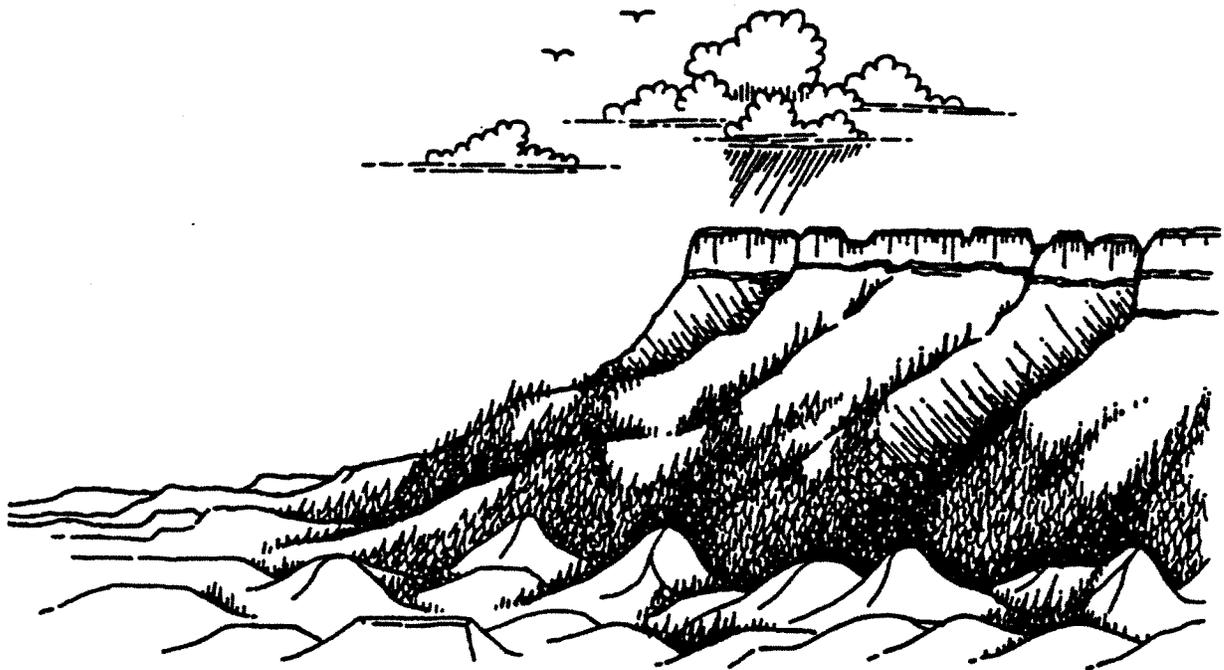


**DECISION NOTICE AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**GRAND MESA NATIONAL FOREST
TRAVEL PLAN REVISION**



**Mesa & Delta Counties
Collbran and Grand Junction Ranger Districts
Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison
National Forests**

December 1994





United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and
Gunnison National Forests

2250 Highway 50
Delta, Colorado
81416

303-874-7691

(TTY/TDD) 303-874-6660

Reply to: 1920

Date: December 12, 1994

Dear Concerned Citizen:

Enclosed is a copy of the approved **Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact** for the Grand Mesa National Forest Travel Plan Revision, which documents my decision to implement a revised travel plan for the Grand Mesa National Forest. The new travel plan is a modification of the plan proposed as Alternative 3 in the Environmental Assessment (June 1994). I feel this plan will best meet the needs of most Forest users, while protecting the environment for future generations.

My decision is based on many things. I analyzed public comment received during the past three years. I considered existing and anticipated travel demands on the Forest, in combination with the resource capabilities and the effects of different modes of travel on those resources. I reviewed travel management direction that the Forest Service must follow.

During the comment period for the June 1994 Environmental Assessment, we received nearly 1,800 letters expressing a broad diversity of concerns about the proposed travel management alternatives. The travel plan was modified as a result of public comment.

The new travel plan focuses on maintaining a network of roads and trails designed to provide a variety of travel experiences for all Forest users. A new travel map and specific use maps will be designed to make it easier and more enjoyable for travelers to use the Forest. Signing at trailheads and along routes will be improved to provide better information and education. The Forest Service will work closely with individuals and groups to implement and monitor this new travel plan.

The new travel plan is designed to be flexible and dynamic. There are opportunities in the future to add more routes to the travel system through partnerships with user groups. The Forest Service looks forward to continuing current alliances and developing new ones.

I appreciate all the interest and energy committed to this effort by so many people. It has been a long time in getting to this point. I feel we have arrived at a workable solution and I look forward to working with you on implementing this decision.

Sincerely,

ROBERT L. STORCH
Forest Supervisor



Caring for the Land and Serving People

**DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Grand Mesa National Forest
Travel Plan Revision**

Mesa and Delta Counties, Colorado

**United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service**

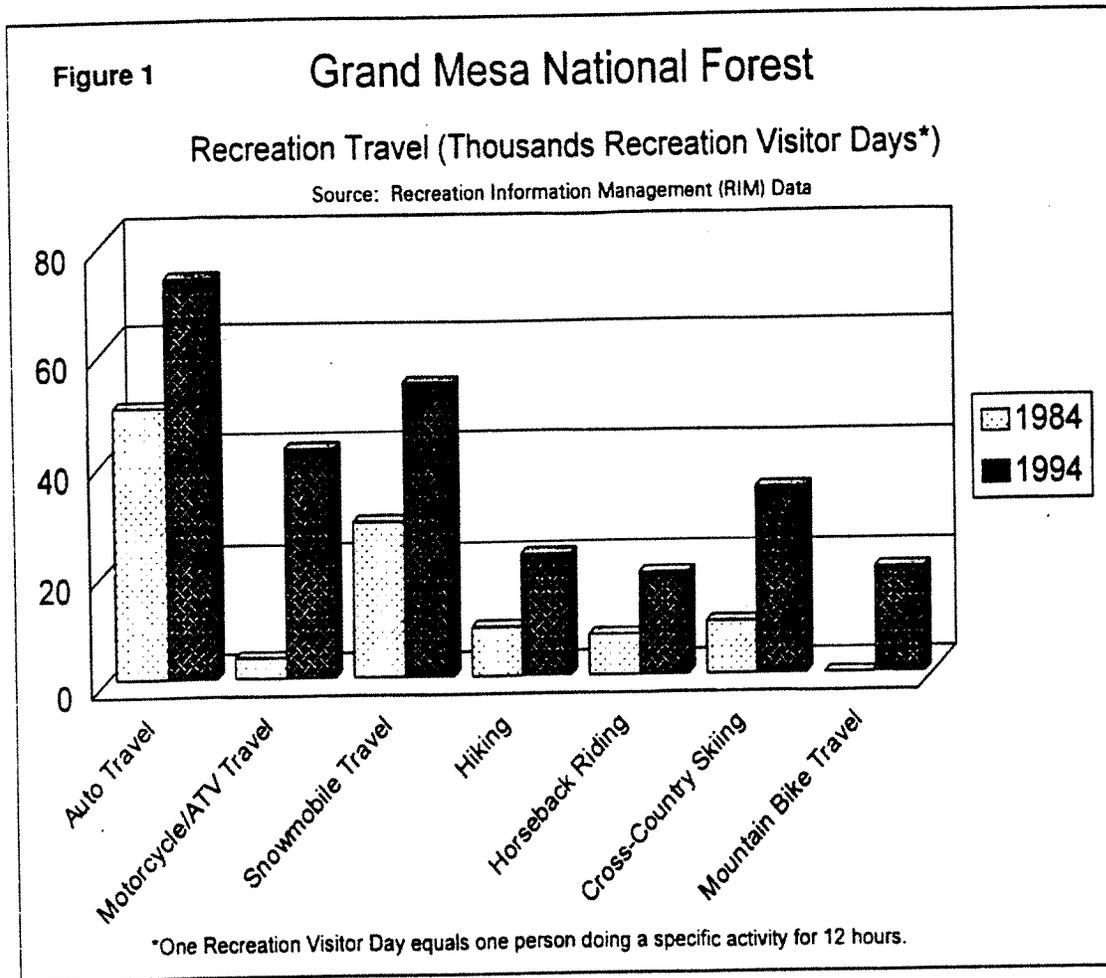
**Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and
Gunnison National Forests
Collbran and Grand Junction Ranger Districts**

Introduction

The Environmental Assessment for Grand Mesa National Forest Travel Management Plan Revision was prepared to analyze the environmental consequences of implementing a revised travel plan for the Grand Mesa National Forest. It assesses the physical, social, biological and economic factors associated with this proposal. The Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed in June 1994. (Copies of the Environmental Assessment are available for public review at the Grand Junction Ranger District Office in Grand Junction, Colorado; the Collbran Ranger District Office in Collbran, Colorado; the Forest Supervisor's Office in Delta, Colorado; and the Rocky Mountain Regional Office in Lakewood, Colorado.) Based upon my review of public comment and the analysis presented in the EA, I have decided to implement a travel plan which is a modification of Alternative 3.

The purpose for this analysis and the need for this decision is to bring travel on the Grand Mesa National Forest into compliance with direction contained in the Amended Land and Resource Management Plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests (Forest Plan) and to address the impacts of current and anticipated travel demands on the Forest. National Forest travel management must provide safe access for recreation travelers, provide a variety of recreational opportunities and support resource management (e.g. reservoir administration, timber harvest, livestock grazing, mineral exploration and development), while protecting the forest environment. The existing travel plan for the Grand Mesa National Forest, completed in 1984, no longer meets these requirements.

Since 1984 there have been significant changes in the amounts and types of travel occurring on the Grand Mesa. Traditional recreational travel (i.e. hiking, horseback riding, hunting, driving for pleasure, snowmobiling) has increased over time. In addition, new recreational travel demands have developed. Use of all terrain vehicles (ATVs) for summer trail riding, fall hunting access and dam and reservoir maintenance has developed. Mountain bike use is increasing in popularity on the Forest. With the increase in recreational travel, there is a need to develop networks of roads and trails which provide recreational opportunities for the various travelers while maintaining forest ecosystems. (See Figure 1).



