

Travel Management FAQs

What is the definition of a National Forest System Road?

A road serving the National Forest System that the Forest Service determines is necessary for the protection, administration, and utilization of the National Forest System and the use and development of its resources. These classified roads are designated as NFSR indicating they are National Forest System Roads.

Are all National Forest System Roads on the Shoshone open to the public?

No. System roads or NFSRs that are open to the public are reflected on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). Some roads are kept on the system for intermittent use but are closed to vehicular traffic for periods greater than a year. They receive basic custodial maintenance to prevent damage to adjacent resources. They are, in effect, stored for future management activities such as vegetation treatments.

What is the difference between a road and a motorized trail?

A road is a motor vehicle route over 50 inches in width, unless identified and managed as a trail (36 CFR 212.1). A trail is a route 50 inches or less in width or a route over 50 inches wide that is identified and managed as a trail (36 CFR 212.1).

What are administrative closures?

Roads open for “administrative use” only are closed to motor vehicle use but may receive limited use by the Forest Service for administration and protection of National Forest System lands (FSM 7716.2).

Will seasonal road closures be adjusted?

Seasonal road closures will be reviewed during travel management planning and could be adjusted after consideration of factors such as wildlife needs for secure habitat, calving, etc.; snow conditions; potential impacts to resources during certain times of year; and coordination with other agencies.

What is the procedure for closing a road?

Procedures for closing a road depend on the type of road and the reason for the closure. Temporary emergency closures of system roads require that the Forest Service notify the public but do not require public involvement. Emergency closures are implemented when a responsible official determines that motor vehicle use on a system road or trail is directly causing or will directly cause considerable adverse effects on public safety, or soil, vegetation, wildlife, wildlife habitat, or cultural resources associated with that road, trail, or area. Temporary, emergency closures must remain in effect until the responsible official determines that: the adverse effects have been mitigated (that is, reduced to the point where they are not

considerable adverse effects) or eliminated; and measures have been implemented to prevent future recurrence (36 CFR 212.52(b)(2)).

More permanent closures such as conversion of an open system road (maintenance levels 2 to 5) to a closed system road (maintenance level 1), or removal of a system road through decommissioning, are considered travel management decisions. These roads have been identified as being unneeded to meet forest resource management objectives and should be decommissioned or considered for other uses, such as for trails. Travel management decisions such as these are made using the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and require public involvement.

Closing of unauthorized or user-created routes that are not part of the National Forest System of roads does not require public involvement unless restoration of the road bed to a more natural state will result in considerable disturbance to the area. In this case the activity of decommissioning may require environmental analysis under NEPA along with public involvement.

What is the process for designating a trail as motorized (from non-motorized)?

The first step in determining the whether a non-motorized trail can be designated as a motorized trail would be to determine the existing trail exists within a Forest Plan management area that allowed for motorized use as defined in the Forest Plan. If the trail exists in a management area that allows motorized use, then the proposed change in the trails designation would be analyzed in the Travel Management NEPA and authorized in the Record of Decision.

When is switch from summer to winter use (over snow vehicles vs. summer motorized)?

There is no seasonal restriction on over snow travel vs. summer motorized. Conditions on the ground typically dictate which mode of transportation can be used. Once there is enough snow for over snow vehicles to travel they are able to in areas open to over snow travel. It is the same for summer motorized. Once conditions permit vehicles to access areas open to summer motorized use they are able to travel in those areas.

Please provide clarification on motorized trails in RAREII, Grizzly PCAs?

- Inventoried Roadless Areas (RARE II): The Shoshone National Forest Land Management Plan states that “The construction, reconstruction, and maintenance of motorized trails are consistent with the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Development of such trails is guided by management area direction and the suitability designations for each management area.” In other words motorized trails can be within Inventoried Roadless Areas as long as the underlying management area allows for motorized use. A motorized trail is defined as a route 50 inches or less in width or a route over 50 inches wide that is identified and managed as a trail. (36 CFR 212.1).

- Grizzly Primary Conservation Areas (PCAs): Within PCAs there can be no net increase in the amount of roads or trails. In other words, if a motorized route is constructed within the PCA a corresponding number of miles would have to be removed (decommissioned) in the PCA.

What is the definition of sustainability referred to in the Forest Service's 2005 Travel Management Rule?

The 2005 Travel Management Rule requires the “clear identification of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use on each National Forest” that will “sustain natural resource values through more effective management of motor vehicle use.” The idea of sustainability is derived from the Forest Service's Mission statement which reads:

“The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations”