

# **DESIGNATED DISTANCE CORRIDORS, DESIGNATED ROUTES AND AREAS FOR TRAVEL MANAGEMENT**

## **DISPERSED CAMPSITE EVALUATION PROTOCOLS**

### **Introduction**

The objective for developing a protocol is to provide a consistent and valid process for monitoring corridors, designated routes to campsites and areas. This protocol and inventory are being done to provide baseline data to characterize existing conditions and serve as data for future adaptive management monitoring needs or larger scale NEPA projects.

Each campsite within a corridor will be identified and a systematic sample of these campsites will be inventoried. Areas will be identified and delineated for boundaries. Some of these areas are less than 1 acre with the intent mainly being for camping although the area is also open to motorized cross country travel. Areas may have campsites inventoried and also safety and resource concerns recorded if they exist. Some areas are proposed for motorized cross country travel. The most common and potentially important types of impacts have been included in this minimum protocol.

### **Standards**

1. Corridors, routes to campsites and areas shall be inventoried that will be included as dispersed camping opportunities on the MVUM map—it is sufficient to monitor a sample of campsites within a corridor or area.
2. Data for each corridor, routes to sites greater than 100 feet, or areas will include a linear GPS feature or area feature. Campsite locations must include: (a) location (site coordinates—derived from GPS, or a dot on a topographic map if GPS coordinates cannot be retrieved; (b) a more in depth inventory by systematic sample of campsites (1 out of 5) within a corridor or area which includes condition; photo supplement and map sketch; and (c) safety concerns within corridors, areas and campsites.

### **Procedures for inventorying corridors, routes and areas**

Identify all the proposed designated distance corridors, routes to campsites and areas on a map and develop a plan to visit these places. Prioritize inventories by going to high use areas first, then moderately used and low use areas last. High use would be areas that are camped in during the week, moderate is on week ends and low use would be occasional or during hunting season. This should incorporate local District knowledge and what makes sense logistically.

#### **A) Corridors**

GPS a road corridor using a linear feature from the start to the end along the Forest Service Road it is located on. The corridor is adjacent to the system Road and goes 150 feet or 300 feet on one or both sides of the Road. Name the GPS

corridor feature (Forest Road Number-District and DD001). The next Corridor on the same road would be DD002. Note on inventory form.

Flag the Corridor at the beginning and end of the corridor with striped flagging denoting the beginning and end of the corridor. On the flagging, in permanent marker, write the name of the corridor using the above protocol for naming. This will assist Heritage folks in finding the corridors. Note any safety concerns regarding ingress and egress access to the corridor. After the corridor has been GPSed, a systematic sample of campsites will be inventoried.

**B) Access Road to Campsite (not in a corridor):**

GPS the most durable and direct access road to a campsite(s). This road needs to be at least 100 feet in length. This should be a line feature. (Road ID-District#-001R). These are considered designated routes to campsites. Also, note any egress and ingress safety concerns off of the main Forest system road. Use a piece of flagging to denote the access road off of main road. On the flagging, write the above road number followed by the number of campsite(s) which the road leads to on the flagging with a permanent marker. This will aid the Heritage folks.

**C) Motorized areas:** GPS using an area feature which delineates the boundaries of the area. (Road ID-District#-001A). When delineating the boundary, look for natural features that may aid in keeping vehicles within a designated boundary such as trees, rocks, etc. These boundaries will have to be marked with signs if they become designated. When in the area, denote any potential resource or safety concerns that currently exist in the area or may be adjacent to the area. Use the list of safety concerns listed on 20 of the protocol. Describe within the perimeter of the area, how many campsites currently exist and record. These areas will be open to cross country motorized travel. For areas that have less than five campsites, inventory one of these sites. For areas with more than 5 campsites, inventory every fifth site.