Under the existing travel plan, off-route motorized travel by both standard-sized vehicles and trail vehicles (ATVs and motorcycles) is allowed on approximately half of the Grand Mesa National Forest. As a result of increased motorized travel, there has been an increase in off-route travel and the development of unplanned and unauthorized routes. The public and Forest managers have expressed concerns about the proliferation of new routes being created by repeated use resulting in impacts to vegetation, soils and riparian areas; increased habitat fragmentation; loss of solitude in the backcountry; and reduced hunting quality.

The current travel map was developed in 1984 and is no longer accurate; some major routes have been relocated, new routes have been created and are not shown on the map, some routes have been closed. A new, updated travel map is needed. There is also a need to develop maps targeted for specific user groups (currently maps for cross-country skiers and snowmobilers are available). Improved signing and more information on proper use ethics are needed to assist in travel compliance and to improve user cooperation.

Travel management on the Grand Mesa National Forest has attracted much interest and comment from a large number of individuals with a wide range of personal values and desires. It has been a difficult process to balance the diverse needs for recreational travel opportunities with resource capabilities.

This decision will begin a dynamic process to manage travel on the Grand Mesa National Forest. It will be reviewed annually, to determine how well it meets management objectives, and adjusted as necessary.

My Decision

I have decided to implement a revised travel plan for the Grand Mesa National Forest. This plan is a modification of Alternative 3 (Preferred Action) as presented in the EA. As a result of this decision, travel management will include:

Motorized travel on the Grand Mesa National Forest will be restricted to designated roads and trails (see Road and Trail Map 3 and tables in EA Appendix E), with the following exceptions:

- A. Where developed parking sites are not provided (for camping, trailheads, fuelwood gathering), off-route travel to a suitable parking site within 300 feet of the roadway is allowed; unless expressly prohibited. Such travel must not damage the land or streams and no live trees may be cut.
- B. Approximately 37,100 acres (11% of the Grand Mesa National Forest) will continue to be closed yearlong to all motorized travel:
 1. Alkali/Kannah Creek/Whitewater Basin is closed to protect municipal watersheds (Grand Junction), moderate and high geologic hazard areas, and big game winter range. [NOTE: The Lands End Road and designated spurs will remain open to motorized travel.]
 2. The area west of Mesa Lakes is closed for public safety. (This area is within the Powderhorn Ski Area permit.)
- C. Snowmobile travel on snow will not be restricted over most of the Forest, with the following exceptions (see Winter Travel Management Map 1):
 1. Snowmobile travel is not allowed in areas closed all year to all motorized travel (see B. above).
 2. The lower Lands End Road portion of the Alkali/Kannah Creek/Whitewater Basin planning area and the Mud Hill/Road Gulch/Hightower area will continue to be closed to protect big game on winter range. Closure dates are dependent on snow conditions and presence of animals (average closure dates November 15 - May 1). (Areas identified as 1 on Winter Travel Map.) [NOTE: Closure dates will be posted and announced through news releases and visitor contacts, annually.]
 3. Snowmobile travel will be restricted to designated routes within elk calving areas and spring transition range on Battlement Mesa and the northern slopes of Grand Mesa, beginning approximately April 15, each year. (Areas identified as 2 on Winter Travel Map.) Prior to the spring closure, snowmobile travel will not be restricted in these areas.
 4. The Sunnyside portion of the Battlement Mesa area will be closed to snowmobile travel to protect bighorn sheep winter range and to become consistent with travel management on the White River National Forest adjacent to this area. Approximate closure dates will be November 15 through May 1. (Area identified as 1 on Winter Travel Map.) [NOTE: Modification to alternative 3.]
 5. Indian Point will be open to snowmobile travel after November 15. This new restriction is designed to eliminate conflicts between motorized and non-motorized hunters during big game hunting season. (Area identified as 3 on Winter Travel Map.) [NOTE: Modification to alternative 3.]

- D. During big game hunting seasons motorized trail vehicles (ATVs, motorcycles) will be allowed to travel off-route on approximately 80,280 acres (see Area Designation Map 2) of the Forest, ONLY to retrieve downed game between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. The Forest Service will monitor this activity for three years (a Monitoring Plan will be developed as part of the Implementation Schedule), to determine compliance with the time period, check whether off-route motorized travel is used only for retrieval and not for hunting access, and determine if resource damage is occurring as a result of the off-route travel. Hunters will be encouraged to not carry firearms when retrieving game, and to have their voided big game license tag with them. The Forest Service will also monitor to determine if there are shifts in hunter use into or away from the areas where off-route motorized travel for retrieval will be allowed.

[NOTE: The time period when off-route motorized travel will be allowed for game retrieval purposes has been changed (originally 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.) to reduce conflict with the prime afternoon/early evening hunting period, and to prevent meat spoilage which may result if retrieval is delayed until after noon. The three-year monitoring period was added to evaluate this management.]

- E. All special use permittees and easement holders (i.e. water users, livestock operators, utility companies, etc.) will have continued access to their approved operations/facilities. The Forest Service will not deny access for permit/easement holders; but the agency has the responsibility to regulate access just as it does in logging operations or mineral exploration/development operations. The Forest Service can direct where access routes will be and how they will be maintained and operated.

All roads and trails used as permittee access will become part of the forest transportation system. Some routes may be closed to public motorized travel and will be signed, "Authorized Traffic Only". In addition, signs will detail what public access is allowed.

Under many existing permits (ex. grazing permits, ditch bill easements) operators are required to submit an annual operating plan to the Forest Service for approval. These annual operating plans need to outline what work will be done, when and how it will be done and who will do it. Access routes that will be used are also identified in annual operating plans. [NOTE: Annual Operating Plan is usually a one page document.]

If a permittee requires a different mode of transportation than is allowed the general public, the Forest Service will issue a Road Use Permit, at no charge. Road Use Permits detail operation and maintenance responsibilities. If a permittee needs to upgrade a road or trail to allow heavy equipment access for major repairs or reconstruction of their facilities, they will be responsible for road construction/reconstruction.

The Forest Service will work with individual permittees where annual operating plans and/or Road Use Permits are necessary.

When permittees are traveling in restricted areas, they will need to carry copies of their annual operating plans and/or road use permits.

Emergency access to water storage and transmission facilities is exempt from travel restrictions.

Fuelwood gathering is also done under special permit. Unless the permit allows for special travel, fuelwood gatherers must follow all travel regulations. (i.e. Off-route travel to a suitable parking area within 300 feet of a roadway is allowed. This travel must not result in resource damage.)

- F. State dam inspectors and water commissioners (State employees) are exempt from travel restrictions when acting in their official capacities (which may include off-route travel). To minimize potential resource damage, the Forest Service will work with the State Engineer and water commissioners to coordinate the routes they will use. State employees will need to carry State employee identification when acting in their official capacities.
- G. Any Federal, State or local officer or member of an organized rescue or fire fighting force can use motorized access for emergency reasons in areas closed to public motorized travel or where motorized travel is restricted to designated routes, in the performance of an official duty.

Non-motorized travel (hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking) will not be restricted except on trails specifically designated for certain types of use (ex: Crag Crest Upper Loop for hikers only, Land of Lakes overlook for hikers and wheelchairs only, inter-campground trail system for hikers). Non-motorized travelers will be encouraged to remain on established routes.

The Forest transportation system will consist of approximately 322 open miles and 70 administratively closed miles of Forest Development Roads, 198 miles of motorized and 119 miles of non-motorized Forest Development Trails. (See tables in EA Appendix E.) Some Forest Development roads and trails will be redesignated for different modes of travel:

- 3 miles low standard roads to motorized trails,
- 24 miles primitive roads to motorized trails,
- 5 miles motorized trail to motorcycle trail,
- 18 miles motorized trail to non-motorized trail,
- 3 miles non-motorized trail to motorized trail.

Sections of some existing Forest Development roads will be closed:

- 5 miles low standard roads,
- 8 miles primitive roads.

Approximately 28 miles of nonsystem routes will be incorporated into the system as motorized trails.

New trails will be constructed:

- 4 miles new motorized trail to form connections for loop networks,
- 2 miles new motorcycle trail.

[NOTE: Additional environmental analysis (NEPA) will be completed to evaluate site-specific consequences before nonsystem routes can be incorporated into the system or any new construction can occur. A minimum of one year is needed to meet NEPA requirements.]

Approximately 299 miles of user-developed trails will be inventoried as nonsystem travelways, rehabilitated and closed.

Access to 25 lake and reservoir fisheries will be restricted to non-motorized methods (a change from 28 lakes and reservoirs - see EA Appendix F and EA Errata). Motorized access is within 1 mile of a majority (16) of these fisheries.

Designated open roads and trails will be signed on the ground and depicted on a new Travel Map. Maps specifically designed for different types of travelers will be developed in cooperation with various organizations.

Implementation of the revised travel plan will be done over time. Staffing and budget constraints will dictate how quickly changes will occur. Individual actions will be prioritized and listed in the Implementation Schedule, which details map development, maintenance, reconstruction, signing, monitoring, public involvement, and public education actions.

Informational signing at major public contact points (i.e. campgrounds, trailheads, visitor centers, parking areas, etc.) and along roads and trails will be improved to more clearly explain what routes are open to what types of travel and why. Areas with limitations or closures will have signs explaining the reason(s). (A Sign Plan will be developed as part of the Implementation Plan.)

Through cooperative volunteer agreements and through individual visitor contacts, we will ask the public to assist in monitoring efforts. This would include gathering information about clarity/quality and condition of signs, adequacy of recreational travel opportunities, compliance with travel regulations.

The transportation system that will be developed under this decision is designed to be dynamic. There are opportunities to increase the transportation system mileage. New routes may be proposed by Forest managers and/or user groups. They must meet travel management objectives and comply with Forest Plan direction. Site-specific environmental analysis will be required. When additional routes are approved they will be constructed as resources become available. The Forest Service will actively seek partnerships and/or cooperative agreements to help accomplish this.

Elements of this decision are also listed under Actions Common to All Alternatives and Actions Common to Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 on pages 12 through 15. Mitigation and monitoring measures discussed on pages 36 through 38 are also part of this decision.

Public Involvement

Planning and analysis efforts concerning travel management on the Grand Mesa National Forest have been ongoing since 1989. Extensive public involvement has occurred through requests for written comment, public meetings, open houses and public review of environmental analysis documentation.

Public scoping began in 1989 with the Forest Service seeking input from Grand Junction area motorized user groups, local Division of Wildlife personnel, Colorado Water Division 3 personnel and livestock permittees. Public meetings were held in June 1990 in Cedaredge, Grand Junction and Collbran to gain additional input and comment on a Forest Service proposal. An Environmental Assessment was completed analyzing the existing travel management and a proposed action (referred to in this Decision Notice and associated EA as the "1991 Plan"). A decision to select the 1991 Plan alternative was made in May 1991. This decision was appealed by nine motorized user organizations. Unsuccessful attempts were made to resolve the appeals. The decision was withdrawn in September 1991.

In an effort to gain a broader base of information on which to analyze travel management, another public involvement process was begun. A working group consisting of representatives from eight different user groups and Forest Service personnel was convened and met bi-monthly between December 1991 and September 1992. Meetings were advertised in local media and open to the general public. Written comments were also solicited and accepted from the general public. Minutes from meetings were mailed to approximately 250 interested persons. The working group reviewed and discussed resource data, and public issues and concerns. The group provided information that the Forest Service considered in developing alternatives. The working group adjourned in January 1993.

A Forest Service interdisciplinary team evaluated public comment and resource information and developed three alternatives (including a preferred alternative) for travel management on the Grand Mesa National Forest. This analysis was documented in a second EA which was released in September 1993 for a 60 day comment period (extended to 105 days).

Five open houses were conducted in Delta, Grand Junction, Mesa, Denver and Cedaredge to provide interested citizens the opportunity to discuss travel management with forest personnel. In addition, 2,567 comment letters were received during the comment period. Appendix B to the EA contains a summary of these comments.

As part of the public comment received on the September 1993 EA, a fourth alternative was proposed by Thunder Mountain Wheelers, an off-highway vehicle user organization.

The extensive public comment received on the September 1993 EA resulted in further analysis, which was documented in the EA released in June 1994. The alternative proposed by Thunder Mountain Wheelers was added as a fourth alternative. The preferred alternative proposed by the Forest Service was modified. Discussions on environmental, social and economic consequences of all four alternatives were greatly expanded. The June 1994 EA was released for a 30 day comment period, which was extended another 30 days until September 14, 1994.

The June 1994 EA drew responses from 1,784 individuals and organizations. Each comment was analyzed and like comments were grouped together. Appendix G (to the EA, part of the EA Errata) lists the summarized comments and responses to those comments.

Alternatives Considered

The June 1994 EA evaluated the consequences of four travel management alternatives. They include:

Alternative 1 (No Action)

National Environmental Policy Act regulations require the Forest Service to study the No Action alternative in detail, as a baseline for comparing the effects of other alternatives (40 CFR 1502.14(d) and Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, 23.1). The No Action alternative would be a continuation of the current Travel Plan, which has been in affect since 1984. The current Travel Map depicts travel regulations with any additional modifications (specific road and/or area closures) being listed in the Travel Availability Guide (updated three times a year). The current level of road and trail maintenance would continue within annual budget constraints.

Under this alternative approximately 49% of the Grand Mesa National Forest (173,200 acres) is open all year to motorized vehicles on and off Forest Development roads and trails. On approximately 40% of the Forest (140,800 acres) motorized travel is restricted to designated roads and trails (does not apply to snowmobiles traveling on snow). Approximately 11% (37,700 acres) of the Forest is closed to all forms of motorized access on or off roads and trails. Some of the motorized closures are seasonal in nature (e.g. closures to all motorized activities exist along the lower Lands End Road and northwest of Hightower Mountain to protect big game on winter range). Some closures to motorized travel are yearlong (e.g. Alkali/Kannah Creek/Whitewater Basin, Mesa Lakes and Coon/Bull/Cottonwood area north of Twin Basin Reservoir).

Non-motorized travelers (hikers, horseback riders, mountain bikers) are not restricted in any areas; however, the upper loop of the Crag Crest Trail, Land of Lakes Trail, and inter-campground trails are designated for hikers, only.

The current transportation system consists of approximately 349 open miles and 71 administratively closed miles of Forest Development Roads, 152 miles of motorized and 104 miles of non-motorized Forest Development Trails. In addition approximately 327 miles of user-developed trails not included as part of the Forest transportation system have been identified. Approximately 60 miles of these trails need to be rehabilitated and closed; in the areas open to off-route travel, 267 miles are not necessary for the protection, administration and utilization of the National Forest or the use and development of its resources. They would be inventoried as nonsystem travelways.

The No Action alternative is described in the EA on pages 16 through 19. Elements of the No Action alternative are also listed under Actions Common to All Alternatives on pages 12 and 13. Mitigation and monitoring measures discussed on pages 36 through 38 are also part of this alternative.

Alternative 2 (1991 Travel Plan)

This alternative is the proposed action identified in the 1991 EA and was the selected alternative in the 1991 Decision Notice (that was subsequently appealed and withdrawn). This alternative was reevaluated in the September 1993 and June 1994 EAs because it provided a reasonable alternative to meet many travel management objectives outlined in the Forest Plan.

Under the 1991 Travel Plan approximately 35,200 acres would be open all year to motorized trail vehicles (less than 48 inches wide) on and off Forest Development roads and trails. Approximately 51,600 acres would be open year-round to all motorized vehicles on and off Forest Development roads and trails (resulting in 25% or 86,800 acres open to off-route motorized travel). On approximately 65% of the Forest (230,900 acres) motorized travel would be restricted to designated roads and trails (except for snowmobiles traveling on snow); and approximately 10% (34,000 acres) of the Forest would be closed to all forms of motorized access on or off roads and trails. Seasonal closures to motorized travel in big game winter ranges would be the same as Alternative 1. Year-round closures to motorized travel would continue in the Alkali/Kannah Creek/Whitewater Basin and Mesa Lakes areas. The current year-round closure area north of Twin Basin Reservoir would be changed to allow motorized travel on designated open routes through the area.

Non-motorized travelers (hikers, horseback riders, mountain bikers) would not be restricted in any areas; however, the upper loop of the Crag Crest Trail, the Land of Lakes Trail, and inter-campground trails would remain designated for hikers, only.

The transportation system under Alternative 2 would be developed by redesignating some Forest Development roads and trails for different types of travel, closing sections of existing Forest Development roads, and incorporating routes currently not part of the transportation system into the system. Under alternative 2 there would be approximately 311 open miles and 78 administratively closed miles of Forest Development Roads, 169 miles of motorized and 127 miles of non-motorized Forest Development Trails. In addition approximately 139 miles of trails not included as part of the Forest transportation system would be inventoried as nonsystem travelways; 188 miles of nonsystem routes would be rehabilitated and closed.

Alternative 2 is described in the EA on pages 19 through 23. Elements of this alternative are also listed under Actions Common to All Alternatives and Actions Common to Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 on pages 12 through 15. Mitigation and monitoring measures discussed on pages 36 through 38 are also part of this alternative.

Alternative 3 Preferred Alternative

Alternative 3 was developed, modified and recommended by the interdisciplinary team, based on environmental concerns, management direction and public comment received between early 1990 and September 1994.

Under this alternative, motorized travel would be allowed only on designated roads and trails on the Grand Mesa National Forest, with two seasonal exceptions. As with Alternative 2, 10% (34,100 acres) of the Forest would be closed to all motorized travel in the Alkali/Kannah Creek/Whitewater Basin and Mesa Lakes planning areas. There would no longer be a motorized closure in the Coon/Bull/Cottonwood planning area, but motorized travel would be restricted to a designated open trail. Elsewhere on the Forest travel by motorized vehicles would not be permitted off designated routes, with the exceptions of snowmobiles traveling over snow (where not specifically restricted) and off-route travel by motorized trail vehicles to retrieve downed game during hunting seasons in select areas.

Non-motorized travelers would not be restricted in any areas except where routes are designated for hikers only (i.e. Upper loop Crag Crest Trail, Land of Lakes Trail, inter-campground connecting trails).

The transportation system under this alternative would be developed by redesignating some Forest Development roads and trails for different types of travel, closing sections of existing Forest Development roads, and incorporating some nonsystem routes into the transportation system. This would result in approximately 322 miles of open roads and 70 miles of administratively closed Forest Development Roads, 198 miles of motorized and 119 miles of non-motorized Forest Development Trails. Approximately 299 miles of user-developed trails would be inventoried as nonsystem travelways, rehabilitated and closed.

Alternative 3 is described in the EA on pages 23 through 29. Elements of this alternative are also listed under Actions Common to All Alternatives and Actions Common to Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 on pages 12 through 15. Mitigation and monitoring measures discussed on pages 36 through 38 are also part of this alternative. [NOTE: As a result of comment received on the June 1994 EA, modifications to this alternative have been made and are described in The Decision section above.]

Alternative 4 (Thunder Mountain Wheelers Proposal)

Alternative 4 was submitted for consideration by Thunder Mountain Wheelers, an off-highway vehicle user group based in Delta, Colorado, during the comment period for the September 1993 EA. After review, the interdisciplinary team recommended this alternative be evaluated as part of the reasonable range of alternatives.

Under this alternative, only the Alkali/Kannah Creek/Whitewater Basin area (30,800 acres) would be closed to all forms of motorized travel, all year. The remaining 314,600 acres of the Grand Mesa National Forest would be open to all travelers (motorized and non-motorized), who would be encouraged to confine their activities to existing roads and trails.

There would be no changes to existing travel regulations for snowmobiles operating over snow.

Separate travel management techniques would be applied during high use periods, such as hunting season. Special closures orders or restrictions to prevent resource damage could be applied to specific areas, for specific seasons, as needs are identified and documented. This could include restricting motorized travel to existing roads and trails, or allowing off-route motorized travel for downed game retrieval during specific hours.

