(b) Specific criteria for designation of trails and areas. In addition to the criteria in paragraph (a) of this section, in designating National Forest System trails and areas on National Forest System lands, the responsible official shall consider effects on the following, with the objective of minimizing:

- 3) Conflicts between motor vehicle use and existing or proposed recreational uses of National Forest System lands or neighboring Federal lands
- 5) Compatibility of motor vehicle use with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account sound, emissions, and other factors.

It is a requirement of the travel management rule that the responsible official consider the effects related conflicts among uses of National Forest System Lands (including conflicts between motorized and nonmotorized recreationists) and the effects of sound on recreation uses, including hunting.

80d	<p>Recreation – Cumulative Effects (page 87 of the EA): “There are no cumulative effects associated with alternatives 1, 2 and 3.” But you don’t have to go far to find EA-presented facts that say otherwise. The next two sentences in the Recreation - Cumulative Effects state: “Travel management projects are being conducted throughout the National Forest System. The nature of OHV recreation is changing throughout New Mexico. There would be increased management and restriction for motorized recreation.”</p> <p>The Recreation Section is one of the few Resources that actually defines the spatial boundaries of its analysis (page 79): “The cumulative effects area for the recreation analysis includes other public and private lands where motorized recreation is available within a 3-hour drive of the Mountainair Ranger District. These lands include other national forests, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), New Mexico Open Space, and private OHV areas.”</p> <p>But the Cumulative Effects ‘analysis’ mentions only the Sandia Ranger District (page 87). There is no mention, let alone any analysis for the Magdalena Ranger District, the Mount Taylor Ranger District, the Lincoln National Forest, the Santa Fe National Forest, or the vast tracts of public land managed by the Socorro or Rio Puerco Field Offices of the BLM. All of these areas are easily within a three hour drive of the Mountainair Ranger District.</p>
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Response: At this time a decision has not been made for travel management on the Magdalena, Mount Taylor Ranger Districts and the Santa Fe National Forest. As noted in the comment, there are expected increased management and restrictions for OHV use, but that OHV recreation opportunities will continue to be available at those locations. The Lincoln National Forest published an MVUM based on their current management that has been in established for many years and there is no change.

105	<p>Concern:</p> <p>I do not believe that if riparian habitat were as impacted by your preferred alternative, I would submit that you would determine that impact to be both substantial and unacceptable. That same measure of resource impact should, in my opinion, be applied to recreational resources as well. The action alternatives identified reduce the recreational resource from 60 to 72%, and claim no cumulative effects.</p> <p>The EA utterly fails to account for Environmental Consequences and Cumulative Effects that the Action Alternatives would have on the existing Recreation Resource. The Recreation Report states there is no cumulative effects associated with the Action Alternatives 1 (the Proposed Action) and Alternative 3. I find that conclusion, of 'no cumulative effects', to be either a major error or a complete fabrication unsupported by the evidence. Because of this error, the EA completely fails to account for significant impacts to the Recreation Resource. The Action Alternatives are improperly valued because of this failure to consider their negative impacts. The EA grossly misinforms the public and the Designated Official about the true effects of the alternatives. The EA does not disclose the true differences between the required No Action Alternative and the Action Alternatives and this misinformation could impact the decision.</p> <p>Rationale:</p> <p>At Page 11, the Recreation Report 'sums up' the effects of the Action Alternatives 1 and 3. There are no cumulative effects associated with Alternatives 1, 2 and 3. Travel management projects are being conducted throughout the National Forest System. The nature of OHV recreation is changing throughout New Mexico. There would be increased management and restriction for motorized recreation.</p> <p>This is how the Alternatives will affect the primary recreation resource, which is the road.</p> <p>This is Table 1; page 18 Chapter 2 of the EA: SEE TABLE. The impact to the recreation resource is this:</p> <p>Alternative 1 reduces roads from 471.4 to 178.5. Closes 292.9 miles, 62% resource loss. Alternative 2 No Action preserves 471.4 miles of road, 0% resource loss Alternative 3 reduces roads from 471.4 to 188.4. Closes 283 miles, 60% resource loss. Alternative 4 reduces roads from 471.4 to 127.4 Closes 344 miles, 72% resource loss.</p> <p>It is clear that the differences between the action alternatives are trivial compared to the difference between any of the action alternatives and the No Action alternative (alternative 2).</p> <p>Three significant flaws in the EA are identified and then expanded below.</p> <p>First, the Recreation Report clearly recognizes that the roads are a recreation resource. Second, the Recreation report clearly identifies the function and value of that recreation resource.</p> <p>Third: the report utterly fails to even discuss the effects of reducing the resource so significantly.</p> <p>The report seriously fails to provide a proper analysis in this regard.</p> <p>1. Statements in the Recreation Report that the Roads are a recreation resource Page 9 tells is the road itself is the recreation: "Roads are important for providing both access to recreation opportunities and as a recreation resource on the Mountainair Ranger District." Page 9 confirms the full inventory of roads is in use: 'All of the NFS roads on the district are currently open to all vehicles, this includes unauthorized roads and a</p>
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number of roads that are listed in our roads database as decommissioned, but are still in use.' Page 7: "The roads and trails are a "viewer platform" from which people experience the landscape, and are often used to define sensitivity levels and distance zones." Page 9: "Roads provide opportunities for sightseeing, exploring the district, hunting, and accessing developed and dispersed recreation opportunities. The more primitive roads provide for challenging OHV driving skills." Page 10, survey response: "19.9% participated in driving for pleasure on the mountain districts."

2. Statements in the Recreation Report that acknowledge the functions and values of the roads as a recreation resource

Page 12: OHV riders generally seek similar outdoor recreation experiences to non-motorized users, access to scenic vistas and historical sites, viewing wildlife, taking photos and to experience and enjoy the outdoor environment with family and friends. They also seek roads and trails where they can experience challenge, excitement, and a sense of adventure and accomplishment. While they may travel with families or in larger groups, they want to recreate in a natural setting with some level of solitude and isolation. (Crimmins 2006)

Also at Page 12 of the Recreation Report:

Nationally, OHV riders spent an average of 27 days a year participating in motorized recreation. They found that motivations for participating in OHV recreation varied from people who sought family-oriented activities, to individuals that used OHVs to view scenery, historic sites and wildlife, to young adventure seekers. Page 16: "Motorized dispersed camping offers solitude and primitive recreation experiences that are generally not available in developed recreation sites."

3. What are the effects to the recreation resource when over half the resource is eliminated? (i.e. over half the roads are closed)

Here are some of the major issues and questions the Recreation Report fails to address: What is the loss when road closures reduce the opportunities to enjoy driving, viewing and sight seeing experiences with family and friends? What is the loss when road closures reduce the recreation experiences of 'challenge, excitement, and a sense of adventure and accomplishment'? What is the recreation loss of dispersed camping when the allowed area is reduced from 476 miles to less than 15 miles? This is a reduction of over 90%, it must have an impact. What are the effects on crowding and the potential for conflict when all the users are forced into using less than half the current resource? The Recreation Report acknowledges potential for conflict, then says there currently isn't any because users are dispersed over a large area. But the report never 'puts two and two together', to consider the effects of a 60% to 72% road closure. What is the associated loss of quality of recreational experience caused by increased crowding and potential for conflict? What are the results of intensified competition for a resource that has artificially been made scarce? Page 21 describes the potential for conflict: The multiple use objectives of the US Forest Service set the stage for conflict when, with some exceptions, both motorized and non-motorized recreationists have access to the same trails or areas of public lands. Page 22, states there is currently no conflict because the current extensive system disperses the users; Extensive shared use is most accepted with lower use levels on a more extensive system. The use of roads and trails are seldom congested on the Mountainair Ranger District. The lack of reports for safety and conflict concerns can be attributed to the extensive system, relative segregation by types of uses, and dispersion of use by both motorized and non motorized recreationists.

The massive closure will have recreational impacts far beyond those who come to the Forest for a motorized experience. It impacts those who use a vehicle to access the forest for nonmotorized activities. The Recreation report and the MRD EA do not assess how closing over half the forest roads will decrease access for nonmotorized recreation, by making it much harder to get into large areas of the forest.

Activities such as backpacking, day hiking, primitive camping and mountain biking are not considered 'motorized'. But these users often use vehicles to get deeper into the forest to the place where they will start their nonmotorized activity. Without the quick access by motor vehicle into the forest, activities that used to be day trips will become impossible. The Recreation analysis does not ask 'what happens to day trips, when the walk becomes 20 miles instead of 10 miles because of road closures? There is no recognition that most recreation is day trips.

The Recreation report also fails to address compliance with the ROS requirements in the Forest Plan. Reducing the roads by over half arguably has an enormous negative impact on how the Semi Primitive Motorized and Natural Roaded areas can function.

Summary: The cumulative impacts of the proposed alternative on the recreation resource must be evaluated with the same zeal of completeness that water quality or wildlife habitat impacts would be evaluated as an excuse to close the public out of their public lands. That corrected recreational resource information must then be fully integrated into the EA, or more likely a full EIS, so the alternatives and the differences between them are properly and completely clarified for the public and Designated Official.

Response: The proposed action represents designation of most of the roads used by the majority of recreation visitors for accessing recreation opportunities. Motorized access was not changed for accessing trailheads or developed recreation sites. Additional roads were requested during the scoping for the purposes of motorized recreation and most of these requests were incorporated into Alternative 3. A few roads that were requested but not included in Alternative 3 were the result of cultural and natural resource impacts. Alternative 3 represents most of the roads currently used by motorized recreationists on the Mountainair Ranger District. Many of the roads not being considered for designation are in very poor or impassable condition and are rarely used, and in a few cases have grown over with vegetation to the point that they are difficult to locate. Effects to the experience for motorized recreationists is discussed throughout the recreation report, including the fact that some may be displaced of their experience is substantially reduced.

Your statement "Alternative 3 reduces roads from 471.4 to 188.4. Closes 283 miles, 60% resource loss" does not adequately reflect the motorized opportunities available in this alternative. There would be 288.4 miles of road designated for use by all vehicles, an additional 51.1 miles would be available as trails for UTVs, ATVs, and motorcycles. This was in response to a request made during scoping that there be a motorized trail system considered for the Mountainair Ranger District.

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) does not specify requirements for the amount of motorized recreation provided in each ROS class. The management of motorized recreation will change in the Roaded Natural and Semi Primitive Motorized ROS classes on the Mountainair Ranger District, but motorized recreation is not precluded from those areas. ROS is similar to zoning in an urban setting, it prescribes an upwards threshold. In an urban setting, if an area is zoned for residential, a commercial building cannot be constructed in that area without a variance granted by the planning agency. However, in this same scenario, if an area is zoned residential there is no requirement that a residence be built on vacant land. ROS is similar, if an area is managed for semi primitive motorized recreation, uses that exceed this management threshold should not be allowed unless the plan is amended with proper analysis and documentation to provide for that use. Much like the residential zoning scenario, because an area is

assigned a SPM class, the process does not presume that the entire area provides optimal primitive motorized recreation throughout the lands assigned to the class, there can be “vacant” lands.

Related to the concern about recreation cumulative effects: The statement that there are no cumulative effects is an error. There are cumulative effects related to the changes in travel management within the three hour drive identified in the affected environment section of the recreation report. Some of the effects related to changes on the Sandia Ranger District are documented in the cumulative effects discussion.

The Lincoln National Forest has had a designated system in place since their initial forest plan was released, and did not make any changes as a result of the Travel Management Rule. There will be no cumulative effects related to the Lincoln National Forest’s travel management. The BLM is undertaking travel management planning on their units within this area, and the Santa Fe National Forest is also conducting an EIS and will be changing their travel management. If these decisions result in a substantially reduced number of motorized recreation opportunities, there may some displacement of motorized recreationists to more distant areas, or they may choose to reduce their motorized recreation activities.

106

ERROR:

On page 85, under Environmental Consequences, the EA states:

“This alternative expands motorized recreation opportunities across the district through the designation of additional roads and the conversion of some roads to trails for vehicles 65 inches in width or less. This alternative would also increase the miles of road designated for all vehicles, increasing access to areas within the Manzanos and Gallinas.”

This is an incorrect statement. Alternative 2, the No Action Alternative, has the greatest motorized recreation opportunities. Table 1 on page 18 lists the mileage of system roads under the various alternatives. There are a total of 471.4 miles of system roads that are open to all vehicles under Alternative 2. In addition, according to the TAP, there are an additional 48.4 miles of non-system roads that are currently available to motorized recreation. On top of that, there are technically 167,000 acres of the Mountainair District that are open to cross country travel.

Alternative 3 ‘adds’ 51.1 miles of motorized trail but all 51.1 miles are already open to motorized recreation under the existing condition represented by Alternative 2. Alternative 3, with 188.4 miles of system roads and 51.1 miles of trail offers only 239.5 total miles of route open to motorized recreation. Two hundred thirty-nine is less than the 519.8 miles of route open to motorized recreation that has been identified in Alternative 2. Alternative 3 does NOT “expand motorized recreation opportunities”. The problem then replicates itself in the summary tables presented in Table 2 of the Alternatives Chapter. On page 22, in the description for Alternative 3 under Recreation, the EA states:

“This alternative expands motorized recreation opportunities. Additional roads and a motorized trail system would be designated under this alternative. The motorized trail system would provide increased opportunities for OHVs.”

Correction:

State the correct impact to motorized recreation on page 85, “This alternative reduces motorized recreation by eliminating 280.3 miles of system and nonsystem routes that are currently available to motorized recreation. This alternative also eliminates cross country travel on 167,000 acres. This alternative does designate some trails for vehicles 65 inches in width or less. There are 2.7 miles of roads that would be constructed to reroute existing roads around private land. The expected effects for these reroutes are the same as those described in alternative 1.”

Update Table 2 in Chapter 2 to reflect the same accurate assessment of the impact to motorized recreation, “There is a 53% reduction in the amount of system and non-system routes available for motorized recreation under this alternative. Cross country travel would be eliminated from 167,000 acres. There would be some motorized trail opportunities under this alternative but these opportunities already exist on open system roads.”

Summary:

The EA incorrectly characterizes Alternative 3 by saying it “expands motorized recreation opportunities” when it very clearly does not when compared to No Action Alternative (Alternative 2). This misrepresentation of fact, if left uncorrected would not provide an accurate view of the alternatives to the Deciding Officer and could significantly impact the Deciding Officer’s decision.

Response: The existing road system (but not the unauthorized routes) will be considered by the responsible official and can be selected under No Action. Alternative 3 does expand motorized recreation opportunities compared to the other action alternatives, Alternative 1 and Alternative 4.

82t	<p>See pg. 105 of EA: This is true. However, expect NMOHVA and other motorized recreation groups to claim otherwise. In particular, the Silberman (2002) study in Arizona gives hugely inflated economic figures by counting hikers, campers, bird watchers, etc, that is, people who use vehicles to access public lands for non-motorized objectives, as "motorized recreation."</p> <p>This resulted in a grossly inflated figure, probably 5 times the actual figure and includes none of the many costs of off-road vehicle recreation. The best estimates for off-road vehicle recreation participation in New Mexico is around 5% of people 16 and older. This estimate is based on several methods (see: http://www.glorietamesa.org/Offroad%20Hordes%20Vastly%20Inflated.pdf) and confirmed by the 2009 study in Colorado. By comparison the USFS RECSTAT survey shows about 26% of New Mexicans 16 and older participate in OHV recreation. However, like the AZ study, this figure includes many people (in fact the majority) who use motorized vehicles to access national forests for non-motorized objectives. Meanwhile, non-motorized outdoor recreation is an enormous contributor to New Mexico's economy. Please see the SJM40 study report "Off-Road Vehicle Recreation in New Mexico, pages 105-108, url: http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/main/sjm40/SJM40report-01-07-09.pdf for details. It is most likely that a successfully managed system of motorized routes will result in an improvement to the local economies by bringing in more tourists and New Mexico visitors to enjoy the rare beauty and diverse wildlife in the Mountainair Ranger District.</p>
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Response: Your comment has been noted.

73e	<p>We remind the Cibola that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Areas outside the Wilderness must not be managed 'as if' they are Wilderness. This statement is flirting dangerously with the idea of a Wilderness 'Buffer Zone' which would be managed for less or no noise. We remind the Cibola that the courts have struck down attempts to impose buffer zones to create illegal 'de facto' Wilderness. 2. The Forest has no authority to manage resources according to people's perceptions (e.g. 'may be perceived as an intrusion'). It has no authority to manage according to personal philosophies or preferences, or to keep people 'happy', whatever that is. And at page 33: ...but motorized use can also reduce the quality of hunts for some users since noise associated with that use can displace wildlife. <p>We remind the Cibola that they DO NOT have any authority to manage in order to satisfy some individual's perception of what the 'quality' of their recreation experience must be in order to be satisfactory. The Cibola has no authority to value one user's experience over another's and to manage in preference of one person over another. That same displacement of wildlife that irritated one hunter can improve the quality of the hunt for another hunter. The sight, smell and sound of a human on foot can also impel an animal to move, perhaps to a location where it is killed by another hunter with more luck. But you never hear a hunter say he bagged his elk because the sound of a vehicle caused the animal to move, and come into his crosshairs.</p> <p>We remind the Cibola that they manage the land, not the animals or the hunters. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish manages the game animals and hunters. They make the rules about how motor vehicles can be used during the hunt. The Cibola National Forest must not overstep it's authority to manage vehicle use by hunters. Its authority is limited to 'where' vehicles can be used. Department of Game and Fish is in charge of the 'when' and 'how'.</p> <p>We also remind the Cibola that sound is inherently a short lived phenomenon. They are on 'thin ice' if they start assigning values to the side effects of various forms of recreation. The manure from horses remains on the trail a lot longer than the sound from my dirt bike. Other users have to deal with the manure for weeks after the horse and rider have left. In terms of time span, the horse manure lasts millions of minutes longer than the motor sound, and has impacts many more users.</p> <p>The Semi Primitive Motorized designation for the Travel Management project area means the area is multiple uses open to all recreationists. Every form of recreation has impacts and interactions between users vary according to their personalities. The Cibola has no authority to arbitrate, attempt to 'solve', or take sides in philosophical arguments over whose recreation is more 'pure', 'appropriate', " environmentally sensitive', 'ethically superior', etc.</p>
<p>Response: The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish provided comments on the Proposed Action recommending that hunters not be given special consideration and that route densities be managed at a minimal level. As the agency responsible for managing wildlife and hunters, the comments from NM Department of Game and Fish were incorporated into a range of alternatives described and analyzed in the EA. Noise disturbance is a recognized impact to some wildlife species and their use of habitats. Impacts to wildlife resulting from noise associated with motorized use was documented in several studies referenced in the EA.</p> <p>Sound and conflicts between uses are criteria that the responsible official is required to consider while</p>	

making travel management decisions under the Travel Management Rule. Research cited in the recreation specialist report has found that sound does contribute to conflicts and a reduction in the quality of the experience for non motorized recreationists. This is included in the analysis for the responsible official to consider as required.

73c

DISCUSSION:

There is plenty of evidence that an attempt by the Mountainair Ranger District to impose 'quiet' recreation standards on non-Wilderness areas would be an invention of illegal self-awarded authority, and contrary to the Cibola's management directives. The Amendments of the Forest Plan tell us how the forests shall be managed such as at page 36 of Amendment 7 1996:

Prescriptions are management practices selected and scheduled for application on a specific area to attain multiple use and other goals and objectives [36 CFR 219.31]. The Mountainair Ranger District is not free to invent new management ideas, goals and categories for itself. Also in the Glossary at page 236 is the definition of Decision

Variable:

Decision variable – A component of an alternative in which input costs, outputs and benefits are identified and used for analysis and decision-making. It is also clear that decision making must follow the rules laid out in the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan includes an extensive table, showing Decision Variables for managing each type of use in each Management Area. Semi Primitive Motorized Areas all have the code 010, which is Recreation. We note there is a separate code for Wilderness. The Recreation decision variable is separate from the Wilderness decision variable. The non-Wilderness areas include the Roaded Natural and Semi Primitive areas which do NOT have, and are not expected to have, 'wilderness characteristics'. They must not be managed to promote or impose wilderness characteristics, instead of the primary objective of providing motorized backcountry experience.

The project area is classified in the EA as 'Roaded Natural' and 'Semi Primitive Motorized'. Semi Primitive is described (page 5 Recreation Report) as:
Semi Primitive Motorized (SPM) – Similar setting to the SPMN except this area provides a motorized backcountry experience where trails and primitive roads are designed for high-clearance, four-wheel drive vehicles. Moderate probability of experiencing solitude. High degree of self-reliance and challenge in using motorized equipment. These areas are predominantly natural, lacking some human modification, except when necessary for site protection. The phrase 'semi primitive motorized' appears 18 times in the Forest Plan. At page 225 of the Forest Plan, the Glossary gives the following definition for Semi Primitive Motorized and Roaded Natural: bold added

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) – A method of delineating types of recreation settings. There are six ROS meetings. Only the first four are evident on the Cibola National Forest. These settings are: Primitive – Essentially unmodified natural environments; Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized – Predominantly natural or natural appearing environments without motorized use; Semi-Primitive Motorized – Predominantly natural or natural appearing environments where motorized use occurs; Roaded Natural – Predominantly natural appearing environments with moderate evidence of the sights and sounds of man; Rural – Modified natural environment with facilities for special activities; Urban – substantially urbanized environment.

Note that for both Semi Primitive and Roaded Natural, motor vehicle use is not just accepted. The area is specifically being managed FOR motor vehicle use. This means

they can be seen and heard because they will be out there. If someone doesn't like that, they should go to a different ROS area of the forest. Page 75 of the EA recognizes that people should go to the appropriate area of the Forest for the type of experience they prefer. That option is available because the Forest has provided for a range of experiences.

On Page 75:

People tend to choose settings for their outdoor recreation activities in order to realize a desired set of experiences. The Forest Service uses a classification system called the recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) to define and manage a range of recreational settings and opportunities on NFS lands.

The USFS like to remind us that not all uses are appropriate in all places, e.g. motor vehicles can't be everywhere. But that admonition also applies to so-called 'quiet' recreation. Quiet recreation can't be everywhere either, and it is particularly not appropriate in areas managed for motor vehicle use.

The recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) classifications are specified in the forest plan to provide direction for recreation management. This classification system helps to define and manage a range of recreational settings and opportunities on NFS lands. The ROS classes describe a desired condition for each ROS class across a spectrum from primitive (such as a wilderness) to urban (with urban influences and level of development.)

There is a desired condition for each ROS class. It would be utter nonsense to claim the ROS class of Semi Primitive Motorized must be managed to attain a desired condition of 'less sound'.

The 1982 USFS ROS Guide says this at page 7, concerning the 'Setting Characterization' of Semi Primitive Motorized areas:

Concentration of users is low but there is often evidence of other users. The area is managed such a way that minimum on-site controls and restrictions may be present, but are subtle. Motorized use is permitted

Page 8 of the 1982 USFS ROS Guide gives the 'Experience Categorization', and says this of Semi Primitive Motorized:

Moderate probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans.

(and) Opportunity to use motorized equipment while in the area. By contrast, the Primitive area is described as having 'Extremely high probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans,' and Semi Primitive Nonmotorized provides 'High, but not extremely high, probability of experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of humans,' No place guarantees total isolation. The ROS Guide also addresses user density, at page 26. Note that there is no connotation of 'conflict' as density increases. Semi primitive

Nonmotorized is described as 'Usually 6-15 parties per day encountered on trails and 6 or less visible at campsites'. Semi primitive Motorized is described as 'Low to moderate contact frequency.' with the footnote that specific numbers must be developed from local conditions. It is clear that a person in Semi Primitive Motorized area is expected to tolerate encountering at least 6-15 parties per day, and that some of those might include motor vehicles.

A person choosing to be in a semi primitive motorized area or roaded natural area must expect the possibility of encountering vehicles or hearing the sound of vehicles, and that there is only a 'moderate probability of experiencing solitude. The non-motorized user must accept this because these conditions are not only inherent to the prescribed management, they are intentional. The management intent is for motorized use, moderate isolation, and moderate number of encounters. Nonmotorized uses are allowed, but there is no management direction to constrict motorized use in order to please those nonmotorized users who dislike the sight , sound or even the idea of motor vehicles. A Semi Primitive Motorized Area is not intended to provide areas where vehicles cannot be seen or heard. There is NO goal of providing for any more solitude than might incidentally occur given the primary function of motorized use.

The EA makes an error when it gives higher value to alternatives because they reduce sound levels which must be accepted as an inherent aspect of the Semi Primitive Motorized Area. The EA is attempting to impose values from the Semi Primitive Nonmotorized spectrum (solitude) onto the Semi Primitive Motorized category. We note that even in the description of the Semi Primitive Nonmotorized there is no mention of sound, noise or quiet. There is no definition for 'quiet' and the Forest Service makes no offer or promise of 'quiet' even in Wilderness areas. The EA comparisons and evaluations of alternatives consistently contradict the management goals and intent of the 'Semi Primitive Motorized' management. It does this by placing positive value on alternatives that result in less sound. Reduction of vehicle sound can only be achieved by reducing the motorized backcountry experience. This is an error and is contrary to the management direction given in the Forest Plan.

ROS Carrying Capacity The USFS 1982 Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Guide has this opening statement:

This handbook chapter serves as a guide for the recreation resource input to Land and Management Planning. It incorporates the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum as the basic framework for inventorying, planning and managing the recreation resource in accordance with the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (RPA), as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA).

It provides this guidance on carrying capability for recreation visitors (p 38). To our convenience, it uses the Southwest Region as the example: SEE FIGURE

Response: The ROS classifications in the 1986 Forest Plan established Roaded Natural classes along ½ mile corridors adjacent to the primary arterial roads in the Manzano and Gallinas Mountains. The majority of these roads are maintenance level 3 roads. All of these roads are considered for designation in every alternative with the exception of a segment of NFSR 260 in the northern end of the Manzano unit, commonly referred to as the “dog head.” This segment is not considered for designation as a result of public involvement with the Isleta Reservation and the Chilili land grant that indicated substantial trespass from this road. ROS does not establish a threshold or objectives for the amount of motorized recreation to be provided in any ROS class.

In the Semi Primitive Motorized (SPM) classes reducing road density improves opportunities for experiencing solitude when riding motorized vehicles. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) does not specify requirements for the amount of motorized recreation provided in each ROS class. The management of motorized recreation opportunities will change in the Roaded Natural and Semi Primitive Motorized ROS classes on the Mountainair Ranger District. Also, ROS is one management consideration among an array of management considerations. There is a management emphasis for each management area. Management for other natural resource or cultural concerns can have a higher priority over providing for any recreation opportunity, motorized or non motorized within a management area.

<i>Need for New Construction</i>	
19kk	<p>32. The scope of the project must address both existing routes and new construction. This is necessary and reasonable because a certain percentage of the existing routes are likely to be closed. Putting a sideboard on the project scope that prevents the evaluation and creation of any new trail segments also eliminates the opportunity to mitigate the overall level of motorized closures. This approach, if pursued, would preclude the evaluation of a reasonable alternative and also preclude any opportunity for mitigation and enhancement. Therefore, limiting scoping of the project to existing routes only would produce a significant built-in disadvantage for motorized recreationists, i.e., the overall number of motorized routes are destined to be reduced and nothing can be considered to enhance existing routes and to mitigate the overall loss to motorized recreationists. We are concerned that the process will not provide motorized recreationists with an equal opportunity (50/50 sharing of motorized to non-motorized trails) in the outcome and we are only destined to lose. We would appreciate an independent evaluation of this situation as soon as possible so that the proper scoping direction can be corrected early in the process.</p>
<p>Response: New construction was considered in the EA. Road reroutes are proposed in Alternatives 1 and 3 in areas where continued access by the public was considered necessary. Additionally, the inclusion of unauthorized and decommissioned roads in Alternatives 1 and 3 would be considered new construction since the roads will have to be brought to Forest Service standards.</p> <p>We would have considered trail construction to address issues or mitigate potential impacts in proposing the trail system in Alternative 3. However, we were able to accommodate those issues by designating existing roads as trails, thus negating the need for new trail construction.</p>	

Concerns Related to EA Analysis

<i>Comment #</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<i>Road Density</i>	
77g	<p>4. Larger than necessary for managing resources: FALSE: First, there is no requirement under the Travel Management Rule that the designated route system be no larger than the Minimum Road System identified by the TAP. Second, the TAP shows that the Proposed Action is almost half the road density of the Minimum Road System. This table is from Appendix A of the TAP. (See Figure) There are numerous statements throughout the EA and Recreation Report which speak to meeting needs for recreation and access. These needs are not confined by the Minimum Road System. The real question here is how the Cibola thinks it can manage and administer the forest with a road density that is half of the recommended minimum. The existing system of roads in the MRD is at a density of 1.38 miles per square mile. This is already well below the Forest Plan direction for a maximum density of 1.90 miles.</p>
<p>Response: 36 CFR 212, Subpart A requires the identification of a minimum road system (MRS) that is needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of NFS lands. The minimum road system represents what is needed for administration of the Mountainair Ranger District and the routes needed to provide the public access to recreation opportunities is a subset of the MRS. Since agency personnel will have limited administrative use of all routes, designated or not, the minimum density cited above of 1.03 miles per square mile is easily met by the existing system of 471.4 miles. Therefore, the designated system, which will be open to the public, can be smaller than the minimum road system and minimum road density suggested in the TAP.</p>	

75b, 99, 111	I support the Mountainair's proposal to right-size its over-extended road network. Particularly strong components of this draft plan are the route density assessment and identification of the Minimum Road System.
Response: We have noted your comment	
75d, 99, 111	The Forest Service should also amend the Cibola's Forest Plan to adopt, as a standard, the route density analysis undertaken in this planning process. This is important given that motorized trails ecologically function as roads.
Response: Thank you for your recommendation. This is outside the scope of the proposal. The proposed plan amendment was identified to eliminate potential inconsistency with the Plan's route density guidance specific to management areas and problematic application of the Plan's road density guidance in the effects analysis.	
Transportation	
19uu	45. Forest Service and BLM law enforcement has taken the position that OHVs cannot legally ride on forest or BLM roads unless the road is designated dual-use. Cumulative decisions have closed OHV trails to the point that there is not an inter-connecting network of routes. At the same time, the agencies have not designated a functional network of dual-use routes to interconnect to OHV routes. Dual-use is essential for the family OHV experience. Therefore, these closure decisions are forcing the OHV recreationists to ride non-designated dual-use routes illegally. The proposed action must include these designations in order to provide a network of OHV routes with inter-connections, where required, using dual-use roads in order to be functional. This will allow OHV enthusiasts to operate legally on forest and BLM roads. We request that a system of dual-purpose roads, and OHV roads and trails that interconnect be one of the primary objectives of the travel management plan and that this objective be adequately addressed in the document and decision. The issue of speed can be adequately and easily addressed by specifying maximum speeds and signing. Without the dual-use designation, the proposed action would transform family OHV trips from a healthy family oriented recreation to an illegal activity. This is not a reasonable nor acceptable outcome.
Response: All of the roads considered for designation in the alternatives would be open to all vehicles, passenger vehicles, trucks, UTVs, ATV, and motorcycles, thereby preventing the issue of having to use some routes illegally. A motorized trail system for vehicles 65" in width or less is considered in Alternative 3. These trails were selected with the consideration of loop routes to provide users with the ability to ride exclusively on trails.	
19vv	46. The continual closure of motorized trails has forced OHVs to be operated on forest roads in order to provide a reasonable system of routes and to reach destinations of interest. The lack of dual-use designations on forest roads then makes OHV use on these routes illegal. The cumulative negative effect of motorized closures and then combined with the lack of a reasonable system of roads and trails with dual-use designation have not been adequately considered in past evaluations and decision-making. We request that all reasonable routes be designated for dual-use so that a system of roads and trails can be used by motorized recreationists. Additionally, we request that the cumulative negative effect of all past decisions that have adequately considered dual-use designations be evaluated and considered in the decision-making and that this project include an adequate mitigation plan to compensate for inadequate consideration in the past.
Response: As referenced in this response to comments, as well as recreation report, all of the system trails on Mountainair Ranger District are either in the designated Wilderness, or are short access trails to the Wilderness. Motorized trails are considered as part of Alternative 3. All of the roads are managed for use by all vehicles on the Mountainair Ranger District, and all action alternatives continue this management for designated roads.	

82f	See page 15 of EA: This is good and should be exercised as needed to protect roads. The RD is woefully underfunded in regard to road maintenance which means many roads will not be kept in good condition. Use of poorly maintained roads during snowmelts and summer rains can result in extreme rutting and also braiding, road-widening and other effects from vehicles creating and avoiding ruts. It would be wise to restrict motorized access during times of high vulnerability.
Response: Thank you for your comment.	
87a	We would like to commend the Mountainair RD for analyzing the impacts of all routes, regardless of their bureaucratic classification. We strongly support the Mountainair RD analyzing the impacts of all routes, whether classified as roads or trails and whether open or closed to public use, when determining the impacts of those routes on natural resources. Forests that fail to take a hard look at all routes also fail to accurately identify the issues associated with motorized routes. These issues include: (1) less frequent maintenance and lower standards for trails than roads which could cause increased resource degradation; (2) underestimated wildlife and watershed impacts from motorized use if trails are excluded from road density calculations; and (3) the false impression that maintenance backlogs are being reduced if trails are excluded from maintenance backlog calculations.
Response: Thank you for your comment.	

77h	<p>5. Resources (funding) not available to support system False. This is a not a legitimate excuse for not designating routes under the Forest Plan. At page 55, Forest Plan Amended 1-9-87, we read: The management prescriptions, including the standards and guidelines, shall govern all activities regardless of funding levels. If funding necessary for complete implementation of any objective is not appropriated, that objective shall be implemented only to the extent possible consistent with applicable management prescriptions.</p> <p>We read that to mean that the objectives should be consistent with the management prescriptions, and not be constrained by funding. The objectives are in place, and are implemented as money is available. We take this mean the objective of providing for recreation isn't discarded. The Forest Plan and the Travel Management Rule have many references to serving recreation needs, including motorized recreation.</p> <p>The TAP concludes it's not feasible to have a functional road system if the miles are reduced to what can be maintained; 216 miles. Never the less, the Proposed Action would have even fewer miles. At page 18 of the EA we see that ALL the action alternatives provide LESS than 216 miles. Alternative 1 has 178.5 miles, Alternative 3 has 188.4 miles and Alternative 4 has 127.4 miles.</p> <p>The Minimum Road System (shown above) is a density of 1.03 miles of road per square mile of land. At 169,000 acres, the project area has 264 square miles of land. To meet the Minimum Road Density of 1.03, the MRD needs 272 miles of road. NONE of the Action Alternatives provide the Minimum Road System, let alone address recreational and access needs. The TAP also notes it's cheaper to maintain the needed roads than to have to restore them later. The following quote is from Page 9, TAP Appendix on Economic Analysis, bold added.</p> <p>Conclusion No cost reduction scenario on its own meets the need to balance road maintenance costs to our budgets. Well thought through combinations of these and other possible scenarios as well as creative management (i.e., partnering with counties for maintenance cost sharing) needs to continue. It is also clear that creating a road system to match our budget by simply closing roads will not result in a functional minimum sustainable road system for the public or the Forest.</p> <p>Therefore a minimum system of roads will need to be established, realizing that the lack of adequate annual maintenance funding will cause the continual degradation of road conditions and serviceability. As the serviceability declines it will have an effect on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User safety (in personal injury, loss of life, or property loss); • Environmental impacts (resource damage); • Overall road maintenance system cost of restoring a safe and efficient road system (periodic reconstruction to eliminate deferred maintenance is more costly than timely preservation of the investment, through annual maintenance);
	<p>Response: As referenced in other comments (42e, 88a, 103e), Alternative 2 road system can be selected for designation and the deciding official is considering that alternative in addition to the action alternatives.</p> <p>The cost of maintaining the system is a consideration when developing a motorized system for public use and the subsequent decision but it is only one consideration (FSM 7715.03).</p>

	<p>36 CFR 212, Subpart A requires the identification of a minimum road system (MRS) that is needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of NFS lands. The minimum road system represents what is needed for administration of the Mountainair Ranger District and the routes needed to provide the public access to recreation opportunities is a subset of the MRS. Since agency personnel will have limited administrative use of all routes, designated or not, the minimum density cited above of 1.03 miles per square mile is easily met by the existing system of 471.4 miles. Therefore, the designated system, which will be open to the public, can be smaller than the minimum road system and minimum road density suggested in the TAP.</p>
77f	<p>Summarized Comment: Transportation Road Conditions Full Comment: 5. Resources (funding) not available to support system 3. No Longer Passable: FALSE: Not Passable? To what driver in what vehicle? The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum includes the objective of providing challenge. Page 9 of the Recreation Report says; 'The more primitive roads provide for challenging OHV driving skills.' The Forest would not close a rock climbing route because it was 'impassable' to novice climbers. Roads should not be disqualified from designation simply because a FS staff can't get through them in a FS truck. The New Mexico 4 Wheelers 4WD club has submitted their GPS tracks of the roads the MRD EA calls 'no longer passable'. The roads were easily passable to properly equipped 4WD vehicles in the hands of capable drivers. Another commentor has spoken to this issue, and provided photographs of what a skilled 4WD operator considers to be a 'passable' route.</p>
<p>Response: The alternatives provide for a variety of routes and challenges, including some routes that may not be considered passable in some vehicles. These routes were provided due to public input during scoping that specifically requested challenging terrain and routes. There are some NFS roads that have been completely encroached upon by vegetation. Use of these roads would cause damage to vehicles and riders and these roads are considered impassible.</p>	
77j	<p>Misinformation on Road 'Poor Location' and 'Resource Damage' Exacerbates Maintenance Cost</p> <p>Issue Another error about maintenance costs is caused the misinformation from the Soils and Water Report. Soil erosion and sedimentation are identified as an 'Issue' in the TAP at page 18, and used to support the maintenance cost issue, which in turn is cited to justify the closures. However, since there are no impaired streams, it appears that this is an imaginary problem which was manufactured to support the desired closures. Inadequate maintenance reduces access for National Forest users and management, accelerates soil erosion by concentrating surface water flow, and affects water quality by increasing sediment into water courses and intermittent drainages. Funding for road maintenance is not adequate to maintain the existing system and perform needed monitoring. (See Appendix H for more information on Road Maintenance Costs) (TAP page 18) I refer you to my comment on the Soils and Water Report which details how the report's assessment of soils conflicts with statements about soils in other parts of the EA.</p>
<p>Response: As explained in the Watershed and Air Report, impaired refers to the listing on the State of New Mexico's water quality 303d and 305b report which assesses whether or not designated uses are met. None of the waters in the project area have been assessed by the State of New Mexico for impairment to water quality. Water quality is only one aspect of a stream's condition or state of impairment. Streams should be in proper functioning condition according to their capability. This includes all streams in a watershed's network – perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral. Properly functioning means that means that channels have adequate landform, vegetation, or woody material in</p>	

<p>order to reduce high flows, filter sediment, aid floodplain development, and improve groundwater recharge. Channels that are eroded, filled with sediment, or otherwise unstable are not properly functioning. Locations where roads have contributed to these conditions have been identified in the TAP. In many cases, these are locations where streams and roads are in close proximity and/or are located on high erosion hazard areas. The Watershed and Air report assumes that none of the streams are impaired because they are not listed, however, other information besides water quality, as described above, contributes to stream condition.</p>	
<p><i>Roads Not Considered</i></p>	
42k	<p>I still will miss having access to NFS roads numbers 260, 260A, 260A1 which we camped several times. One 4th of July weekend we camped there without any campfires because of restrictions (which we abided) and had the most beautiful weekend without any other human visitor. Beautiful place if you don't mind the pipeline going through. There are two other roads we used to enjoy a day of 4-wheeling and sunshine and then bring out a grill to bbq a hamburger, I am referring to NFS road numbers 55K1, 55K2. My dogs know every inch of those places.</p>
<p><i>Response</i> FR 260 was not considered for designation due to concerns brought forwards from the Pueblo of Isetla and the Chillili Land Grant of frequent trespass onto their lands from this road. This road will be available for administrative use including use by fire fighters. Non-motorized use will still be allowed on FR 55K1 and 55K2.</p>	
<p><i>EA Data</i></p>	
72g	<p>'The EA presents no data at all on the numbers of recreational users of any kind. The significance of the missing information is that all the statements about user impacts to resources are purely conjecture. Every statement that there 'could, may or might' be impacts, must also be read as meaning there 'may not, or might not' be impacts. Identified impacts such as erosion, are caused by the cumulative effects of natural processes (fire, rain etc.) and decades of human uses including all recreation, timber harvest, grazing, and agency actions such as thinning and prescribed burns. The EA does not differentiate between impacts from various sources and provides no information for changes over time. The EA does not identify or scale what type or amount or proportion of impacts are caused by the use of motor vehicles, either on or off roads and trails.'</p>
<p><i>Response:</i> The forest has recreation data from the NVUM survey that is cited in the recreation section and the recreation specialist report. We do not have recreation use data for specific location, but we do have specialist observations that were used in the EA. In the absence of hard data on which to base the effects analysis, we used a qualitative approach, which complies with NEPA. The use of “could” or “may or might” when describing potential effects may be due to some uncertainty because effects would be related to changes in public use. Changes in public use would be influenced by factors that cannot be accurately predicted, hence the use of the terms “could” or “may or might”.</p>	
<p><i>Social Impact</i></p>	
79c	<p>A major question that is never asked is, “What is the social impact of eliminating over half of a recreation resource, the roads themselves?”</p> <p>“Roads are important for providing both access to recreation opportunities and as a recreation resource on the Mountainair Ranger District. All of the NFS roads on the district are currently open to all vehicles, this includes unauthorized roads and a number of roads that are listed in our roads database as decommissioned, but are still in use.” (p. 9)</p>
<p><i>Response:</i> See response to question 105. As noted in that response, most of the roads used by the majority of visitors are included in the proposed action and to a greater extent in Alternative 3. For most visitors to the Mountainair Ranger District, there will be little if any change to their motorized use of the</p>	

<p>district in these two alternatives. Alternative 4 does prohibit use on a few of the more commonly used roads. The social and economic impact section considers changes as they relate to the regional area. There is little effect anticipated to the communities surrounding the Manzano Ranger District.</p>	
19aa	<p>21. Each route must include a socio-economic analysis that includes the impacts on the public owning OHVs and looking for opportunities to use them and landowners who purchased property with the intent of being able to access and recreate using motor vehicles.</p>
<p>Response: The management of OHV use will be changing with the implementation of project, regardless of which alternative is selected. The benefits and risks of each route was considered and documented in the TAP process. This analysis, along with comments received during public involvement, informed the proposed action. Motorized recreation is provided for in all alternatives, and the analysis of the impacts is documented in the EA.</p>	
<p>Social Consideration</p>	
79a	<p>ERROR: The EA lists ‘Social and Economic Considerations’ in the Contents. We find the EA and its underlying reports contain no discussion or analysis in Affected Conditions and Environmental Consequences for any Social Considerations.</p> <p>DISCUSSION: The word ‘social’ appears only seven times in the EA, and each time, it appears with the word ‘economic’. It appears:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Page i –In the Table of Contents as a Heading in Chapter 3, “Social and Economic Considerations”. 2. Page 23 – As a ‘Resource Area’ heading in Table 2 Comparison of alternatives – environmental consequences in Chapter 2. The line for the Social and Economic ‘Effects’ column lists ‘local economy’ as the only item considered and the description of impacts for each Action Alternative pertains strictly to the ‘economic sectors’. No other effects on the Social and Economic Resource Area is listed. 3. Page 27 – In the first paragraph of Chapter 3, the phrase ‘social and economic’ along with ‘physical’ and ‘biological’, are listed as environments to be discussed and presented in Chapter 3: “This section summarizes the physical, biological, social and economic environments of the affected project area and the potential changes to those environments due to implementation of the alternatives.” 4 & 5. Page 103 (twice)– It again appears as a Main Heading in Chapter 3 and in the introduction sentence to the topic but all of the following discussion is purely demographic and economic in nature. “Social and Economic Considerations The following analysis is based on the social and economic specialist report prepared by Sara Dechter, forest planning staff. This report is on file in the project record.” 6. Page 104 “The social and economic features of nearby communities are influenced by the entire Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), comprised of Bernalillo, Sandoval, Tarrant and Valencia Counties.” There is no further discussion. The EA does not go on to offer any analysis, insight, observations, or conclusions about any social affected environment or environmental consequences. 7. Page 105 – ‘Social’ appears in the lead sentence of the Environmental Justice

section:

“Forest products and cultural connections to the land are the major social and economic contributions of the Mountainair Ranger District to surrounding communities.”

There is no further discussion of the social environment. The EA does not offer any analysis, insight, observations, or conclusions about any social affected environment or environmental consequences. The section is only thirteen lines long, and is entirely about the economic value of forest products. While multiple locations promise a hard look at the Social considerations, there is no evidence offered by the EA that any social considerations were considered, studied, evaluated or documented.

The Specialists’ underlying report, which is only six pages, focuses entirely on very basic demographic and economic data. It offers only a very cursory look at economic impact. It also makes this erroneous and dismissive statement on page 4:

“The major social and economic contributions of the Mountainair Ranger District to the surrounding communities are forest products and cultural connections to the land. These activities will continue across the District no matter which alternative is selected. What will change because of this decision is how these activities are administered. “

This is neither an accurate statement or an acceptable level of ‘analysis’ The report refuses to acknowledge the social impacts of the action alternatives, all of which will severely reduce public access and disrupt historical uses.

We note that Chapter 3 in this EA runs from page 27 to page 113. In 86 pages, it offers no information at all on the Social Environment. For comparison, we examined the Social Economic Report for the Grasslands Plan Revision, which was also completed by Cibola staff. The comparison was enlightening. At page 21 the Socio Economic Report for the Grasslands makes this statement about the social importance of Recreation Activities:

“Providing for outdoor recreation activities is one of the primary contributors to social cohesion, quality of life, and social and economic sustainability for Grasslands communities.”

The Specialist's Social Economic Report for the Mountainair EA doesn't even include this sort of basic acknowledgement of the social important of recreation. It is stunningly numb to social impacts of closing over half the forest roads. At page 5 it reads:

“The gain or loss of the recreation opportunities on the Mountainair Ranger District is unlikely to affect the economic sectors that are supported by motorized recreation.”

This is all it has to say about depriving the public of over half its access. Where is the analysis of the social impact of the gain or loss of the recreation opportunities?

The underlying Recreation Specialists’ report is 47 pages, and it provides some clues about issues the Social Economic report should have considered. These are some of the questions that the Social Economic Report should ask and answer.

“The Gallinas Mountains are a popular hunting range; (and) The most unique feature of this geographical area is the opportunity for solitude” (p. 2)

“The Manzano Mountains are highly valued for their scenic quality, especially in the fall.” (p. 3)

What is the social impact when access to these areas is reduced because roads are closed?

“The roads and trails are a “viewer platform” from which people experience the landscape, and are often used to define sensitivity levels and distance zones.” (p. 7)

What is the social impact when the public can't get to the 'viewer platform' because the

road is closed? How does this reduce their experience of the landscape?
 “Roads provide opportunities for sightseeing, exploring the district, hunting, and accessing developed and dispersed recreation opportunities. The more primitive roads provide for challenging OHV driving skills. “ (p. 9)

What is the loss to the social environment when road closures decrease the quality of recreation experience by denying the public the satisfaction of sightseeing, exploring, hunting, and challenges?
 “19.9% participated in driving for pleasure on the mountain districts.” (p. 10)

What is the social impact when this major family activity is curtailed by road closures?
 “OHV riders generally seek similar outdoor recreation experiences to non-motorized users, access to scenic vistas and historical sites, viewing wildlife, taking photos and to experience and enjoy the outdoor environment with family and friends. They also seek roads and trails where they can experience challenge, excitement, and a sense of adventure and accomplishment. While they may travel with families or in larger groups, they want to recreate in a natural setting with some level of solitude and isolation. (Crimmins 2006” (p. 12)

What is the loss to the social environment when road closures reduce the opportunities to enjoy these experiences with family and friends. What is the loss to the social environment when road closures reduce the recreation experiences of “challenge, excitement, and a sense of adventure and accomplishment ”?
 “National Survey on Recreation and the Environment Survey (NSRE) collected data between 1999 and 2004 to develop a report on OHV use trends. They found that OHV users are more active in almost every recreation activity relative to the general U.S. population 16 and older, including day hiking, mountain biking, hunting, and viewing and photographing wildlife and scenery. Nationally, OHV riders spent an average of 27 days a year participating in motorized recreation. They found that motivations for participating in OHV recreation varied from people who sought family-oriented activities, to individuals that used OHVs to view scenery, historic sites and wildlife, to young adventure seekers.” (p. 12)

Notice the 'social' issues implied in the motivations for recreation: from 'family-oriented' to viewing enjoyment to adventure-seekers. These are all social values. Why are these not even mentioned in the Social and Economic Report?
 “Motorized dispersed camping offers solitude and primitive recreation experiences that are generally not available in developed recreation sites.” (p. 16)

Response: FSH 1909.17 provides the agency guidance for social impact analysis for all projects:

- a. Socioeconomic effects (sec. 35.4) include changes due to the action in income, employment, population, local revenues, and business activity.
- b. Sociocultural effects (sec. 35.5) include changes in community institutions, values, interpersonal relationships, and perceptions of the environment.

In general the social and economic impact analysis considers the broader community connections with the National Forest system. The recreation analysis focused on the recreation opportunities and impacts related to travel management, the social and economic section focused on the community relationships related to travel management. The social scientist and recreation specialists worked together to determine where information was the most appropriate to analyze for this project. There is obviously social analysis contained in the recreation section as stated in your comment.

Concerns and Suggestions Regarding the Mountainair Travel Management EA and Process

<i>Comment #</i>	<i>Comment</i>
General Comments	
87b	<input type="checkbox"/> Failing to respond to specific issues raised during scoping <input type="checkbox"/> The Purpose and Need statement is inadequate; <input type="checkbox"/> Need to utilize Best Management Practices for designating and managing routes; <input type="checkbox"/> Need to identify the NEPA documented baseline road system; <input type="checkbox"/> Minimum System Analysis does not reflect fiscal realities; <input type="checkbox"/> Need to address cumulative impacts; <input type="checkbox"/> Forest Plan road density changes are inappropriate; <input type="checkbox"/> Fugitive dust is not analyzed.
Response: These issues are addressed in comments 87c-q	
1	With most of the users of the Mountainair Ranger District area from the Alb metro area, why all the open houses in Torreon, Corona, and Mountainair?
Response: Meetings were held in Belen during the development of the proposed action and after the release of the proposed action for scoping. Belen was selected due to its proximity to Albuquerque and other communities to the west of the Manzano Mountains. These meetings were poorly attended and the decision was made to hold the meeting during the comment period in Mountainair, Corona, and Torreon where earlier meeting attendance was higher.	
Analysis and Best Available Science	
19ee	25. Theoretical or assumed impacts must not be used to close motorized recreational opportunities. This is happening way too often. For example, an impact on wildlife by OHV recreation is assumed on a theoretical basis but there is no site specific data or monitoring to back that statement. A similar situation is happening in other resource areas including sedimentation and noxious weeds. Decisions to close motorized recreation must not be made on the basis of theoretical or assumed impacts to the natural environment. In order to avoid arbitrary and capricious decisions, site specific data and monitoring must be presented and demonstrate a measure significant impact.
Response: The effects analyses in the EA are based on specific information such as the roads and/or trails that would be designated in each alternative, the existing conditions, and estimates of changes that would occur to the resources under each alternative. The estimates of change are informed by research that is referenced in the specialist reports and EA.	
Analysis between No Action and Action Alternatives	
69	<p>ERROR: The EA does not accurately reflect the current condition of the resource under the baseline condition (the No Action Alternative). All of the analysis presented of the impacts of the alternatives is strictly comparative. Without understanding and clearly stating the current resource conditions and the impact of that condition identified in the No Action Alternative, the comparative analysis between the No Action Alternative and the Action Alternatives is meaningless and specious.</p> <p>DISCUSSION: The Environmental Consequences chapter, where the analysis takes place, offers an exhausting litany of descriptions and comparisons. But a careful and analytic examination of the Environmental Consequences shows that almost all of the comparative analysis is baseless because the existing condition is not accurately described. No stated or documented criterion has been established by which to judge the current condition of the affected resources. No thresholds beyond which the resources degrade has been identified or stated. In many cases, the resource condition</p>

described in the No Action Alternative is already satisfactory. The discussion and comparisons of the affect of route densities on the Management Indicator Species is specific example that is representative of a widespread lack of basis for the comparative analysis on which the EA is based.

In the Wildlife section of Chapter 3, on page 35, the EA has this to say about route densities:

Route Densities High route densities can affect wildlife negatively through harassment, displacement, or vulnerability to hunters and poachers. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has funded several studies on the effects of roads on elk and, in particular, the effects on mature bulls. These studies have found that hunter densities increase in proportion to road densities. The more roads you have in an area, the more hunter access, resulting in more hunting pressure and harvesting of mature bulls. Mule deer are expected to show the same results. One study in particular (Stalling1994)summarized elk mortality in three different areas: (1) high density of open roads; (2) roads closed to motorized vehicles during hunting season; and (3) areas with no roads. In the area with a high density of open roads, only 5 percent of all bulls lived to maturity (4.5 years). None of the bulls lived past 5.5 years, and the herd contained about 10 bulls for every 100 cows. In the area with roads closed during the hunting season, 16 percent of the bulls lived past maturity, most reaching 7.5 years. The herd contained 20 bulls for every 100 cows. In the area with no roads, 30 percent of the bulls lived to maturity, most reaching 10 years. This herd contained 35 bulls per 100 cows. The study found that as road access increases, elk become increasingly vulnerable to hunting mortality. This trend would result in elk populations with undesirable sex and age structure, increasingly complex and restrictive hunting regulations to protect elk herds, and a loss of recreational opportunity. Table 9 summarizes route density by alternative. The existing forest plan road density guidance is a maximum of 1.9 miles of road per square mile.

Wow. The citations make a strong argument that road densities play a vital role in the health and vitality of the elk herd by affecting the habitat on which elk depend. If it is true in the study area, it must also be true on the Mountainair Ranger District.

Alternative 4 provides the fewest miles of motorized routes resulting in the least amount of habitat displacement, habitat fragmentation, and direct habitat loss compared to all the other alternatives.” And if route density plays such a major role in the health and vitality of the elk herd, one could easily surmise that the less route density on the ground in the District, the better it would be for the elk. If one had to rate the Alternatives on their impact to the elk herd, Alternative 4 would be better than Alternative 1 which would be better than Alternative 3 and all of them would be better than the No Action Alternative, right? It must be...this conclusion is carried forward and dutifully recorded in Chapter 2 when the comparison of the Alternatives is summarized on page 19: And as it is summarized in Chapter 2, the Deciding Officer merely has to read the comparisons and reach the obvious conclusion that road density is bad for the elk population, right? WRONG. If road density truly were impacting the elk herd, the above might be true but the EA gives us a way different story about the existing condition (the No Action Alternative) if we read carefully.

First, it is important to know which habitat types impact elk. The EA gives us the answer: Mountain Grassland and Mixed Conifer. The next thing we need to take into account is the scale. The EA gives us that information also but we need to put numbers together to get the whole picture. The project area is roughly 169,000 acres. There are

962 acres categorized as Mountain Grassland on the Mountainair District. The first red flag goes up because that is only one half of one percent. Impacts of road densities are going to have a relatively small affect if they are only occurring on one half of one percent of the analysis area. But the summary tables don't explicitly say that. The information is in the EA but the reader has to read carefully and pull information from various places to understand what is really being stated.

The examination continues...there are 17,056 acres of Mixed Conifer on the Mountainair District, just over 10% of the analysis area. That is roughly twenty times as many acres of Mixed Conifer as Mountain Grassland acreage. We have now established that impacts to the Mixed Conifer habitat would have twenty times the affect as the same impacts on Mountain Grassland. But both habitat types have their own 'line' in the table. Unless the reader is paying close attention to the acreage numbers, they have no idea that the scale is 20x for Mixed Conifer line in the table than it is for Mountain Grassland.

But that is not all. To get even more details, it is necessary to dig into the Management Indicator Species Assessment, one of the underlying specialists' reports that is referenced in Chapter 3. On page 11 of 34 (of this document with no page numbers), the MIS Assessment says this (Emphasis added):

"Effects to population trend: The expected increase in size of secure habitat areas (unroaded areas) from the Proposed Action and other Action Alternatives is anticipated to increase elk numbers slightly, in combination with vegetative recovery on numerous large fires on the Gallinas/Manzano units (elk prefer post-burn areas for high quality forage due to the amount of new plant growth). As noted in the Forest-wide MIS discussion on elk, they are expanding their populations throughout New Mexico, and the New Mexico Game Commission has directed the Department to decrease elk numbers across most of New Mexico and increase the number of permits offered. At present, this would apply to the Gallinas unit; with the Proposed Action and other Action Alternatives having the potential to increase elk numbers slightly on the Manzano unit, it is not known if population numbers would increase to the degree that a hunt could be considered. Overall, forest-wide populations are expected to remain upward although elk habitat in the analysis area is a relatively small percentage of the total amount of habitat available forest-wide. "

Wait a minute. Elk population is increasing across the Forest? Even with the route densities higher than recommended?

The statement is even more forceful in the 2005 MIS Report for the Cibola National Forest (p. 7) that is referenced in the Wildlife specialists' report:

"Elk numbers have increased in New Mexico and on the Cibola National Forest since 1985 to the point they are considered over abundant in some areas. The Cibola LRMP EIS, page 90, estimated the total Forest elk population at 790 animals in 1985. Now the current combined elk population for the Cibola Game Management Units surveyed in 2004 totals 5,036 (only units 9, 13 and 38 were surveyed). A recent publication of the NMDGF, State of New Mexico Elk Interactive Program, estimates there are 70,000 elk in New Mexico."

The 2005 MIS Report goes on to specifically say that habitat condition is not the limiting actor for the expanding elk population(emphasis added): "The New Mexico Game Commission has directed the Department to decrease elk numbers across most of New Mexico and increase the number of permits offered. For GMUs on the Cibola, 3,610 public elk hunting permits will be available in 2005-2006. Since elk are highly mobile

and reclusive, determining actual numbers and trends on a project based area is impractical. Elk numbers are currently held in check by hunting, both sport and depredation. Mountain grasslands or mixed conifer habitat condition and distribution have not proven to be a limiting factor for population expansion.”

The foundational MIS report referenced in the Wildlife section of the Environmental Consequences specifically and emphatically states that habitat condition is not a limiting factor for elk population. Yet the Wildlife Specialist has summarized and brought forward statements in Table 2 of the Alternatives Chapter of the EA as if the affect of road densities on elk habitat are important factors on the Mountainair District and a compelling reason for the Deciding Officer to choose an Alternative with less roads open to motorized recreation.

Reading through Table 10 on pages 37-39 gives a much more thorough analysis if we read it very carefully. I have highlighted some of the more pertinent points. Note that the ‘route densities remain high’ compared to other habitat types, but remember, the Mountain Grassland is only on one half of one percent of the analysis area. Continuation of Elk- Mountain Grassland at the top: What? Even with all that route density, the habitat trend itself remains upward? Yes, the EA even explains it: “it is a small percentage of the total available forestwide.”

And the Elk – Mixed Conifer table at the bottom of the page? First we have to read through all the comparisons between the alternatives...until we hit the ‘punch line’ at the bottom: “which is a very small amount compared to the forestwide total .” Why so small? After all, there are 17,000 acres of Mixed Conifer habitat. But the route densities are very low, 0.5 miles per acres, well less than the Forest standard for road densities. So the route density impact on Mountain Grassland habitat is small because the acreage is really small and the route density impact on Mixed Conifer habitat is small because the route densities are really low. Scale and quantitative analysis IS important! We are getting an entirely different picture of the situation than the one depicted in Table 2 of the Alternatives section. We continue... Yes, the habitat trend for elk is described as ‘remains upward’ across both habitat types, even for the No Action Alternative. And even more importantly, the population trend for elk is also described as ‘remains upward’ for all of the alternatives including the No Action Alternative. This is quite a different result than what is anticipated if the Deciding Officer makes a decision reading only the route density line in the Table 2 comparisons in the Alternatives Chapter.

The quantitative analysis (the elk population is going upward even for the No Action Alternative) is vitally important when discussing the affect that route densities have in the different alternatives. If DOESN’T matter that there are higher road densities in some Alternatives than others if the elk population is going up even under the No Action Alternative!

This lack of a quantitative analysis and its inaccurate portrayal of the impact of motorized use doesn’t apply just to the elk. Across the entire spectrum of MIS species examined, the numbers are almost universally up or stable on a Forest-wide basis (Table 4, page 28). There are three exceptions on that table – mule deer, house wrens, and juniper titmouse. What does the detail in the MIS document says for those three species? Let’s look. Page 15 of the Management Indicator Species Assessment: The MIS Assessment clearly says that it doesn’t matter if the route densities are more or less

when compared to each other for the mule deer population. Route density is not what is affecting the mule deer population. The EA's underlying document (the MIS Assessment document) clearly states that the mule deer population's downward trend is due to 'other factors'. In fact, the 2005 MIS Report (p. 9) for the Cibola is even more specific: "Mule deer numbers in general have decreased over the past decade across the western United States.

