



**File Code:** 1950-3 / 7710

**Date:** March 17, 2010

**Route To:** ( )

**Subject:** Significant Issues and Alternatives to Analyze in Detail in the Travel Management Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Approval of Mitigations

**To:** Travel Management Project Leader

I approve of the issues and alternatives to be analyzed in detail in the Santa Fe National Forest's draft environmental impact statement for travel management planning. The Forest's interdisciplinary team identified 5 significant issues raised during scoping as directed in CEQ regulations at 40 CFR 1502.2(b):

“Impacts shall be discussed in proportion to their significance. There shall be only brief discussion of other than significant issues. As in a finding of no significant impact, there should be only enough discussion to show why more study is not warranted.”

The Forest's steering committee reviewed the issues and approved of them on January 22, 2009. The interdisciplinary team subsequently revised them, and the committee approved the revisions at the June 25, 2009 steering committee meeting. The specialists' analysis of the environmental effects resulted in slight changes to the significant issues, finalized and recommended by the interdisciplinary team on January 19, 2010. The 5 significant issues I approve of are:

1. Continued public motorized use of routes and areas described in the proposed action will adversely affect forest resources. These effects include:
  - Erosion, soil compaction, and degradation of water quality and watershed condition;
  - Degradation of fish and wildlife habitat;
  - Damage to cultural resource sites;
  - Damage to traditional cultural properties;
  - Spread of invasive plant species;
  - Damage to rare plants; and
  - Compromising the character of wilderness and inventoried roadless areas.
2. The reduction in miles of routes and the prohibition on cross-country travel described in the proposed action will adversely affect the quantity of public motorized experiences because the proposed action:
  - Lacks enough loops and connectors to provide for longer rides;
  - Lacks diverse opportunities for all-terrain vehicles, motorcycles, and 4x4s;
  - Lacks diverse routes for different skill levels;
  - Restricts access to traditional cultural properties;
  - Does not provide enough area for motorcycle trials;
  - Closes too many routes, which will concentrate use and take away the semi-primitive aspect of riding in the forest; and
  - Does not plan for the future growth in motorized sports.
3. Prohibiting motorized cross-country travel will limit the retrieval of big game, perhaps to an unacceptable level.



4. Designating motorized dispersed camping corridors will increase cross-country travel and the resource damage associated with it and curtail the kind of unrestricted camping that the Santa Fe National Forest currently provides.
5. The proposed action, by designating routes uniformly across the forest outside of designated Wilderness, will cause conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users because they will be recreating in the same vicinity.

The project record contains the process the team used to identify the significant issues, and a full list of all the issues considered. The measures used to analyze the issues have been discussed and agreed upon.

### *Alternatives*

Section 1502.14 of CEQ's regulations implementing NEPA call alternatives including the proposed action "the heart of the environmental impact statement." In the environmental impact statement, agencies shall "rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and for alternatives which were eliminated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their having been eliminated" (40 CFR 1502.14(a)).

Agencies are further advised that "the EIS shall document the examination of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action. An alternative should meet the purpose and need and address one or more significant issues related to the proposed action. Since an alternative may be developed to address more than one significant issue, no specific number of alternatives is required or prescribed" (36 CFR 220.5(e)).

I find that the 3 alternatives to the Corrected Proposed Action cover the significant issues. The alternatives the interdisciplinary team will analyze in detail in the environmental impact statement are listed in the table below.

<i>Alternative</i>	<i>Responds to Issues:</i>
1 – No Action	
2 – Corrected Proposed Action	
3	1, 4
4	2, 3, 4
5	3, 4, 5

The draft environmental impact statement also will list the alternatives considered but not analyzed in detail and the reasons why.

The interdisciplinary team kept me informed of the changes associated with the issues and alternatives from the time the issues and alternatives were roughed out, until now, when much of the environmental analysis has been completed.

**ERIN CONNELLY**  
Acting Forest Supervisor