All existing system and user-developed roads and trails would comprise the transportation system under alternative 4. Initially all trails would be open to hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking and motorized trail vehicles (ATVs and motorcycles), with the exception of trails currently designated for hikers only. Some trails would be identified as special category trails more appropriate for a given mode of travel, but this would not prohibit or exclude use by other types of travelers.

This alternative would have approximately 404 open miles and 1 administratively closed mile of Forest Development Roads, 203 miles of motorized and 101 miles of non-motorized Forest Development Trails. In addition, there would be 299 miles of nonsystem trails open to both motorized and non-motorized travel.

Alternative 4 is described in the EA on pages 29 through 33. Elements of this alternative are also listed under Actions Common to All Alternatives and Actions Common to Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 on pages 12 through 15. Mitigation and monitoring measures discussed on pages 36 through 38 are also part of this alternative.

Reasons For My Decision

I arrived at my decision to revise travel management on the Grand Mesa National Forest by reviewing Forest Service policies and regulations that were developed in response to numerous laws. The preferred alternative, including modifications in this decision, complies with all travel management direction.

I considered the trends in recreational travel that have been occurring on the Grand Mesa National Forest and I reexamined the analysis of environmental consequences of that travel; including past, present and potential future effects. The selected travel management alternative will provide the best protection for the various resources on the Grand Mesa National Forest while still meeting the existing and expected future demands for all uses.

I reviewed public comment received throughout the entire planning and analysis process (since 1989). I could not have made a decision that would satisfy everyone. However, I did make modifications in response to public comment, where those modifications met the Forest Plan goals for travel management on the Grand Mesa National Forest. I feel my decision best meets the demands for access to this Forest and will maintain or improve the natural resources found there.

More specifically, the reasons for my decision include:

Applicable Laws, Regulations and Policies

The selected travel management alternative (with modifications) is in compliance with the following laws, regulations and policies:

A. National Forest Roads and Trails Act of October 13, 1964 as amended (16 U.S.C. 532-538, P.L. 88-657):

Recognizes that construction and maintenance of an adequate system of roads and trails within and near National Forests is essential to meeting the increasing demands for timber, recreation and other uses.

Authorizes and establishes procedures related to rights-of-ways, easements, construction and maintenance (including requirements for road maintenance and reconstruction).

B. Highway Safety Act of 1966 (23 U.S.C. 402, P.L. 89-564):

Directs design, construction and maintenance of roads in accordance with safety standards, directs sound traffic control principles and standards.

C. National Trails System Act of October 2, 1968 (16 U.S.C. 1241-1249, P.L. 90-543):

Establishes a National Trail System for the purpose of providing trail recreation opportunities.

Prescribes administrative and development matters.

(Applies to Crag Crest National Recreational Trail, Crag Crest National Recreation Ski Trail [County Line Cross-Country Ski Trail] and proposed American Discovery Trail)

D. National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321, 4331-4335, 4341-4346, 4346a-b, 4347, P.L. 91-190):

National charter for protection of the environment.

Directs all Federal agencies to evaluate the consequences of Federal actions on human environment by using an interdisciplinary approach, seeking public participation, developing and considering alternatives and disclosing the effects.

E. Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (5 U.S.C. App. 2, P.L. 92-463):

Sets guidelines and procedures to establish advisory committees to Federal agencies.

[NOTE: We received comments that asserted formation of the working group violated this act. The Federal Advisory Committee Act was designed to help "level the playing field" to keep individuals or groups from getting special treatment from the Federal government, and to help ensure equal access for all. As an agency that implements public policy, the Forest Service must be fair, open and balanced in all of its relationships with the public.

Given the breadth and depth of public comment and involvement in this process, my decision in this matter would not have differed substantially if the working group had not convened. Limited solutions are available to resolve the problems addressed by the Travel Plan.

The alternatives considered and ultimately recommended to me came from an interdisciplinary team of Federal employees who hold credentials in their scientific fields. They based their consideration on information received from all sources, the best available data, and their knowledge of the capacity of natural resources to accommodate travel demands.]

F. Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1536, 1538-1540, P.L. 93-205):

Directs that actions authorized, funded or carried out by Federal agencies cannot jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of their critical habitats.

G. Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1601, P.L. 93-378) as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1608, P.L. 94-588):

Directs the design of roads to standards appropriate for intended modes of travel and prescribes the revegetation of unnecessary roads.

H. Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701-1702, 1711-1723, 1732-1737, 1740-1742, 1744, 1746-1748, 1751, 1753, 1761-1771, 1781-1782, P.L. 94-579):

Establishes policy for Federal land acquisition and disposal, and administration of use, occupancy and development of Federal lands (ex: mining, grazing, rights-of-way, etc.).

[NOTE: We received numerous comments concerning Revised Statute 2477 (RS 2477) which originated in the 1866 Mining Law granting rights-of-way over public lands for highways. FLPMA repealed this statute; however rights that existed under this statute prior to reservation of the National Forest Reserves or a National Forest may still be claimed by a public entity (i.e. city, county, state). To claim a right, the right-of-way must, 1) have been in existence prior to the establishment of the forest reserve (Grand Mesa National Forest was reserved as part of the Battlement Mesa Reserve in 1892), 2) have been constructed or used, and 3) accepted as part of a transportation system by a public entity (for maintenance and liability reasons). To date, no claims under RS 2477 have been made on the Grand Mesa National Forest.]

H. Executive Order 11644 as amended by Executive Order 11989 (May 25, 1977)
Use of Off-Road Vehicles on the Public Lands:

Establishes policies that will ensure that the use of off-road vehicles on public lands will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands, to promote the safety of all users, and to minimize conflicts among the various users.

I. Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1978 as amended (23 U.S.C. 101a, 201-205, P.L. 95-599 and 97-424):

Establishes criteria for forest highways and defines forest roads and forest development roads and trails.

J. Executive Order 12630 (March 15, 1988) Governmental Actions and Interference with Constitutionally Protected Property Rights:

Provides that private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation. Directs agencies to evaluate actions that may result in a loss of private property with a Takings Implication Assessment.

[NOTE: We received several requests to complete a Takings Implication Assessment on the Grand Mesa National Forest Travel Plan as it would relate to impacts to off-road vehicle businesses. Prior to my decision, I reviewed the provisions of Executive Order 12630 of March 15, 1988. Subsequently, I concluded that the Grand Mesa National Forest Travel Plan is primarily related to planning activities and is, therefore, exempt from the provisions of the Executive Order pursuant to Section 2(c)(4) of said Order.]

K. Americans with Disabilities Act of July 26, 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101-12102, 12111-12117, 12131-12134, 12181-12185, 12187-12189, 12201-12208, 12210-12211, P.L. 101-336):

Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in the private sector and in state and local governments concerning employment, public accommodations, services and transportation.

[NOTE: Revising travel management on the Grand Mesa National Forest will not result in any actions which fall under the ADA. However, the principles of the ADA were considered in developing the management strategy that will be implemented as a result of this decision. Networks of roads and trails will provide recreation opportunities for persons with disabilities equal to those without similar limitations. The areas where off-route motorized trail vehicles may be used for downed game retrieval during big game hunting seasons were established in part to provide opportunities for elderly and/or disabled hunters to retrieve game with motorized vehicles. There is opportunity for individuals to request authorization to use specialized equipment in areas where resource damage will not occur as a result. Separate from but related to travel management, the Forest Service is required to provide accessible facilities under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 791, 793-794, P.L. 93-112).]

L. Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 212 (Administration of the Forest Development Transportation System), 219 (National Forest System Land and Resource Management Planning), 261 (Prohibitions), 295 (Use of Motor Vehicles off Forest Development Roads)

M. Policy and direction in Forest Service Manual 1922 (Forest Planning), 2353 (Forest Development Trails), 2355 (Off-road Vehicle Use Management), 7703 (Transportation System Policy), 7710 (Transportation Planning), 7730 (Transportation System Operation and Maintenance) and Forest Service Handbooks 1909.12 (Land and Resource Management Planning), 1909.15 (National Environmental Policy Act Procedures), 2309.18 (Trails Management), 7709.55 (Transportation Planning).

N. Colorado Revised Statute Section 33-14.5-108 (Off-highway Vehicle Law):

Unlicensed motorized vehicles may not be operated on the public streets, roads or highways except when the street, road or highway is designated open by the State, the United States or any agency thereof.

[NOTE: As part of my decision, all 192 miles of unsurfaced roads (low standard and primitive roads) and 24 miles of graveled roads will be designated as open to unlicensed motorized vehicles (ATVs, trail motorcycles) to provide linkages and loops with existing motorized trails to increase the recreational opportunities for these travelers.]

We received comments claiming the proposed travel plan revision was in violation of additional laws (i.e. Pre-emption Laws, Equal Footing Doctrine of the Northwest Ordinance of 1789, Prior Appropriation Doctrine, Homestead Act of 1866, Colorado House Joint Resolution 94-1035 and Colorado Senate Bill 94-157). These laws do not pertain to the actions that will occur as a result of revising travel management on the Grand Mesa National Forest.

Environmental Issues

Environmental issues were identified through internal and external scoping and through additional comment on the environmental analysis conducted to evaluate alternatives. (Environmental issues are listed on pages 9 through 11 of the EA, and in the summaries of public comment in Appendix B to the EA and Appendix G in the EA Errata.) Issues identified which elements of the environment were of particular concern related to travel management. The consequences of each alternative on each element of the environment are disclosed on pages 38 through 90 of the EA.

As a result of implementing my decision (alternative 3 with modifications):

- A. Cultural resources will receive increased protection. (See EA page 39.)
- B. Soil resources will be protected by restricting motorized travel to designated routes. (See EA pages 40 and 63-64.)
- C. Water quality will be protected by restricting motorized travel to designated routes. (See EA pages 41 and 63-64.)
- D. Impacts to vegetation from off-route travel will be reduced. (See EA pages 42 and 64.)
- E. Restricting motorized travel to designated routes will reduce impacts to fisheries, aquatic and riparian resources forest-wide. Changes in use patterns may result in increased use at localized areas (ex: lakes and reservoirs more easily accessed will receive more use than areas with only non-motorized access). Through improved signing and public information, we hope to redistribute recreation use to reduce potential impacts. (See EA pages 43 and 65.)
- F. Wildlife habitat diversity will be improved, over time, as a result of this decision. Nonsystem routes that will not be incorporated into the transportation system will receive reduced travel. The likelihood of new unauthorized routes being developed will decline. Both will result in less habitat fragmentation. (See EA pages 45 and 66-67.)
- G. Bighorn sheep habitat will be protected in the Sunnyside portion of the Battlement Mesa by restricting motorized travel to the Sunnyside (FDR 274) and Kimball (FDR 275) Roads and closing the area to snowmobile travel between November 15 through May 1.
- H. Known habitat for threatened, endangered and sensitive species will be protected. (See EA pages 49 and 68.)