This can be explained in part by mule deer's need for early and mid-successional habitats that are being lost due to a lack of disturbance either from fire and/or mechanical (timber harvest) treatment. Recent increases in mule deer numbers on the Cibola may be a result of several large wildfires which have occurred on GMU 38 in the Gallinas Mountains."

Motorized recreation and route density is not the limiter to mule deer population. The information is there in the referenced 2005 MIS Report but it is not brought forward in the EA as it should be.

Page 31 of the Management Indicator Species Assessment: The Table on page 28 isn't even correct! The MIS Assessment says that the house wren population remains stable under all of the Alternatives. 'Scale' is important also.

The house wren is dependent on riparian habitat. There is very little riparian habitat on the Mountainair District. The EA claims there is 2810 acres in Table 4 (p. 28) but this is challenged in by the following note in the underlying Neotropical Migratory Bird Analysis on page 2:

**** The Cibola National Forest GIS general vegetation (CNF general vegetation) layer used to analyze habitat types in the project area shows 3,677 acres of riparian; little true riparian (wetland vegetation such as willows, sedges, cottonwoods) occurs in the project area. Tajiue Creek (along FR 55 in the Manzano Mountains) and some of the west side drainages in the Manzanos (small, dispersed segments) contain portions of true riparian vegetation. All drainages in the general vegetation layer are often typed as riparian even if no true riparian vegetation is present. The majority of drainages in the project area are ephemeral (flowing only in response to precipitation)."

So the amount of habitat on the Mountainair District is overstated and, since some of the acreage is on the west side of the Manzanos (mostly in the Wilderness), even less than the acreage listed is impacted by motorized recreation. Again, and even more importantly, it doesn't matter if the habitat for the house wren in each alternative is more or less affected. Even the No Action alternative supports a stable population trend.

Page 23 of the Management Indicator Species Assessment: Once again, it doesn't matter if there is more or less impact to the Juniper titmouse habitat from Alternative to Alternative because the population trend is being affected by other factors.

It is clear from these examples that a fundamental understanding of the current condition of the resource, its scale in the analysis area, and what factors are driving the resource condition is absolutely necessary before being able to make rational and informed decisions. If the condition of the resource isn't clearly understood in the No Action alternative, it is very misleading to compare the impacts and affects under one Alternative with another.

RESOLUTION: It is imperative that the Deciding Officer have a clear understanding of the resource conditions under the No Action Alternative before making comparisons between the Alternatives. The information in Table 2 needs to be more accurately

	<p>presented. For each line item included in the summary comparisons in Chapter 2, the current condition of the resource impacted needs to be clearly stated. Is the current condition satisfactory? If not, why not? If factors outside the scope of the analysis are impacting the condition of the resource, it should be clearly stated. If the scale of the resource is so small as to render the affects of the Alternatives impact insignificant, it should be clearly stated in the comparison tables in Chapter 2.</p> <p>Table 2 in Chapter 2 is titled, “Comparison of alternatives – environmental consequences”. It is absolutely imperative that this table clearly define the consequences of the alternatives on all of the examined resource parameters for Wildlife, Hydrology, Recreation, etc. It is impossible to understand the consequences of the Alternatives and make a rational, defensible decision unless the resource condition under the No Action alternative is clearly understood and accurately stated. Only then can comparisons be made and logical conclusions drawn on the impacts of the Action Alternatives.</p>
<p>Response: This comment takes issue with the description of the “current condition”, stating that it is inaccurately described. We disagree. The comment also takes issue with the effects analysis being “strictly comparative”, with the effects of the No Action alternative providing the baseline for comparison. The EA clearly states that is how the analysis is conducted and displayed. The effects analysis documented in the EA is appropriate for the project, given its context and the issues approved by the responsible official.</p> <p>(The stated and documented criteria for the wildlife analysis is on pages 32-36 and includes affects to Management Indicator Species, Threatened/Endangered/Sensitive species, and High priority migratory birds. Effects related to loss of habitat due to conversion of native vegetation, fragmentation of habitat, interruption of migratory patterns of wildlife, lack of habitat use due to disturbance, and direct mortality are described on page 32.</p> <p>The purpose of the Stallings 94 citation is to show that greater road densities allow greater hunter access. Road densities are relevant to effects on wildlife. Although there are differences between alternatives for all wildlife species, comparisons shown in Table 2 reflect the greatest differences between alternatives for the affected species and display where alternative differ from Forest Plan guidance.</p> <p>The purpose of describing effects to MIS (Management Indicator Species) is to determine consistency with the Cibola Land and Resource Management Plan, and to determine project level effects to habitat and the relationship and magnitude of these effects on the Forest-level species and population trend. Since MIS trends are determined at the <u>Forest-wide</u> scale for both species and habitat, the threshold for impacts is very high at the project level. A project level analysis determines how project alternatives will affect the observed <u>Forest-wide</u> habitat and population changes. Table 10 displays a summary of those changes for each species determined to have habitat in the analysis area. Table 10 describes habitat quantity and quality of habitat for each MIS and it determines how project alternatives will affect <u>forest-wide</u> population trend therefore meeting the requirements of an MIS analysis. A project would have to result in high percentage of habitat conversion in order to result in a change in habitat or population trend. The project level MIS report and summarization in the EA show that trend will remain stable for species and habitat except in Mountain Grassland habitat where route densities are high in the analysis area.</p>	
<p><i>Analysis of Unauthorized Routes</i></p>	
<p>71</p>	<p>ERROR: The EA includes an erroneous statement in the Background (p. 4): “The district has experienced a proliferation of unauthorized (user-created) routes as a result of the increased recreational use of OHVs,” and again in the Alternatives section when describing Alternative 2 (p.12): “Since cross-country travel has been permitted,</p>

there has been a proliferation of unauthorized roads.”

DISCUSSION: Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary offers this definition of proliferate: “To grow by rapid production of new parts.” The Cambridge Online Dictionary say that proliferation means: “To increase a lot and suddenly in number.” Dictionary.com says that proliferation is a: “a rapid and often excessive spread or increase.” The Forest Service’s inventoried unauthorized roads as identified in the EA do not meet any of the above definitions. The TAP includes a listing of all other roads (unauthorized or decommissioned) that were considered for inclusion into the road system in Appendix A of the Mountainair TAP. The total mileage of these road segments is only 48.1 miles. But under closer examination, the mileage of truly unauthorized (user created) routes becomes much clearer and far less numerous. Only 14.2 miles of the routes examined for inclusion were tagged with a ‘U’ designation in the TAP table. All of the other unauthorized routes were identified by a Forest Service route designation. This provides clear evidence that the majority of the unauthorized routes were initially created by Forest Service activities and then decommissioned.

The description of Proposed Action Development in the EA (p. 5) makes it clear that the Forest Service considered its inventory of unauthorized routes to be complete and total: “Hard copy maps displaying all of the system routes and all known unauthorized routes were provided to the participants at each community meeting.”

Again, on page 27, the Wildlife and Special Status Species description makes it plain that the Forest Service considered its knowledge of all unauthorized routes to be complete enough to base its road density analysis on that inventory: “For the purpose of the wildlife species and habitat analysis, route density is defined as all motorized routes, including roads (system, unauthorized, and decommissioned) and trails located outside of Manzano Mountain Wilderness.”

The Forest Service also makes its declaration of a complete inventory of unauthorized routes by the omission of any statements in the EA that claim that the unauthorized routes are uncounated, unknown, or too numerous to enumerate. The ‘proliferation’ of routes, in a previously completely unmanaged setting was, at maximum, a mere 14.2 miles in 169,000 acres. There is a reasonable assumption that even some of the 14.2 miles had their source, not by public users, but in other Forest Service activities. Fourteen miles of the inventoried 519.5 miles of roads (system and unauthorized) is less than 3%. Three percent ‘growth’ in 264 square miles over decades of allowable cross-country travel does not meet any definition of ‘proliferation’ in size or speed of growth. The use of the term ‘proliferation’ is important and significant in the EA as it gives inaccurate information to the Deciding Officer. The number of user-created unauthorized routes by motorized use is small and the end of legal cross country travel will end creation of any more routes.

RESOLUTION: Remove the terms ‘proliferation of unauthorized routes’ and ‘proliferation of unauthorized roads’ from the EA or provide a larger documented inventory of unauthorized, user-created roads or routes that justifies the use of the term ‘proliferation’.

Response: The Forest Service does not make a declaration that all unauthorized routes have been inventoried. All routes that have been inventoried were shared on the early project maps as referenced in this comment. To assist the public in commenting on the existing situation, inventoried unauthorized routes were displayed on the early maps. There are many unauthorized routes that have not been

<p>inventoried, and an inventory of unauthorized routes is not required. Especially in the Gallinas unit there are more unauthorized routes than have been inventoried. There are numerous unauthorized routes on the Mountainair and Gallinas, that have developed as a result of cross country travel. We have noted your concern about the use of the word proliferation.</p>	
<p>Best Management Practices</p>	
87d	<p>B. Use of Best Management Practices We are unable to find any reference to our recommendation to use Wildland CPR's "Best Management Practices for Off-Road Vehicle Use on Forestlands: A Guide for Designating and Managing Off-Road Vehicle Routes" in the DEA. We have again attached this document as Appendix B for use by the Mountainair RD and again ask that where the Mountainair RD suggests alternatives that do not comply with these BMPs, we would like an explanation as to why they were not followed, especially in light of Executive Order 11644 (as amended by E.O. 11989) that directs the agency to minimize impacts to the environment and other users when making designations.</p>
<p>Response: The Forest Service does use best management practices established the laws regulation and policy that govern the agency. However, the BMP's outlined in "Best Management Practices for Off-Road Vehicle Use on Forestlands: A Guide for Designating and Managing Off-Road Vehicle Routes" are often similar to those used by the Forest Service. Additionally, "Best Management Practices for Off-Road Vehicle Use on Forestlands: A Guide for Designating and Managing Off-Road Vehicle Routes" is similar in content to the process used by the Forest Service to identify roads for designation in the alternatives. For example, the Forest Service has surveyed and mapped sensitive plants, Critical Habitat and territories for listed species and avoids designating routes in those areas (except in some cases where major Forest system roads already exist and are important to the transportation system). Many of the same citations provided in the OHV BMP document were used to analyze effects to wildlife and sensitive plants as a result of designating (or not designating) routes in the TM process. There is also Forest Service Handbook direction and laws such as the Endangered Species Act that provide for the viability of wildlife and sensitive plant species and their habitat. Many of the recommendations made in the Wildland CPR document were also elements that were considered and analyzed related to recreation.</p>	
<p>Budget and Economic Concerns</p>	
31c	<p>[...] a single motorized trail will use 85% of districts' trail budget.</p>
<p>Response: In reviewing your comment, we have identified an error in the Recreation section. The analysis should be. "The short term cost to bring the proposed system to standard is estimated to be \$120,900, almost 86% of the annual trails budget for the entire <i>forest</i>." The document states that this is the annual trails budget for the district. This will be corrected in the Errata sheet.</p> <p>This estimate is based on the funding needed to bring the newly designated trails to standard, a one time cost. This includes all of the trails proposed in Alternative 3, not just a single trail. The estimated annual operations and maintenance for this system is \$94,430. Cost to manage and maintain a motorized trail system is one element that the deciding official needs to consider, among other criteria as outlined in the Travel Management Rule.</p>	
<p>Comments and Selection</p>	
19bb	<p>22. It would be a huge step backward for society if we had to comment on every foot of road, water line, sewer pipe, sidewalk, and motorized trail that the public needs. Gauging public need by the number of comments is not the norm in our society and should not be used in this process.</p>
<p>Response: The number of comments received plays no part in the decision to be made. Forest Service procedures provide for public comment on proposed actions prior to a decision.</p>	
<p>Compliance with the Rule</p>	

19tt	<p>43. Specific references from the new National OHV Policy that must be adequately addressed include: Existing – The unit or district restricts motor vehicles to “existing” routes, including user created routes which may or may not be inventoried and have not yet been evaluated for designation. Site-specific planning will still be necessary to determine which routes should be designated for motor vehicle use.</p> <p>For many visitors, motor vehicles also represent an integral part of their recreational experience. People come to National Forests to ride on roads and trails in pickup trucks, ATVs, motorcycles, and a variety of other conveyances. Motor vehicles are a legitimate and appropriate way for people to enjoy their National Forests—in the right places, and with proper management.</p> <p>To create a comprehensive system of travel management, the final rule consolidates regulations governing motor vehicle use in one part, 212, entitled “Travel Management.” Motor vehicles remain a legitimate recreational use of NFS lands. This final rule requires designation of those roads, trails, and areas that are open to motor vehicle use. Designations will be made by class of vehicle and, if appropriate, by time of year. The final rule will prohibit the use of motor vehicles off the designated system, as well as use of motor vehicles on routes and in areas that is not consistent with the designations.</p> <p>The clear identification of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use on each National Forest will enhance management of National Forest System lands; sustain natural resource values through more effective management of motor vehicle use; enhance opportunities for motorized recreation experiences on National Forest System lands; address needs for access to National Forest System lands; and preserve areas of opportunity on each National Forest for nonmotorized travel and experiences. Clearly the rule intended to identify existing routes being used for motorized access and recreation and preserve existing non-motorized routes by elimination of cross-country travel.</p> <p>Why is a process that was intended to eliminate cross-country travel and designate existing motorized routes been allowed to turn into a massive closure process? Additionally, the rule preserves existing non-motorized routes by not allowing them to be converted to motorized routes and it does not state anywhere that non-motorized travel and experiences were to be significantly enhanced by a wholesale conversion of motorized routes to non-motorized routes. We request that the intention of the final OHV Route Designation rule be followed by the Mountainair Ranger District Travel Plan decision and that the rule not be used inappropriately as an action to create wholesale motorized closures and a wholesale conversion of motorized to non-motorized routes.</p> <p>44. In order to be responsive to the needs of motorized recreationists, the plan should specifically allow for amendments as required to create new trails, connect trails to create motorized loops, extend trails, make minor boundary adjustments to allow a motorized trail, etc.</p>
<p>Response: Several comments and agency responses in the preamble to the Travel Management Rule apply to these comments. In response to item 43:</p> <p>Comment. Some respondents suggested a no-net-loss policy for motor vehicle routes (every route closed</p>	

must be replaced by a new route of the same length and character), a specific goal for available routes (such as four miles of motor vehicle trail per square mile), or a general policy to develop all access opportunities close to urban areas.

Response. The Department disagrees with establishing any of these principles as national policy. Designation decisions are best left to local managers, working closely with State, tribal, and local governments, users, and other members of the public and informed by site-specific evaluation of environmental impacts.

The Need for the Revised Rule section states that:

“Current regulations at 36 CFR part 295, which provide for allowing, restricting, or prohibiting motor vehicle travel”... The rule and previous regulations authorize the agency to restrict or prohibit motor vehicle travel.

In response to Item 44 this comment and agency response states that:

“Comment. Some respondents asked the Forest Service to include potential future routes in the inventory and designation process, and to make provision for including additional user created routes discovered after designation is complete.

Response. Long-term planning may identify potential corridors suitable for consideration for future construction. However, the agency does not intend to designate routes on a motor vehicle use map until such routes actually exist, have been analyzed and evaluated, and are available for public use. Section 212.54 of the final rule provides for revision of designations as needed to meet changing conditions. New routes may be constructed and added to the system following public involvement and site-specific environmental analysis. Such revisions may also include closures or changes in designations.”

The purpose and need of the Mountainair Travel Management Project is to designate a system for motorized vehicle use, and close the district to cross country travel to comply with the Travel Management Rule. Constructing a new motorized trail system is not part of the purpose and need. However, new trails can be proposed at a future date and the district can consider these routes and may select to analyze and consider adding new trails to the motorized road and trail system.

77i

6. Travel Management Rule criteria to ' minimize damage to natural resources, reduce user conflict and designate roads in relation to availability of resources (funds) for maintenance and administration'.

FALSE: The TMR says none of those things. In regards to maintenance funding, it specifically just the opposite; ' At times, resources are scarce, and the Department does not believe that this scarcity should lead to blanket closures of NFS lands to recreational users.' (see citation below)

a. Damage to Natural Resources: No NEPA project has the goal of minimizing resource damage. The object is to make informed decisions. The USFS operates under the Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act. MUSYA doesn't tell the USFS to minimize resource damage either. See below, TMR Section 212.55, ' ..the responsible official shall consider effects on National Forest System natural and cultural resources, public safety, provision of recreational opportunities, access needs, conflicts among uses of National Forest System lands,...' The official has to consider effects on all the resources, not just natural resources.

b. User Conflict: The USFS is directed to manage conflicts among USES, not USERS. The TMR confirms conflict of USES. See below, TMR Section 212.55, ' ..the responsible official shall consider effects on National Forest System natural and cultural resources, public safety, provision of recreational opportunities, access needs, conflicts among uses of National Forest System lands,...' The TMR, as published in the Federal Register, also says this at page 68281: The references to use conflicts in this section are taken from E.O. 11644. In issuing this E.O., President Nixon directed agencies to take conflicts among uses into account in designating trails and areas for motor vehicle use.

c. Designate roads in relation to availability of resources:
The Travel Management Rule DOES NOT say that the forest must have the resources (funds) to maintain the system it designates. The exact wording in the Rule itself says the responsible official 'shall consider' the need for maintenance and the availability of resources for that maintenance (bold added below). § 212.55 Criteria for designation of roads, trails, and areas.

(a) General criteria for designation of National Forest System roads, National Forest System trails, and areas on National Forest System lands.
In designating National Forest System roads, National Forest System trails, and areas on National Forest System lands for motor vehicle use, the responsible official shall consider effects on National Forest System natural and cultural resources, public safety, provision of recreational opportunities, access needs, conflicts among uses of National Forest System lands, the need for maintenance and administration of roads, trails, and areas that would arise if the uses under consideration are designated; and the availability of resources for that maintenance and administration.

On Page 68280 of the Federal Register Nov 9, 2005, is a comment and response which speaks EXACTLY to this issue (the comments and responses are part of the 'Travel Management Rule Final as published.) (bold added) The commentor argued that no routes should be designated unless funding is available for maintenance and enforcement. In its response the USFS disagrees and provides its reasons.

	<p>Comment. Some respondents stated that the final rule should ensure that no routes are designated unless there is funding for maintenance and enforcement. Other respondents asked field officials to consider the availability of volunteers and cooperators in evaluating resources available for maintenance.</p> <p>Response. The Department agrees that availability of resources should be a consideration in designating routes for motor vehicle use. Section 212.55(a) of the proposed and final rules include as a criterion for designation “the need for maintenance and administration of roads, trails, and areas that would arise if the uses under consideration are designated; and the availability of resources for that maintenance and administration.” The Department believes, however, that this determination involves the exercise of judgment and discretion on the part of the responsible official. At times, resources are scarce, and the Department does not believe that this scarcity should lead to blanket closures of NFS lands to recreational users.</p> <p>Volunteers and cooperators can supplement agency resources for maintenance and administration, and their contributions should be considered in this evaluation. On Page 68269 of the Federal Register Nov 9, 2005, in the commentary and responses which are part of the 'Travel Management Rule Final as published, we again see that maintenance costs must be 'considered'. (bold added) While availability of resources for maintenance and administration must be considered in designating routes for motor vehicle use (§ 212.55), cooperative relationships and volunteer agreements may be included in this consideration.</p>
<p>Response: The sentence on page 17 of the EA is poorly worded. All of the references above indicate that the responsible official should consider “consider effects on National Forest System natural and cultural resources, public safety, provision of recreational opportunities, access needs, conflicts among uses of National Forest System lands, the need for maintenance and administration of roads, trails, and areas that would arise if the uses under consideration are designated; and the availability of resources for that maintenance and administration.” All of these factors are considered by the responsible official when approving alternatives and this consideration will influence the outcome of the decision as directed by the Travel Management Rule. While all action alternatives propose changes to the existing system, none of the alternatives result in a blanket closure of NFS lands to recreational users.</p>	

19bbb	<p>52. Motorized recreationists endorsed and accepted millions of acres of area restriction under the Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use, Final Rule (http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/final.pdf) as a positive action to control environmental impacts. We accepted area restriction and not area closure. Area closure is permanent. Area restriction allows flexibility as needed to address site specific conditions. Each motorized road and trail exists because it serves some multiple-use need. Every road and trail is important to some individual for some purpose. Each motorized road and trail must have adequate site-specific analysis to determine all of its values including motorized recreational value. Motorized recreationists gave up 97% of the area historically available to them under both the National Route Designation rule as the ultimate act of mitigation so that we would continue to have use of existing motorized routes that cover or provide access to an area estimated at less than 3% of the total area. Now motorized recreationists have been given almost no credit for our cooperation during that action and we have only been penalized for our past cooperation by current route designations, resource management plans, forest plans and travel plans that seek to close 50% to 75% of the existing motorized routes. This outcome was not part of the National Route Designation agreement and this level of closure is not acceptable to us for that reason. National Route Designation agreements were not made with the intention of massive closures beyond that agreement. We ask that all BLM and Forest Service actions include proper recognition of the agreement behind the National Route Designation decisions which allow continued use of the existing networks of motorized roads and trails without massive motorized closures.</p>
<p>Response: Your position has been noted and included in this response to comments.</p>	
<p>Forest Plan</p>	

87k	<p>III. Additional Concerns</p> <p>A. Forest Plan Road Density Changes are Inappropriate</p> <p>Amending the Forest Plan to change route density guidelines to a forest-wide 1.9 miles per square mile is not an insignificant Forest Plan amendment and could result in significant negative impacts to wildlife. Current Forest Plan guidelines state a maximum road density of 1.9 miles per square mile for protecting water quality, but for wildlife the road densities for specific management areas are considerably lower and should not be modified through travel planning. Forest Service 1985:61-1. For example, Management Area 2 should have an average road density of 1.5 miles per square mile (Forest Plan at 94), 0.3 miles per square mile for Management Area 7 (Forest Plan at 115), a maximum of 1.9 in Management Area 8 (Forest Plan 120-1), an average of 0.3 to 1.6 for Management Area 9 (Forest Plan 132), 0.5 for Management Area 10 (Forest Plan at 139), 0.14 for Management Area 13 (Forest Plan 161), and 0.8 for Management Area 18 (Forest Plan at 198). To change the road density forest-wide would eradicate these lower road density guidelines without regard for the specific requirements to reach management goals in each management area or regard to habitat or species specific concerns.</p> <p>We recommend the Cibola National Forest expand the Forest Plan definition of road density to include all motorized routes, including roads (system, unauthorized, and decommissioned) and trails since the primary effects to wildlife are the same or similar. Forest Service 2010:32. The Cibola National Forest should also adopt a route density guideline of no more than 1 mile per square mile to protect wildlife.</p>
<p>Response: Appendix A of the EA provides a discussion of the rationale for the plan amendment for road density guidance. This rationale disclosed why the existing road density guidance in the Forest Plan could not be logically applied to the proposal and alternatives to determine whether or not they were consistent with the Plan. The Responsible Official determined to amend the Plan to eliminate Management Area-specific guidelines as part of the proposal because the analysis areas upon which many of the road-density guidelines were based could not be accurately mapped. These Plan guidelines were enumerated in the Transportation/Travel sections of the management area guidance, and are not in the Plan’s wildlife guidance. In addition, forest plan revision is expected to begin with 2-3 years, and road density guidance can be revisited during the revision process. The determination that the Plan Amendment would not be significant is because the changes would neither:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goods and services originally projected; nor 2. have an important effect on the entire forest plan or affect land and resources throughout a large portion of the planning area during the planning period. <p>Because the Plan has now been in effect for 25 years, the planning period has elapsed.</p>	
84 , 85	<p>Summarized Comment: There is a concern that the Forest Plan Amendment is not appropriate or consistent with the Forest Plan.</p> <p>Specific Comment:</p> <p>“ISSUES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposed Forest Plan Amendment described in Appendix F does not flow from the Purpose and Need stated in the MRD EA. 2. The proposed Forest Plan Amendment includes elimination of Road Density Guidance and changes wording on Maintenance and Road Obliteration. Neither of these is necessary to comply with the Travel Management Rule 3. The Forest Plan Amendment changes are contrary to guidance in the Forest Plan in regards to the output of the Forest recreation services. The changes are significant, and

require a full EIS with the minimum 90 day comment period.

4. The EA has gone to great lengths to disguise and hide the actual intent of the Forest Plan amendment; to eliminate the wording in the Forest Plan that makes the Mountainair Ranger District keep certain mileages of road open to the public. This is not disclosed in the EA at all, and not even in the body of the discussion of Appendix A. It is visible only if the reader goes into the voluminous tables of Appendix A, which show the specific changes in wording being proposed. The EA does not make clear that their proposed 1.90 mile per square mile density standard is only a maximum. A standard for maximum does not fully replace the policies and functions of the Forest Plan wording being deleted. The current wording has standards for minimums also. Under the new proposal, the Ranger District could be allowed to fall any amount below the allowed maximum of 1.9. This would be a significant change in Cibola Forest Plan road policy for the Mountainair Ranger District.

DISCUSSION:

1. The proposed Forest Plan Amendment described in Appendix F does not flow from Purpose and Need stated in the MRD EA. MRD EA, Chapter 1, p 4-5, states the Purpose and Need:

There is a need for improving management of motorized vehicle use on National Forest System lands within the Mountainair Ranger District of the Cibola National Forest in accordance with provisions of the Travel Management Rule at 36 CFR parts 212, 251, and 261. The Travel Management Rule requires the district to have a system of National Forest System roads, trails, and areas designated for motor vehicle use. There is a need to comply with the Travel Management Rule, 36 CFR 261.13, which requires that forests prohibit motor vehicle use off the system of designated motorized routes. There is a need to amend the "Cibola National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan" (forest plan) to be compliant with the Travel Management Rule (see appendix A).

Here are the citations for 'forest plan' in the MRD EA in the Purpose and Need chapter, both referring only to the need to amend the Forest Plan so it does not allow cross country travel. page 3 of Chapter 1, Purpose and Need (prior to the Purpose and Need statement): Motorized cross-country travel is allowed by the forest plan outside of the Manzano Mountain Wilderness, which is closed to all motorized and mechanized uses. Page 9 of Chapter 1, under Decision Framework:

Linked to this decision would be a nonsignificant forest plan amendment to provide direction that is consistent with the Travel Management Rule. The MRD EA says the decision will 'link' to an amendment to the Forest Plan to eliminate cross country travel. We assume it means that the change to the Forest Plan is part of the decision being made with this EA.

The EA is proposing a Forest Plan amendment that would go far beyond the Purpose and Need statement of 'to be compliant with the Travel Management Rule. On the last page (page 116) of the EA we see the statement for the Forest Plan Amendment Analysis: (Bold Added).

Implementation of the Travel Management Rule is not a discretionary decision-it is mandated by the Travel Management Rule. Since the 1985 "Cibola National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan" permitted motorized cross-country travel, and did not incorporate the MVUM as the enforcement tool for motorized travel

designation, the forest plan must be amended to implement travel management. Because the proposal would be within current forest plan direction, there would be insignificant changes in the outputs of goods and services from the Cibola National Forest during the remainder of the life of the current forest plan. This travel management direction would remain in effect until the forest plan revision process examines travel management in the context of the potential changes to forestwide goals, objectives, and management direction. This statement reverts back to the 'purpose' of complying with the Travel Management Rule, does not mention road density guidance, and claims there would be insignificant changes in outputs. We disagree.

2. Amending the Forest Plan to eliminate Road Density Guidance or Road Obliteration is not required to comply with Travel Management Rule There is no factual or logical connection between road density, obliteration and the Travel Management Rule. We have reviewed the Travel Management Rule; there is no mention of obliteration or managing road density. The words 'density' and 'obliteration' do not appear in the Rule. We know the Forest Plan currently has an 'open' policy in regards to motor vehicle use, and that needs to be changed. To comply with the Travel Management Rule, all that is needed is an amendment to eliminate cross country travel.

3. Amending the Forest Plan to eliminate Road Density Guidance in order to allow reducing road mileage by 60% or more a) is contrary to Forest Plan guidance for output of Recreation Services, and b) is not 'Insignificant' We provide this section, with citations from the Cibola Forest Plan as amended, to support our contention that reducing the road density by 60% is contrary to Forest Plan guidance on service output, and is very significant. Amendments resulting in significant impacts must be accomplished under an EIS with the required 90 day comment period.

a) Why does the Cibola wants the amendment?

The Cibola clearly wants to eliminate the road density guidance so it can implement a decision which would reduce road density far below what is currently required in the Forest Plan. The Cibola would not be able to choose any of the Action Alternatives without the amendment, because all the Action Alternatives would violate the current Forest Plan.

b) Why is Road Density Guidance in the Forest Plan, what are the consequences of eliminating it?

Road density guidance does not just 'happen' to be in the Forest Plan. It was created for some reason(s) and purpose(s). There MRD EA provides no discussion of what functions are served by the road density guidance. There is no discussion of what management tool(s) would replace this. There is no discussion of what guidance, if any, would replace the deletions other than a blanket 1.9 mile road density maximum. The EA fails to disclose why road density guidance and mileage numbers are in the Forest Plan, and how eliminating them would change the purpose, intent and/or goals of the Forest Plan. The EA fails to disclose the environmental consequences of eliminating the mileage and road density guidance. Eliminating them would be a change in approach and in thinking. In his decision, the California judge who overturned the 2005 Planning Rule called this a 'paradigm-shift'. Paradigm-shifts are significant.

c) Environmental consequences of eliminating the mileage and road density guidance
The effects of the action alternatives have been well documented in other comments by this commenter. The Action Alternatives reduce the existing road system by a minimum of 60% (Alternative 3) to 70% (Alternative 4), with Proposed Action Alternative 1 proposing a reduction of 62%. We discuss two aspects of road density and mileage. First the administrative needs, and second, the recreation needs.
Administrative Need for Roads: Table 1 from Appendix A is shown in this comment, at page 5. It shows the Proposed Action would reduce the road mileage so drastically, that the density would be half of that required for Minimum Road System as determined by the TAP. As this commenter has noted in another comment, ALL the Action Alternatives result in a road density below the Minimum Road System. This can hardly be deemed 'insignificant', since the roads would be too few to allow for adequate administration of the forest lands.

Roads as a Recreation Resource: This commenter's Recreation comment cites the MRD EA to show the Cibola is well aware that the roads themselves are an important recreation resource. All the action alternatives have the effect of severely reducing the recreation resource 'roads'. The Reduction of Road Mileage by 60-70% is a significant impact to the service outputs described by the Forest Plan. The following citations are from the Cibola Forest Plan as amended. Page 1, Establishes that a fundamental Purpose is to provide services that maximize public benefit: The purpose of the Forest Plan is to provide for multiple use and sustained yield of goods and services from the Forest in a way that maximizes long term net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner [36CFR 219.1a]. To accomplish this, the Forest Plan: Briefly describes the major public issues and management concerns pertinent to the Forest and how each one is addressed in the Forest Plan. Briefly summarizes the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) including the existing management situation, projected future use and supply conditions. Establishes long-range policies, goals, and objectives, and contains the specific management prescriptions planned to meet the policies and to achieve the multiple-use goals and objectives. Specifies the vicinity, timing, and standards and guidelines for proposed management practices. We note that eliminating the Mileage and Road Density Guidance would impact and change the ' vicinity, timing, and standards and guidelines for proposed management practices' of the Forest Plan. Page 13, Identifies Recreation as one of the services, and projects an increased demand, with dispersed recreation being both the largest amount and fastest growing segment of recreation use.

3. Summary of the Analysis of the Management Situation

This chapter summarizes the AMS. It depicts the current goods and services produced and projects supply and expected future use on the Forest. It also summarizes expected future conditions of the Forest once the Plan is implemented.

Chapter 3, on page 20:

RECREATION New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma have been among the fastest growing states in the nation and this rapid population growth is projected to continue. As population increases, the future needs for outdoor recreation are also expected to increase. Dispersed recreation use, including consumptive and nonconsumptive wildlife use, was estimated to be 609,500 recreation visitor days (RVDs) in F.Y.1981. Dispersed recreation accounts for the largest amount of recreation use and is projected to be the fastest growing segment in the future. Page 21, The Forest Plan

says that to meet recreation needs, more recreation resource will be needed, including construction and managing use to capacity. The Forest and Grasslands have the potential to accommodate future increases Of dispersed recreation. However, this potential cannot be realized under Current management direction. Additional trail construction, managing use to capacity, shifting use patterns, cooperating with other agencies, utilizing volunteers and manpower programs, and increasing public awareness will all be needed to meet future trends.

CONCLUSION: The minimum 60% reduction in road mileage proposed by the Action

Alternatives MRD EA directly conflicts with the Forest Plan. All the Action Alternatives would severely reduce the capacity of the MRD to accommodate even the current users. The reduction of the roads (a recreation resource) by 60% would have severe effect on the future recreation users. The closure to the public of 60% of more of the forest roads has a significant impact in reducing the service output of the forest. The MRD EA fails to discuss and disclose any of these issues. The Action Alternatives would all conflict with the Forest Plan even if the proposed Amendment were adopted.

4. How the EA Hides and Disguises the real purpose of the proposed Amendment
There is no mention of current direction regarding road density or mileage in the Purpose and Need. We first see that the Cibola intends to amend the Forest Plan to remove 'variable road density guidance' at page 12, (Chapter 2, Alternatives). We see this under the Proposed Action Alternative 1. The wording is repeated for Alternative 3 at page 4 and Alternative 3 at page 15: (bold added)

- Amend the forest plan to prohibit cross-country motorized travel on the district except where shown on the MVUM.
- Amend the forest plan to remove the variable road density guidance for each management area and its associated analysis areas. Change the road density to a maximum of 1.9 miles of roads per square mile average for all management areas on the Mountainair Ranger District.

When combined with previous decisions, these proposed changes would result in a motorized system with 178.5 miles of NFS roads open for public motor vehicle use. No discussion or analysis of the proposal to eliminate road density guidance or mileage is presented any place in the EA or underlying reports. It is simply deemed 'insignificant' (at page 9) with no supporting explanation. Saying it's insignificant doesn't make it so. Appendix A, what the proposed Amendment would really do
Examining Appendix A, we realize that the statements in the EA about eliminating the road density guidance do not disclose the actual details, significant impacts and scale of the proposed amendment. Even the Appendix A discussion doesn't show it. The wording changes in the amendment proposal do not just eliminate road density guidance. They also would eliminate Forest Plan guidance that tells the Mountainair Ranger District to keep certain mileages of roads maintained at certain maintenance levels. Elimination of the mileage direction is never mentioned at all anyplace in the EA. It appears only in the table in Appendix A. This means there have been no environmental effects or consequences analyzed in regards to eliminating specific road mileage. At Appendix A, page 125, we read this: The ID team compared the proposed action to the guidance in the forest plan to determine if the actions are consistent with the forest plan. The forest plan addresses road density in two places, forestwide guidance and in the management area guidance for transportation. The

forestwide guidance (page 61-1 of the forest plan) provides for a maximum road density of 1.90 miles per square mile (average) of forest land. The proposed action is consistent with the forestwide guidance in the forest plan for road density (see table 1) There is no apparent need to eliminate the road density guidance because current road density is consistent with Forest Plan guidance. Table 1 at Appendix A page 125 reveals that the Mountainair RD is actually well below the allowed maximum of 1.90 miles per square mile: Road Density Table App A.JPG

Then Appendix A (page 125) makes this statement in its attempt to justify eliminating the road density guidance. We note this discussion has nothing to do with Travel Management Rule compliance and does not flow from the Purpose and Need or the Issues identified in the EA. The Purpose and Need and Issues do not say the EA will address assessing the suitability of how the Forest Plan's management areas are defined. We maintain this statement is false, because it is irrelevant to the EA. The management area guidance on road density varies by analysis areas, which are subdivisions of management areas that are described but not mapped in the forest plan. The analysis area road density guidelines range from 0.14 to 1.90 miles per square mile (see table 2). Many of the analysis areas were defined according to the seral stage2 of the vegetation type or range condition. Analysis areas based on vegetation structure change over time and shift across the landscape; shifts are caused by management activities and natural disturbances. Because the exact location of the analysis area boundaries is unclear and the conditions used to define them have changed, it is no longer meaningful to define road densities by analysis area. Because analysis areas cannot be mapped consistently over time, there is no way to determine if the proposed action road system exceeds the forest plan guidance. Therefore, there is a need to amend the road density guidance in the forest plan so that it is clear and consistent.

The next paragraph at page 125 says this:

We propose to retain the current forestwide road density direction (1.90 miles per sq. mile average) while eliminating road density guidance for each management area and its associated analysis areas. Even at this point, Appendix is STILL not disclosing what it is really up to. But it becomes apparent at page 126. Appendix A repeats the mantra of complying with the Travel Management Rule: Since the forest plan allows cross-country travel across 168,989 acres on the district, there is a need to amend the forest plan to comply with the Travel Management Rule.

The Proposed Amendment would result in a major change of Road Policy The section of Forest Plan, which the amendment would change, specifies much more than road densities. It specifies certain numbers for miles of roads to be maintained in certain areas, at certain periods. The following excerpts of tables are two examples are from Appendix F's tabular list of proposed changes in the Forest Plan, at pages 127 and 128. Deleting the text has the effect of eliminating the Road Density standards and the actual miles of ML 2 roads to be maintained. (Sidebar- Unintended Consequences: We note the discussion of reducing fire risk by creating fuelbreaks, at page 126. All the Action Alternatives fall below the current Management Area direction for density. Closure and obliteration of roads could have the significant impact of eliminating fuelbreaks. This impact is not acknowledged or address in the EA.) According to the Cibola Forest Plan, the Mountainair Ranger District is made up of Management Areas 11, 12, 13 and 15 Note the instruction for Management Area 12 to maintain 320 miles of Maintenance Level 2 roads per period in all periods. None

of the Action Alternatives in the EA even keep that many miles of all types of road open to the public. This is explicitly admitted at page 126:

Other periods specify maintenance on more miles of roads than are being proposed for designations. Note also the instruction to manage the average road densities of 1.7 miles, 1.2 miles, 1.9 miles etc. These are called 'average' road densities, not maximum allowed road densities. From page 128 App F p 128 Management Area 12 road density & maintain.JPG Note also in Appendix A, that these changes are noted as 'text deleted'.

There is no mention of any replacement of text with other specific management direction. From Page 127 App F p 127 Management Area 11 road density & maintain.JPG Cross-Country Travel and Road Obliteration and Maintenance Statement at Appendix A, page 126 (bold added) Since the forest plan allows cross-country travel across 168,989 acres on the district, there is a need to amend the forest plan to comply with the Travel Management Rule.

The forest plan also contains some obsolete timeframes for performing road construction, reconstruction, or obliteration. The plan was analyzed in 10-year periods (periods 1 through 5) for the first 50 years and in 50-year periods (periods 6 through 8) for the following 150 years. Implementation of period 1 was expected to begin in Fiscal Year 1986. Since the plan is now in its third decade, some of these periods and associated tasks are moot. Other periods specify maintenance on more miles of roads than are being proposed for designations. Therefore, all language on periods associated with roads under the "Transportation" section is proposed to be amended.

To provide for consistency between the plan and the Travel Management Rule, we propose deleting or changing the standards/guidelines listed below, which refer to OHV area closures and restrictions, obliteration, and maintenance, signing of closed areas (no longer appropriate), or specific acreages of OHV closed areas (no longer necessary as all areas outside the designated system will be closed). This amendment would be specific to the Mountainair Ranger District. According to the current Cibola Forest Plan, the Mountainair Ranger District is comprised of Management Areas 11, 12, 13 and 15n We find these statements about construction, signage and obliteration to be essentially false because they are irrelevant; not required to comply with the Travel Management. The Forest Service has presented ('sold') the Travel Management Rule to the public as a process which will designate where motor vehicles can be used. It DOES NOT tell the forests to maintain, sign, or physically obliterate any roads. These actions are not part of complying with the Travel Management Rule. At page 128, we read this applied to Management Areas 13 and 15, and applied to Management Areas 11 and 12 on page 127:

Road management will be applied to obliterate poorly located or constructed roadways to improve watershed condition and reduce soil loss. Management will take the form of standard roadway prescriptions for obliteration. The Cibola National Forest is attempting to invoke the Travel Management Rule to write themselves a blank check for road management. They are attempting to use the Rule as an excuse to do things the Rule is not intended or designed to do.

The nonmotorized public has been told that no matter what the decisions are for motorized use, the decisions will not affect nonmotorized use. The decommissioning and obliteration of roads is OUTSIDE the purpose of the EA analysis process, and

contrary to the Travel Management Rule. The hikers, horseriders and mountain bikers will be justifiably angry and surprised if they find forest roads being destroyed. They would be right in feeling deceived, and justified in accusing the Cibola of abusing the Travel Management Rule.

RESOLUTION:

Delete all mention of the Forest Plan Amendment from the EA and underlying documents.

Add an Action Alternative that will comply with the existing Forest Plan guidance for recreation service output, road density, maintenance and retention of mileage.

Perform new analysis to address whether or not the Action Alternatives meet Forest Plan guidance for road density and mileage, output of recreation services, the minimum road system. Analysis must include environmental consequences and cumulative impacts on the recreation service output. We include the following excerpt from the legal decision that struck down the 2008 Forest Planning Rule, because we see strong parallels. At the core of the disagreement is whether or not eliminating a rule or standard is significant. We would like to point out (bold added): that the Court decided the plaintiff should not be forced to delay seeking redress until a revised LRMP was applied to a site specific plan. It is disingenuous for the USDA now to maintain that it has no idea what might happen if it is no longer required to comply with the requirement. Likewise, we maintain it would be disingenuous of the Cibola National Forest to maintain it has no idea of 'what might happen' if it is no longer required to comply with requirements of the Forest Plan vis-à-vis the roads. It would be disingenous for the Cibola to attempt to maintain that it thought the changed requirements were insignificant and would have no impacts on the public and the output of the recreation resource.

The Ninth Circuit did not 'buy' the USDA's argument that '... there is no reason to believe that lower environmental safeguards at the national programmatic level will result in lower environmental standards at the site-specific level...'. The Ninth Circuit said that response from the USDA '...suggests that it conceives of plan development rules merely as exercises in paper-pushing...' We agree with the Court. Lowering standards at the programmatic level will result in lower standards at the site-specific level.

Another parallel is the discussion of USDA's failure to analyze the environmental consequences of eliminating the protections for a resource. The 2008 Rule dispute revolved around the species resource, but the same logic applies to all resources, including the recreation resource...does not actually discuss the environmental consequences of eliminating the specific protections that are provided in previous plan development rules. Case4:08-cv-02326-CW Document23 Filed06/30/09

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<http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/includes/2009_06_30_SJ_Order.pdf>

http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/includes/2009_06_30_SJ_Order.pdf

Page 19-20 The overarching nature of the plan development rule makes it impossible to link the procedural injury at issue here to any particular site-specific project, whether now or in the future. Waiting to adjudicate the validity of the Rule until an LRMP is revised under it and a site specific plan is later approved under that LRMP would not present the court with any greater a "case or controversy" with respect to

	<p>the already-completed procedural violation than exists today. Rather, such an approach would insulate the procedural injury from judicial review altogether. If Citizens is forced to delay seeking redress for its procedural injury until a site-specific plan is approved under a revised LRMP, it would face a statute of limitations defense. The government might also argue that the procedural injury is not sufficiently tied to the project to confer standing. Moreover, it would be a waste of the government's resources if it were to revise an LRMP and approve a site-specific plan, only to have both declared invalid because the 2008 Rule pursuant to which the LRMP was created was procedurally defective.</p> <p>Page 21 The 2008 Rule eliminates or modifies standards that applied to all LRMPs and site-specific plans. (and a few paragraphs later) It is disingenuous for the USDA now to maintain that it has no idea what might happen if it is no longer required to comply with the requirement. As the Ninth Circuit found, the "USDA's argument . . . that there is no reason to believe that lower environmental safeguards at the national programmatic level will result in lower environmental standards at the site-specific level [] suggests that it conceives of plan development rules merely as exercises in paper-pushing." Citizens I, 341 F.3d at 975. At the very least, the EIS must discuss instances where the USDA has found the viability requirement to be difficult to implement and analyze the impact of no longer having to ensure species viability in those instances. The same is true with the rest of the EIS chapter entitled "Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences." The EIS discusses the differences between the identified alternatives and explains why the USDA prefers Alternative M, but it does not actually discuss the environmental consequences of eliminating the specific protections that are provided in previous plan development rules. Because the EIS does not evaluate the environmental impacts of the 2008 Rule, it does not comply with NEPA's requirements." (Comment 84)</p>
	<p>Response: It is correct to say that the purpose and need for the Mountainair RD travel management project does not directly lead to a "need" to amend the Plan. In that sense, including a need to amend the plan in the purpose and need is confusing. The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires that all proposals to manage the national forests be consistent with the direction contained in the Forest Plan. In this case, the Plan contained guidance in management area direction that was outdated or in conflict with the Travel Management Rule or potentially conflicted with the Proposed Action and alternatives. Road density guidance at the management area level is an example of the latter. As explained in Appendix A of the EA, application of this guidance was problematic and the Plan Amendment was designed to remove the potential for inconsistency between the alternatives and Plan direction, therefore making the alternatives consistent with the NFMA direction. There is no other intent related to this change in Plan direction.</p>
63, 72b, 72h	<p>Summarized Comment: The EA fails to provide analysis of the impacts the alternatives would have on the Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) of the Mountainair District.</p> <p>Specific Comment: "DISCUSSION: In the Environmental Consequences Chapter (p.75), the EA provides the background and some of the framework for the required analysis: "The recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) classifications are specified in the forest plan to provide direction for recreation management. This classification system helps to define and manage a range of recreational settings and opportunities on NFS lands. The ROS classes describe a desired condition for each ROS class across a spectrum from primitive (such as a wilderness) to urban (with urban influences and level of development.)"</p>

In the current Cibola National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (the Forest Plan), the ROS is defined. It also defines the classifications within the ROS; specifically the Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) spectrum is defined as a classification where motorized use occurs (emphasis added):

“Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) – A method of delineating types of recreation settings. There are six ROS meetings. Only the first four are evident on the Cibola National Forest. These settings are: Primitive – Essentially unmodified natural environments; Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized – Predominantly natural or natural appearing environments without motorized use; Semi-Primitive Motorized – Predominantly natural or natural appearing environments where motorized use occurs; Roaded Natural – Predominantly natural appearing environments with moderate evidence of the sights and sounds of man; Rural – Modified natural environment with facilities for special activities; Urban – substantially urbanized environment.”

The Forest Plan also defines acceptable variation of the acreages within each ROS classification, including SPM. The EA refers to these Forest Plan limits on page 76: “Acceptable variations in ROS classifications from the acreages presented in the forest plan standards and guidelines for specific management areas are as follows:

- Primitive: No change
- Semiprimitive Nonmotorized: ± 15 percent
- Semiprimitive Motorized: ± 15 percent
- Roaded Natural: ± 15 percent
- Rural: ± 15 percent “

The above limitations are on page 58-59 of the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan also requires (p. 59) that: “Forest and update every 5 years. Include in Recreation and Opportunity Guides the identification and mapping of Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classification of land in the Cibola Forest.” And, more importantly that” “All Review effects of road closures on ROS/WOS class acreages every three years and adjust acreages as affected by closures.”

It is clear that the existing Forest Plan considers the acreages meeting the specific requirements of each ROS classification (including the SPM classification) to be significant by carefully setting the “acceptable variation in ROS classifications from the acreages presented in the forest plan standards and guidelines for specific management areas.” It is equally clear from the Forest Plan that road closures change the ROS classifications. The EA does not analyze the four alternatives presented for their impact on the ROS classifications of the lands available to recreationists. This is a clear requirement in order to determine whether the EA complies with the Forest Plan. The ROS Users Guide (1982), referenced in the Recreation Specialist’s Report, clearly spells out that the only difference between the ROS Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) classification and the ROS Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) is whether motorized use is permitted (Users Guide p. 7). Clearly if motorized recreation is no longer permitted because the existing roads and trails are no longer available for motorized use, the acreages for the SPNM and SPM classifications are impacted. The importance of the amount of these two classifications available to the recreating public is acknowledged in the Forest Plan’s clearly stated limits on the changes in acreage allowed. Yet the EA is fails to analyze these changes in acreage for these ROS classifications.

The ROS Project Planning Users Guide (1987) echoes and amplifies the importance of identifying, analyzing, and mitigating ROS classification impacts of projects (p. 6, emphasis added): “The Recreation Specialist’s role is to identify recreation opportunities, integrate them with other resource activities, analyze recreational effects, identify conflicts and recommend mitigation techniques.

The Recreation Specialist should:

Provide ROS findings, opportunities, new alternatives, inconsistencies, effects, and mitigation data to Team members preparing NEPA documents. Utilize Forest Plan economic data to evaluate alternative project sets. Include recreation demand projections and average annual costs and benefits. Provide site specific project monitoring needs for ROS settings. Provide interpretation of the Limits of Acceptable Change parameters for each ROS setting indicator (63-1)• Help integrate ROS opportunities, analyze inconsistencies and other effects, interpret S&Gs, and identify and integrate mitigation techniques into proposed project sets. Alternatives 1, 3, and 4 all dramatically reduce the motorized recreation use permitted on the existing roads and trails of the Mountainair Ranger District. The lack of allowed motorized use will, by the very definition of the ROS classifications, affect the ROS classification, the acreages that fall under each ROS classification, and the associated recreational opportunities for the public.

The Forest Plan, the ROS Users Guide, and the ROS Project Planning Users Guide all agree on the importance of identifying, analyzing, and mitigating the impacts that projects may have on the acreages identified under SPNM and SPM ROS classifications. The EA and the underlying Recreation Specialist’s Report is completely silent on the potential effects and cumulative effects the four Alternatives would have on the ROS classification. The Forest Plan limits the allowable changes to the ROS acreage. Without documented analysis of the impact the roads and trails being closed will have on the ROS acreages, it is impossible for the public to comment on these impacts. It is also not possible for the Deciding Officer to determine whether the alternatives meet the existing requirements of the current Forest Plan.

RESOLUTION: Limiting the available alternatives to only those that do not affect the existing ROS classifications would allow the EA to go forward without analyzing the affects of changing the ROS classifications and the resulting acreages. The only alternative that doesn’t impact the ROS classifications is Alternative 2. Since Alternative 2 leaves the Forest open for cross-country travel, it would not serve the need of complying with the TMR and does not offer a feasible solution to the identified error.

Another option would be for the Deciding Officer to choose a combination of Alternatives 2 and 3; utilizing the routes from Alternative 2 but apply the cross country travel ban from the other alternative. The other viable choice is to withdraw the existing EA and re-issue an EA that includes an analysis of the alternatives effects on the ROS classifications and acreages in the Affected Environment Chapter. NMOHVA requests that one of the above paths be selected to ensure that the Forest Plan requirements are met. To reiterate, the Forest Plan is very clear that projects within the Mountainair District are required to comply with the prescribed acreage range requirements for each ROS classification. The EA fails to analyze the impacts of the presented alternatives on the ROS classifications. The public and the Deciding Officer are unable to determine whether the alternatives presented meet the requirements of the Forest Plan. NMOHVA requests that the EA be withdrawn and re-issued with the

	required analysis of impacts to the ROS classification acreages included.” (Comment 63)
	<p>Response: The ROS system does not exclusively apply to motorized recreation, nor does the system establish goals for the quantity of motorized recreation. ROS is designed to manage the settings that provide for recreation opportunities on the National Forests. There seven indicators that help determine the effects on ROS settings: access, remoteness, visual characteristics, site management, visitor management, social encounters, and visitor impacts. In Semi Primitive Motorized (SPM) classes, the roads should be primitive. Recreationists in a SPM setting have a moderate probability of experiencing solitude, closeness to nature, and tranquility in a predominantly natural appearing environment. The area is managed for a low concentration of users but there is evidence of others on the trails. In the Roaded Natural (RN), roads are typically managed for improved access, paved roads and maintenance level 3 roads managed for low clearance passenger vehicles. Opportunities to affiliate with other users in developed sites. Most developed recreation sites are found in ROS settings.</p> <p>The proposed action and all action alternatives continue to provide for a setting that meets these setting objectives. There is a reduced level of access in the SPM areas in many cases, but the management is constituent with SPM settings. In many cases reducing the number of roads available will increase the probability of experiencing solitude, closeness to nature, and tranquility which is a goal in this setting. The roads that are designated will continue to be managed as a primitive roads that provide challenge and a high degree of self reliance. The roads that define the RN such as the NFSR 55 will continue to be managed for higher use, and the developed campgrounds will continue to provide opportunities for users in a social setting. (ROS references are from the Project Planning ROS User's Guide Chapter 60, 1987 and the 1986 ROS Book)</p>
83	<p>Summarized Comment: Forest Plan Consistency with Recreation Goals Full Comment: ERROR: The EA is contradictory, directly in conflict, and would achieve goals opposite to goals stated in the existing Cibola National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan).</p> <p>DISCUSSION: On page 1 of the current Forest Plan, it states (emphasis added): “The purpose of the Forest Plan is to provide for multiple use and sustained yield of goods and services from the Forest in a way that maximizes long term net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner [36 CFR 219.1a]. To accomplish this, the Forest Plan: Briefly describes the major public issues and management concerns pertinent to the Forest and how each one is addressed in the Forest Plan. Briefly summarizes the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) including the existing management situation, projected future use and supply conditions. Establishes long-range policies, goals, and objectives, and contains the specific management prescriptions planned to meet the policies and to achieve the multiple-use goals and objectives. Specifies the vicinity, timing, and standards and guidelines for proposed management practices. Establishes monitoring and evaluation requirements needed so that direction is carried out to determine how well outputs and effects were predicted. Contains references to information used and lists interdisciplinary (ID) team members participating in developing the Forest Plan.”</p> <p>Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan, the Management Direction, set general goals for the Forest. On page 33, under Recreation, it states its goal for Recreation: “Recreation Provide dispersed and developed outdoor recreation opportunities and enhance experiences by providing access, services, and facilities consistent with other</p>

resource considerations. Emphasize dispersed recreation over developed recreation.” Chapter 3 of the Forest Plan, the Summary of the Analysis of the Management Situation

states that the Chapter:

“...summarizes the AMS. It depicts the current goods and services produced and projects supply and expected future use on the Forest. It also summarizes expected future conditions of the Forest once the Plan is implemented.”

One of the resources listed in Chapter 3 is Recreation. It appears on page 20:

“RECREATION New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma have been among the fastest growing states in the nation and this rapid population growth is projected to continue. As population increases, the future needs for outdoor recreation are also expected to increase.”

It goes on to state:

“Dispersed recreation use, including consumptive and nonconsumptive wildlife use, was estimated to be 609,500 recreation visitor days (RVDs) in F.Y.1981. Dispersed recreation accounts for the largest amount of recreation use and is projected to be the fastest growing segment in the future.”

On page 21, it explores the Future Trends of Recreation:

“Future Trends Dispersed recreation is expected to increase to 1,700 MRVDs annually by the end of Period 5. The increase is because of population growth and an increase in participation. Areas closest to population centers will receive most of the impact.”

It then goes on with its Conclusion:

“Conclusion The Forest and Grasslands have the potential to accommodate future increases of dispersed recreation. However, this potential cannot be realized under current management direction. Additional trail construction, managing use to capacity, shifting use patterns, cooperating with other agencies, utilizing volunteers and manpower programs, and increasing public awareness will all be needed to meet future trends.”

The current EA’s Action Alternatives are all completely contradictory to this Conclusion in the Forest Plan. Even Alternative 3, which leaves the greatest amount of routes open to the public, reduces the route mileage available to the public by over 49%. How can an EA that reduces route mileage by nearly half be construed as complying with a Forest Plan that states that managing use to capacity and additional trail construction will be needed to meet future trends in dispersed recreation? Simply put, it can not. The EA does not comply with the Forest Plan. The Recreation section closes with a discussion on the Expected Future:

“Expected Future Projected future use of dispersed recreation can be met in the Plan at the 80 Condition percent level--1,357 MRVDs annually--at the end of Period 5. In order to provide this use, 168 miles of trails will be constructed or reconstructed. Additional trailheads will also be constructed and rights-of-way for roads and trails will be obtained for better dispersion of the recreationists. However, full service management is provided for in only 50 percent of the management areas.”

Even under the optimistic auspices of the current Forest Plan, the anticipated future use of dispersed recreation was only projected to be met at the 80% level. The Action Alternatives in this EA ensures that the gap between dispersed recreation needs and the Forest’s ability to meet those needs is even greater.

The underlying specialists’ report, Recreation and Scenic Resource Specialist Report, acknowledges both the growth of dispersed recreation and its importance on the

District. But this information is largely missing in the EA document as the growth and importance of dispersed recreation was inexplicably left out. The Recreation and Scenic Resource Specialist Report includes pervasive statements on both the growth and importance of dispersed recreation on the Mountainair District.

Page 16:

“Recreation use in the Manzano area is growing, partly because of the overflow of recreationists from the Sandia Ranger District and population growth in the middle Rio Grande Valley. Attractions such as Manzano State Park and the Salinas Missions (National Park Service) draw tourists to the area. There are two state scenic byways, Abo Pass Trail and Salt Mission Trail, within close proximity to the forest boundary. Additional dispersed recreation activities in the Manzano Mountains include hiking, biking on roads and cross-country, rock climbing, wildlife viewing and interpretation, sightseeing, camping, picnicking, hunting, gathering of forest products, and pleasure driving.”

Page 9:

“Roads are important for providing both access to recreation opportunities and as a recreation resource on the Mountainair Ranger District. All of the NFS roads on the district are currently open to all vehicles, this includes unauthorized roads and a number of roads that are listed in our roads database as decommissioned, but are still in use. Often there is no obvious difference between system roads, unauthorized roads and roads listed as decommissioned, but are still in use.”

Page 9:

“Driving for pleasure is a frequent recreation activity identified by respondents in the Cibola National Visitor Use Monitoring surveys. In 2001, 10% indicated that driving for pleasure on roads was one of the activities they participated in while visiting the Cibola National Forest and Grasslands. In 2006, when the mountain districts of the Cibola National Forest were analyzed separately from the grasslands, 19.9% participated in driving for pleasure on the mountain districts.”

Page 12:

“In New Mexico, about 26% of respondents had participated in OHV recreation, 31 % of men and 20.7 % of women reporting participating in OHV recreation. The largest percentage was among people under 30, 46.3%, with 24.1% being 30-50 and 11.6% 51 and older. An estimated 345,400 of New Mexico residents have participated in OHV recreation. (Cordell et al 2005) Off highway vehicle registrations have been increasing in New Mexico. In 1990, there were 2,995 OHVs registered. In 2000, there were 7,457 OHVs registered, a 149% increase in 10 years. (BLM 2003)”

The EA does freely acknowledge the negative impact on dispersed recreation by the Action Alternatives. Environmental Consequences of Alternative 1, typical of all the Action Alternatives in its dramatic reduction of routes serving dispersed recreation, includes:

Page 80:

“They would likely feel that the quality of their experiences has been reduced, and may be displaced to other areas.”

