

Nez Perce Forest Travel Management Planning (DRAMVU)

Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

February, 2016

Letter from

Cheryl Probert, Forest Supervisor

Following almost nine years, more than 2,300 public comments and tireless work by planning team members, I am pleased to release the Nez Perce National Forest Travel Management Planning Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Draft Record of Decision. This project is also known as Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use (DRAMVU). A Travel Management decision was previously made on the Clearwater side of the Forest in 2011, and included over-snow vehicle use.

This decision comes after a long journey with many twists and turns. As we worked through the public comments and environmental analysis, court decisions on other National Forest travel plans caused us to revisit some key issues and complete additional analysis. The result is a travel plan that provides quality recreation experiences for both motorized and non-motorized users, reduces conflicts and protects the resources of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests.

Many of you attended meetings and open houses, wrote letters and emails, or visited personally with me or members of the planning team. To everyone who participated in the planning process—thank you. Your insights and experiences helped guide us to a better travel management plan.

This travel plan will not please everyone. The decision was a difficult one but it will provide the best opportunities for all groups to access and enjoy the Nez Perce National Forest while also protecting our natural resources for future generations.

**Cheryl Probert
Forest Supervisor**

A Quick Summary of the Nez Perce National Forest Travel Management Plan Final EIS and Draft ROD

The Nez Perce National Forest began its effort to review and update its forest-wide travel management plan in June, 2006.

The project was undertaken to provide quality summer motorized recreation experiences while protecting natural resources and providing non-motorized recreation opportunities.

We are not doing this alone. 155 other national forests are in the process or have completed their travel management plans.

The new Travel Plan will designate which routes (roads and trails) are open to motorized travel.

The last time the Nez Perce National Forest completed a major update to its Travel Plan was in 2003, 12 years ago. A lot has changed since then, including the number of people visiting the forest.

In 2005, the USDA Forest Service issued the Travel Management Rule to reduce impacts of increased use of motor vehicles on the National Forests. Sales and licensing of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) have increased over time, meaning more people are driving motorized vehicles on the forests and are potentially causing impacts in sensitive areas or important wildlife habitats. OHV use on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests is no exception. In Idaho, registrations of OHVs have increased from over 36,000 in 1998, to over 142,000 in 2014; Idaho County has experienced a similar trend with 2,905 registrations in 2014.

For many visitors, motor vehicles also represent an integral part of their recreational experience. The people who come to the Nez Perce National Forest may ride on roads and trails in passenger vehicles, SUVs, pickup trucks, ATVs, motorcycles, or non-motorized conveyances. As stated in the Travel Management Rule, motor vehicles are a legitimate and appropriate way for people to enjoy their National Forests—this type of use; however, needs to be in the right places and with proper management to sustain our natural resources.

Updating the travel plan and developing a new motor vehicle use map (MVUM) is not only long overdue, it will help ensure that your next visit to the Nez Perce National Forest is a safe and enjoyable one.





Travel Plan BY THE NUMBERS

.....12

Years since the Nez Perce National Forest's last major travel plan update (2003).

.....390

Miles of forest trails open to motorized use under the new plan, outside wilderness.

.....1,963

Miles of forest roads open to motorized use under the new plan.

.....Over 2,300

Number of public comments received following dozens of community meetings and open houses.

.....228,197

Number of acres restricted from off-route motor vehicle use currently.

.....1,004,428

Number of acres restricted from off-route motor vehicle use under the new plan.

