

**Chapter
4**

Identifying Issues

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Identifying Issues

The current Umatilla National Forest road system provides access to developed and dispersed camping areas, trailheads, and to administrative facilities such as communication towers, utility corridors, fire lookouts, reservoirs, and private recreation residences. The road system also provides access to perform ecosystem restoration projects such as prescribed fire or timber harvest and access to livestock grazing pastures, mining claims, and for suppression of unwanted wildland fires.

Issues were generated from public response to the Umatilla National Forest Travel Management Decisions (Heppner Ranger District (7/92), Pomeroy Ranger District (7/93), North Fork Ranger District (7/92), and Walla Walla Ranger District (7/93)), annual forest stakeholder meetings, public response to a variety of project proposals, local knowledge of roads, responses to the National Roadless EIS process in 2002, and discussion with other public agencies. Issues could be addressed at the forest, area, watershed, or project scale; watershed or landscape assessments; or as part of site-specific project proposals. Forest-scale issues will be addressed through this roads analysis document and sub-forest-scale roads analyses will develop issues appropriate to the sub-forest scale.

Forest-Scale Issues

- 1) Policy issues considered in this analysis were the interrelationship of state, county, tribal, and other federal agency transportation facility effects on land and resource management plans and programs; transportation investments necessary for meeting plan and program objectives; and current and likely funding levels available to support road construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and decommissioning.
- 2) Road maintenance funding is not adequate to maintain and sign roads to the objective maintenance level. Conversely, the road system may be too large to adequately maintain to the objective maintenance level with existing budgets.
- 3) The current Umatilla National Forest classified road system has unwanted environmental impacts to water quality and aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species, five of which are listed under the Endangered Species Act. Unauthorized, user-created roads and trails result in unwanted environmental impacts to soil productivity, wildlife, and the spread of invasive exotic plant species.
- 4) Some roads have been under Forest Service jurisdiction for many years and may not be under the appropriate jurisdiction. Due to changing use, it might be more appropriate for some roads to be under county or state jurisdiction or special use permits. In addition, some road realignments, widening, and surfacing are needed to accommodate anticipated increases in vehicle volumes and additional vehicle types.

Sub-forest-scale Issues

- 1) Road values and road related risks should be further addressed. There are unwanted environmental impacts from the current Forest road system (including road density) and from unauthorized, user-created roads and trails. Roads causing unacceptable impacts should be evaluated for disposition or mitigation at the sub-forest level.
- 2) The public expressed concern that reducing or reconfiguring the Forest's transportation system might occur without the benefit of public involvement. Public involvement shall be an integral part of the sub-forest-scale analyses process and any site-specific project decisions.