Page 80:

“Campers could opt to park within 20 feet adjacent to the road and walk to a campsite away from the road outside of these corridors. However, public comments received to date and the observed use patterns indicate that most campers prefer to have their

	<p>vehicle close to their camp site, and their campsite away from the road. As a result, parking adjacent to the road and walking a distance to a campsite is not expected to be a common activity, and most campers will choose to motorize disperse camp within a corridor”.</p> <p>Page 81: “Comments received indicate that some people may perceive the restrictions on motorized crosscountry travel and motorized dispersed camping as a means of closing the forest. There is a chance that some people may no longer be able to access areas they customarily use with motor vehicles, which would further feelings of being closed out of their established areas of use.”</p> <p>Page 81: “Some of these sites have been heavily used for years and these users could feel displaced and discouraged from camping on the district. Additionally, increased crowding of designated dispersed motorized camping areas may occur as motorized dispersed camping in other areas would be prohibited.”</p> <p>Page 82: “There is a 62 percent reduction in the number of system roads that would be available for motorized use by the public in this alternative compared to the existing condition. Some of these roads are occasionally used for exploration, hunting and other motorized recreation opportunities.”</p> <p>The EA freely acknowledges the negative impact on dispersed recreation by the Action Alternatives. The Forest Plan states that dispersed recreation is to be emphasized over developed recreation. The Forest Plan states that in order to meet recreation needs, they will need to manage to capacity. The Action Alternatives dramatically reduce that capacity. The Action Alternatives in the EA provide for a result that is in direct conflict with the stated goal and direction of the existing Forest Plan.</p> <p>RESOLUTION: All of the EA’s Action Alternatives are in direct contradiction with the Forest Plan. As such, the EA is clearly not in compliance with the Forest Plan. None of the decision choices afforded the Deciding Officer will be in compliance with the Forest Plan. The only recourse is to withdraw the EA as written and release a new EA with Action Alternatives that meet both the Forest Plan and the Travel Management Rule requirements.</p>
<p>Response: We disagree. The project includes a plan amendment where there is conflict between the Plan’s direction and the proposed action and alternatives. The instances cited in the comment as contradictions are where the expected future conditions described in the 1985 Plan to not coincide with today’s conditions.</p>	
<p>Cooperative Management</p>	
114b	<p>Lastly, we respectfully request that any access management is done with the cooperation of local governments such as Socorro County.</p>
<p>Response: We have noted your suggestion.</p>	
<p>Cumulative Effects</p>	
19p	<p>6. Because of the cumulative effects on motorized recreationists from all past and reasonably foreseeable closures and the growing need for motorized access and motorized recreational opportunities, there can be no net loss of these opportunities with this action. This can be accomplished by implementing a route designation for all</p>

	<p>existing routes.</p> <p>7. A starting list of actions that should be evaluated in a cumulative effect analysis include: SEE TABLE in ORIGINAL COMMENT.</p> <p>8. Past actions that have had a significant impact on motorized recreationists as shown in the table above. Reasonably foreseeable actions including travel plans, forest plans and resource management plans will produce additional significant impacts. These actions have produced or will produce a significant debt in the mitigation bank for motorized recreational opportunities in the Cibola National Forest and immediate surrounding areas and this issue must be adequately addressed.</p>
<p>Response: The analysis in the EA adequately discusses the effects on motorized recreation. The responsible official will make the determination of whether the effects disclosed in the EA are significant or not.</p>	
19x	<p>18. The site specific analysis of each road or trail to be closed must address or identify where the public would go to replace the motorized resource proposed for closure. In other words, the analysis must adequately evaluate the site specific value of a road or trail proposed for closure to motorized recreationists. It must also quantify the significant negative cumulative impact experienced when motorized recreationists could not find a trail or road with a similar experience in the area. The quality of our experience has been significantly reduced. It must also quantify the significant cumulative impact that the closure of a system of road and trails would have collectively when enough routes are closed to eliminate a good motorized day outing. An incomplete analysis is not acceptable under NEPA requirements.</p>
<p>Response: Such an analysis described in the comment is not required for the responsible official to make an informed decision. In addition, the Forest Service received no information in public involvement that identified specific “values” or “experiences” that were being affected by the Proposed Action or the other alternatives and that might require such additional road or trail-specific analysis.</p>	
80a	<p>ERRORS: The cumulative effects analysis and summary statements ignore the requirements of the CEQ. The cumulative effects analysis presents no rational connection between the facts before the agency and the stated environmental consequences of the alternatives.</p> <p>DISCUSSION: The EA, as it is presented, violates the requirements for cumulative effects analysis as required by the Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ), Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, and statements in this EA.</p> <p>We will start our discussion with a review of 40 CFR 1500. In several sections, CEQ regulations provide definitions of cumulative effects and provide requirements for the analysis of cumulative effects. We review three of them here (emphasis added):</p> <p>“Sec. 1508.7 Cumulative impact. "Cumulative impact" is the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.”</p> <p>“Sec. 1508.8 Effects. "Effects" include:</p> <p>(a) Direct effects, which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.</p> <p>(b) Indirect effects, which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of</p>

land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.

Effects and impacts as used in these regulations are synonymous. Effects includes ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative. Effects may also include those resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the agency believes that the effect will be beneficial.”

“Sec. 1508.27 Significantly. "Significantly" as used in NEPA requires considerations of both context and intensity:

(a) Context. This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant.

(b) Intensity. This refers to the severity of impact. Responsible officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action. The following should be considered in evaluating intensity:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.”

The CEQ provides a whole document (Considering Cumulative Effects Under the National Environmental Policy Act) to provide further clarity why accurate cumulative effects analysis is important and how cumulative effects analysis should be executed.

Here are a few excerpts of exceptional relevance (emphasis added):

“The CEQ’S “Considering Cumulative Effects Under the National Environmental Policy Act” provides a framework for advancing environmental impact analysis by addressing cumulative effects in either an environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS). The handbook presents practical methods for addressing coincident effects (adverse or beneficial) on specific resources, ecosystems, and human communities of all related activities, not just the proposed project or alternatives that initiate the assessment process. (Page v from the Executive Summary)

“Determining the cumulative environmental consequences of an action requires delineating the cause-and-effect relationships between the multiple actions and the

resources, ecosystems, and human communities of concern. Analysts must tease from the complex networks of possible interactions those that substantially affect the resources. Then, they must describe the response of the resource to this environmental change using modeling, trends analysis, and scenario building when uncertainties are great. The significance of cumulative effects depend on how they compare with the environmental baseline and relevant resource thresholds (such as regulatory standards). Most often, the historical context surrounding the resource is critical to developing these baselines and thresholds and to supporting both imminent and future decision-making. (Page vi from the Executive Summary)

The Forest Service itself recognizes the legal requirements for completing a cumulative effects analysis and gives specific instructions on how to accomplish the analysis. From FSH 1909.15, Chapter 10, Section 15: “Reaching a conclusion about the significance of the effects is critical for the analysis summarized in the EA to support a finding of no significant impact (FONSI).”

Section 15.1 (emphasis added):

“The following regulation applies to analysis of cumulative effects of past actions: Cumulative Effects Considerations of Past Actions (40 CFR 1508.7). In accordance with The Council on Environmental Quality Guidance Memorandum on Consideration of Past Actions in Cumulative Effects Analysis dated June 24, 2005:

The analysis of cumulative effects begins with consideration of the direct and indirect effects on the environment that are expected or likely to result from the alternative proposals for agency action. Agencies then look for present effects of past actions that are, in the judgment of the agency, relevant and useful because they have a significant cause-and-effect relationship with the direct and indirect effects of the proposal for agency action and its alternatives.”

Section 15.3 (emphasis is from the FSH):

“When appropriate, the following framework should assist in the development of a meaningful cumulative effects analysis for project proposals.

1. Define the affected spatial area for each resource where effects (direct and indirect) may be caused by the proposed activities.
2. Define the temporal boundaries for each resource from the proposed activities (How long will the effects last?).
3. Document the rationale and sources for the spatial and temporal boundaries of the affected area for each resource.
4. Describe the effects that overlap in time and space for past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions (activities), regardless of ownership, that may combine with effects of the proposed activities and result in cumulative effects.
5. Briefly describe any key assumptions made in the analysis and any information gaps that may exist. Cite pertinent references, monitoring results, and so on.”

The EA itself, on page 27, does explain the relationship between past actions and present actions but misses the boat completely on the requirement of clearly establishing a “significant cause-and-effect relationship with the direct and indirect effects of the proposal for agency action and its alternatives.”:

“The discussion of cumulative effects included in all the resource analyses presented in this chapter do not attempt to quantify the effects of past human actions by adding up all prior actions on an action-by-action basis. In order to understand the contribution of past actions to the cumulative effects of the proposed action and alternatives, the analyses rely on current resource settings and conditions as a proxy for the impacts of past actions. This is because existing conditions reflect the aggregate impact of all prior

	<p>human actions and natural events that are difficult to quantify that have affected the environment and might contribute to cumulative effects. Existing conditions are a result of past and present impacts to the various resources. These effects are described under alternative 2, the no action alternative.”</p> <p>The EA makes no attempt to define the spatial or temporal boundaries of the cumulative effects analysis. The public is left to guess at the size and timeframe the analysis is representing. The lack of stated spatial and temporal boundaries does not meet CEQ regulations.</p> <p>The EA makes every effort at establishing ‘cause and effect’ relationship as long as motorized recreation is portrayed as the root of all evil. But, the cause and effect, when examined, shows exactly the opposite. In the words of the EA itself, the “existing conditions reflect the aggregate impact of all prior human actions and natural events.” This makes an accurate and definitive depiction of the current resource conditions absolutely essential to a meaningful projection of future impacts by the Action Alternatives. But the cumulative effects descriptions make absolutely no attempt to accurately define the current condition or base the cause and effect relationship of the future condition on the current condition of the resources.</p>
<p>Response: The effects analyses in the EA represent a reasonable examination of the cumulative effects on the various resources. The CEQ guidance document on considering cumulative effects states on page 12 that “Not all potential cumulative effects issues identified during scoping need to be included in an EA or EIS. Some may be irrelevant or inconsequential to decisions about the proposed actions or alternatives. Cumulative effects analysis should “count what counts”, not produce superficial analyses of a long laundry list of issues that have little relevance to the effects of the proposed action or the eventual decisions.” In this EA, cumulative effects discussions are included for all resources for which analysis was conducted. Key resources such as recreation and wildlife provide a discussion of cumulative effects commensurate with their importance to making a reasoned decision. Although in some cases the spatial and temporal bounds for the analysis are not explicitly addressed, a careful reading of the EA shows that the analyses are bounded in time and space.</p>	
80e	<p>RESOLUTION: The application of the Cumulative Effects analysis in the EA is deficient in meeting the requirements of the CEQ regulations, the Forest Service Handbook, and even the EA’s own description of the process. The results mislead the Deciding Officer by conclusions that have no rational connection between the facts before the agency and the stated environmental consequences of the alternatives. The error is so pervasive and insidious that the only recourse is to withdraw the current draft EA and write an EA that meets the requirements for Cumulative Effects Analysis.</p>
<p>Response: See the response to the previous comment.</p>	

19o	<p>5. One of the specific requirements under NEPA is that an agency must consider the effects of the proposed action in the context of all relevant circumstances, such that where “several actions have a cumulative . . . environmental effect, this consequence must be considered in an EIS.” <i>Neighbors of Cuddy Mountain v. U.S. Forest Serv.</i>, 137 F.3d 1372, 1378 (9th Cir. 1998) (quoting <i>City of Tenakee Springs v. Clough</i>, 915 F.2d 1308, 1312 (9th Cir. 1990)). A cumulative effect is “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions.” 40 C.F.R. § 1508.7. 3. The cumulative effect of all motorized closures has been significant and is growing greater every day yet they have not been adequately addressed. Ignoring cumulative effects allows the agency to continue to close motorized routes unchecked because the facts are not on the table. CEQ guidance on cumulative effects was developed to prevent just this sort of blatant misuse of NEPA.</p>
<p>Response: We disagree that the cumulative effects of travel management decisions have not been adequately addressed in the EA. These effects, which are primarily associated with people and their use of the forest, are addressed in several places in the EA including recreation, public safety, and social and economic considerations.</p>	
<p>FONSI</p>	
61a, 61b & 61d, 61e	<p>Summarized Comment: There is a concern that there are significant impacts that preclude a FONSI.</p> <p>Specific Comments:</p> <p>“ERROR: All of the Action Alternatives presented in the EA significantly impact the resource opportunities afforded the public using the Mountainair Ranger District. These significant impacts preclude a decision for a FONSI.</p> <p>DISCUSSION: The alternative with the ‘least’ impact to the current situation is Alternative 3 which reduces the current system of roads and trails from 471.4 miles to 239.5 miles, a reduction of over 49%. This reduction, by half, of the motorized recreation system on the District does not even include the loss of cross country travel or the 48.1 miles of unauthorized routes the District listed in the Mountainair TAP (if the unauthorized roads are included, the reduction is 54%). Clearly, the Deciding Officer cannot choose any of the presented Alternatives and claim a Finding of No Significant Impact. The impact of an important Forest resource, motorized recreation opportunity, will be dramatically reduced even if the least impactful alternative is chosen. The CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1500) are very clear: Sec. 1508.13 Finding of no significant impact.</p> <p>"Finding of no significant impact" means a document by a Federal agency briefly presenting the reasons why an action, not otherwise excluded (Sec. 1508.4), will not have a significant effect on the human environment and for which an environmental impact statement therefore will not be prepared.” (Comment 61b)</p> <p>“Choosing ANY of the Action Alternatives in total would render a FONSI in clear conflict with CEQ regulations.” (Comment 61d)</p> <p>“A decision for a FONSI is not supported by the facts presented by any of the proposed Action Alternatives and would be in violation of CEQ regulations. The appropriate decision is that the EA shows a full EIS is needed.” (Comment 61e)</p>
<p>Response: The CEQ regulations at 40 CFR 1500-1508 describe the NEPA process and provide guidance on complying with those regulations. The purpose of the EA is to disclose the effects so that the</p>	

<p>Responsible Official can determine whether or not to prepare and EIS or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The CEQ regulations at 1501.4, whether to prepare an environmental impact statement, include direction to “prepare a finding of no significant impact (§ 1508.13), if the agency determines on the basis of the environmental assessment not to prepare a statement.” The subsequent definition of human environment (§ 1508.14) states that “economic or social effects are not intended by themselves to require preparation of an environmental impact statement”. Clearly, reductions in “resource opportunities afforded the public” are within the realm of social issues which, by themselves, would not trigger an EIS. In addition, reductions in availability of roads for recreation do not necessarily rise to significance when placing the effects in context as required by § 1508.27.</p>	
61c	<p>The term ‘significant’ is important. So important, in fact, that CEQ regulations devote an entire section to a definition of ‘significant’ as it pertains to environmental documents (emphasis added). Sec. 1508.27 Significantly.</p>
<p>Response: 40 CFR 1508.27 provides the definition for “significantly” that is used in the determination of whether there are significant effects related to a proposal. The criteria listed in the definition are used in the determination of whether a Finding of No Significant Impact can be prepared for an EA.</p>	
104	<p>The EA does not address the inevitable environmental impacts of excessive concentration of visitors due to the proposed alternative’s reduction in motorized opportunities. As you know, in the NEPA process, if during the performance of an EA it is determined that there will be impacts to the environment due to the implementation of the proposed action, whether those impacts are positive or negative, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) cannot be issue and a full EIS must be conducted. Given that implementation of your proposed alternative would eliminate ~83% of the currently available opportunities, and further, that the rapid growth in motorized recreation is projected to continue in the foreseeable future, even the most casual visitor can see that visitor concentration will be enormous. Further, one need not be a forest planner to recognize that a 500+% increase in visitor concentration would logically be expected to have an impact on the environment.</p> <p>This significant impact has not been adequately evaluated, nor have mitigative actions been identified in the EA. The impact and associated mitigative actions must be considered as part of the NEPA process. In fact, given the magnitude of the impact, a FONSI cannot be logically reached. Therefore, this failure requires, at a minimum, a full EIS be preformed.</p> <p>Summary: Perhaps the most significant of all impacts resulting from the proposed action has not been adequately evaluated and considered.</p>
<p>Response: The EA, on pages 80-88, discusses the effects on recreation and does not identify the “magnitude of impact” described in the comment. Based on the observations of Cibola NF recreation managers, the Sandia RD, which lies closer to Albuquerque and received much more recreation use, has not experienced such effects after implementation of its Travel Management decision. For a discussion of significance, see the response to comment 61b</p>	
<p>Individual Roads Not Identified</p>	
42m	<p>Then Chapter 2 of the report did not relate the road numbers when describing the “number of miles” that would be designated. So, we really have no idea which roads are truly going to be open for off-road vehicle use.</p>
<p>Response: All of the roads proposed for designation in each alternative are displayed on maps in Appendix B of the EA (p.131). The maps are referenced at the beginning of each of the alternative descriptions.</p>	
<p>Maps</p>	
42l	<p>As a side note, I would like to comment on the Map that was posted for Alternative 3 on</p>

	the website did not clearly denote the some 25 miles of road that would be for smaller ATV's. It was extremely confusing and did a poor job of conveying the off-road vehicle system that would be proposed.
Response: The roads being considered for vehicles 65" in width or less are shown on the maps of Alternative 3 in different colors and are identified in the legend.	
19h	<p>2. We are very concerned that the current text and maps does not adequately and easily disclose the motorized routes to be closed. Order to meet NEPA requirements for adequate public disclosure, each alternative map must show each motorized route that is proposed to be closed.</p> <p>The standard used in many travel plans has been to show those motorized routes proposed to be closed by an alternative with red lines. The tables for each alternative also need to clearly identify an each existing motorized route that is proposed to be closed.</p>
Response: Routes that are not designated are shown on the alternative maps as gray lines and are identified in the legend of each map as "System Road not Designated".	
25	Road labeled County Road 55 is actually County Road AO13, and changes to FR55 at National Forest Boundary west of Tajique. Fr55 then changes back to County Road AO13 inside Forest Valley Ranches subdivision, and is a dedicated county road for maintenance purposes. Road labeled County Road 322 4 miles west of Tajique within Forest Valley Ranches is a gated private subdivision road. Should be taken off map.
Response: FR 55 is displayed as a county road on the Alternative maps in Appendix B (p. 131). The error with 322 has been noted and it will not be included on the motor vehicle use map (MVUM).	
Minimum Road Systems	
87f	<p>C. Minimum System analysis</p> <p>As we said in our earlier comments:</p> <p>The minimum system analysis is a framework for the MRD to determine resource risks, access values, and other values so that the risks and values associated with each route can be used to assess retention of the route. Identification of the "minimum road system needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands" is required by 36 C.F.R. § 212.5(b) (see also Forest Service 2007).</p> <p>Affordability and a risk/value analysis should inform objective determination of the minimum transportation system. The minimum system must reflect long-term funding expectations and minimize adverse environmental impacts associated with road construction, reconstruction, decommissioning, and maintenance. [36 CFR 212.5(b)(1)] Units must also consider their ability to manage the proposed system in a fiscally and environmentally sustainable manner, as required in 36 CFR 212.55(a). The Forest Service should use Executive Order 11644, § 3, as amended, and the TMR, 36 C.F.R. §§ 212.5(b), 212.55 as sideboards when accounting for district-specific ecological conditions and public input. The Forest Service is also subject to a variety of other legal obligations, pursuant to, for example, the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and National Historic Preservation Act that apply in varying and different degrees depending on specific spatial and temporal scales, and the specific natural and cultural resources affected by route designations. Center for Biological Diversity et al, 2009:4-5. The Cibola National Forest can only afford 9% of its current motorized road system. Forest Service 2009:45. While we understand that reducing the road system to just 9% (approximately 42 miles) of the existing open roads is not realistic, it is not fiscally responsible to add additional routes to the system, whether roads or motorized</p>

	trails, whether existing on the ground or not. Therefore, only Alternative 4 would meet the requirements of the Travel Management Rule and should be the alternative selected by the Mountainair RD.
Response: Thank you for your comment – we disagree that only Alternative 4 meets the requirements of the Travel Management Rule. Any of the alternatives considered in detail in the analysis could be selected and meet the requirements of the rule.	
Motorized Trail System	
90a	<p>PROCESS ERROR: Numerous routes in Alternative 3 are designated as trails with a 65 inch vehicle width rather than roads. There is no scientific proof or justification for such a need given in the EA in the Environmental Consequences discussion of Alternative 3. There are several key routes that should remain open to motorized travel as roads rather than trails as a result of this process error. They are discussed below.</p> <p>DISCUSSION: 1) Page 86 paragraph 1 of the EA states, “The designation of motorized trails may reduce potential conflicts between OHV users and full-sized vehicles by providing the opportunity for segregated use” [my emphasis added]. This is completely speculation on the part of the FS for the advent of possible future conflicts.</p> <p>2) No documentation of any past reports of conflicts between full-sized vehicles and smaller wheelbase vehicles has been cited, likely because it does not exist and is only hypothetical. Similarly, p. 78 of the EA states that “No conflicts between motorized and non-motorized uses have been formally reported or documented. Also, FS law enforcement did not identify any user conflicts.</p> <p>3) The choice of the Alternative 3 maximum vehicle width of 65 inches is arbitrary, apparently based upon the nominal width of 65 inches the FS has chosen for a UTV. No scientific data of any kind is presented (such as wildlife, soils, historical sites, etc, etc) to justify this aspect of Alternative 3.</p> <p>4) I personally drove and GPSed all of the roads submitted on 29 separate maps in my Scoping Comments April 29, 2009 in a 1999 Jeep Cherokee, which is an average-sized 4-wd vehicle. This was done without any difficulty.</p> <p>5) The factory specifications for this vehicle (see attached JPEG image) shows the front and rear track of the vehicle (measured from the centers of the wheels side to side) to be 58 inches. The overall width of the vehicle (including fender flares which are outside of the tires) is 67.9 inches. This is not a statistically significant width difference from the 65 inches arbitrarily chosen by the FS. See the attached data from the Jeep Cherokee owners manual: SEE FIGURE</p> <p>6) The Mountainair Ranger District admits that the difference is not significant when it states on page 86 paragraph 4 of the EA that “The difference between 65 inches and the wider road prism for full-sized vehicles is not evident to most people on the more primitive level 2 roads which are often less than 80 inches due to infrequent maintenance.”</p> <p>7) It is recognized that ATV and UTV riders may benefit, in terms of their quality of recreational experience, from trails that they do not have to share with full-sized</p>

vehicles.

8) However, there is a drastic decrease in available roads from EA action Alternative 2 (no action) to Alternative 3, which presently keeps the most roads open to motorized use. Specifically, this is a decrease from 471.4 miles open in Alternative 2 down to 188.4 miles in Alternative 3, which is a 60% REDUCTION. This will result in a greater user density per mile of available road for all vehicles.

9) There is a critical route in Alternative 3 that connects the northern to the southern parts of the Gallinas District. This could allow forest users to travel from one section of the Forest to the other without going out of the Forest to county roads to go “all the way around”. Presently it involves a proposed trail (65 inches width or less) from a decommissioned road that runs north from 167 to 458T5, then via 458T7, then via 126C. This connector route should be designated as a road, not a motorized trail because of its great “connection” ability.

10) On page 135 in the southern part of the Manzano District Alternative 3 proposes as a trail a section of decommissioned road traveling north and south between the eastern end of 205 and 205A2. Changing this to a road rather than a motorized trail would add a very desirable loop segment for all vehicles.

11) Similarly on page 135 in the southern section of the Manzano District, changing the designation of 205AZ5 from an “existing system road to be designated as a motorized trail” to a road for all motorized use would add another very desirable loop for all vehicles.

Response: The alternatives were developed in response to issues raised during the scoping period (see the issues section of the EA, p. 7). The trails included in Alternative 3 were developed in response to issue #2 (p. 8) – the potential loss or reduction of motorized recreation opportunities.

The vehicle width of 65” or less was selected based on research conducted during the development of alternatives on the standard width of UTVs. This width allows all major brands of UTVs, ATVs and motorcycles to use the trails but restricts their use by full size vehicles. The UTV specifications used to make this determination are available in the project record.

The maps you provided during the scoping period were used to determine additional routes to consider for both motorized trails and routes open to all vehicles for this alternative.

Many of the trails considered in Alternative 3 are designated as trails in Alternative 1. The deciding officer will review the effects and compare alternatives before making a decision.

97	<p>While Alternative 3 does in fact include a potential route between the north and south sections (FRs 458T5, 458T7, 126C), it is not clear that it will be open to full size vehicles. It is labeled as a “motorized trail” on the Alternative 3 maps. This specific route is needed to prevent long distances from being traversed to get between the two areas. Without this route the area will be nearly inaccessible as most people will not travel the necessary distance to get between the two areas. This effectively eliminates travel in this area. This should be re-evaluated and an open route for all vehicles should be established. I can find nothing written in the EA that describes this route as potentially damaging to the forest. In fact, one of our club members specifically provided the USFS, prior to the scoping process, this mapped route when he traveled it in his full size vehicle and provided GPS coordinates to them. This is an acceptable route for full size vehicles and must remain open.</p>
<p>Response: This route is designated as a trail in Alternative 3. The deciding officer will review the effects of designating trails before making a decision. Your preference has been noted.</p>	
42c	<p>Generally, the effects of ATV use is not that great for someone that is truly out hunting and not just there to tear the place up with an ATV. You simply cannot take all the motorcycle and ATV trails away! You are simply inviting the public to dare to get caught.</p>
<p>Response: The effects of motorized vehicles is analyzed throughout the EA, including ATVs. There are no system trails currently managed for ATV use. Alternative 3 proposes converting some low standard roads to ATV/UTV standard trails.</p>	
86f	<p>Summarized Comment: Concerns with Motorized Trail System Full Comment: Motorized Trail System We are concerned about the short and long-term costs associated with creating an entirely new motorized trail system, as proposed in alternative 3. “The short-term cost to bring the proposed system to standard is estimated to be \$120,900, almost 86 percent of the annual trails budget for the entire district. The annual maintenance cost for the motorized trail system is estimated at \$94,430, which is 67 percent of the annual trails budget for the entire forest (p.86, Environmental Assessment for Travel Management, Mountainair Ranger District.)” These are astonishing numbers, especially in light of the National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey. According to these results, less than 2 % of Cibola National Forest visitors participate in OHV use and Motorized Trail Activity. In contrast, more than 50% of recreationists visit the forest for hiking or walking (pp.24-25, Appendix B, Mountainair Ranger District Travel Analysis). The annual trails budget allocates funds to both motorized and non-motorized trails, and allocation should reflect actual visitor use. We believe that a well-maintained non-motorized trail system throughout the forest is very important to visitor experience.</p>
<p>Response: Your concern has been noted. The \$120,900 actually reflects the trails budget for the entire forest, and the adjustment will be shown on the Errata sheet for the EA.</p>	
87n	<p>Summarized Comment: Concerns with Motorized Trail System Full Comment: D. Motorized Routes We do not support the inclusion of the 51.1 mile motorized trail system, or any motorized trail system in the Mountainair Ranger District because enforcement and funding both pose significant problems for the Forest Service. E nforcement will be difficult if not impossible to implement, as noted in the DEA: “Motorized trails may be patrolled infrequently due to limited administrative use allowed on these routes and the possibility that these trails may become more difficult to drive in full-size vehicles.” Forest Service 2010:24.</p>

Alternative 3 would be “the most complicated action alternative to enforce due to the miles of road designated, the establishment of a trails system that may required LEOs to use ATVs, and the designation of motorized big game retrieval corridors.” Forest Service 2010:109. We disagree that the “lack of reports for safety and conflict concerns can be attributed to the extensive system, relative segregation by types of uses, and dispersion of use by both motorized and nonmotorized recreationists.” Forest Service 2010:78. Rather, the fact that motorized trail uses are not encouraged is likely the reason there are few conflicts in this district. We note that there is no analysis of the expected impacts the proposed motorized trail system will have on safety, no analysis of specific safety concerns for the proposed routes (e.g., are there blind corners, steep grades, current non-motorized use patterns, etc.). Alternative 4 will put public safety at greater risk than the other alternatives because of the 51.1 miles of motorized trails and has not been adequately analyzed by the Forest Service in this DEA.

If the system roads to be designated as a motorized trail have been identified as being potentially needed for future use, it is unwise to designate them as a motorized trail at this point. Forest Service 2010:91. While converting these same miles of road to ML 1 would mean they would receive less maintenance, it would result in far less damage than if these miles are used by off-road vehicles and receive little to no maintenance. Funding for a motorized trail system simply does not exist in this district. As noted above, funding for most of the road system is not adequate. It would be illogical for the Mountainair RD to add a motorized trail system at a cost of over 85% of the entire trails budget initially and 67% of the trails budget each year to maintain it. Forest Service 2010:86. This would put all hiking trails in jeopardy of deterioration as badly needed maintenance funds are diverted to a single motorized trail.

Safety of the proposed motorized trail system is analyzed by looking solely at past reports of user conflicts and incident reports of the current situation which does not encourage motorized trail use. Forest Service 2010:78. We recommend the Forest Service review Guidelines to Engineering Analysis of Motorized Mixed Use on Low-Volume Roads in U.S. National Forests, Gililland, Ed., 2007. There is no analysis of the availability of nearby motorized trail systems on both public and private land, negating any perceived “need” for a motorized trail system in the Mountainair RD. There are motorized recreation focused areas found on Forest Service lands, Bureau of Land Management, State, local and private lands. These areas include the Sandia Ranger District of the Cibola National Forest (south of I-40, in David and Otero Canyon and), the Lincoln National Forest (an extensive system of motorized trails), the Socorro Field Office of the BLM (Gordy’s Hill), Montessa Park south of Albuquerque near the airport managed by Albuquerque Open Space, Rio Puerco on New Mexico State Land, several small motocross areas including Sandia in south Albuquerque, J-Five Motocross near San Ysidro, and Moriarty Motocross near Moriarty.

We also raised concerns about the impacts of a motorized trail system in our comment letter of May 1, 2009 that are not adequately been addressed in the DEA. We remain concerned about, and ask the Forest Service to analyze, the impacts of the motorized trail system to natural resources due to less frequent maintenance and lower standards.

Response: The forest received requests for a motorized trail system during early collaboration and scoping to provide for challenging opportunities for motorized trail vehicles (ATVs, UTVs, and Motorcycles.) A trail system is proposed in Alternative 3 to analyze the effects and benefits to provide this type of recreation opportunity. Your concerns have been noted.