**D) Campsite Inventory:**

At each campsite in a corridor, end of an access road or in an area, either use a GPS to obtain site point coordinates or carefully place a dot on a topographic map and then obtain site coordinates from the map. The goal is to get a point for each campsite. This will help in determining the campsite density in areas and corridors.

Stand in the center of the campsite to get an idea of the area that the site encompasses. Often this is dictated by a firering. The campsite ID should be the Road # with a dash, District number with a dash and a campsite number starting with 001., District #s are Coyote(1), Cuba (2), Jemez (3), Las Vegas (4), Pecos (5), Espanola(6) Try to distinguish between sites if possible. If you cannot get a point feature to work, look for an open area in the vicinity and get a point and then describe the direction and location of the campsite from the GPS reading. If no GPS reading is available, mark on a topo map.

For every **fifth** campsite that you take a GPS point reading, you will perform a more in depth inventory of the campsite. This is further in the protocol. You will also take a photograph of the campsite to facilitate future relocation of the

campsite and draw a sketch. GPS units with data dictionaries can be taken into the field, allowing for on-site electronic capture of data. Alternatively, data can be collected on paper forms and marked on a topographical map. Either method can be used depending on local District needs.

### Fields to be completed in a GPS unit or on a hard copy form

- 1) Record the name of the data recorders and the date.
- 2) Record the name of the Ranger District the corridor, route or area is located.
- 3) Record the Forest Road number and denote if it is open seasonally or yearly.
- 4) Record the corridor using a line feature. Record the name of the corridor using (Forest Road Number-District-and DD001). Note any ingress/egress safety concerns.
- 5) Record routes or access roads to campsites (not within a corridor) or to an area using a line feature. These are the most defined routes that are more than 100 feet in length and provide access to campsites or motorized areas. These are not in corridors. Note any ingress/egress safety concerns. If a road goes through a corridor and ends at a place people are camping, go ahead and GPS the route and note that this goes through a corridor. It may be useful information in the TM process and could become a designated route. (Forest Road #- District#-001R).
- 6) Record a motorized area using an area feature. Record how many campsites currently exist and if there are any resource or safety concerns.(Use safety issues defined further in the protocol under 20.) Record using (Forest Road Number-District#-001A). We need to delineate the boundaries of this area. You may want to use survey flags to aid in determining boundaries.

### **7) Level of camping Definitions in corridors and areas:**

**High:** Occupied during the week for camping or day use. Could have difficulty finding a good place to camp on weekends when weather is good.

**Medium:** Used mainly on weekends and/or during hunting season, holidays. May receive overflow use from campgrounds.

**Low:** Used occasionally by hunters, campers or day-users.

- 8) Note if the access road destination is in a corridor, route to a campsite or to a motorized area, the road condition should be assessed from 1-3. One would have deep rutting where water pools or flows with severe erosion. Two would have signs of water concentration running down the roads causing moderate signs of erosion and three would have a road with vegetation with limited erosion

#### **Destination of Route**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 0-150 or 300 ft. (corridor)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ > 100 feet to campsites
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Access to Motorized Area

#### **Road Condition**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Deep Ruts
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Erosion due to H2O conc.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetation on road

### 9) Campsite point feature and inventory

Record campsite locations using a point feature. These campsites need to be within the designated distance corridor of 150 feet or 300 feet, at the end of an access road or in an area. Check the proper distance of the corridor from the road. The corridor is adjacent to the road so it starts at the edge of the road. You can pace this off, use a GPS unit or a measuring tape. There are a few routes that access camping. We should GPS the campsites as well as the campsites in designated areas that will be open to motorized uses.

### 10) Campsite ID

The campsite ID should be (Forest Road Number-District#-001).