- I. Demands for dispersed recreation outside Wilderness will be met by providing transportation networks and opportunities for different travelers. Table 7, EA page 35 lists the miles of roads and trails that will be available as a result of this decision. Additional roads or trails may be added to the transportation system over time. Forest managers and/or user groups may propose additional routes that would provide recreational travel opportunities. If proposed routes are determined to meet travel management objectives and Forest Plan guidelines, they will be added to the system as resources become available (to complete NEPA analysis, construction and maintenance).
- J. All existing recreational travel can be continued under this decision, with the exception of motorized travel off roads or trails. [NOTE: Off-route travel by snowmobiles over snow will be allowed over the majority of the forest - see Winter Travel Management Map 1.] Some travelers may shift their use from one area to another to continue their desired recreational pastimes, but the opportunities to recreate will still be available.

Factors Other than Environmental Consequences

In addition to environmental considerations, I arrived at this decision by considering other factors - many of which are based on public comment received on the EA. Some of these comments have resulted in modifications to the preferred alternative, as presented in the EA. The factors other than environmental consequences which I considered include:

- A. Many who commented felt allowing off-route motorized access to retrieve downed game was preferential treatment for hunters. There are also many hunters who specifically purchased ATVs or other vehicles to aid in their hunting. As a compromise to those hunters who want to use ATVs for off-route game retrieval, areas have been set aside where limited off-route travel can occur (see Map 2). These areas have soil types, vegetation and terrain which are less likely to be impacted by limited off-route motorized travel. (Travel should not take place if damage to soil, water or vegetative resources will occur.) A three year monitoring period will allow us to determine whether off-route travel in these areas results in resource damage.
- B. Comments received from the Colorado Division of Wildlife and other individuals indicated that the original time period proposed for allowing off-route motorized access to retrieve downed game (12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m.) may conflict with the prime afternoon hunting period. This would not meet the intent to reduce conflict between motorized and non-motorized hunters. Also delaying motorized access until 12:00 noon may result in meat spoilage if an animal is downed early in the day. Changing the time when off-route motorized trail vehicles may be used to access downed game to 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. would reduce conflicts with non-motorized hunters and may result in less meat spoilage by allowing earlier access.
- C. Travel management should be consistent across administrative boundaries. Motorized travel is restricted to designated routes on the White River National Forest along the common boundary with the Grand Mesa National Forest, for most of the year. The White River National Forest is closed to motorized travel between the Sunnyside Road FDR 274 and Kimball Road FDR 275, and between Mud Hill and Reno Mountain. Currently, off-route travel is allowed on the Grand Mesa National Forest (except the Battlement Mesa area) along most of this common boundary.

My decision will make travel management more consistent between the White River and Grand Mesa National Forests because motorized travel will be restricted to designated routes for most of the year. Potential conflicts may continue along the common forest boundary between Hightower Mountain and Spruce Mountain during big game hunting seasons and in the winter. Off-route motorized travel for downed game retrieval and off-route snowmobile travel (until approximately April 15) will be allowed to occur in this area.

I have decided not to further restrict seasonal off-route travel between Hightower Mountain and Spruce Mountain, for several reasons. Off-route travel for game retrieval is expected to be much less than what is currently occurring in this area. We should be able to identify whether off-route travel is crossing onto the White River during the three year monitoring period and can make future adjustments, if necessary. This area is not big game winter range and does not warrant off-route restrictions to snowmobiles. The area is transition range and includes calving areas. During the period animals may be in this area, snowmobile travel will be restricted to designated routes (after April 15).

- D. This decision modifies alternative three as presented in the EA by making access roads and trails traveled by permittees (ex. water users, livestock owners, etc.) part of the transportation system. Some access routes may not be open to motorized travel by the general public and will be marked for "Authorized Traffic Only". This will result in less impact to permittees who would have had to get additional permits under the preferred alternative presented in the EA. As described above (page 4), the Forest Service will work with individual permittees to insure their continued access to their permitted areas/facilities.
- E. Many concerns were expressed about whether the Forest Service can enforce new travel regulations. This is a legitimate concern given the decreasing budgets and reductions in staffing the agency is experiencing. We will need the assistance of forest users to insure compliance. Through public information and education efforts (user club contacts, individual contacts, improved signing, improved maps) we hope to increase knowledge in resource management and proper use ethics. As so many people commented, "This is the public's National Forest and you will need the public's help in managing it."
- F. Similarly, there are concerns about the ability of the Forest Service to maintain a transportation system. Budget constraints limit the number of roads/trails that can be maintained, so funds will be focused where they will be most cost efficient and effective. Routes that require a high cost to be repaired and/or relocated will have a lower priority than routes that are designed to handle the use and are more easily maintained. Nonsystem routes that cannot be maintained, or do not serve a need (i.e. only access route to a given area) were not incorporated into the transportation system.

A national program is being developed which will emphasize user satisfaction, quality service and prioritize maintenance of recreational facilities, including trails and trailheads. This Forest is recognized as the leader in the total development of this program. Within the component of trails and trailheads, forest-wide priorities are being developed and trail managers are establishing "Standards of Quality" and determining the costs to achieve these standards. This information will be used to develop individual and forest-wide costs for the operation and maintenance of the trail and trailhead program.

- G. Alternative funding sources may be available for road and trail maintenance. Off-highway vehicle registration fees are collected by the State of Colorado to be used for maintaining off-highway vehicle routes. As part of this decision, 24 miles of graveled roads, 192 miles of low standard and primitive roads and 198 miles of motorized trails will be designated as off-highway vehicle routes; and will be eligible to receive State funding. Funding requests must be made by user groups. The Forest Service looks forward to continuing and increasing cooperative efforts with local user groups to expand the use of these funds.
- H. There has been an increase in recreational travel on the Forest (see EA Errata Appendix H), and we anticipate this to continue over time. Travel needs to be accommodated. The road and trail networks that will make up the transportation system were designed to provide a range of opportunities for recreational travelers. Additional opportunities may be identified that will meet travel management objectives, and the transportation system may be expanded through partnerships and cooperative efforts between the Forest Service and other agencies and organizations.

Environmental Documents Reviewed

In addition to the environmental analyses provided in the December 1990 EA, the May 1991 Decision, September 1993 EA and June 1994 EA; I also considered information presented in:

- A. Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Amended Land and Resource Management Plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, 1991
- B. Amended Land and Resource Management Plan for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, 1991
- C. Final Oil and Gas Leasing Environmental Impact Statement for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, April 1993
- D. Long Slough Environmental Assessment and Decision Notice, 1987

Finding Of No Significant Impact

I have reviewed the Environmental Assessment to determine whether this action would have significant effects on the human environment. Consideration has been given to the criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27 for determining significance and the Environmental Assessment contains sufficient information to verify the "Finding of No Significant Impact".

- The action will not have significant effects on the quality of the human environment, either as an individual action, or as part of the cumulative effect of other past, present and planned actions within this area.

- Effects on forest visitor safety are discussed on page 74 of the EA. Because motorized travel will be restricted to maintained system routes (except for snowmobile travel over much of the Forest and downed game retrieval during hunting seasons in specially designated areas), this will reduce the potential for accidents caused by terrain related problems. There may be an increase in the number of motorized travelers on designated routes, which potentially increases the safety hazard to all travelers. Motorized trail vehicles will be allowed on low standard and primitive roads, which also increases the potential safety risks. To reduce these potential safety hazards, warning signs will be posted and public information will include messages about expected traffic situations on different routes. This mitigation is expected to reduce the potential hazards associated with increasing and mixing traffic so that the selected travel management does not affect public health and safety adversely.
- Geographic characteristics unique to the Grand Mesa National Forest are described in the EA and the Oil and Gas Leasing Environmental Impact Statement for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests (April 1993). Unique geologic characteristics include an underlying basalt layer, which combined with fine textured subsoils results in perched water tables across the Grand Mesa. This is evidenced by the large number of natural lakes and wetlands. The Grand Mesa sideslopes generally show much evidence of past soil mass movement in the form of earthflows, slumps, slides and mudflows. These areas are classified as having mostly moderate with some high geologic hazard due to the slope instability.

The Grand Mesa National Forest has the largest number of permitted water storage and transmission facilities in the National Forest System (230). Many of the natural lakes and wetlands have been modified and converted into water storage facilities. Most of these activities were present on the Grand Mesa before the establishment of the National Forest.

As a result of the selected travel management, potential impacts to the unique soil and water features on the Grand Mesa National Forest will be reduced over what is and could occur under existing travel management. Motorized travel will be limited primarily to roads and trails located and maintained to prevent negative impacts to soil and water resources.

The proposed action will not impact park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas.

- The effects of the proposed action are not controversial. (NOTE: The term "controversial" refers "to cases where a substantial dispute exists as to the size, nature or effect of the major federal action rather than to the existence of opposition to a use." FNAWS v. USDA, 681 F.2d at 1182 (citation omitted).)
- The effects of revising travel management on the Grand Mesa National Forest as they relate to the human environment are not highly uncertain, nor do they involve unique or unknown risks. Effects have been documented in the EA on pages 38 through 90.
- The action is not precedent-setting. It does not establish a precedent for future actions which may have a significant effect on the environment. It does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. I arrived at this decision by considering the resource capabilities of the Grand Mesa National Forest, current and anticipated travel demands, and public comment received during the analysis process; most of which are unique to this Forest.