Mitigation	
82c, 82e	<p>Summarized Comment: There is a concern that people will not adhere to the new system and physical closure of roads is needed.</p> <p>Specific Comment: Experience in other states has shown that off-road vehicle recreationists often disregard attempts to close a route by sign or map. You should seriously consider physically blocking closed roads with boulders, large berms and/or by planting trees at the route's beginning. I recommend planting several mid-sized trees because this will provide both a physical barrier and a visual barrier.</p>
<p>Response: Your suggestion has been noted. Travel management will be monitored and the district may consider physical barriers where they may help to improve compliance with the MVUM.</p>	
78b	<p>It is apparent that the Cibola is willing to consider mitigation and is willing to invest time and money when it comes to nonmotorized recreation, because they have done it. The proof is in the table below from Appendix D of the EA, pages 157-159. Appendix D, Recreation Projects 1.JPG Appendix D, Recreation Projects 2.JPG Appendix D, Recreation Projects 3.JPG</p> <p>The 'type' of projects listed include these mitigations: The mitigation actions have bold added Fourth of July Campground: improvement of riparian and adjacent streamside vegetation, wildlife habitat improvement by reducing haphazard pedestrian traffic and improving riparian habitat, maintaining or improving suitable habitat for endangered/threatened species. Capilla Campground: restoration of riparian habitat and related site vegetation.</p> <p>Red Cloud Campground: all road and parking surfaces hardened off limit to resource damage; rehabilitated to stabilize soils. Albuquerque Trail 78: barriers to restrict all-terrain and off-road vehicles. Fourth of July Campground: Realignment and extension of trail system Bosque Trail: Modify existence of Bosque Trail and close existing; also modification of existing trail outside of wilderness boundary. Crest Trail: Alternative 2, modification of location of Crest Trail relocation with portions of trail closed and permitted to heal naturally. Ox Canyon: Relocation of trail and rehabilitation of unneeded section using hand tools. Trail Canyon: Relocation of 1.6 miles of Trail Canyon Trail, and rehabilitation of the unwanted portion of the trail. Manzano Crest: Construction for Manzano Crest Trail Connector. The old saying is 'Follow the Money'. The path of the money for the recreation budget is very apparent here, and it all goes to non-motorized recreation. For non-motorized recreation, the Cibola will spend the money to mitigate: modify, relocate, rehabilitate, improve, realign, stabilize, connect etc. And that money doesn't even include all the facilities constructed for nonmotorized recreation. What does motorized recreation get? Massive closures under an EA whose alternatives proposed from 60% to 70% closure.</p>
<p>Response: The annual trails budget on the Cibola National Forest has been approximately \$140,000 a year in the past few years (Page 89 of the EA.). The annual roads budget on the Cibola National Forest has been approximately \$940,000 over the past four years (Page 78 of the EA.) There have been many roads maintenance projects that have benefited motorized recreation.</p>	
Monitoring	
82g	<p>See pg. 17 of EA: Suggest that monitoring results be shared with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Their duties include (as defined by the OHV Act)</p>

	recommendations for route closure, maintenance and rerouting. While their responsibility does not replace the Forest Service's responsibility or authority, working together in this area will help NMGF in their management efforts as well as the USFS's in theirs.
Response: Thank you for your comment. The NMDGF and the Forest Service routinely work together to enforce resource management laws.	
19y	19. Site specific monitoring of motorized versus non-motorized use must be provided for each route as required by the National OHV Rule.
Response: The Travel Management Rule, at 36 CFR 212.57 provides the following direction: §212.57 Monitoring of effects of motor vehicle use on designated roads and trails and in designated areas. For each administrative unit of the National Forest System, the responsible official shall monitor the effects of motor vehicle use on designated roads and trails and in designated areas under the jurisdiction of that responsible official, consistent with the applicable land management plan, as appropriate and feasible. There is no requirement for monitoring of motorized versus non-motorized use for each route.	
Multiple Use	
19w	16. Over 90% of the visitors to the project area are associated with multiple-use opportunities including motorized access and motorized recreation opportunities. These are multiple-use lands as designated by congress and must be managed as such. Recreation is a stated purpose for multiple-use lands.
Response: All Action alternatives provide for motorized recreation and multiple use management. Alternative 3 provides for the motorized trail opportunities. The existing system in Alternative 2 is under consideration for designation.	
19dd	Summarized Comment: There is a concern that travel management is being used to restrict/minimize multiple use on National Forest lands. Specific Comments: “24. The travel management plan for the area must reflect that use and the needs of the public for motorized recreational opportunities in the area. Again, these are multiple-use lands and we ask that they remain viable multiple-use lands by not closing existing motorized routes.” (Comment 19dd) “34. The evaluation and decision-making must take into account that the total area of the National Forest equals 192,300,000 acres and out of that total 44,919,000 acres or 23.36% is already designated wilderness. Current forest planning actions seek to convert roadless lands to defacto wilderness even though they are designated multiple-use lands. Therefore, this percentage will be even more lopsided toward non-motorized opportunities at 53.79% assuming that 58,518 acres of roadless areas are converted to defacto wilderness areas and managed for nonmotorized recreation. We maintain that the management of all of the remaining 147,381,000 congressionally designated multiple-use acres (including roadless) or 76.64% of the forest should be managed for multiple-uses. Every multiple-use acre must remain available for multiple-uses in order to meet the needs of 96.41% of the public who visit our National Forests for multiple-uses. Every reasonable multiple-use acre must remain available for multiple-uses in order to maintain a reasonable balance of opportunities. The proposed plan does not meet the basic needs of the public for multiple-use opportunities, does not provide a proper allocation of multiple-use recreation opportunities and does not meet the laws requiring multiple-use management of these lands.” (Comment 19mm)
Response: The Proposed Action and all of the alternatives provide for motorized recreation and continuation of “multiple-use”. There is no requirement that multiple-use be accommodated on each and every acre of national forest land.	
19rr	40. In a recent article

	<p>(http://www.helenair.com/articles/2008/08/01/national/80na_080801_drill.prt) about a lawsuit regarding drilling in New Mexico on the Otera Mesa, the BLM manager stated “While up to 90 percent of BLM lands are open to drilling under the plan, Childress said only 800 to 900 acres of Otero Mesa’s 1.2 million would be permanently disturbed by roads, footpads and other drilling related activities. “I think that’s a pretty reasonable percentage,” he said.” We agree and find that this is a relatively insignificant.</p>
<p>Response: Your comment has been noted.</p>	
<p>Need for “All Open Roads” Alternative</p>	
<p>98</p>	<p>DISCUSSION:</p> <p>At page 6 of the EA, Chapter 1 Purpose and Need, is a statement about what roads were brought forward from the TAP to the EA and the criteria used for that decision:</p> <p>In situations where public input was consistent with recommendation of the TAP, that area or travel route was brought forward. In some instances public input did not align with the recommendations in the TAP. In these cases mitigation measures were developed to address the resource concerns and the route or area was brought forward into the proposed action. The route or area was dropped from consideration if mitigation measures could not be identified. Also, some routes and areas were dropped from consideration if there was no public input to support designation and the TAP recommendation did not support designating the route.</p> <p>The Cibola has stated the TAP is not a NEPA 'decision' document. We state 'Lack of public support' is not a legitimate reason to drop the routes either, 'Lack of public support' is not a 'NEPA decision'. You can't 'tier' to 'lack of public support'. The remaining reason for not bringing routes forward for consideration is 'TAP not recommending the route.' The Cibola will respond by saying the EA shows all the roads is in the No Action Alternative. But this is a false show of 'analysis'. The roads that the TAP rejected are bundled into Alternative 2. It includes all the existing roads along with the 'cross country travel'. The aspect of 'cross country travel' guarantees the routes cannot be considered for designation. The cross country travel is the 'poison ' which kills Alternative 2. The Deciding Officer can reject the only Alternative that shows all the roads because of the 'cross country' travel. This is an effective strategy for 'throwing the baby (roads) out with the bath water (cross country travel). It also provides a convenient way for the Cibola to say it didn't use the TAP as a pre-decisional document, and that all the routes are in the EA. Did the Cibola expect the public to identify every, single segment of road, prior to the EA release, in order to have the road included in the analysis?</p> <p>That is a totally unreasonable burden to put on the public. That would be expecting the public to do the Cibola's work. It is the obligation of the Cibola to do a full analysis and disclose it to the public. That means disclosing all the analysis and consideration they did, and how it was applied to each road. This is not done.</p> <p>The EA provides no list of 'Roads Identified by the Public for Inclusion' to support its statement that this ever occurred. In any case, we contend that 'dropped from consideration if there was no public input to support 'designation' is not a legitimate reason for disqualifying roads from the EA analysis. We have personally examined the physical project record at the Cibola office on March 23, 2010. It consists entirely of reference materials and a couple of letters from NMDGF. There is not a shred of physical evidence that any analysis of routes was ever done after the TAP was</p>

	<p>completed. There is no material from the meetings cited in the EA with various publics where roads the public wanted were identified. Page 5 of the EA says the meetings were 2008, well before the NEPA process officially started. The TAP didn't even come out until February 2009. There is nothing showing that any mitigations were considered for any route. With no record, the public has no idea what transpired and what decisions were made and why, and what mitigations were considered, or specific reasons routes were not brought forward into the EA. The only piece of analysis that we know for sure exists, and which could have been used disqualifying roads from designation, is the TAP, and a verdict of ' TAP recommendation did not support designating the route'. That is clearly pre-decisional and illegal under NEPA.</p> <p>RESOLUTION: Create a 5th alternative that shows all the routes, but does not include the cross country travel. Do a full analysis of this Alternative 5.</p>
<p>Response: The TAP documents the formal interdisciplinary process that examined the roads that exist on the Mountainair RD. In many cases this analysis identified roads that represent moderate to high risk and low value and were candidates for changes to motorized vehicular use as provided for in the Travel Management Rule. The public was afforded many opportunities to identify system (as well as unauthorized roads) that they believed were important to continue to be designated for motorized use. Where these higher risk roads were not identified by the public, the ID Team recommended that they not be included in the Proposed Action. The public had additional opportunities to comment on the Proposed Action – the comments the Forest Service received after distribution of the Proposed Action generated the issues that were used to create the additional alternatives.</p> <p>The information used to develop the alternatives can be found in the project record as well as the roads identified for inclusion by the public. Mitigations such as reroutes or road maintenance, that were deemed necessary to facilitate access to areas identified by the public or district as important, are considered in the EA and documented in the project record.</p> <p>It is possible that Alternative 2, No Action, could be selected by the responsible official. This is because the Cibola NF Plan has been amended, by the Sandia RD Travel Management decision, to not allow cross-country travel. This amendment becomes effective when a decision is made on future Travel Management decisions, including the one for the Mountainair RD. This alternative would allow continued motorized use on all the system roads that exist on the district.</p>	
<p>NEPA</p>	
<p>101</p>	<p>NEPA CFR 1500.2 (e) states: “Use the NEPA process to identify and assess the reasonable alternatives to proposed actions that will avoid or minimize adverse effects of these actions upon the quality of the human environment.”</p> <p>The Mountainair EA contains an error in “Issue # 1” that I respectfully suggest is contrary to NEPA CFR 1500.2. The second sentence (underlined) demonstrates the error: Designation of unauthorized (user-created), closed, decommissioned, or new roads and motorized dispersed camping corridors. There is concern that designating unauthorized, closed, decommissioned, or new roads could have effects to natural or heritage resources. There is also a concern that designation of motorized dispersed camping corridors will lead to conditions that mimic cross-country travel inside and adjacent to the corridors.</p> <p>The sentence erroneously constructs a cause and effect relationship between “motorized</p>

	<p>dispersed camping” and “conditions that mimic cross-country travel inside and adjacent to the corridors” that is not supported by data in the EA. The underlying assumption is that any human use equals damage. The erroneous relationship and assumption are used in alternatives 1, 3 and 4 in close between 60% and 80% of the roads (and thereby dispersed camping) which is unreasonable.</p> <p>I offer the following to support my argument: The EA does not contain data that supports the cause and effect relationship. There are numerous statements of implied damage but no pattern of damage that warrants massive closure. The EA contains data in the Law Enforcement section of the EA which shows that from 2000 through 2008: h. “There were 4 incident reports in which a vehicle...damages or unreasonably disturbs the land, wildlife, or vegetative resources”. (table page 108) The language in the Law Enforcement section correctly makes a distinction between “operating a vehicle” and “operating a vehicle ...in a manner which damages or unreasonably disturbs the land, wildlife, or vegetative resources.”</p> <p>I suggest it is unreasonable to close between 60% and 80% of the roads and potential dispersed camping sites because of four incidents in eight years of actual damage and the assumption that any human use is damage.</p> <p>I suggest two remedies: 1) remove the sentence from “Issue One” as follows: Designation of unauthorized (user-created), closed, decommissioned, or new roads and motorized dispersed camping corridors. There is concern that designating unauthorized, closed, decommissioned, or new roads could have effects to natural or heritage resources. There is also a concern that designation of motorized dispersed camping corridors will lead to conditions that mimic cross-country travel inside and adjacent to the corridors. 2) Re-draft and re-release alternatives 1, 3 and 4 in light of documented evidence of damage.</p>
	<p>Response: The issue accurately portrays the comments received during scoping. The cause-and-effect relationship described in the issue is clear and was used in developing the various alternatives. There is no interpretation that “any human use is damage”; rather, the issue clearly states that the concern is that designating a corridor for motorized dispersed camping could lead to motorized use beyond what is required to access camp sites and would therefore, resemble unrestricted cross-country use. There is no need to revise the issue or the alternatives as suggested.</p>
19000	<p>69. One of the basic requirements of NEPA is to “achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities” (Public Law 91-190, Title I, Section 101 (b) (5)). The wording of NEPA was carefully chosen and was intended to produce a balance between the natural and human environment. NEPA was not intended to be used to destroy the human environment. However, the agency is using NEPA to seriously impact the human environment through a series of travel plan decisions aimed at removing the motorized public from public lands. This trend is not right and must be corrected by implementing a pro-recreation alternative as part of this action.</p>
	<p>Response: Your comment has been noted. None of the alternatives considered in the EA results in “removing the motorized public from public lands.”</p>
29h, 77b	<p>routes and areas were dropped from consideration if there was no public input to support designation and the TAP recommendation did not support designating the route.”</p> <p>Under the NEPA process, the decision maker has the responsibility to make an informed</p>

	<p>decision. The EA role is to provide the NEPA decision maker the best and the most complete data upon which this decision is to be made. By not identifying in the analysis the requested input from the public, the decision maker does not have complete meaningful data upon which to make a decision. Members of New Mexico 4 Wheelers GPS mapped many of the existing recreational off road trails/roads in the Mountainair Ranger District and provided these maps to the District for analysis. It is the obligation of the Ranger District to do a full analysis and disclose it to the public. That means disclosing everything that was done, and how it was applied to each road. There is no recognition that this public input was actually used and therefore the analysis process that resulted in the alternatives was flawed</p> <p>In addition, this paragraph uses the Travel Analysis Plan (TAP) as the basis for “dropping” existing roads which is a violation of the NEPA decision process. The TAP is pre-NEPA. The TAP does not make any decisions, it provides data into the NEPA decision process where the decision to include or not include roads in the TMP. The TAP does not make these decisions.</p> <p>Resolution: Corrections that will satisfy this comment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The EA needs to be redone to identify the analysis and fully justify the use or non-use of the public input. b. Re-do the EA to eliminate using the TAP as a basis for eliminating roads from the alternatives.
<p>Response: Section 1508.9 of the CEQ regulations states that an EA “(a) Means a concise public document for which a Federal agency is responsible that serves to: (1) Briefly provide sufficient evidence and analysis in determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact. (2) Aid an agency’s compliance with the Act when no environmental impact statement is necessary, (3) Facilitate preparation of a statement when one is necessary. (b) Shall include brief discussions of the need for the proposal, of alternatives as required by section 102(2)(E), of the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, and a listing of agencies and persons consulted.” We disagree that the additional information that the comment suggests be added to the EA would improve the data upon which a decision would be made. This information is in the project record, was used to develop the alternatives, and is available for the responsible official to review prior to a decision. We also disagree that TAP was used improperly in developing the proposed action and the alternatives. The TAP made recommendations which were used to inform the proposed action and alternatives.</p>	
29c	<p>ERROR: Use of non-supportable statements such as “there is a concern....”</p> <p>Discussion: On page 8 #1: “There is a concern that designating unauthorized, closed decommissioned or new roads could have effects to natural or heritage resources. There is also a concern that designation of motorized dispersed camping corridors will lead to conditions that mimic cross-country travel inside and adjacent to the corridors. “</p> <p>It natural to have concerns, but without any valid data to support these concerns they are only concerns that appeared to be based personal opinion, not fact. Therefore, issues based on these un-supported concerns should not be a dara input into the NEPA process.</p> <p>Resolution: Corrections that will satisfy this comment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delete any recommendations that are not supported by actual data. Do not unsupported “concerns” as basis for the NEPA decision process.
<p>Response: This issue reflects one spectrum of the public responses received during the scoping period conducted on the proposed action. It is based on cause and effect relationships presented by the proposed action (cause – designation of unauthorized, closed or decommissioned roads and designation of motorized dispersed camping corridors; effects on natural and heritage resources and potential for</p>	

motorized use in the corridors beyond what is necessary to access campsites). It is not unreasonable to assume that the cause-effect relationship has merit without having “actual data” specific to the Mountainair RD. This issue was used to develop alternatives to the proposed action.

15b	Taking away the Public rights with out due cause NEPA, NOI, will result in public outrage and despair, as well as family recreation loss. It is not in the best interest of the Cibola National Forest's Mountainair Ranger District to follow through with such piracy of public land. By the Public and Cibola National Forest's Mountainair District working together, a sustainable ,edium maybe produced satisfying both parties and a workable system. This is opposing any actions that Cibola National Forest's Mountainair District may be attempting with the current information provided to the Public- stakeholders. Further action by Cibola National Forest's Mountainair District or its superiors shall be constituted as piracy of Public use and Public Lands.
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Response: Your comment has been noted.

29g	<p>Area: Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study</p> <p>Discussion: In Chapter 2, page 17, Designation of Every System Road, the EA states: “This alternative would have considered designation of every road currently on the Mountainair Ranger District system of roads. However, some roads on the district are poorly located, cause extensive resource damage, or are no longer passable by motor vehicles (see travel analysis process for Mountainair). Also, the existing system of roads on the Mountainair Ranger District is larger than necessary for managing resources, and the resources are not available to maintain a system of this size. This alternative did not meet the criteria stated in the Travel Management Rule of minimizing damage to natural resource, reducing user conflict, and designating roads in relation to the availability of resources for maintenance and administration. “</p> <p>Under the NEPA process, the decision maker has the responsibility to make an informed decision. The EA role is to provide the NEPA decision maker the best and the most complete data upon which this decision is to be made. By not forwarding the designation of every existing system road as an alternative will violate the process of providing the decision makers all the data to base their decision on. This paragraph uses the Travel Analysis Plan (TAP) as the basis for eliminating existing roads which is incorrect. The TAP is pre-NEPA and not the NEPA decision process. The paragraph states that roads are poorly located, cause extensive resource damage and are no longer passable. Last year NM4W GPS mapped many of these same roads in virtually stock high clearance 4x4 vehicles and did not identify any that were impassable. This statement is very misleading and without any supporting data. The paragraph states there are more roads than the District needs for managing resources. The roads are used for this purpose but as important is the public’s access to their public lands. The Forest Service at times seems to lose sight that they are housekeepers of the public’s land, not gate keepers. The paragraph states keeping the roads open won’t achieve “reducing user conflict” which is a criterion in the Travel Management Rule (TMR). This statement is incorrect. The TMR addresses “conflicts between uses” not users. Additionally, in the EA, Chapter 3, page 78 Motorized Recreational Safety states “No conflicts between nonmotorized and motorized users have been observed by District employees.” Additionally, the Law Enforcement section in Chapter 3 did not identify any user conflicts either.</p> <p>Minimizing damage to natural resources is not a criteria contained in the TMR. The designation of roads in relation to the availability of resources for maintenance and administration is identified as a TMP criteria, it is not. The TMR shows maintenance costs (budget) listed as a consideration, not a “criteria” for making decisions about what to keep open. A criteria is an absolute, a consideration is not. A detailed study covering every system road is what reasonable person would expect EA alternatives to be based upon.. Without this study, the EA and its resulting alternatives are flawed.</p> <p>Resolution: Corrections that will satisfy this comment: Perform a detailed study on designating every existing system road as an alternative.</p>
	<p>Response: Although the EA states that it cannot be selected, the No Action alternative is essentially the alternative that is proposed in this comment. No Action would provide for motorized use on all system roads. This is analyzed in the EA.</p> <p>The sentence on page 17 of the EA is poorly worded. The responsible official should consider “consider effects on National Forest System natural and cultural resources, public safety, provision of recreational opportunities, access needs, conflicts among uses of National Forest System lands, the need for maintenance and administration of roads, trails, and areas that would arise if the uses under consideration</p>

<p>are designated; and the availability of resources for that maintenance and administration.” All of these factors are considered by the responsible official when approving alternatives and this consideration will influence the outcome of the decision as directed by the Travel Management Rule. While all action alternatives propose changes to the existing system, none of the alternatives result in a blanket closure of NFS lands to recreational users.</p>	
<p><i>New Alternative</i></p>	
<p>19qq</p>	<p>39. Under the existing conditions with a typical width of no more than 12 feet, the 471.4 miles of roads in the Mountainair Ranger District would cover about 685 acres (471.4 x 5280 x 12 / 43560). At a typical width of no more than 48 inches, the 0 miles of ATV trails cover about 0 acres. At a typical width of no more than 24 inches the 0 miles of motorized single-track trails cover 0 acres. The total Mountainair Ranger District covers 205,879 acres. The percentage of the total forest used by roads, ATV trails, and single-track motorcycle trails under existing conditions is respectively, 0.3330%, 0.00%, and 0.00%. The total area of roads and trails under Existing Conditions far less than 1% of the project area. The total area used by motorized routes under Existing Conditions is 685 acres or 0.3330% of the 205,879 acre area. Therefore, the area used Under Existing Conditions is relatively insignificant and is an entirely reasonable level of use on multiple-use lands. The reduction under the proposed action of 303.9 miles of roads or 64% of the existing routes produces a significant impact on the public’s ability to access and recreate. The proposed open road would cover 260 acres or 0.1261% of the area. The proposed action is not a reasonable level of use for lands designated for multiple-use by congress.</p> <p>Furthermore, a Pro-Recreation Alternative that increases motorized access and motorized recreational opportunities in the Mountainair Ranger District is an entirely reasonable alternative for these multiple-use lands. A reasonable alternative would include conversion of roads to primitive 4x4 routes, ATV and single-track motorcycle trails. SEE TABLE</p>
<p><i>Response:</i> The effect of the current level of use is examined in the EA in the discussions of the No Action alternative. Rather than using the area disturbed by roads as an indicator of effect and level of use, the analysis examines the roads’ interaction with the various resources. The TAP used this approach, examining the roads and rating their values and risks based on consistent measures and making recommendations for each. These recommendations, and input received from the public during the many opportunities for comment, formed the basis for the Proposed Action.</p>	
<p><i>New Issue</i></p>	
<p>19aaa</p>	<p>51. It is not environmentally and socially responsible to squeeze motorized recreationists into the small possible numbers of areas and routes, yet this is the goal being pursued by the Cibola National Forest. There is also a significant public safety aspect associated with squeezing everyone into a small area as accidents will increase with too many motorized recreationists on too few routes. We request that these significant issues be adequately addressed.</p>
<p><i>Response:</i> For the most part, the routes proposed for designation, particularly in Alternatives 1 and 3, are those most commonly used by the public (information obtained during public meetings and from district personnel). Motorists have shared these routes in the past without serious issues. Please see the public safety section of the Transportation section (p. 89) and past vehicle violations in the Law Enforcement section (p. 107-108).</p>	
<p><i>TAP was Predecisional</i></p>	
<p>29f, 29h, 29b, 77b, 78a, 88b, 91, 100, 103b,</p>	<p><i>Summarized Comment:</i> There is a concern that the use of the TAP was used to filter out roads and is therefore predecisional and a violation of the NEPA process.</p> <p><i>Specific Comments:</i></p>

103h, 109	<p>“ERROR: Deletion of roads through the travel analysis process (TAP), not as a result of the formal NEPA travel management planning process.</p> <p>Discussion: On pages 4 and 5 under Proposed Action Development, the EA states: “The ID team weighed public input and natural and cultural resource management needs and concerns, as identified during the travel analysis process (TAP), to develop the proposed action .In situations where public input was consistent with recommendation of the TAP, that area or travel route was brought forward. In some instances public input did not align with the recommendations in the TAP. In these cases mitigation measures were developed to address the resource concerns and the route or area was brought forward into the proposed action. The route or area was dropped from consideration if mitigation measures could not be identified. Also, some routes and areas were dropped from consideration if there was no public input to support designation and the TAP recommendation did not support designating the route”.</p> <p>The TAP is performed previous to the NEPA process and is a data input into the decision process, it is not a decision document itself. Therefore using the TAP as the rationale to delete roads as is stated in the referenced paragraph “The route or area was dropped from consideration if mitigation measures could not be identified..“ is in violation of the NEPA process and is incorrect.</p> <p>Additionally, there is nothing in the Travel Management Rule or NEPA which says they should or can eliminate routes from being considered in the EA because there was public input on those specific road/routes as is stated in the referenced paragraph, “Also, some routes and areas were dropped from consideration if there was no public input to support designation and the TAP recommendation did not support designating the route”. This section of the paragraph again references the TAP as a decision document which is incorrect. Furthermore, the public input was solicited pre- NEPA, the comments were requested during public meetings before the publication of the NEPA proposed alternatives and are not the formal basis for roads/routes deletions.</p> <p>Resolution: Corrections that will satisfy this comment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do not delete roads/routes from the identified alternatives because they were recommended for deletion in the TAP. 2. Do not delete roads/routes because there was no public input during the scoping period.” (Comment 29b) <p>“The use of the TAP as a decision making instrument to pre-filter roads from subsequent consideration in the EA is illegal. This alone should be grounds to withdraw the present EA and re-do it.” (Comment 88b)</p> <p>“Under the NEPA process, the decision maker has the responsibility to make an informed decision. The EA role is to provide the NEPA decision maker the best and the most complete data upon which this decision is to be made. By not identifying in the analysis the requested input from the public, the decision maker does not have complete meaningful data upon which to make a decision. Members of New Mexico 4 Wheelers GPS mapped many of the existing recreational off road trails/roads in the Mountainair Ranger District and provided these maps to the District for analysis. It is the obligation of the Ranger District to do a full analysis and disclose it to the public. That means disclosing everything that was done, and how it was applied to each road. There is no recognition that this public input was actually used and therefore the analysis process</p>
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	<p>that resulted in the alternatives was flawed</p> <p>In addition, this paragraph uses the Travel Analysis Plan (TAP) as the basis for “dropping” existing roads which is a violation of the NEPA decision process. The TAP is pre-NEPA. The TAP does not make any decisions, it provides data into the NEPA decision process where the decision to include or not include roads in the TMP. The TAP does not make these decisions.</p> <p>Resolution: Corrections that will satisfy this comment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The EA needs to be redone to identify the analysis and fully justify the use or non-use of the public input. b. Re-do the EA to eliminate using the TAP as a basis for eliminating roads from the alternatives.” (Comment 100) <p>“It is my contention that the Travel Analysis Process (TAP) has been applied incorrectly and in a manner inconsistent with NEPA by the Mountainair Ranger District to pre-filter many roads out and eliminate them from analysis in the EA, which is supposed to consider ALL possibilities, but cannot in this instance because they have been improperly omitted from all of the action alternatives.” (Comment 103b)</p> <p>“The use of the TAP as a decision making instrument to pre-filter roads from subsequent consideration in the EA is illegal. This alone should be grounds to withdraw the present EA and re-do it.: (Comment 103h)</p> <p>“The criteria used for dropping the roads from consideration in the EA are not legal. Supporting Rationale: Page 6 of the EA, Chapter 1 Purpose and Need, contains a statement about what roads were brought forward from the TAP to the EA and the criteria used for that decision: "In situations where public input was consistent with recommendation of the TAP, that area or travel route was brought forward. In some instances public input did not align with the recommendations in the TAP. In these cases mitigation measures were developed to address the resource concerns and the route or area was brought forward into the proposed action. The route or area was dropped from consideration if mitigation measures could not be identified. Also, some routes and areas were dropped from consideration if there was no public input to support designation and the TAP recommendation did not support designating the route."</p> <p>The EA states that roads were dropped at the pre-NEPA stage if there was not specific public support for designating individual roads. The Cibola should not expect the public to identify every, single segment of road, prior to the EA release, in order to have the road included in the analysis. That is a totally unreasonable burden to put on the public. It is the obligation of the Cibola to do a full analysis of the resources and impacts and then disclose that data to the public. That means disclosing everything they did, and how it was applied to each and every road.” (Comment 109)</p>
<p>Response: The TAP made recommendations for each road based on a consistent analysis of the values and risks associated with each. The responsible official used these recommendations, along with information received from the public during the extensive opportunities for comment early in the Travel Management process, to determine what to propose. The TAP was not used as a decision document and was only used to inform the process of developing the proposed action and alternatives. The language in the EA may infer that it was used in a manner that it was not. The No Action alternative provides the resolution recommended in the comment.</p>	

TAP	
62, 108	<p>Summarized Comment: The methodology for assessing benefit in the TAP conflicts with the EA assertion that loops are favorable for OHV recreation.</p> <p>Specific Comments:</p> <p>DISCUSSION: In the discussion below, we provide the quotes from the EA and underlying Recreation Report which confirm that loops and looped roads are important to motorized recreation. Then we provide the proof that the TAP takes exactly the opposite position. The TAP rating system for Benefit/Risk actually penalizes roads that create loops! The EA states that roads and trails that loop or road and trail segments that form loops are desirable because they meet an important need for OHV recreation. Page 74:” (Comment 62)</p> <p>“Concern: The methodology for assessing benefit in the TAP conflicts with the EA assertion that loops are favorable for OHV recreation.</p> <p>Supporting Rationale: Below, quotes from the EA and underlying Recreation Report are presented which confirm that loops and looped roads are important to motorized recreation. The TAP, however, takes exactly the opposite position. The TAP rating system for Benefit/Risk actually penalizes roads that create loops.</p> <p>[see letter in project record for supporting data]</p> <p>Summary: The conflict between the TAP scoring methodology of penalizing loops and the EA’s documented positive valuation of loops to serve the needs of motorized recreation is an error that one would expect to have a major impact on the information presented to the Deciding Officer. This error could be the basis for a significant difference in the Deciding Officer’s final decision and must be corrected.”(Comment 108)</p>
<p>Response: The TAP analyzed roads from multiple perspectives including resource access and motorized recreation (TAP p. 28-31). Resource access refers to the benefit of using a road to access forest resources such as vegetative treatment areas. Loops are favorable for OHV recreation but this benefit would be considered under the motorized recreation category and not under resource access. The two categories do not have to agree on the benefit of loop roads to conduct the rankings in the TAP.</p>	

107	<p>Concern: The EA contends that some system roads are no longer passable without supplying any evidence. The EA claims that the TAP was used to assess whether a road was passable.</p> <p>Supporting Rationale: The EA states that some system roads “are no longer passable by motor vehicles.” Page 17: “However, some roads on the district are poorly located, cause extensive resource damage, or are no longer passable by motor vehicles (see travel analysis process for Mountainair).”</p> <p>Page 82: “However, many of the roads not included for designation are either redundant to the roads that would be designated, or have not been maintained for many years and are no longer passable by most vehicles or in some cases are no longer passable to motorized vehicles.”</p> <p>Page 84: “Current management of roads and trails would continue under this alternative. All 471 miles of system routes and most unauthorized routes would be available for use, although some are no longer passable due to lack of maintenance.”</p> <p>Page 95: “However, routine road maintenance cannot be performed on some segments of roads due to the presence of heritage resources within the road prism, making continued use of these roads difficult. This has resulted in some segments of road becoming degraded or impassable.”</p> <p>The EA also claims, on page 17, that the TAP is the source for this information. Yet, an examination of the TAP, absolutely zero data or evidence that the road segments of the current system were even analyzed much less documented as being ‘passable’. Pass-ability was not included in any of the seven ‘risk’ assessments. Pass-ability was not included in any of the five ‘benefit’ assessments detailed in the TAP. Pass-ability was not presented in the tabular results in Appendix A of the TAP. In other words, The TAP did not analyze or document the ability for a motor vehicle to ‘pass’ the system road segments in on the Mountainair Ranger District.</p> <p>The EA also makes the specific claim that the roads in question were not passable by motor vehicle. With the wide range of motor vehicles available to motorized recreationists, it is certain that most, if not all, current system routes can be traversed. Today, there is a very wide range of vehicles and their associated capabilities included in the term “motor vehicles” and pass-ability, therefore, varies greatly with the specialization of the vehicle to the terrain and the level of skill demonstrated by the driver.</p> <p>The terms “passable by motor vehicle”, “no longer passable”, and “impassable” are generally inaccurate or speculative at best as used in the EA and should be removed from the document.</p> <p>Summary: The current draft of the EA contains significant errors about the conditions and suitability of road segments for motorized recreation. Road segments improperly disregarded or eliminated based on this flawed determination must be reevaluated for their high challenge recreational resource potential. To simply omit or misrepresent routes that inexperienced drivers or inadequately prepared vehicles could not easily</p>
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	navigate will have a major impact on the information presented to the Deciding Officer and could be the basis for a significant error in the Deciding Officer's final decision.
<i>Response:</i> The statement on p. 17 needs further clarification. The TAP analyzed whether roads on the district are poorly located and/or cause resource damage. Information on whether a road is passable was provided by district personnel who utilize these roads for fieldwork.	
<p>The EA clarifies that some roads are not passable by “most vehicles or in some cases are no longer passable to motorized vehicles” (p. 82). This statement indicates that some roads cannot be driven by full size vehicles but may be passable by UTVs or ATVs. Attempts were made to incorporate more difficult terrain into the alternatives to provide recreationalists with varying levels of difficulty. This is most apparent in Alternative 3 which provides for additional motorized recreation opportunities compared to the proposed action. This alternative incorporates motorized trails for vehicles 65 inches in width or less. Some of these trails would not be considered “passable” in a four wheel drive truck.</p>	