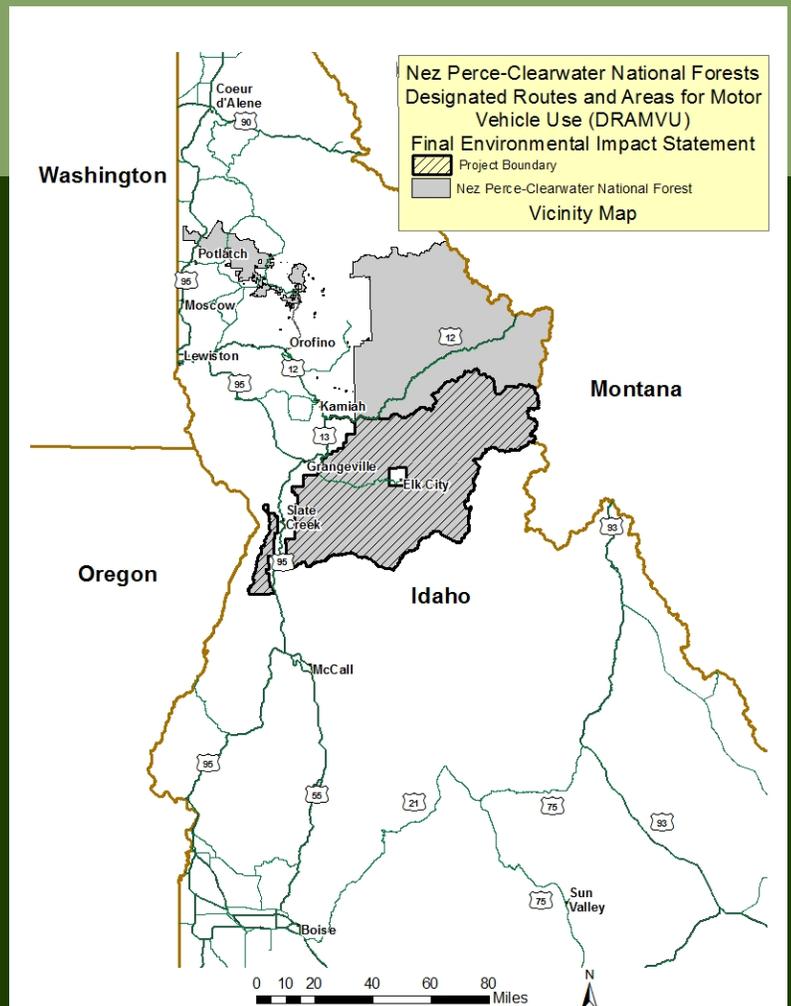
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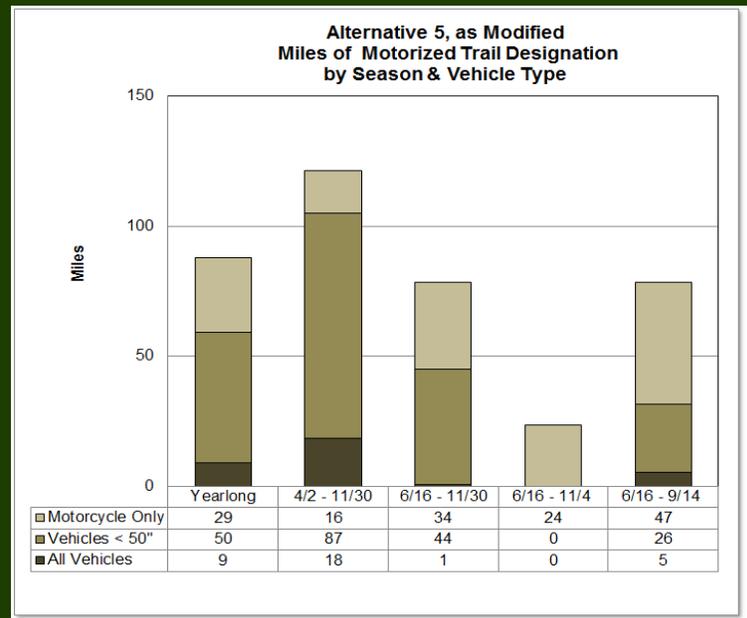
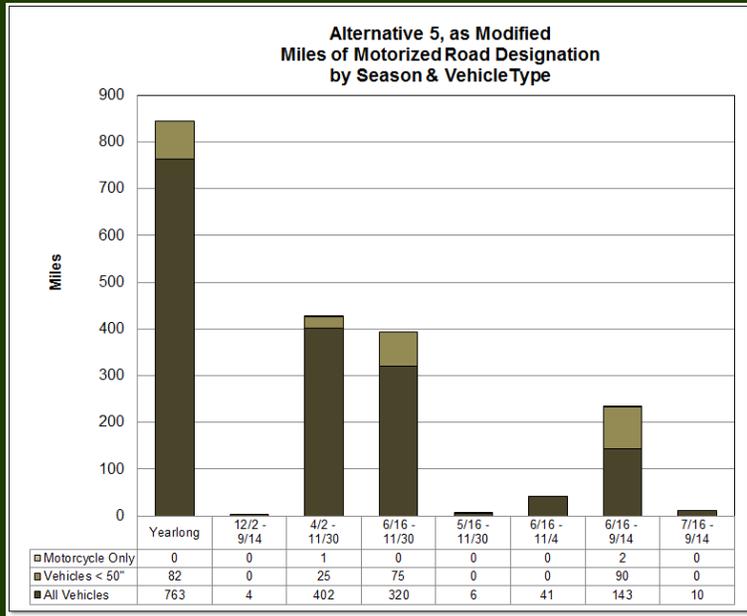
The Forest Service's original Proposed Action was described in the scoping document released for public review in 2007. Based on generous feedback from the public and information gathered by resource specialists during field reviews and internal Planning Team discussions, four alternatives were presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) released in 2008. Based on comments, a Supplemental Draft EIS (SDEIS) was developed with proposed designations and released in 2010.