- The EA tiers to the Oil and Gas Leasing EIS for the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests for descriptions of the cultural resources found on the Grand Mesa. Effects of this decision are described on page 39 of the EA. Because motorized travel will be restricted to designated routes (with the exception of snowmobile travel and motorized trail vehicles used for downed game retrieval in select areas), potential impacts to cultural resources will be greatly reduced compared to the existing travel plan. The proposed action will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The proposed action will not cause loss or destruction of significant cultural or historical resources.
- Revising travel management will not adversely affect endangered or threatened species or their habitat. To comply with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act, all travel management activities would be cleared for species occurrence, prior to any new ground disturbance, on a case by case basis. If any future assessments indicate that threatened or endangered species could be adversely affected by any travel management activity, appropriate measures will be required to prevent impacts on any of these species. (See EA pages 45 through 50 and 67 through 68, as well as Biological Assessment in the project files.)
- This action complies with Federal, State or local laws and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. (See Management Requirements discussion on EA page 12 and EA Errata.)

Based on the findings in the Environmental Assessment, I find that this project will have no significant effect on the quality of the human environment; therefore an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Findings Required By Other Laws

The Forest Plan has been reviewed. I have determined that this decision is consistent with the direction provided in the Forest Plan. The actions in this project fully comply with the Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines, goals and management area direction.

Floodplains, wetlands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, cultural resources and mineral implications have been considered and these resources will not be adversely affected by this project. No threatened, endangered, proposed or sensitive species or their habitat will be negatively impacted by this project.

Implementation Date

Implementation of this decision may take place five (5) days after the end of the appeal filing period, unless an appeal is received. The appeal filing period extends 45 days after the publication of Notice of Decision in the **Grand Junction Daily Sentinel**. (Anticipated publication date is December 15, 1994.) In the event of an appeal, implementation may take place 15 days after the appeal is decided.

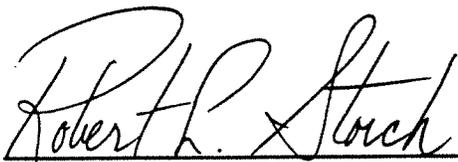
Contact Person

For further information concerning this decision contact Tom Condos, Forest Supervisors Office, 2250 Hwy 50, Delta, CO 81416; (303) 874-7691.

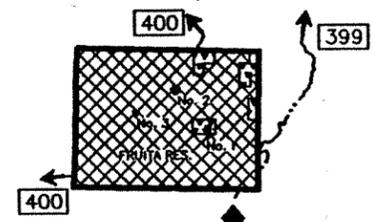
Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 215. Any appeal of this decision must fully comply with the requirements of 36 CFR 215. Appeals must be filed with the appeal deciding officer within 45 days of the publication of Notice of Decision in the **Grand Junction Daily Sentinel**. The appeal deciding officer is:

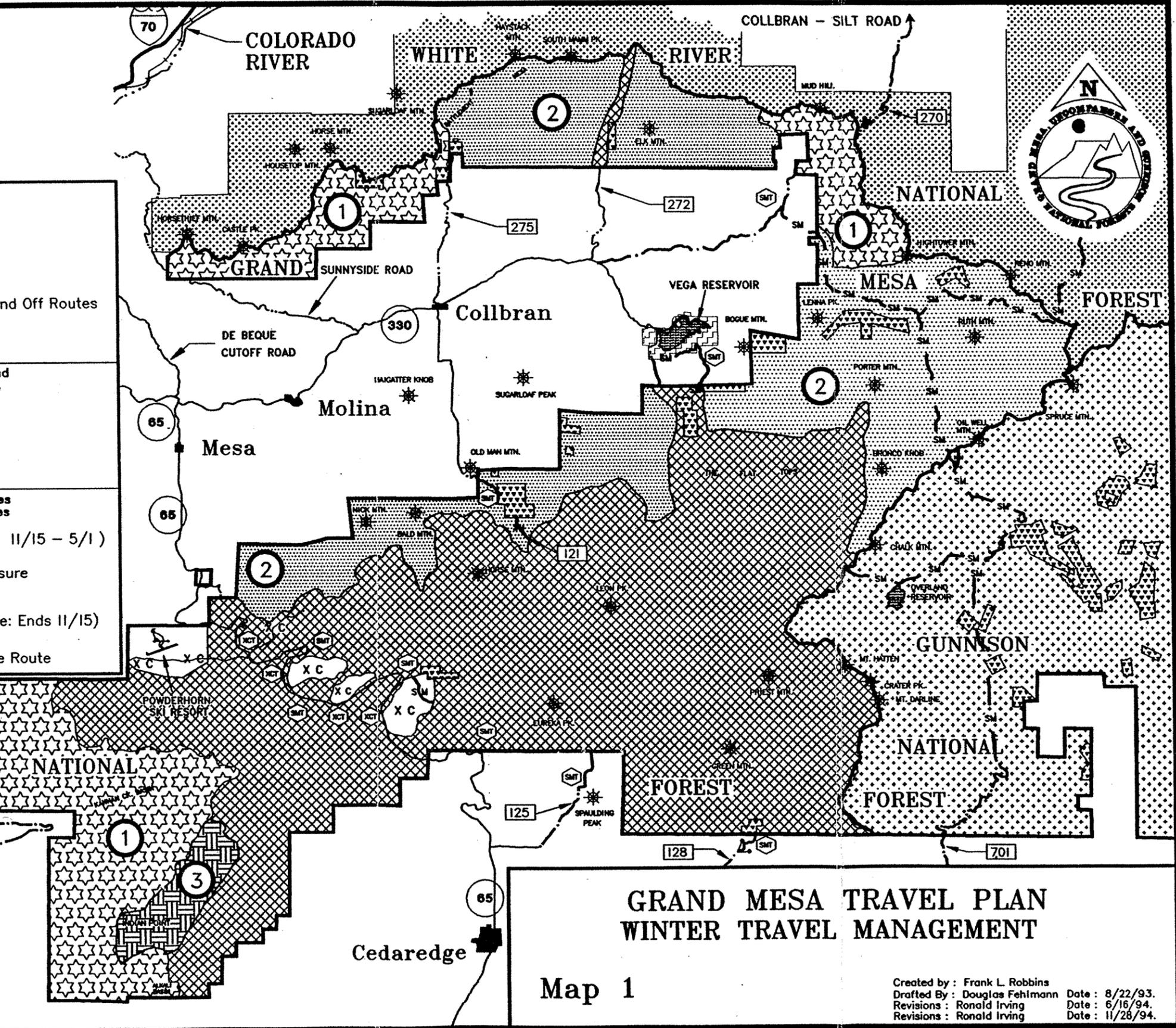
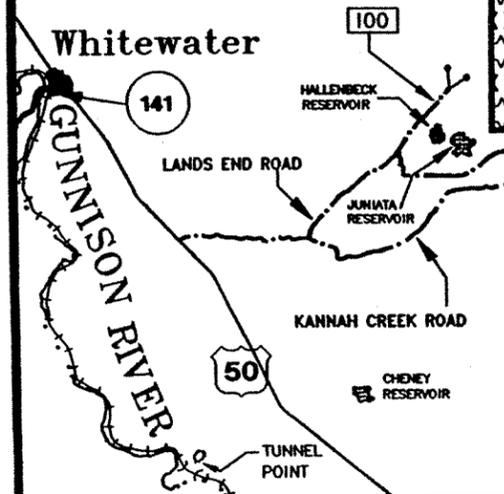
Elizabeth Estill
Regional Forester
Rocky Mountain Region
740 Simms St.
Lakewood, CO 80401

 12/12/94
ROBERT L. STORCH DATE
Forest Supervisor

INSERT: GRAND MESA NATIONAL FOREST (FRUITA DIVISION)



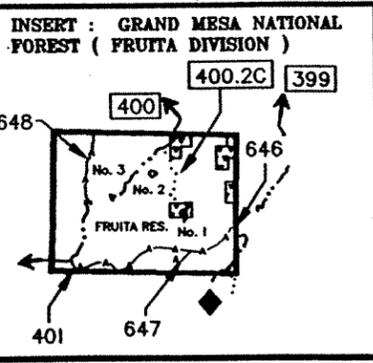
- LEGEND**
- State Recreation Area
 - Private Land
 - Gunnison National Forest
 - White River National Forest
 - Areas Open to Snowmobiles On and Off Routes
 - Trailhead - Snowmobile
 - Trailhead - Cross-Country Ski
- Forest Open to Snowmobiles On and Off Routes Except as Noted Below**
- Alpine Ski Area
 - Cross-Country Ski Area
 - Cross Country Ski Trail
 - State Highway 65, Plowed Road
- Seasonal Area Closures to Snowmobiles Except on Marked or Maintained Routes**
- 1 Winter Range Closure (Est. Date: 11/15 - 5/1)
 - 2 Elk Calving/Transitory Range Closure (Est. Date: Begins 4/15)
 - 3 Hunting Season Closure (Est. Date: Ends 11/15)
- SM - Marked or Maintained Snowmobile Route