64a, 110	<p>Summarized Comment: There is a concern about the use of redundancy to eliminate roads from the alternatives.</p> <p>Specific Comments: “Concern: The EA proposes to eliminate roads with using a criteria of ‘redundancy’ but the reasoning of ‘redundancy’ conflicts with the EA’s statements on the value of roads as recreation resources.[...]</p> <p>Specifically identified roads and trails were provided as precious resources in comments submitted on 4/22/09: “Another glaring omission in the TAP is the total disregard for recreation value in the road or trail itself. This shows specifically in the Public/Recreation Access benefit definition table on page 41 of the TAP. Recreational benefit or value is only assigned to roads and trails in terms of ACCESS, there is no acknowledgement or realization of the intrinsic recreational value of the ROAD or TRAIL itself to the motorized recreationist. It is not always about the destination, the route itself is the benefit! “</p> <p>During public Scoping for this project the public provided other, similar comments and the Forest heard them. On page 8, under Issues (2.): “Loss or reduction of motorized recreation opportunities. There is concern that quality opportunities for motorized recreation, particularly opportunities for wider vehicles including full-size 4x4s, were not fully considered in the proposed action. These concerns included: a. Requests for motorized trail opportunities for users desiring more challenge; b. Requests for additional designations for full-size vehicles and UTV and ATV opportunities; and c. Requests for additional designations of motorized dispersed camping corridors across the district.”</p> <p>Indeed, it was clearly requested that additional routes to support the need for increased motorized recreation opportunity in Scoping comments: “Specifically, the MRD Travel Management EA and subsequent EIS should include at least one alternative that maximizes motorized recreational opportunities in the Planning Area. The range of alternatives should strive to provide for the current and future demand for OHV recreational routes. The alternatives should include identified areas where OHV trails can be constructed and maintained when demand increases. The planning team should also look to individuals and user groups for assistance in identifying opportunities for OHV recreation that include new constructed routes that make loops, provide a variety of terrain and challenge levels and otherwise facilitate an enjoyable OHV trail system. Direction to construct new routes as needed to meet growing needs should be incorporated into each alternative.”</p> <p>It is very clear that the District has heard, acknowledged, documented, and understands the stated desire from public users that more routes are needed to meet growing recreational desires and expanding need. The Mountainair Travel Analysis Process (TAP) that is cited in the EA includes seven ‘risk’ categories for roads and trails. Not one of the seven identify or specify ‘redundancy’ as criteria. Other recreational resources are not put to the ‘redundancy’ test. All of the nonmotorized trails within the Manzano Wilderness climb to the same ridgeline. In many regards, all of the trails in the wilderness are redundant. Why not just one trail? . The answer lies in the multiple trails providing choice in location, length, and experience. Additional trails also</p>
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	<p>add more capacity. Three trails going to the same destination can accommodate three times as many users at the same time. Why do ski areas include multiple runs to the same destination (the bottom of the mountain)? Obviously, the answer again is that getting to the bottom is not the sole criteria for appropriateness. Each individual ski run is valued for its uniqueness, the skill level required, or simply its added capacity to provide the sought-after experience to the skier. Why would the EA assume that roads and motorized trails, as a recreational resource, are any different than nonmotorized trails or even ski runs? The EA offers no evidence that redundancy is an appropriate criteria for a choice in designation.</p> <p>Furthermore, the current Cibola National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (the Forest Plan) does not identify road or trail ‘redundancy’ as a criteria for suitability or road and trail redundancy as an issue. Simply put, the elimination of routes to eliminate ‘redundancy’ is in conflict with both the EA itself and the larger body of evidence that the Mountainair Ranger District has collected and published.</p> <p>Summary: The EA must eliminate the criteria of ‘redundancy’ in destination or path, parallel trails, and similarity for system designation analysis. The use of ‘redundancy’ as a criteria for system road and trail designation is in conflict with the EA’s acknowledgement of the roads and trails themselves as recreational resources and the public’s well documented desire for additional route opportunities.” (Comment 110)</p>
<p>Response: A road can be both: redundant to other, less impacting roads needed for management as well as a resource for motorized recreation. This “conflict” is one of the factors to consider in travel management. The Travel Management Rule (at 36 CFR 212.55) identifies general criteria for designation of roads, trails, and areas. Among these are access needs, the need for maintenance and administration of roads, trails, and areas that would arise if the uses under consideration are designated; and the availability of resources for that maintenance and administration. Road “redundancy” is related to these three criteria.</p>	
78c	<p>There is a presumption of fairness and equal treatment the American government owes in it actions towards American citizens. We don't see equal treatment demonstrated in the Mountainair Ranger District EA for Travel Management. What we do see is prejudice and discrimination, as made evident in the choices the Cibola is making. They choose to support the nonmotorized community, and to shut out the motorized community.</p> <p>RESOLUTION: Redraft the EA to answer the questions posed in this comment, in order to create a transparent decision process that discloses to the public the specific reasons for road closures and the specific mitigations that were considered.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disclose why a road was dropped. Which risk factors were critical. 2. Describe the mitigation measures that are available 3. Disclose what mitigations were needed or considered for which roads 4. Provide standards and criteria for the decisions that mitigation would not be done 5. Define 'mitigation measures could not be identified <p>Provide the list of the roads that are being mitigated, and how that will be done. Provide the list of the roads that are not being mitigated, and tell the public why not. Provide criteria and standards for making mitigation decisions. Provide reasons for why mitigation measures are deemed acceptable or not acceptable. Consider sources of volunteer labor and cooperative agreement to implement mitigation measures. Designate trails that need mitigation and add them to the MVUM as mitigation is completed.</p>
<p>Response: This information was used to develop the alternatives and is in the project record. There is no requirement that detailed information on each road be placed in the EA.</p>	

78a, 91, 109,	<p>Summarized Comment: There is a concern that the reasons roads were not considered for designation was not fully articulated in the EA. Mitigations considered for roads was not fully disclosed.</p> <p>Specific Comments: “The Mountainair Ranger District has not disclosed which mitigations were considered for which roads and why some were acceptable and others were not. There are no standards given for mitigation. The public does not know what mitigations were considered and then rejected, or for what reasons.” (Comment 91)</p> <p>“The Cibola has failed to fully disclose which mitigations were considered for which roads and why some were acceptable and others were not. There are no standards given for mitigation. At the end of the day, the public still does not know why Roads 458W and 458Y, for example, were not brought forward for analysis in the EA. The public does not know what mitigations were considered, if any were, and then rejected, or for what reasons.</p> <p>The EA provides no list of 'Roads Identified by the Public for Inclusion' to support this statement. We contend that 'dropped from consideration if there was no public input to support designation' is clearly not a legitimate reason for disqualifying roads from the EA analysis. Public support (or lack of it) is not a NEPA decision. You cannot 'tier' the EA to 'lack of public support'.</p> <p>This failure leaves the Cibola with only one other viable reason for disqualifying roads from the EA analysis, and that is 'TAP recommendation did not support designating the route'. That is clearly pre-decisional and, therefore, illegal under NEPA.</p> <p>The Cibola might argue that all the roads, including 458 W and 458 Y are shown in the EA. That is technically true. But they are shown only in the No Action Alternative 2. None of the identified Action Alternatives show all the existing roads.</p> <p>Alternative 2 is moot and cannot be chosen as the decision, because the Travel Management Rule requires stopping cross country travel. But by bundling all the roads with the 'cross country travel' into Alternative 2, they can discard the only Alternative that shows all the roads. This is an effective, if disingenuous, way to 'throw the baby (roads) out with the bath water (cross country travel). The cynic reviewing this EA might find that this is exactly the strategy used to set up the EA for the massive closures the agency and their anti recreation supporters want, and what some might say we see in the proposed alternative.</p> <p>Summary: The criteria used for dropping the roads from consideration in the EA are not adequate and may well not be legal.” (Comment 109)</p>
	<p>Response: One alternative (No Action) considers every open system road on the district – this alternative provides for continued motorized use of currently open system roads. Contrary to the comment, this portion of the No Action alternative could be selected by the responsible official. The statement in the EA that this alternative could not be selected is somewhat misleading. All of No Action could not be selected because it would provide for continuation of motorized cross-country travel on the entire district outside of Wilderness. The part of the No Action alternative that would provide for continued motorized use of open system roads could be selected.</p> <p>The TAP made recommendations for each road based on a consistent analysis of the values and risks associated with each. The responsible official used these recommendations, along with information</p>

<p>received from the public during the extensive opportunities for comment early in the Travel Management process, to determine what to propose. The TAP was not used as a decision document and was only used to inform the process of developing the proposed action and alternatives. The language in the EA may infer that it was used in a manner that it was not. The No Action alternative provides the resolution recommended in the comment.</p>	
<p>See page52 for an explanation of why 458W and 458Y were not considered for designation.</p>	
24f	<p>Summarized Comment: TAP Process Concern The National Forest Service needs to provide information and educational opportunities for users so that their expectations and understanding of the area’s uses are clear. If there is an obvious opportunity to re-direct a hiking or equestrian trail where it may coincide with an established motorized route then we believe there could be an opportunity to enhance the experience for all parties concerned.</p>
<p>Response: Your comment has been noted.</p>	
<p>Purpose and Need</p>	
72a, 73a	<p>The Mountainair Ranger District Travel Management EA makes an error because the evaluation of alternatives favors (awards positive value to) alternatives which would result in less sound from motor vehicles being heard in the area. This is contradictory to the description of Semi Primitive Motorized in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum in the Forest Plan. Assigning benefit or valuation to alternatives because they'd result in 'less noise' or 'less sound' or 'less presence of motor vehicles' is not an appropriate criteria or parameter for evaluating and comparing alternatives in the EA. (Direct Quote from Comments 72a and 73a)</p> <p>“This error begins right at the beginning of the EA, in the Purpose and Need chapter 1, page 4: bold added The unregulated use of motor vehicles in cross-country travel is causing damage to soils, water quality, wildlife habitat, archaeological resources, and impacts to quiet recreational experiences such as hiking. A designated and managed system of routes for motor vehicle use is needed to address the above concerns as well as meet the requirements of the Travel Management Rule.</p> <p>This statement in the Purpose and Need chapter is a substantial error. There is no legitimate 'purpose' because there is nothing in the Travel Management Rule directing national forests to make decisions in order to provide for quiet recreational experiences. There is no 'need' to address impacts to quiet recreation because quiet recreation is not a legitimate category and is not a management objective for the project area, which is categorized entirely as Roded Natural and Semi Primitive Motorized. There is nothing in the Forest Plan as amended that instructs the Cibola National Forest to manage Semi Primitive Motorized or Roded Natural areas in order to reduce 'impacts to quiet recreational experiences', i.e. to reduce sound, provide areas with less sound, provide less sound near Wilderness areas, or to manage for maintaining or increasing 'solitude'. We find this at page 59, Cibola Forest Plan, Amendment 11, July 2008: OHV use will be designated and managed in accordance with the Travel Management Rule, 36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295 once analysis has been completed and a decision has been signed by the deciding officer.</p>

Note that the Amendment does NOT say 'in accordance with the Travel Management Rule and whatever else the Forest decides it wants to include as a requirement.' The OHV use designation is LIMITED to complying with the Travel Management Rule, which includes complying with current regulations (e.g. the Forest Plan). The Travel Management implementation process is not a blank check that the Forest can fill in however it likes.

The sight and sound of motor vehicles (as perceived or valued by other users) should not be used as criteria for evaluating alternatives in the EA. The result is that the EA gives higher value to alternatives which violate the Forest Plan's prescriptions for managing non-Wilderness areas and which do not comply with the Travel Management Rule. We find that this error is pervasive throughout the EA and has substantially distorted the comparison of alternatives. This is a significant error which results in bad information being provided to the Designated Official (Deciding Officer).

The error is exacerbated by the EA's total failure to compare and evaluate the alternatives for their compliance with the Forest Plan and with meeting the objectives of the Forest Plan, especially in respect to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. There EA does not even raise the question of 'How well do the alternatives satisfy the objective of ' providing motorized backcountry experience?' as specified for Semi Primitive Motorized Area in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum." (Comment 72a)

"This error begins right at the beginning of the EA, in the Purpose and Need chapter 1, page 4: bold added

The unregulated use of motor vehicles in cross-country travel is causing damage to soils, water quality, wildlife habitat, archaeological resources, and impacts to quiet recreational experiences such as hiking. A designated and managed system of routes for motor vehicle use is needed to address the above concerns as well as meet the requirements of the Travel Management Rule.

This statement in the Purpose and Need chapter is a substantial error. There is no legitimate 'purpose' because there is nothing in the Travel Management Rule directing national forests to make decisions in order to provide for quiet recreational experiences. There is no 'need' to address impacts to quiet recreation because quiet recreation is not a legitimate category and is not a management objective for the project area, which is categorized entirely as Roaded Natural and Semi Primitive Motorized. There is nothing in the Forest Plan as amended that instructs the Cibola National Forest to manage Semi Primitive Motorized or Roaded Natural areas in order to reduce 'impacts to quiet recreational experiences', i.e. to reduce sound, provide areas with less sound, provide less sound near Wilderness areas, or to manage for maintaining or increasing 'solitude'. We find this at page 59, Amendment 11, July 2008: OHV use will be designated and managed in accordance with the Travel Management Rule, 36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295 once analysis has been completed and a decision has been signed by the deciding officer. Note that the Amendment does NOT say 'in accordance with the

	<p>Travel Management Rule and whatever else the Forest decides it wants to include as a requirement.' The OHV use designation is LIMITED to complying with the Travel Management Rule, which includes complying with current regulations (e.g. the Forest Plan). The Travel Management implementation process is not a blank check that the Forest can fill in however it likes.” (Comment 73a)</p>
<p>Response: The EA discloses the effects of changes in the existing conditions under each of the alternatives. Whether the EA provides an “evaluation of alternatives” that “favors (awards positive value to) alternatives which would result in less sound from motor vehicles being heard in the area” is a judgment made by the author of the comment. The EA displays effects and places them in context. The quote from page 4 of the EA is from the Background section of the EA, which is used to set the project in context and provide clarification on how the project came to be. It is not intended to be read as the “purpose”.</p> <p>Please see response to comments 72d, 72f, and 73b for more information on sound and comment 73f for more information on ROS</p>	
87c	<p>A. Purpose and Need</p> <p>Our request that the Purpose and Need statement include: 1) the need to adjust both the core transportation system and recreation travel network in light of funding limitations for maintenance, monitoring and enforcement; 2) the need to address lost non-motorized recreational opportunities, and impact to natural soundscapes that have arisen or might be expected to arise given recent trends in motorized use; and 3) the need to complete environmental analysis on routes identified for decommissioning has not been addressed in the DEA. We are particularly concerned that not a single mile of road has been identified for permanent closure, decommissioning and obliteration.</p> <p>While it might not be possible through this process to complete the NEPA analysis necessary to decommission all unneeded routes identified through Travel Management Planning, it is inappropriate to delay all decommissioning of unneeded roads to future projects in which unnecessary routes “would likely” be closed or decommissioned. Forest Service 2010:91.</p> <p>We strongly recommend that the necessary environmental analysis be incorporated into this project to decommission at least some of the most environmentally-destructive routes that have been identified as unnecessary, and we recommend that the routes identified as high risk/low value in the Travel Analysis Process report be prioritized for this analysis. If the Forest Service decides not to complete this analysis in this process, we ask that the Forest Service outline a timeline for the decommissioning work and environmental analysis that needs to be completed in the decision notice.</p> <p>We provided detailed comments on the need to identify routes for decommissioning in our scoping letter and incorporate by reference those recommendations and concerns here. Center for Biological Diversity et al., 2009:11-12. Legacy Roads Initiative funds are available each for projects that are “shovel ready” and identifying routes for decommissioning and performing the necessary NEPA analysis to remove those routes from the ground would position the Mountainair Ranger District to take advantage of the Legacy Roads funds.</p>
<p>Response: Thank you for your comment. The purpose and need will remain as stated in the EA.</p>	
<p>Range of Alternatives</p>	
77a, 77k	<p>Summarized Comment: There is a concern that the range of alternatives was too narrow and that an alternative that designated all system roads wasn’t considered.</p>

	<p>Specific Comments:</p> <p>“ISSUE: Range of Alternatives is not properly formulated. Reasonable alternatives have been excluded, which is a CEQ violation.</p> <p>DISCUSSION: The MRD EA specifically excludes (eliminates from detailed study) the alternative of designating every system road. The CEQ's Forty Questions provide this direction concerning alternatives 29b. How must an agency respond to a comment on a draft EIS that raises a new alternative not previously considered in the draft EIS?” (Comment 77a)</p> <p>“RESOLUTION: We find the Action Alternatives offered in the current EA offer an extremely narrow range of options to the Deciding Officer. None of the Action Alternatives even meet the Minimum Road System needs, let alone public access and recreation needs. The EA offers no rational argument for any of this. The EA specifically rejects including an alternative which would designate the current system roads. Every aspect of the EA's argument has been refuted in this comment.</p> <p>The Cibola must issue a supplemental draft EA for public comment. The SDEA will present and evaluate Alternative 5 which is necessary to comply with the CEQ requirements for a full Range Of Alternatives. Alternative 5 will propose to comply with the Travel Management Rule by closing cross country travel, and it will leave open as many of the system roads and trails as possible. Only those roads and trails which cannot be brought to sustainable condition should be closed to motorized use.” (Comment 77k)</p>
<p>Response: The alternatives were developed based on the responses received during scoping. The other alternatives also are included in the range of alternatives. There is no requirement that the Minimum Road System be considered one of the alternatives –identification of the minimum road system is one of the TAP requirements included in the Forest Service Manual. The EA states that the No Action alternative could not be selected because it would allow cross-country travel, but the portion of No Action that would allow continued motorized use of system roads could be selected by the responsible official.</p>	
19xx	<p>48. The Forest Service has only addressed less motorized access and less motorized recreational opportunities. The alternatives formulation and decision-making must adequately recognize and address the fact that the majority of the public visiting the project area want more motorized access and motorized recreational opportunities.</p>
<p>Response: The EA addresses the range of motorized use from no changes to the current level (No action) to other alternatives that provide different mixes of designations. No alternatives were considered that provided more designations than currently exist, but one alternative would result more motorized designations than the proposed action.</p>	
<p>Roadless</p>	
19ggg	<p>57. If Roadless acres are included in this total, it becomes even more unbalanced with at total of 103,437,000 acres or 54% in wilderness or roadless designation while only 2.55% of the visitors are wilderness visitors.</p>
<p>Response: This reflects national figures, and not specific to the analysis area or the Mountainair Ranger District. The Manzano Mountain Wilderness is 37,000 acres. There are no inventoried roadless areas on the Mountainair Ranger District. Approximately 18% of the Mountainair Ranger District is designated Wilderness.</p> <p>Regarding visitation, the 2006 NVUM study for the Cibola National Forest reports that 6.3% of respondents to the Cibola National Forest visited Wilderness areas. In the same study, 1.6% of visitors stated that they participated in OHV recreation, and 0.9% in motorized trail use.</p>	
<p>ROS</p>	

72d, 72f, 73b	<p>Summarized Comment: There is a concern with assigning a positive value to ‘quiet’ and ‘solitude’ and a negative value to seeing/hearing motor vehicles.</p> <p>Specific Comments: “Evidence of 'Quiet' and 'Solitude' being assigned positive value in the EA and the underlying Recreation Report The word 'quiet' appears eight times in the EA, and every one of them is in reference to an alternative which might result in sounds of motor vehicles having 'negative' effects on people who prefer 'quiet'. Those statements include these, with bold added. Page 4 of Chapter 1, Purpose and Need states: The unregulated use of motor vehicles in cross-country travel is causing damage to soils, water quality, wildlife habitat, archaeological resources, and impacts to quiet recreational experiences such as hiking. A designated and managed system of routes for motor vehicle use is needed to address the above concerns as well as meet the requirements of the Travel Management Rule.</p> <p>In Chapter 3, page 83, we read, under Alternative 2: This alternative has the greatest impacts to nonmotorized recreation where quiet and a sense of solitude are important to the recreation experience, since more areas are accessible by motor vehicles</p> <p>And then at page 84: There could be some change in the types and locations of recreation activities, particularly in “quiet” recreation activities. This alternative has the greatest impacts to nonmotorized recreation where quiet and a sense of solitude are important to the recreation experience, since more areas are accessible by motor vehicles.</p> <p>This statement is at page 42 of the Recreation Report: Alternative 1 – Proposed Action Cross country motorized big game retrieval would be prohibited on the District under this Alternative. This prohibition would also include the associated activities such as scouting and hunting from all forms of motorized transportation. Travel would be restricted to open system roads. For bow hunters and those with preference for more solitude and less noise intrusion there will be more area in which to hunt. Hunters would need to rely on pack stock or self for game retrieval.</p> <p>On page 44, under Alternative 3, we read: bold added For hunters seeking a quiet experience, this alternative may impact the quality of their hunt within and near areas where motorized big game retrieval is permitted.</p> <p>Also on page 44, under Alternative 4, we read: bold added This alternative would favor the hunter looking for less noise intrusion and solitude. We see that these statements have indeed been carried forward into the EA itself. The 'fingerprints' of this error from the Recreation Report are repeated in many places in the EA. For example at page 21, in the tabular summary of the effects of the alternatives, we read this under Alternative 3: Motorized big game retrieval may reduce the experience of hunters seeking a quiet experience. And under Alternative 4, these words: Increased vehicle noise at these areas may be perceived as an intrusion by those entering the wilderness.</p>
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We remind the Cibola that:

1. Areas outside the Wilderness must not be managed 'as if' they are Wilderness. This statement is flirting dangerously with the idea of a Wilderness 'Buffer Zone' which would be managed for less or no noise. We remind the Cibola that the courts have struck down attempts to impose buffer zones to create illegal 'de facto' Wilderness.

2. The Forest has no authority to manage resources according to people's perceptions (e.g. 'may be perceived as an intrusion'). It has no authority to manage according to personal philosophies or preferences, or to keep people 'happy', whatever that is.

And at page 33:

...but motorized use can also reduce the quality of hunts for some users since noise associated with that use can displace wildlife.

We remind the Cibola that they DO NOT have any authority to manage in order to satisfy some individual's perception of what the 'quality' of their recreation experience must be in order to be satisfactory. The Cibola has no authority to value one user's experience over another's and to manage in preference of one person over another.

That same displacement of wildlife that irritated one hunter can improve the quality of the hunt for another hunter. The sight, smell and sound of a human on foot can also impel an animal to move, perhaps to a location where it is killed by another hunter with more luck. But you never hear a hunter say he bagged his elk because the sound of a vehicle caused the animal to move, and come into his crosshairs." (Comment 72d)

“RESOLUTION for Correcting the Errors:

Remove the words ' and impacts to quiet recreational experiences such as hiking.' from Purpose and Need, Chapter 1 page 4.

Remove all statements referring to noise, sound or solitude affecting other users from the entire EA including from all the tables. Remove all of those statements from the Recreation Report.

Insert discussion which compares and evaluates the alternatives based on their ability to satisfy the objectives for Semi Primitive Motorized and Roded Natural Areas, as described in the Forest Plan.

Insert this wording at the beginning of Chapter 2 to disclose to the public and the Deciding Officer that critical information is missing, as required by CEQ.” (Comment 72f)

“The sight and sound of motor vehicles (as perceived or valued by other users) should not be used as criteria for evaluating alternatives in the EA. The result is that the EA gives higher value to alternatives which violate the Forest Plan's prescriptions for managing non-Wilderness areas and which do not comply with the Travel Management Rule. We find that this error is pervasive throughout the EA and has substantially distorted the comparison of alternatives. This is a significant error which results in bad information being provided to the Designated Official.

The error is exacerbated by the EA's total failure to compare and evaluate the alternatives for their compliance with the Forest Plan and with meeting the objectives of the Forest Plan, especially in respect to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. There EA does not even mention the idea of 'How well do the alternatives satisfy the objective of ' providing motorized backcountry experience?' as specified for Semi Primitive Motorized Area in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum.” (Comment 73b)

Response: The criteria from the Travel Management Rule is listed on the response to 73f on page 60. Sound as it relates to conflicts of uses, wildlife habitat, and developed areas are all criteria that the

<p>deciding official is directed to consider. Research cited in the Recreation Report indicates that the sight and sound of motor vehicles contributes to the conflict between non motorized and motorized recreationists, and is provided as information to respond to these criteria.</p>	
<p>The response to 73f also discusses the compliance with ROS classifications in the Forest Plan.</p>	
72c	<p>Using this we can make a rough estimate of how many visitors the Mountainair's Semi Primitive and Roded Natural areas could serve. The 'study area' for the Mountainair travel management EA has 169,000 acres of Semi Primitive Motorized and Road Natural area. The ROS Guide says the visitor capacity for Semi Primitive Motorized ranges from 2.4 to 6.0 RVD's (recreation visit days). The lower end of the capacity range is 2.4 RVD's/Acre/100 day season. This calculates to 2.4 visitors x 169,000 acres, 405,600 visits over a 100 day season. Assuming the Mountainair area is accessible 10 months out of the year (300 days), that would be 1,352 visits per day. We consider it highly unlikely that the MRD is getting that level of use.</p> <p>The EA does not even mention the concept of RVD's. The EA provides zero information on users, or how many of what types use the area. The EA has no justification for presuming any user group is under-served, or lacks recreation opportunity. The EA also violates CEQ by neglecting to identify that this critical data is 'missing information'. Every single statement of resource impact (Wildlife, Soils etc.) in the EA is dependent on this missing information about the numbers of users. Without any information on the number of visitors, every statement about impacts is mere conjecture.</p>
<p>Response: The agency has been transitioning to use national forest visit and site visits rather than recreation visitor days as units of measure for recreation visits. A RVD represents one person visiting the forest for 12 hours. One RVD would also represent 12 people visiting the forest for one hour each. The NVUM survey reports in site visits (each individual that visits a site) and national forest visits (each individual that enters and exit the forest for recreation, and often has multiple site visits during that trip.) This more accurately reflects the number of visitors, and correlates better to the example that you provide. This report references site visits and reported visitor data from the NVUM. We do not have data that is accurate to the district level, but have reported forest data from the 2001 and 2006 NVUM surveys. The NVUM Surveys, combined with district observations is acceptable level of data as required in the CEQ regulations.</p>	
<p>Route Selection</p>	
19z	<p>20. Each route must be evaluated on the basis of whether it will see more use as a motorized route or a non-motorized route and then the appropriate decision should be made on that basis.</p>
<p>Response: There is no requirement to analyze each route individually in the manner described and the responsible official did not identify this level of detail as information necessary to have in the decision-making process. The EA discloses the effects of the various alternatives and the responsible official will make a decision based on the EA and the project record as a whole. The rationale for the decision will be disclosed in the decision document.</p>	
<p>Scoping</p>	

29e	<p>User road/route input overlooked: During the March 2009 public meetings NM4W provided GPS based maps that identified route/trails that should be included in the alternatives. Several of these routes/roads are not included in the alternative maps.</p> <p>Discussion: On page 135 Alternative 3 Map: This map contains many of the full sized routes/roads mapped by the NM4W but did not include several that had significant recreational value. The routes/roads in question all connected with routes/roads that are included. Specifically along FR 205D1 there is a full sized unimproved road that intersects from the northeast. This road has had very little use but travel from the top where it leaves FR 205D1 down into a small very scenic canyon that turns to the southeast for about 2 miles. The road then connects with FR 205 and an unauthorized road that is identified as being changed to a motorized trail at the edge of the Ranger District. As the road approaches the junction of FR 205 it leaves the Ranger District on to private land for about 50 yards going through two gates. In my experience these gates have never been locked, they have the normal sign asking that they be closed after there are opened.</p> <p>In addition to enhancing the motorized experience by being able to travel a scenic canyon, this route/road would be another exit route for the FR 205 road system in case of an emergency.</p> <p>Resolution: Corrections that will satisfy this comment: Republish the alternative 3 map to include the subject road as discussed above. (If District personnel have any difficulty in finding this road I would be happy guide them to it.</p>
<p>Response: Many of the roads mapped by NM4W were included in Alternative 3. Natural resource concerns were identified for this road and therefore it was not included in the alternative.</p>	
87e	<p>We note that there is no “response to comments” section.</p>
<p>Response: Comments that have previously been submitted on this project were used at multiple points: to develop the proposed action and then to develop alternatives. These comments are in the project record. The notice, comment, and appeal regulations at 36 CFR 215 require a 30-day comment period for the public to provide comments on the proposed action. Those comments are addressed in this document.</p>	
<p>Social Analysis and NEPA</p>	
79e, 79g	<p>Summarized Comment: There is a concern that the EA did not adequately address the social impacts of the project.</p> <p>Specific Comments: “The EA is required to provide a much more thorough examination of the social impacts of the project by NEPA regulations. The requirements start in 40 CFR 1500: “Sec. 1501.2 Apply NEPA early in the process.</p> <p>(Commenter then included the applicable regulations in the letter, 40 CFR 1501.2, which can be found in the project record).</p> <p>The EA only covers economy, demographics, and environmental justice. There has been no analysis or even description of social organizations, attitudes/beliefs/values, lifestyles, and land use as they pertain to the social sciences. For instance, the EA clearly includes the Albuquerque metropolitan area (p. 104): “The social and economic features of nearby communities are influenced by the entire Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), comprised of Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance and Valencia Counties. Sandoval County does not border the Mountainair</p>

	<p>Ranger District. In 2000, the population of these four counties was 712,738.” (Comment 79e)</p> <p>“RESOLUTION: The only way to fix the disregard for meeting the NEPA requirements of addressing the full gamut of Social considerations is to re-issue the document after the required analysis has been completed. Social considerations are important. The Forest Service even includes a chapter in their planning regulations that is specific to social analysis requirements. The lack of the required Social considerations creates a significant gap in the information that is to be presented to the Deciding Officer for their thoughtful consideration. Without the Social consideration analysis and environmental consequences, the Deciding Officer cannot make a rational and defensible decision which balances protecting the social environment as well as the natural environment.” (Comment 79g)</p>
<p>Response: The social analysis in the EA adequately addresses the relevant factors identified in FSM 1970.</p>	
<p>Socioeconomic Analysis</p>	
<p>79f</p>	<p>Summarized Comment: Socioeconomic Analysis and Recreation Full Comment: It is obvious that local organized motorized recreational clubs would fall under ‘social organizations’ that could be impacted by significant changes in the availability of motorized recreational resources. But the EA offers no insight or analysis on what the local 4WD clubs think/believe/value about the recreational resources offered on the Mountainair District and what they believe the impacts to their organization will be for the Action Alternatives. The Forest Service regulations explicitly require it but the EA does not even attempt to deliver it.</p>
<p>Response: The CEQ and Forest Service NEPA regulations address social organizations in a number of different contexts. In terms of Socio Economic assessment the term is used to address the broader community relationships to the project, rather than individual clubs. This broader context is analyzed in the EA. The term is also used in relation to outreach for public involvement. The Mountainair Ranger District conducted extensive public outreach and collaboration from the beginning, contacting and meeting with representatives and individuals from groups such as New Mexico Four Wheelers, New Mexico Off Highway Vehicle Alliance, the Trials Motorcycle Group and the Blackfeather Motorcycle club. Comments and concerns have been incorporated into the development of alternatives, the EA, and this response to comments.</p>	

65	<p>ERROR: The EA lists ‘Social and Economic Considerations’ in the Contents. We find the EA and its underlying reports contain no discussion or analysis in Affected Conditions and Environmental Consequences for any Social Considerations.</p> <p>DISCUSSION: The word ‘social’ appears only seven times in the EA, and each time, it appears with the word ‘economic’. It appears:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Page i –In the Table of Contents as a Heading in Chapter 3, “Social and Economic Considerations”. 2. Page 23 – As a ‘Resource Area’ heading in Table 2 Comparison of alternatives – environmental consequences in Chapter 2. The line for the Social and Economic ‘Effects’ column lists ‘local economy’ as the only item considered and the description of impacts for each Action Alternative pertains strictly to the ‘economic sectors’. No other effects on the Social and Economic Resource Area is listed. 3. Page 27 – In the first paragraph of Chapter 3, the phrase ‘social and economic’ along with ‘physical’ and ‘biological’, are listed as environments to be discussed and presented in Chapter 3: “This section summarizes the physical, biological, social and economic environments of the affected project area and the potential changes to those environments due to implementation of the alternatives.” 4 & 5. Page 103 (twice)– It again appears as a Main Heading in Chapter 3 and in the introduction sentence to the topic but all of the following discussion is purely demographic and economic in nature. “Social and Economic Considerations The following analysis is based on the social and economic specialist report prepared by Sara Dechter, forest planning staff. This report is on file in the project record.” 6. Page 104 “The social and economic features of nearby communities are influenced by the entire Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), comprised of Bernalillo, Sandoval, Tarrant and Valencia Counties.” There is no further discussion. The EA does not go on to offer any analysis, insight, observations, or conclusions about any social affected environment or environmental consequences. 7. Page 105 – ‘Social’ appears in the lead sentence of the Environmental Justice section: “Forest products and cultural connections to the land are the major social and economic contributions of the Mountainair Ranger District to surrounding communities.” There is no further discussion of the social environment. The EA does not offer any analysis, insight, observations, or conclusions about any social affected environment or environmental consequences. The section is only thirteen lines long, and is entirely about the economic value of forest products. While multiple locations promise a hard look at the Social considerations, there is no evidence offered by the EA that any social considerations were considered, studied, evaluated or documented. The Specialists’ underlying report, which is only six pages, focuses entirely on very basic demographic and economic data. It offers only a very cursory look at economic impact. It also makes this erroneous and dismissive statement on page 4: “The major social and economic contributions of the Mountainair Ranger District to the surrounding communities are forest products and cultural connections to the land. These activities will continue across the District no matter which alternative is selected. What
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will change because of this decision is how these activities are administered. “ This is neither an accurate statement or an acceptable level of ‘analysis’ The report refuses to acknowledge the social impacts of the action alternatives, all of which will severely reduce public access and disrupt historical uses. We note that Chapter 3 in this EA runs from page 27 to page 113. In 86 pages, it offers no information at all on the Social Environment. For comparison, we examined the Social Economic Report for the Grasslands Plan Revision, which was also completed by Cibola staff. The comparison was enlightening.