**This more in depth inventory should be done on every 5<sup>th</sup> campsite within a corridor, at the end of a route that accesses campsites or in areas. The following is the protocol for a more in depth dispersed campsite inventory. If there are less than 5 campsites in a corridor, at the end of a route or in an area, do an inventory on one site.**

### 11) Disturbed Area Rating

Record disturbed area as one of the following classes, depending on the size of the area disturbed by camping activities, including the main campsite, satellite tent pads, volleyball and horseshoe areas etc. This includes the entire disturbed area of the campsite. In most situations, disturbed places are distinguished by obvious vegetation loss (either complete lack of vegetation or sparse vegetation resulting from trampling). Places where vegetation has been flattened but is likely to recover in the short-term should **not** be included in the disturbed area. Where vegetation is naturally absent, it may be necessary to identify disturbed places on the basis of flattening of soil or litter on the forest floor. When there are multiple separate disturbed parts of the campsite, do NOT include undisturbed areas in between. For example, if there is a main campsite, two tent pads and a stock-holding area, assess the size of each of the four areas separately and then sum them. Social trails between separate disturbed areas can be ignored. Select a midpoint when the condition is close to the boundary between classes.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 0-100 m<sup>2</sup> (0-1076 ft<sup>2</sup>)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ 100-200 m<sup>2</sup> (1076-2153 ft<sup>2</sup>)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ More than 200 m<sup>2</sup> (more than 2153 ft<sup>2</sup>)

### 12) Impacts

Note the impacts associated with the campsite by marking impact with an X . For social trails and roads, denote the number besides the main access road that goes to the campsite. If structures are built, denote the number with a description below such as toilet, hitchrail, corral, sign, food pole, etc. Note if trash is present, human waste and noxious weeds including the weed species, area infested in square feet and percent of area infested. Count and record # of firings.

### 13) Disturbance to Groundcover Rating 1-4

Record disturbance to the groundcover of the **central** portion of the campsite (disregarding satellite disturbed areas) as one of the following classes. Select a midpoint when the condition is close to the boundary between classes. An effort

was made to look at ecosystems that also lack both perennial vegetation and organic horizons.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetation flattened but not eliminated or minimal physical change except for fire ring.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Ground vegetation worn away or soil surface flattened around fire ring or center of activity.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Ground vegetation lost on most of site, humus and litter present and/or soil surface flattened (for long term) on most of site, but exposed mineral soil not highly compacted except in a few areas.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Bare mineral soil widespread over most of site and highly compacted over most of site (cement).

Rationale: If there is no bare soil in a campsite give a rating of 1. If bare soil is obvious at the center of the site, extending out from a fire ring, but a single 2-person tent would extend onto portions of the site that are still vegetated (i.e. the bare area cannot accommodate both a fire ring and a single tent), assign the site a rating of 2. If the central bare area is large enough for a fire ring and two 2-person tents, assign a rating of 3 (if most of the bare area still retains a humus/litter cover) or a rating of 4 (if the humus/litter cover is gone from most of the site).

**NOTE:** On sites without organic soil horizons and/or much perennial vegetation (for example, desert sites, sites on rock, the groundcover class has been adapted to accommodate this type of site also. In ecosystem types with a poorly developed organic soil horizon, use the level of soil compaction to differentiate between class 3 and class 4 campsites. Where there is sparse but regularly-distributed perennial vegetation, use the size of the central area from which all perennial vegetation has been eliminated (irregardless of the annual vegetation) to differentiate between class 2 and class 3. Where there is little perennial vegetation, use the size of the central area that has experienced long-term flattening of the soil surface to differentiate between class 2 and class 3. This might involve flattening of microbiotic crusts and a hummocky or rocky surface in deserts or flattening/abrasion of forest litter in dense shade. Conversely, a campsite entirely confined to a rocky ledge would always get a rating of 1 because there is no long-term flattening of the soil.