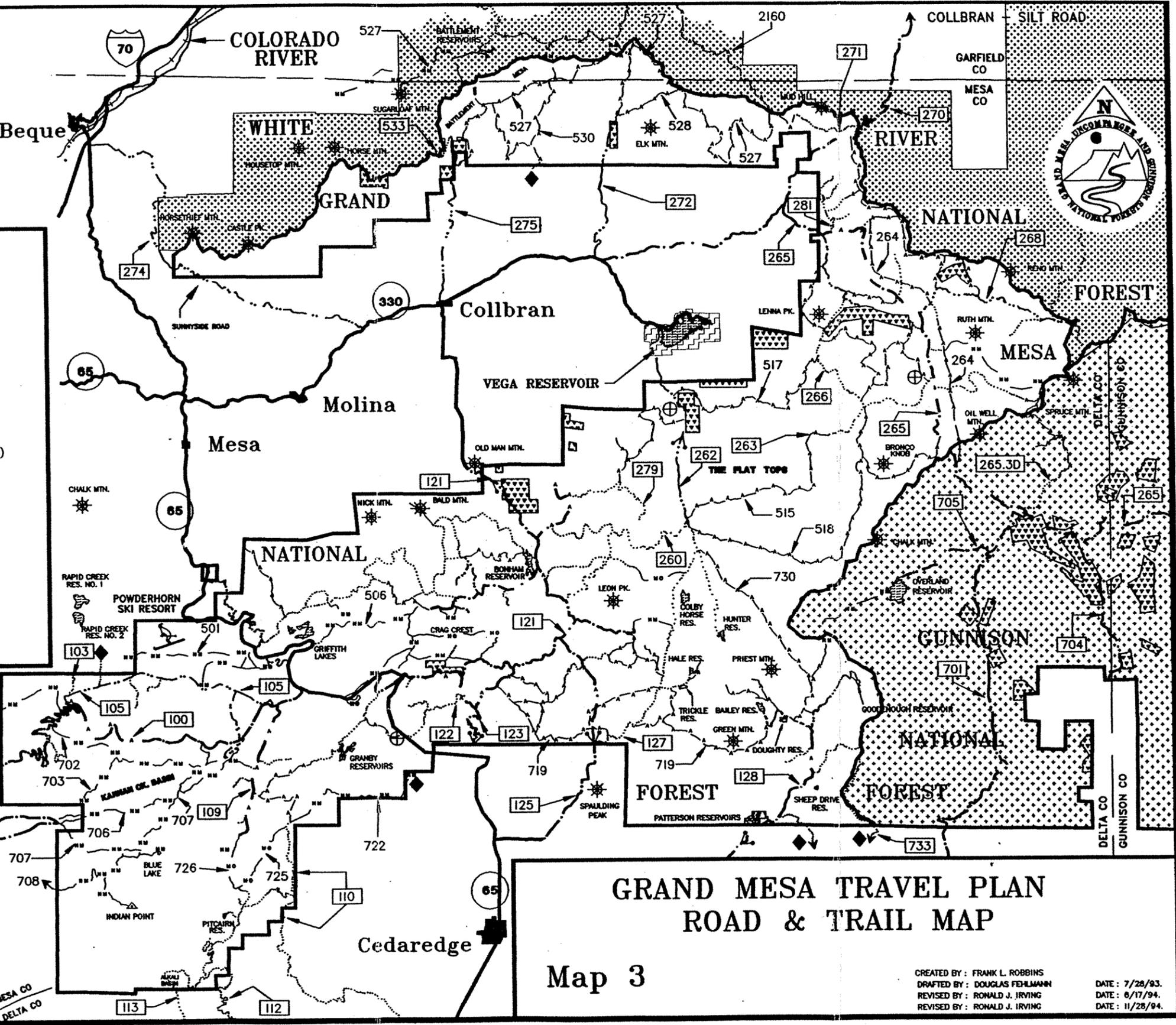
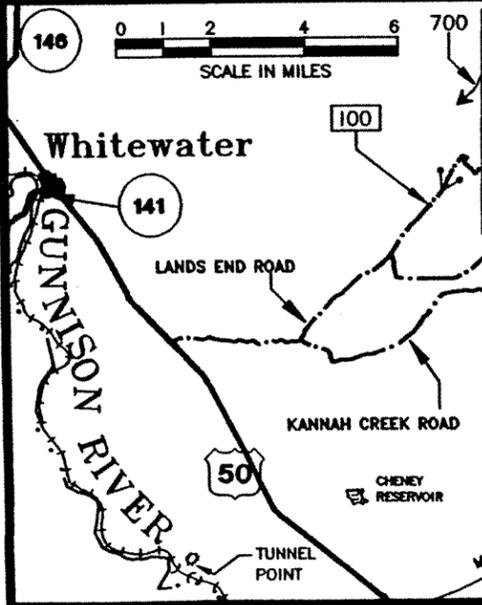
**GRAND MESA TRAVEL PLAN
WINTER TRAVEL MANAGEMENT**

Map 1

Created by: Frank L. Robbins
 Drafted By: Douglas Fehlmann Date: 8/22/93.
 Revisions: Ronald Irving Date: 6/16/94.
 Revisions: Ronald Irving Date: 11/28/94.



- LEGEND**
- State Park Lands
 - Private Lands
 - Gunnison National Forest
 - White River National Forest
 - Highway - Paved (Open to licensed vehicles only)
 - Primary Forest Road - Graveled (Open to licensed vehicles only)
 - Primary Forest Road - Graveled open to ATV traffic (A)
 - Low Standard Forest Road (Open to ATV's)
 - Primitive Forest Road (Open to ATV's)
 - Trail Open to ATV's and Motorcycles
 - Single Track Trail, open to motorcycles (M O), but closed to ATV's
 - Non-motorized Trail (N M), open to hikers, mountain bikes and horses
 - Trail for Hikers Only (H O)
 - No Right-of-Way (No Public Access)
 - Proposed Trailhead Improvements
 - Forest Road
 - Forest Trail



**GRAND MESA TRAVEL PLAN
ROAD & TRAIL MAP**

Map 3

CREATED BY : FRANK L. ROBBINS
 DRAFTED BY : DOUGLAS FEHLMANN
 REVISED BY : RONALD J. IRVING
 REVISED BY : RONALD J. IRVING

DATE : 7/28/93
 DATE : 6/17/94
 DATE : 11/28/94

**Errata for
Environmental Assessment**

ERRATA FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Grand Mesa National Forest Travel Management Plan Revision

Page iii, **add**:

Appendix G - Response to Public Comment, June 1994 Environmental Assessment

Appendix H - Recreation Travel

Page 1, sixth paragraph beginning "Significant changes in ... last 10 years.", **add**:

(See Appendix H.)

Page 12, **add** paragraph to A. Management Requirements section:

Additional general direction for travel management and the development of Forest transportation systems is found in the National Forest Roads and Trails Act of October 13, 1964 as amended (16 U.S.C. 532-538, P.L. 88-657), the Highway Safety Act of 1966 (23 U.S.C. 402, P.L. 89-564), the National Trails System Act of October 2, 1968 (16 U.S.C. 1241-1249, P.L. 90-543), the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1978 as amended (23 U.S.C. 101a, 201-205, P.L. 95-599 and 97-424); which correspond to policy and direction in Forest Service Manual 2300 and 7700.

Page 13, after eighth paragraph beginning "The American Discovery ... released in 1995.", **insert**:

The Forest Service issues permits for water structures such as dams and ditches, livestock operations and other rights-of-way under FLPMA. Access for permitted activities is independent of general public access. Individuals or groups having special permits are allowed to conduct their business on National Forest System Lands according to their permits. Permittees cannot be denied access to their permitted area; however, the Forest Service can control when and how access is achieved. Permittees must submit annual operating plans for Forest Service approval, which identify the work to be done, access needs and persons who will accomplish the work. Operators should have copies of their approved annual operating plan with them when administering their permits. It is the responsibility of all permittees to follow the terms of their permit and take necessary steps to assure they are in compliance with Forest Plan guidelines.

Where access requirements are not part of a special use permit and access would require modifying a road or trail above existing standards, a Road Use Permit or Road Use Easement may be required, which directs the construction and/or maintenance responsibilities of the permittee.

Access routes available to permittees but closed to general public motorized use would be signed according to Forest Service guidelines or policy. Typical sign wording would state "Authorized Traffic Only", in addition to a travel management sign detailing what types of public travel is allowed.

Any Federal, State or local official, or member of a rescue organization or fire fighting organization in the performance of an official duty would be exempt from travel restrictions or closures.

Grand Mesa National Forest Travel Plan Revision

Page 14, **delete** third, fourth and fifth paragraphs, beginning "The Forest Service ... restrictions or closures."

Page 15, **add** paragraph to C. Actions Common to Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 section:

Existing trailhead facilities will be evaluated. Construction/reconstruction needs will be prioritized and completed as budget will allow. Additional NEPA analysis will be required prior to any construction/reconstruction.

Page 16, fourth paragraph, beginning "Presently, about 10% (34,500 acres)...", **change** percentage and acreage of areas closed to all forms of motorized travel to: 11% and 37,700 acres.

Page 16, fifth paragraph, beginning "About 41% (144,000 acres)...", **change** percentage and acreage of areas open to motorized travel on designated routes only to: 40% and 140,800 acres.

Page 17, figure 3, **change** shading showing restricted travel near Powderhorn Ski Resort to show area closed to motorized travel.

Page 19, sixth paragraph beginning, "This alternative would classify about 11% (37,100 acres)...", **change** percentage and acreage of areas closed to all form of motorized access to: 10% and 34,000 acres.

Page 19, sixth paragraph beginning, "This alternative would classify...", **delete** fourth and fifth sentences beginning, "The Indian Point ... in these areas."

Page 19, seventh paragraph beginning, "Approximately 64% (227,800 acres)...", **change** percentage and acreage of areas open to motorized access only on designated routes to: 65% and 230,900 acres.

Page 19, seventh paragraph, **add** "and Lands End/Indian Point" to last sentence.

Page 23, ninth paragraph beginning, "Under this alternative, ... areas (see below).", **change** third sentence to read:

As with Alternative 2, 10% (34,100 acres) of the Forest would be closed to all motorized access in the Alkali/Kannah Creek/Whitewater Basin and Mesa Lakes planning areas.

Page 29, sixth paragraph beginning "Under this alternative ... (See Appendix F.)", **change** to read:

Under this alternative 25 lake/reservoir fisheries would be accessible by non-motorized means, only. A total of 79 fisheries will have motorized access either by road or motorized trails. (See Appendix F.)

Page 29, ninth paragraph beginning, "This alternative would classify...", **change** percentage and acreage of area closed to all forms of motorized access to: 9% and 30,800 acres.

Page 34, Table 6, **change** footnote 9 to read:

To be added to the system and managed and maintained for all uses. Repair of resource damage where needed.

Page 35, Table 7, **add** footnote 3 for Nonsystem Trails, to read:

3. To be added to the system and managed and maintained for all uses. Repair of resource damage where needed.

Page 36, fourth paragraph beginning, "In areas where ... motorized travel, provided:" **Delete** third sentence beginning, "Special travel authorizations ... motorized travel, provided:", and **replace** with:

The Forest Service will work with individual permittees where necessary, to develop annual operating plans detailing work to be done, tentative dates, access requirements and names of persons who will do the work.