The Final EIS presents seven alternatives. The Selected Alternative (Alternative 5, as Modified) presented in the FEIS reflects the primary themes and many of the specific ideas that were provided in response to scoping, the DEIS and the SDEIS.

The Selected Alternative 5, as Modified

The selected alternative, Alternative 5, as modified, reflects a mix of motorized and non-motorized opportunities that seems to best fit the landscape and natural resources of the forest. In addition, it complies with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies including recent court rulings regarding National Forest travel plans.





Summary of Alternatives - Changes from Existing to Selected		
Designations	Alternative 2 Existing	Alternative 5 as modified
Roads open to motor vehicle use	1,980	1,963
Roads open to non-motorize use	1,746	1,762
Roads open yearlong	1,062	846
Roads open seasonally	919	1,117
Of the miles of road open for use:		
Roads open to all vehicles - yearlong	878	763
Roads open to all vehicles - seasonally	866	926
Roads open to vehicles less than 50 inches in width - yearlong	183	82
Roads open to vehicles less than 50 inches in width - seasonally	50	189
Roads open to motorcycles only - yearlong	0	0
Roads open to motorcycles only - seasonally	2.5	2.5
Trails open to motorized use	398	390
Trails open to non-motorize use	684	693
Trails open yearlong	296	88
Trails open seasonally	102	302
Of the miles of trail open for use:		
Trails open to all vehicles - yearlong	9	9
Trails open to all vehicles - seasonally	26	24
Trails open to vehicles less than 50 inches in width - yearlong	149	50
Trails open to vehicles less than 50 inches in width - seasonally	41	157
Trails open to motorcycles only - yearlong	138	29
Trails open to motorcycles only - seasonally	36	121
New trails open to vehicles less than 50 inches in width	0	1.1
Acres open for off-route motor vehicle use, outside of wilderness	1,004, 428	0

Next Steps

Getting a Copy of the Document

On-Line: The DRAMVU project Final EIS and Draft ROD are posted on the project webpage at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=17752>.

Digital Copy: Copies of the document including the narrative and maps are available on CD at any of our offices.

Paper Copy: Copies of the FEIS and Draft ROD are also available for review at each of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest offices.

Objection Process

The DRAMVU project Final EIS and Draft ROD are subject to the pre-decisional administrative review process (objection process). The notice of availability, published in the *Lewiston Tribune*, started the official 45-day objection filing period. Only those who have previously submitted specific written comments regarding the DRAMVU planning effort may file an objection. The objection filing period will be followed by a 45-day objection resolution period. General information about the objection process can be found here:

http://www.fs.fed.us/objections/objections_related.php.

Implementation - Motor Vehicle Use Maps

Once the objection process is completed, the DRAMVU project Final Record of Decision (Final ROD) will be issued. From that decision, and other access decision; roads, trails and areas that are open for motorized travel will be shown on the Nez Perce National Forest motor vehicle use map (MVUM). For each road, trail or area that is open for motor vehicle use, the MVUM will specify the type of motor vehicle and the season of use. The map will not include over-snow vehicle use or non-motorized use. This map will be free to the public at Forest Service Offices and available to view or download from our Forest website.

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