#### 14) Tree Damage Rating 1-3

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 0-3 severely damaged trees or no trees on site.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ 4-10 severely damaged trees
3. \_\_\_\_\_ 11 or more severely damaged trees

Rationale: Assess damage directly in the site as well as adjacent to site if possible. Include any trees judged to have been damaged as a result of camping activities at the site being recorded. You are recording **severely** damaged trees. Severely damaged trees are those that (1) have been felled and are at least 4 inches in diameter where felled (if trees have multiple stems, consider the tree felled if any stem at least 4 inches in diameter has been cut off; or (2) have

scarring that exceeds 1 ft<sup>2</sup> in total area or (3) have highly exposed roots i.e. more than 3 feet of root sticks out at least 1 inch above the ground surface. Select a midpoint when the condition is close to the boundary between classes.

Campsites with no trees would be given a rating of 0.

**15) Soil Disturbance:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ No noticeable erosion due to human activities
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Minor soil disturbance, compaction leading to no vegetation on hardened site.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Noticeable soil movement & displacement, potential gullies and trenches forming
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Major human caused erosion as evidenced by rills, gullies and exposed tree roots on site or access route.

Rationale: This is used to identify soil disturbance that may have a negative effect on water quality and watersheds. It occurs by concentration and scour of overland flow, with enhanced erosion, loss of vegetation, and sediment transport as a consequence.

**16) Distance to Riparian Area:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 0 - 20 ft.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ 21 - 50 ft.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ 51 - 100 ft.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ > 100 ft.

**Distance to water / stream:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ < 100 feet
2. \_\_\_\_\_ < 300 feet
3. \_\_\_\_\_ > 300
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Unknown

**17) Unstable Eroding Banks: (yes/no) \_\_\_\_\_ Length: \_\_\_\_\_**

Rationale: Identification of Riparian or wetland areas and distance to water. Riparian areas are adjacent to lakes, perennial and some intermittent streams, as well as, wetlands and wet meadows that have saturated soils during all or part of the year. They are defined by the presence of sensitive high-water-table-dependent vegetation and soils. Wetlands also have sensitive soils and species composition, and occupy irregular areas contiguous to or separate from streams. It is beneficial to know the location of the campsite in relationship to a lake, perennial stream, intermittent/arroyo or wetland/wet meadow.

Name of water body (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_ Lake
2. \_\_\_ Perennial stream
3. \_\_\_ Intermittent stream / arroyo
4. \_\_\_ Wetland / Wet Meadow

**18) Wildlife signs present: (yes/no) \_\_\_\_\_ Type \_\_\_\_\_**

**19) Photos: overview of site and resource concerns**

Please take a picture of the main campsite area. Include a photo or two of any major resource concerns. Indicate the number on the form from your camera, which direction the photo is facing and a description. On the site map, indicate where you are taking the photo. When downloading photos, save under campsite number and print copies to attach to the inventory forms.

**20) Safety and Health Considerations: (yes/no)**

Note on the inventory form where there are safety or health considerations and provide an explanation and if these can be mitigated.

Unsafe ingress/egress from main road: Considerations: Is the access to the campsite on a blind curve, is there vegetation blocking a drivers' view, or is there a steep incline or decline that makes it difficult to see other drivers on the main road?

Proximity to hazards: (shooting area, high use road, old mine site, burned area, cliff, hazard trees etc.) What are the known hazards in the area? Are they within proximity to the campsite?

Fire potential: fuel accumulation, proximity to slope, poor placement of fire rings, no natural barriers between site and fuel?

Potential for flash floods: Is this a common area for flash floods or heavy spring runoff?

Problems with human waste accumulation: Are people digging latrines near water? Is there exposed human waste on the ground surface? Is there an area at least 200 feet from water to dig catholes without crossing the main road? Is there already an accumulation of human waste seen in the area? Are people already leaving latrines behind at this location when they leave the forest?

**21) Restoration Recommendations/Mitigations:**

Due to safety or resource concerns are there ways to mitigate this campsite so it can be used in the future or do you feel that this site should be closed due to resource concerns? Please make your recommendations.

**22) Attach additional notes and comments on back of sketch.**