Page 36, **delete** fifth and sixth paragraphs beginning, "- each individual's access ... (not for general access),"

Page 36, after fourth paragraph, **insert** paragraph:

Road Use Permits or Road Easements will be required when permittee access needs exceed existing standards. Permits/easements will identify construction and/or maintenance requirements that must be met by the permittee. (The Forest Service will work with individual permittees where Road Use Permits or Easements are necessary.)

Page 37, **delete** first Paragraph beginning, "Acquisition of key ... by private land.", and **replace** with:

Trail rights-of-way needs will be evaluated and pursued as needed, to enhance public access.

Page 43, **delete** eighth paragraph beginning, "Snowmobile activity would ... or riparian resources.", and **replace** with:

Snowmobile activity will have little impact on aquatic or riparian resources. Snowmobiles are used to access some lakes and reservoirs for ice fishing.

Page 55, first paragraph under Battlement Mesa beginning, "Off-route motorized travel..." **insert** after second sentence beginning, "If this portion ... in this area.":

The area from Horsethief Mountain to FDR 275, on the White River National Forest, has a travel management prescription of no motorized travel year-round. Currently, this same area on the Grand Mesa National Forest is open year-round to all motorized traffic. This creates a situation for the public where they must be totally familiar with the area and know exactly where the boundary line exists between the two Forests, to avoid violating travel management rules. The area on the White River NF is closed to motorized use to protect the bighorn sheep herd, and soil and water resources.

Page 55, second paragraph under Battlement Mesa beginning, "Continuing and enforcing ... in this area." **insert** sentence after second sentence beginning, "It would also...recreational use conflicts.":

Travel management on the White River NF adjacent to the Battlement portion also restricts motorized travel to designated routes.

Page 55, after paragraph under Mud Hill/Road Gulch/Hightower beginning, "Big game winter ... of the animals.", **add** paragraph:

No off-route motorized travel is allowed on the White River NF adjacent to this area. This is consistent with the motorized travel closure for big game winter range, but is not consistent with allowing off-route motorized travel on the Grand Mesa NF in this area. As with the Battlement Mesa area, the existing management requires the public to know the location of the forest boundary. Due to gentler terrain in this area, the chance of non-compliance and potential impacts from off-route motorized travel crossing onto the White River National Forest would be high.

Page 56, **delete** paragraph under Ruth Mountain beginning, "Effect of travel ... 38 through 54.", and **replace** with:

Unique effects of travel management options on the Ruth Mountain area include:

Currently, this area is managed to allow off-route motorized travel, both in winter and summer. This conflicts with travel management on the White River NF adjacent to this area. The portion of the White River NF between Hightower Mountain and 1 mile east of Reno Mountain is closed to off-route motorized traffic, yearlong; between Reno Mountain to Spruce Mountain travel management allows only snowmobiles to travel off-route over snow and is closed to off-route motorized travel the rest of the year.

Restricting motorized travel to designated routes on the Grand Mesa NF in this area would reduce potential travel violations on the White River if routes did not extend to the common forest boundary. Closing this area to motorized travel would eliminate conflicts with travel regulations on the White River NF; however, motorized recreational opportunities would be lost.

Page 63, alternative 1 discussion under Soils and Water, after paragraph beginning, "Cooperative agreements with ... and water resources.", **add** paragraph:

Retaining current travel management could result in negative impacts to soil and water resources on the White River National Forest where motorized travel crosses the common boundary between the two Forests. Travel management on the White River has closed the majority of the area adjacent to the Grand Mesa NF to off-route motorized travel to protect areas of high geologic hazard.

Page 63, alternative 2 discussion under Soils and Water, after paragraph beginning, "The area open ... Alternative 1 above.", **add** paragraph:

This alternative would have the same potential impacts to soil and water resource on the White River National Forest as described under alternative 1.

Page 64, alternative 3 discussion under Soils and Water, after paragraph beginning, "There is a ... current CFR authorities.", **add** paragraph:

Some damage to soil and water resources on the White River NF between Hightower Mountain and Spruce Mountain may occur as a result of off-route motorized travel during big game seasons. This portion of the White River NF is closed to motorized travel, except on designated routes.

Page 64, alternative 4 discussion under Soils and Water, after paragraph beginning, "On established roads ... construction and maintenance.", **add** paragraph:

The potential for damage to soil and water resources on the White River NF adjacent to the Grand Mesa NF is highest under this alternative. Much of the White River NF is closed to off-route motorized travel along the common boundary, to protect soil and water resources. It would be very difficult for users to know exactly where they were in relation to the forest boundary to avoid violating travel regulations.

Page 66, alternative 1 discussion under Wildlife Habitat, after paragraph beginning, "Big game winter ... under this alternative.", **add** paragraph:

Bighorn sheep habitat in the Sunnyside portion of the Battlement Mesa area could be negatively impacted by off-route motorized travel under this alternative, both on the

Grand Mesa NF and the White River NF.

Page 66, alternative 2 discussion under Wildlife Habitat, after paragraph beginning, "Big game transitional ... Knob/Bird Creek vicinity.", **add** paragraph:

There would be no change in travel management in the Sunnyside portion of the Battlement Mesa under this alternative. Bighorn sheep habitat could be negatively impacted by off-route motorized travel on both the Grand Mesa NF and White River NF.

Page 67, after first paragraph beginning, "Big game winter ... to snowmobile use.", **add** paragraph:

Bighorn sheep habitat on the Sunnyside portion of the Battlement Mesa area would be protected by restricting motorized travel to designated routes during most of the year. If off-route travel by snowmobiles occurred in this area wintering bighorn sheep could be negatively impacted.

Page 67, third paragraph beginning, "Off-route motorized trail ... activity is occurring.", **add** sentence:

These impacts could potentially occur on the White River NF adjacent to areas where motorized vehicles could be used for downed game retrieval.

Page 67, first paragraph under Alternative 4 discussion for Wildlife Habitat beginning, "Impacts to wildlife ... available for use.", **add** sentence:

Similar impacts could occur on areas of the White River NF which are adjacent to the Grand Mesa NF.

Page 70, Non-motorized User Experience in Alternative 1 discussion under Recreation, after paragraph beginning, "Conflicts between users ... visitor contact points.", **add** paragraph:

Current travel management on the Grand Mesa NF is in conflict with travel management on the White River NF along much of the common boundary between the two forests. The areas between Horsethief Mountain and FDR 275 (Sunnyside portion of Battlement Mesa) and between Mud Hill and Reno Mountain on the White River NF are closed to all off-route motorized travel. East of Reno Mountain motorized travel is restricted to designated routes on the White River. Conflicts occur and will continue to occur where motorized users cross onto the White River NF in these areas.

Page 70, Winter Recreation Experience in Alternative 1 discussion under Recreation, after paragraph beginning, "Snowmobilers and cross-country ... users may increase.", **add** paragraph:

Differences in travel management between the Grand Mesa NF and White River NF will result in conflicts in winter motorized travel on the White River, as described above.

Page 71, Non-motorized User Experience in Alternative 2 under Recreation, after paragraph beginning, "Opportunities for non-motorized ... activity is restricted.", **add** paragraph:

Non-motorized user experiences on the White River NF adjacent to the Grand Mesa NF in the Sunnyside portion of Battlement Mesa, and between Hightower Mountain and Spruce Mountain could be negatively impacted as a result of motorized travel crossing onto the White River NF.

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Page 72, Non-motorized User Experience in Alternative 3 under Recreation, after paragraph beginning, "Opportunities for non-motorized ... activity is restricted.", **add** paragraph:

Restricting motorized travel to designated routes under this alternative will reduce potential impacts on non-motorized users on the White River NF, except during hunting season.

Page 73, Hunting and Fishing Experiences in Alternative 3 under Recreation, after paragraph beginning, "Under this alternative ... retrieve downed game.", **insert** paragraph:

Allowing off-route travel with motorized vehicles to retrieve downed game between Hightower Mountain and Spruce Mountain could result in conflicts with non-motorized users and violation of travel restrictions on the White River NF in this area.

Page 74, Non-motorized User Experience in Alternative 4 under Recreation, after paragraph beginning, "Because no use ... of non-motorized experiences.", **insert** paragraph:

This alternative has the greatest potential for conflict with non-motorized users and violation of travel regulations on the White River NF.

Page 75, Hunting and Fishing Experience in Alternative 4 under Recreation, after paragraph beginning, "Hunters would be ... prime hunting hours.", **insert** paragraph:

Potential conflicts between non-motorized hunters and motorized hunters along the common boundary with the White River NF will be greatest under this alternative. Violation of travel regulations (closed to off-route motorized travel or travel only on designated routes) on the White River will continue to be a problem.

Appendix E

Page E-7, Table E-4, **change** Forest Lake Rd. No. 124 to "O" under Alt. 3.

Page E-11, Table E-5, **add**:

Eureka Trail No. 734, length 7.0 miles, Alt.1 - MT, Alt.2 - MT, Alt.3 - MT, Alt.4 - MT.

Appendix F

Page F-8, **move** "3. Forrest Lake ... open road (good access." to page F-10 under, "Fisheries currently open to all modes of motorized travel with no special recommendations which would retain motorized access on designated routes."

Page F-8, **move** "5. Cole Reservoir #1 Weir & Johnson Unit 0.7 mile access" to page F-10, "Fisheries currently open to all modes of motorized travel with no special recommendations which would retain motorized access on designated routes."

Page F-9, **move** "13. Knox Reservoir...1.0 mile access" and "14. Trout Lake ... 1.5 miles access" to page F-10 under, "Fisheries currently open to all modes of motorized travel with no special recommendations which would retain motorized access on designated routes." **change** to read "1.0 mile access on trail #734" and "1.5 miles access on trail #734", respectively.

Page F-12, **move** "95. Bull Creek Reservoir #2 Bull Basin Unit 2.7 miles access trail #506", under "Fisheries currently open to motorized access in areas highly susceptible to user impacts due to high soil moisture conditions which would become non-motorized access."

Appendix G - Response to Public Comment, June 1994 Environmental Analysis, New appendix.

Appendix H - Recreation Travel, New appendix.