At page 21 the Socio Economic Report for the Grasslands makes this statement about the social importance of Recreation Activities:

“Providing for outdoor recreation activities is one of the primary contributors to social cohesion, quality of life, and social and economic sustainability for Grasslands communities.”

The Specialist's Social Economic Report for the Mountainair EA doesn't even include this sort of basic acknowledgement of the social important of recreation. It is stunningly numb to social impacts of closing over half the forest roads. At page 5 it reads:

“The gain or loss of the recreation opportunities on the Mountainair Ranger District is unlikely to affect the economic sectors that are supported by motorized recreation.”

This is all it has to say about depriving the public of over half its access. Where is the analysis of the social impact of the gain or loss of the recreation opportunities?

The underlying Recreation Specialists’ report is 47 pages, and it provides some clues about issues the Social Economic report should have considered. These are some of the questions that the Social Economic Report should ask and answer.

“The Gallinas Mountains are a popular hunting range; (and) The most unique feature of this geographical area is the opportunity for solitude” (p. 2)

“The Manzano Mountains are highly valued for their scenic quality, especially in the fall.” (p. 3)

What is the social impact when access to these areas is reduced because roads are closed?

“The roads and trails are a “viewer platform” from which people experience the landscape, and are often used to define sensitivity levels and distance zones.” (p. 7)

What is the social impact when the public can't get to the 'viewer platform' because the road is closed? How does this reduce their experience of the landscape?

“Roads provide opportunities for sightseeing, exploring the district, hunting, and accessing developed and dispersed recreation opportunities. The more primitive roads provide for challenging OHV driving skills. “ (p. 9)

What is the loss to the social environment when road closures decrease the quality of recreation experience by denying the public the satisfaction of sightseeing, exploring, hunting, and challenges?

“19.9% participated in driving for pleasure on the mountain districts.” (p. 10)

What is the social impact when this major family activity is curtailed by road closures?

“OHV riders generally seek similar outdoor recreation experiences to non-motorized users, access to scenic vistas and historical sites, viewing wildlife, taking photos and to experience and enjoy the outdoor environment with family and friends. They also seek roads and trails where they can experience challenge, excitement, and a sense of adventure and accomplishment. While they may travel with families

or in larger groups, they want to recreate in a natural setting with some level of solitude and isolation. (Crimmins 2006” (p. 12)

What is the loss to the social environment when road closures reduce the opportunities to enjoy these experiences with family and friends. What is the loss to the social environment when road closures reduce the recreation experiences of “challenge, excitement, and a sense of adventure and accomplishment ”?

“National Survey on Recreation and the Environment Survey (NSRE) collected data between 1999 and 2004 to develop a report on OHV use trends. They found that OHV users are more active in almost every recreation activity relative to the general U.S. population 16 and older, including day hiking, mountain biking, hunting, and viewing and photographing wildlife and scenery. Nationally, OHV riders spent an average of 27 days a year participating in motorized recreation. They found that motivations for participating in OHV recreation varied from people who sought family-oriented activities, to individuals that used OHVs to view scenery, historic sites and wildlife, to young adventure seekers.” (p. 12) Notice the 'social' issues implied in the motivations for recreation: from 'family-oriented' to viewing enjoyment to adventure-seekers. These are all social values. Why are these not even mentioned in the Social and Economic Report?

“Motorized dispersed camping offers solitude and primitive recreation experiences that are generally not available in developed recreation sites.” (p. 16)

Camping in the Forest is a time-honored tradition for many New Mexican families. What happens to the very social experience of dispersed camping when the allowed mileage that allows dispersed vehicle camping is reduced from 476 miles to less than 15 miles? This is a reduction of over 90%, it must have a social impact.

A major question that is never asked is, “What is the social impact of eliminating over half of a recreation resource, the roads themselves?”

“Roads are important for providing both access to recreation opportunities and as a recreation resource on the Mountainair Ranger District. All of the NFS roads on the district are currently open to all vehicles, this includes unauthorized roads and a number of roads that are listed in our roads database as decommissioned, but are still in use.” (p. 9)

Page 21 describes the potential for conflict of uses:

“The multiple use objectives of the US Forest Service set the stage for conflict when, with some exceptions, both motorized and non-motorized recreationists have access to the same trails or areas of public lands.”

And a very much related statement at page 22 says there is currently no conflict of uses because the current extensive system disperses the users:

“Extensive shared use is most accepted with lower use levels on a more extensive system. The use of roads and trails are seldom congested on the Mountainair Ranger District. The lack of reports for safety and conflict concerns can be attributed to the extensive system, relative segregation by types of uses, and dispersion of use by both motorized and non motorized recreationists.”

Closing over half the roads and 90% of the dispersed camping will inevitably result in crowding. What is the social impact of crowding? What is the associated loss of quality of experience? The massive closure will have a social impact far beyond those who come to the Forest for a motorized experience. It also impacts those who use a vehicle to access the forest for non-motorized activities. There is not a single mention any place in the EA of how closing over half the forest roads will decrease access for non-motorized recreation and make it harder to get into large areas of the forest.

Activities such as backpacking, day hiking, primitive camping, and mountain biking are not considered 'motorized'. But these users often use vehicles to get deeper into the forest to a location to start their activity. Without the quick access by vehicle into the forest, activities that used to be day trips become impossible.

Neither the Social nor the Recreation analysis asked, "What happens to day trips when the round trip becomes 20 miles instead of 10 miles because of road closures?"

The EA is required to provide a much more thorough examination of the social impacts of the project by NEPA regulations. The requirements start in 40 CFR 1500:

"Sec. 1501.2 Apply NEPA early in the process.

Agencies shall integrate the NEPA process with other planning at the earliest possible time to insure that planning and decisions reflect environmental values, to avoid delays later in the process, and to head off potential conflicts. Each agency shall:

(a) Comply with the mandate of section 102(2)(A) to "utilize a systematic, interdisciplinary approach which will insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts in planning and in decisionmaking which may have an impact on man's environment," as specified by Sec. 1507.2."

CEQ regulations make it crystal clear that the analysis required for environmental documents is for both the natural and social sciences. The requirement in CEQ regulations is pervasive. The requirements are well documented. There is supposed to be analysis and supporting data from both the natural and social sciences.

Sec. 1502.6 Interdisciplinary preparation.

Environmental impact statements shall be prepared using an inter- disciplinary approach which will insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts (section 102(2)(A) of the Act). The disciplines of the preparers shall be appropriate to the scope and issues identified in the scoping process (Sec. 1501.7).

Sec. 1502.8 Writing.

Environmental impact statements shall be written in plain language and may use appropriate graphics so that decisionmakers and the public can readily understand them. Agencies should employ writers of clear prose or editors to write, review, or edit statements, which will be based upon the analysis and supporting data from the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts.

Sec. 1507.2 Agency capability to comply.

Each agency shall be capable (in terms of personnel and other resources) of complying with the requirements enumerated below. Such compliance may include use of other's resources, but the using agency shall itself have sufficient capability to evaluate what others do for it. Agencies shall:

(a) Fulfill the requirements of section 102(2)(A) of the Act to utilize a systematic, interdisciplinary approach which will insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts in planning and in decisionmaking which may have an impact on the human environment. Agencies shall designate a person to be responsible for overall review of agency NEPA compliance.

Not only are federal agencies required to study the social considerations for environmental documents, they are required to have the capabilities with which to conduct analysis on social sciences.

“Sec. 1508.8 Effects.

"Effects" include:

(a) Direct effects, which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.
(b) Indirect effects, which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems. Effects and impacts as used in these regulations are synonymous. Effects includes ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative. Effects may also include those resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the agency believes that the effect will be beneficial.” It is important to note that in Section 1508.8, ‘economic’ and ‘social’ are presented as two separate and distinct areas for analysis. And Section 1508.14 is even more specific about what is to be analyzed:

“Sec. 1508.14 Human environment.

"Human environment" shall be interpreted comprehensively to include the natural and physical environment and the relationship of people with that environment. (See the definition of "effects" (Sec. 1508.8).) This means that economic or social effects are not intended by themselves to require preparation of an environmental impact statement. When an environmental impact statement is prepared and economic or social and natural or physical environmental effects are interrelated, then the environmental impact statement will discuss all of these effects on the human environment. “

The ‘new’ 1982 Forest Planning regulations state:

“Sec. 219.5 Interdisciplinary approach.

(a) A team representing several disciplines shall be used for regional and forest planning to insure coordinated planning of the various resources. Through interactions among its members, the team shall integrate knowledge of the physical, biological, economic and social sciences, and the environmental design arts in the planning process. The team shall consider problems collectively, rather than separating them along disciplinary lines.”

And finally, the Forest Service’s own 1909.15 Chapter 1973 is even more explicit in the use of, and requirements for, social analysis in environmental documents (emphasis added):

“1973 - SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Social analysis is instrumental in National Forest planning and plan implementation. Social analysis is part of the overall evaluation requirement for decision making. Social impact assessments help identify desired conditions for social, economic, and ecological environments, and the effects of National Forest management activities on social systems within and/or adjacent to the National Forest or project area.

1973.02 - Objectives

Use social impact analyses as determined by FSM 1970.6 to provide information to the decisionmaking process. Decisionmakers use social impacts to:

1. Identify and integrate the interests of populations affected by National Forest management activities and programs.

2. Inform responsible officials of the expected short- and long-term effects of forest plans and plan implementation on (1) desired conditions for the National Forest; and (2) sustainability of social systems of populations within and/or adjacent to the National Forest.

3. Social analyses, at a minimum, attempt to explain causal relationships with both economic and ecological environments; and, forecast future conditions given forest management actions (or inaction) as appropriate.

1973.03 - Policy

Use social analysis to describe the existing systems and conditions of the social environment and recent trends.

1973.1 - Scope

In social analyses, identify the area of concern, timeframe, and the affected population or communities within the scope of the plan, project or program (FSM.1970.6).

1973.2 - Methods

The range of appropriate information methods for social analysis information collection and analysis includes:

1. Informal inquiry and/or formal scoping of public attitudes, beliefs and values.
2. Synthesis of media reports and other secondary data.
3. Primary data collection.”

Chapter 1973.2 goes on to require:

“Used alone or in combination, the range of appropriate general information treatment methods includes:

1. Qualitative approaches, such as ethnographic studies.
2. Mixed qualitative and quantitative approaches, such as content analysis of media, written documents, and scoping results.
3. Quantitative approaches such as statistical (probability-based) analysis.”

Chapter 1973.2 describes in detail what the scope of the social analysis should include:

“Social analyses may use qualitative or quantitative methods, or both, as appropriate.

The scope of social analyses should include rationale about the following:

1. Analysis Area. The analysis area covers the geographic extent of populations or communities to be included in the evaluation. Unless otherwise warranted, an appropriate analysis area for evaluation will at a minimum, include those populations or communities directly affected by proposed National Forest management activities.

2. Timeframe. The timeframe includes the period of time, historical or future, necessary to adequately evaluate National Forest management activity effects on the social environment. Unless otherwise warranted, an appropriate time span for evaluation will include historic data sufficient to determine whether there are significant recent trends and forecasts within acceptable statistical limitations.

3. Information Variables. Information variables include the data necessary to adequately describe, explain, or forecast conditions. Typically, social impact information variables may address:

- a. Social organization.
- b. Attitudes, beliefs, and values.
- c. Lifestyle.

	<p>d. Landuse. e. Economy. f. Demographics. g. Civil rights and environmental justice.” The EA only covers economy, demographics, and environmental justice. There has been no analysis or even description of social organizations, attitudes/beliefs/values, lifestyles, and land use as they pertain to the social sciences. For instance, the EA clearly includes the Albuquerque metropolitan area (p. 104): “The social and economic features of nearby communities are influenced by the entire Albuquerque Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), comprised of Bernalillo, Sandoval, Tarrant and Valencia Counties. Sandoval County does not border the Mountainair Ranger District. In 2000, the population of these four counties was 712,738.” It is obvious that local organized motorized recreational clubs would fall under ‘social organizations’ that could be impacted by significant changes in the availability of motorized recreational resources. But the EA offers no insight or analysis on what the local 4WD clubs think/believe/value about the recreational resources offered on the Mountainair District and what they believe the impacts to their organization will be for the Action Alternatives. The Forest Service regulations explicitly require it but the EA does not even attempt to deliver it.</p> <p>RESOLUTION: The only way to fix the disregard for meeting the NEPA requirements of addressing the full gamut of Social considerations is to re-issue the document after the required analysis has been completed. Social considerations are important. The Forest Service even includes a chapter in their planning regulations that is specific to social analysis requirements. The lack of the required Social considerations creates a significant gap in the information that is to be presented to the Deciding Officer for their thoughtful consideration. Without the Social consideration analysis and environmental consequences, the Deciding Officer cannot make a rational and defensible decision which balances protecting the social environment as well as the natural environment.</p>
<p>Response: Social analysis and impacts are considered in multiple locations throughout the EA and related specialist reports. The Socio Economic report considers the broader community relationships with travel management and motorized recreation. The recreation report considers the impacts and benefits to both motorized and non motorized recreation when visiting the Mountainair Ranger District. There is also analysis related the grazing, transportation, special uses and forest product gathering. All of these are aspects of social assessment related to travel management.</p> <p>Response to the concern “Neither the Social nor the Recreation analysis asked, ”What happens to day trips when the round trip becomes 20 miles instead of 10 miles because of road closures?” :</p> <p>Alternative 1 (proposed action) and Alternative 3 maintain all of the arterial and collector roads and the primary system used for transportation. There continues to be access to all of the trailheads and developed recreation sites. There are a few exceptions in Alternative 4, where land reroutes around private would not be constructed, and there would be a loss of primary system roads. There would not be anywhere where a 10 mile round trip becomes a 20 mile round trip to access these locations.</p>	
82j	<p>See pg. 23 of EA: It is likely that the local economy would be improved by Alternative 1. The Recreation Survey performed during the SJM40 study "Off-Road Vehicle Recreation in New Mexico" revealed that a sizable percentage of non-motorized recreationists are displaced by motorized recreation, especially ATVs and dirt bikes. Since "quiet recreation" is a huge contributor to the New Mexican economy (see the SJM40 report for details) it is likely that a carefully managed, designated system of OHV</p>

	routes will enhance quiet recreation and thus bring more visitors and tourists to the local areas.
Response: Your comment has been noted	
102	<p>The Cibola/ Mountainair EA contains an error in the form of an unverified assumption that is used to dismiss the social/economic impact of alternatives 1, 3 and 4. Please refer to Page 105 of the EA:</p> <p>“All Alternatives”</p> <p>“The gain or loss of recreation opportunities on the Mountainair Ranger District is unlikely to affect the economic sectors that are supported by motorized recreation. The rate at which motorized vehicle sales have increased over the last 5 years has largely been dependent on advances in technology and the increasing popularity of the sport. The loss of recreation opportunities on the Mountainair Ranger District is unlikely to affect the retail sales of vehicles used for motorized recreation and tourism related retail services in any of the alternatives. Even though there is considerable motorized dispersed camping on the district, especially during the hunting season, the economic impacts of these activities are small relative to the size of the economic region and are unlikely to adversely affect the local economy. Dispersed campers generally contribute to the local economy through the purchase of food, gasoline and other retail items. Since they do not pay for lodging in hotels or other private facilities, their economic contribution is limited to the markup or margin of profit on their purchases. For convenience stores where these types of goods are often purchased, the markup is lower than higher end goods and services.”</p> <p>Problem: The underlined section does not meet intent of NEPA 1508.8 which seeks to gage the social/economic impact of closing between 60% and 80% motorized dispersed camping. The section acknowledges there is “considerable motorized dispersed camping on the district ” but dismisses its impact without data.</p> <p>Remedy: Remove the underlined section from the EA.</p>
Response: We disagree with your assertion, and stand by our analysis.	
Specialist Reports	
77c	I had personal conversations at the Cibola office on March 23rd with Nancy Brunswick and Sarah Campney-Dechter, in the presence of Keith Baker, the FOIA officer. Ms Brunswick and Ms. Campney-Dechter confirmed there are no field notes in the project record. They said no field work was performed specifically for the Travel Management planning, that ID Team members relied on their personal experience and knowledge of the forest. The only person who made a field trip was the hydrologist, who was from another region. He had not left any field notes for the project record, although they supposed maybe he could be contacted in San Diego to supply them.
Response: Where needed to inform the analysis, fieldwork was performed specifically for Travel Management planning. Field trips to view the Forest and specific areas of concern occurred on March 23-25, 2009. There are photos and email notes regarding this work in the project record. Additionally, the cultural resource fieldwork was conducted in 2010 specifically for Travel Management and many of the roads and dispersed camping corridors were visited by the archaeology crew. Problems areas encountered during this project, such as dispersed camping corridors in locations that could not be accessed with motor vehicles, were brought to the attention of the ID team. The cultural resource clearance serves as documentation of this fieldwork. The fieldwork was supplemented by ID team member’s personal experience, knowledge, and day to day fieldwork for other project across the Forest. Although identified	

as a participant, Nancy Brunswick did not attend this meeting.	
20	We want to get copies of the underlying specialist reports for the Mountainair Ranger District EA for Travel Management.[...]It's important for us to have the reports, so we can thoroughly understand the EA. We found the specialist reports to be critical when we were reviewing the Sandia Ranger District EA a couple of years ago.
Response: The specialist reports were provided during the comment period to persons who requested them.	
Suggested Alternatives	
19f, 19i	<p>For this reason, we strongly recommend and support the development of a Pro Recreation Alternative. The proposal by the Cibola National Forest does not meet this definition of a Pro-Recreation Alternative. A Pro-Recreation Alternative would include the following characteristics in addition to the current proposal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Dispersed camping within 300 feet of all existing routes. 4. Use of seasonal closures, where required, to protect the environment and wildlife with the intention of keeping routes open for the summer recreation season. 5. All of the existing routes are needed as OHV routes due to the cumulative effects of all other closures. We are a locally supported association whose purpose is to preserve trails for all recreationists through responsible environmental protection and education. Page 4 of 29 6. Additional OHV routes are needed to address the growing popularity of OHV recreation and the greater needs of the public for access and motorized recreation. 7. In order to reasonably meet the needs of the public for motorized recreational opportunities we request that the proposed alternative include the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Interpretative routes to preserve the pioneer and mining heritage in the area. b. Provides the type of long-distance figure 8 routes, loops and side destinations desired by OHV recreationists <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Loops ranging from 20 to 60 miles ii. Many stops and side destinations iii. Documents and preserves the historic nature of the area iv. Additional use of dual-use routes so that OHVs can connect with trails systems. v. Grants could be used for signing at each site and the development of interpretative literature, brochures, and maps. vi. Grants could be used where required for route improvements.
Response: This proposal would increase the number of miles of trails beyond what currently exist. Such an alternative would not be feasible given current and expected budgets for trails.	
19l	<p>We urge Forest Service leadership to address this problem by developing a preferred alternative based on a Pro-Recreation alternative. The current set of alternatives does not include a Pro-Recreation alternative. NEPA requires analysis of all viable alternatives and all significant issues. A Pro-Recreation alternative is viable and needed by the public.</p> <p>We are a locally supported association whose purpose is to preserve trails for all recreationists through responsible environmental protection and education. Page 5 of 29 develop and support a Pro-Recreation alternative. Other motorized recreationists are available to develop and support a Pro-Recreation alternative if the agency would engage them. Again, we urge the Forest Service to address this situation and restore public confidence in the agency by developing and selecting a Pro-Recreation alternative that provides equal program delivery by allocating at least 50% of the trails to motorized use.</p>
Response: NEPA requires consideration of a range of alternatives be considered. The range of	

alternatives includes No Action (which would result in all open system roads being available for motorized public use) to the Proposed Action and other alternatives developed to address the issues associated with the Proposed Action.	
19r	10. All roads to be closed to full-size vehicles should be converted to atv routes. This is a reasonable alternative for all existing roads.
Response: Comment noted- this alternative is consistent with No Action. Routes that are suitable for ATV designations are included in other alternatives where appropriate.	
19yy	49. The existing level of motorized access and recreation cannot be dismissed because it is only associated with the No Action Alternative. The existing level of motorized access and recreation is reasonable alternative and an alternative other than No Action must be built around it.
Response: No action addresses this proposal and that part of No Action that would allow the continued motorized use of open system roads could be selected by the responsible official – see response to previous discussions about No Action in comments 29g and 98.	
Suggested Routes	
87p	F. Specific Route Recommendations We again offer these specific route recommendations. We ask that these recommendations be implemented in any alternative chosen. (See table of recommendations provided in the project record)
Response: Where consistent with the alternatives that are considered, route recommendations supplied in the comment could be implemented.	
Unauthorized Route Terminology	
19g	1. The use of “unauthorized trails or roads” is not an appropriate term as many of these routes were created during periods going back to the 1800’s when the forest was managed without designated routes, cross-country travel was allowed, and access and use of the forest was encouraged. The use of “unauthorized trails or roads” is an inaccurate representation of the management conditions and uses allowed in the past and we request that this term be dropped from the text.
Response: Unauthorized roads or trails represents roads that are not included in the National Forest System roads inventory. As stated in the the preamble to the Travel Management Rule: “The Department believes that the term “unauthorized or unclassified road or trail” is cumbersome and that “unauthorized” more accurately captures the nature of these routes than “unclassified.” Accordingly, in the final rule, the Department is changing “unauthorized or unclassified road or trail” to “unauthorized road or trail.” The definition for unauthorized road or trail (a road or trail that is not a forest road or trail or a temporary road or trail and that is not included in a forest transportation atlas) makes clear that unauthorized roads and trails are not part of the forest transportation system and are not officially recognized by the Forest Service.” However, the rule provided for consideration of designation of unauthorized roads and trails and adding them to the system. There are a number of unauthorized roads and trails being considered for designation in Alternatives 1 and 3.	
Use of No Longer Passable Criteria	
66	ERROR: The EA claims that some system roads are no longer passable without supplying any evidence. The EA claims that the TAP was used to assess whether a road was passable. DISCUSSION: The EA states that some system roads “are no longer passable by motor

vehicles.”

Page 17:

“However, some roads on the district are poorly located, cause extensive resource damage, or are no longer passable by motor vehicles (see travel analysis process for Mountainair).”

Page 82:

“However, many of the roads not included for designation are either redundant to the roads that would be designated, or have not been maintained for many years and are no longer passable by most vehicles or in some cases are no longer passable to motorized vehicles.”

Page 84:

“Current management of roads and trails would continue under this alternative. All 471 miles of system routes and most unauthorized routes would be available for use, although some are no longer passable due to lack of maintenance.”

Page 95:

“However, routine road maintenance cannot be performed on some segments of roads due to the presence of heritage resources within the road prism, making continued use of these roads difficult. This has resulted in some segments of road becoming degraded or impassable.”

The EA also claims, on page 5, that the TAP is the source for this information. Yet, when we examine the TAP, we find absolutely no data or evidence that the road segments of the current system were analyzed or even documented for being ‘passable’. Pass-ability was not included in any of the seven ‘risk’ assessments. Pass-ability was not included in any of the five ‘benefit’ assessments detailed in the TAP. Pass-ability was not presented in the tabular results in Appendix A of the TAP. The TAP did not analyze or document the ability for a motor vehicle to ‘pass’ the system road segments located on the Mountainair Ranger District.

The EA also makes the specific claim that the roads in question were not passable by motor vehicle. With the wide range of motor vehicles available to motorized recreationists, it is certain that most, if not all, current system routes can be traversed. Included are recent photos of two of the NMOHVA President’s own personal ‘motor vehicles’ and we believe that one or the other or something in between could very ably demonstrate pass-ability on the routes in question. As the photos demonstrate, there are a wide range of vehicles and capabilities encompassed by the words “motor vehicles” and pass-ability varies greatly with specialization of the vehicle and the level of skill demonstrated by the driver.

The terms “passable by motor vehicle”, “no longer passable”, and “impassable” are inaccurate or highly speculative as used in the EA and should be removed from the document.

Not all of the roads in the current system are supposed to be easily passable by motor vehicle. From the EA on page 75 (emphasis added): “Semiprimitive Motorized (SPM) – Similar setting to the SPNM except this area provides a motorized back-country experience where trails and primitive roads are designed for high-clearance, 4-wheel-

drive vehicles. There is a moderate probability of experiencing solitude and a high degree of self-reliance and challenge in using motorized equipment. These areas are predominantly natural, lacking some human modification, except when necessary for site protection.”

There are 152,601 acres of SPM ROS classification on the Mountainair District and it comprises very nearly the entire analysis area. This ROS classification purposely contains roads that provide challenge in passage.

The EA makes numerous references to the degree of challenge desired by the motorized recreation community. Under the Issues on page 8 (emphasis added):

2. Loss or reduction of motorized recreation opportunities.

There is concern that quality opportunities for motorized recreation, particularly opportunities for wider vehicles including full-size 4x4s, were not fully considered in the proposed action. These concerns included:

- a. Requests for motorized trail opportunities for users desiring more challenge;
- b. Requests for additional designations for full-size vehicles and UTV and ATV opportunities; and
- c. Requests for additional designations of motorized dispersed camping corridors across the district.

Page 74:

“Public comments and research indicates that OHV recreationists desire a system with loop opportunities that offer a variety of destinations, experiences, and challenges.”

Page 80:

“For some motor vehicle users, motorized cross-country travel challenges the rider, and is a recreation activity that is valued by those users.”

Page 82:

“The roads being considered in this alternative provide several large and small loops in the Manzanos to provide users with variety and challenge. Challenging routes are available along the more primitive roads in the southern and northern portions of the Manzanos.”

“Motorized operators of ATVs and motorcycles who are looking for more complex technical challenges would find limited opportunities under this alternative, and those opportunities would be confined to roads.”

RESOLUTION: Remove all reference to ‘pass-ability’ from the EA. Remove all reference of the TAP being the source for analysis on ‘pass-ability’ from the document. Failure to remove these errors about the conditions and suitability of road segments for motorized recreation from the draft EA will have a major impact on the information presented to the Deciding Officer. If these errors are left in the EA, the erroneous picture they create can cause a significant impact in the Deciding Officer’s final decision.

Response: The statement on p. 17 needs further clarification. The TAP analyzed whether roads on the district are poorly located and/or cause resource damage. Information on whether a road is passable was provided by district personnel who utilize these roads for fieldwork.

See the response to Comment 107 for additional information.