

Access and Travel Management

The Department of Agriculture revised regulations in 2005 regarding travel management on National Forest System (NFS) lands to clarify policy related to motor vehicle use, including the use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs). The travel management rule requires designation of those roads, trails, and areas that are open to public motor vehicle use. The travel management rule prohibits the use of motor vehicles off the designated system, as well as use of motor vehicles on routes and in areas that are not consistent with the designations (2005 Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212)). This decision designates roads, trails, and areas that are open to public motor vehicles on the Craig and Thorne Bay Ranger Districts. There were three phases that designated roads and trails open for motorized vehicles:

1. The POW Roads Analysis recommended open roads and road closure methods. These recommendations were based on future road needs, travel safety, resource protections, and available funding.
2. The ATM Environmental Analysis (EA) considered the Roads Analysis recommendations in developing the Proposed Action (Alternative 2) for public scoping. The EA included resource analysis and opportunities for public involvement.
3. A Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) was prepared based on this decision. It is available at the Ranger Districts. The MVUM shows the open roads, OHV trails, and off-road areas (Travel management Areas). **The MVUM can be updated annually and will be adjusted as conditions change.**

The purpose and need for this project was to provide a smaller, manageable road system that provides good access to the many resources found on and near Prince of Wales Island. Craig and Thorne Bay Ranger Districts reassessed their road management practices in response to reductions in road maintenance budgets, changing road use patterns, existing and potential resource concerns, and the Travel Management Rule.



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Prince of Wales Island Motor Vehicle Use Map

Numbers and Answers

- 1) How many miles of NFS roads are on the districts – both open and closed?
1684 miles of National Forest System Roads on Prince of Wales and surrounding islands.

- 2) How many miles of NFS roads and motorized trails are designated open to the public?

	Miles of Road	Miles of Motorized Trail	Grand Total
Total	769	249	1018

- 3) How many miles of NFS roads and trails were open before the ATM was published?

Total Miles	1273
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- 4) How many miles of NFS roads have been physically stored since the ATM was published?

Total Miles	392
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National Forest System Road and Motorized Trail Designations in miles	
ML 1 - Closed to all motorized vehicles	597
ML 1 - Off Highway Vehicle Trails	249
ML 2 - Open to All Vehicles for mixed use	467
ML 2 - Open to Highway Vehicles only	54
ML 3 - Open to All Vehicles for mixed use	101
ML 3 - Open to Highway Vehicles only	100
ML 4 - Open to Highway Vehicles only	37
Seasonally open road	10
Decommissioned road	69
Total miles	1684

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Road Maintenance

Per the **Tongass Forest Plan, Road Maintenance**: the Forest operates and maintains National Forest System (NFS) roads, “in a manner which meets the road management objectives” and uses “road storage, road closures, maintenance, reconditioning, decommissioning and other measures to keep road surface and road site erosion at low or near background levels.”

In 36 CFR 212.5 (b) (1), the forest is required to identify the minimum road system that among other things reflects long-term funding expectations. Presently road maintenance funding is continuing to decrease. The forest has identified a **minimum road system** that is needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands.

Less and less funding is available for road maintenance which can lead to safety concerns or resource damage, especially at stream crossings. The forest made decisions to close roads, or put them in a self maintaining condition in part to reduce maintenance costs. The closure methods for closing roads will benefit some streams and fisheries by removing culverts that may become blocked and cause road erosion.

Definitions

National Forest System (NFS) Maintenance Levels (ML):

- ◆ Level 1 – Closed more than 1 year
- ◆ Level 2 – High-clearance vehicles
- ◆ Level 3 – Passenger vehicles; surface not smooth
- ◆ Level 4 – Passenger vehicles; surface smooth
- ◆ Level 5 – Passenger vehicles; dust free; possibly pave

Road Storage is defined in **FSH 5409.1760.5**, “The process/action of closing a road to vehicle traffic and placing it in a condition that requires minimum maintenance to protect the environment and preserve the facility for future use.” These roads are in the NFS as ML 1.

Road Decommissioning activities stabilize and restore unnecessary roads to a more natural state. Decisions to decommission roads are based on land use changes (LUD) as described in the FS Land and Resource Management Plan. Decommissioned roads are not included in the NFS.

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Prince of Wales Motor Vehicle Use Map

Why a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM)?

The Forest Service recognized unmanaged motorized recreation (especially off-road) as a major threat to the health of forests and grasslands in the 21st century. As part of the response, the Forest Service revised its travel management regulations.

The 2005 Travel Management Rule (36 Code of Federal Regulations) stipulates that each ranger district designate the roads, trails, and/or areas that are open to motor vehicle use. These open roads, trails, and/or areas must be identified on a MVUM. This rule applies to all national forests and grasslands.

Forests were given four years from the publication of the 2005 Travel Management Rule to publish their MVUMs. The Craig and Thorne Bay MVUM was published online in January 2010. A print version followed and is now available for free to the public.

Who decides which roads appear on the MVUM?

The district ranger has the authority to make changes to the MVUM with a NEPA analysis. Subsequently your comments are crucial to the successful management of the district road system. Your comments about the MVUM influence the designation of roads, trails, and/or areas on subsequent MVUM.

You call this MVUM thing a Map!?

The MVUM is strictly a designation of roads open to motorized use. It is not meant as a guide or visitor map, those types of maps can be acquired at the District offices.

As required by 36 CFR, only open roads, trails and areas may appear on the map. A national standard governs the appearance of the MVUMs and the district is unable to make changes in the format.

What about my snowmobile?

Over-snow vehicles are exempted from the travel management rule.