



INFRASTRUCTURE

Gila National Forest – Forest Plan Revision

Plan Revision Technical Meeting
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Ground Rules

1. Listen to understand, not to respond
2. Allow every voice to be heard
3. Participate in the discussion
4. Help ensure that everyone feels safe in the discussion
5. Treat everyone with respect
6. Focus on the topic at hand
7. Talk about what you think and know; let others do the same





HOW TO DISAGREE WITHOUT BEING DISAGREEABLE

TRY SAYING:

- "My experience was different / I experienced that differently."
- "I respect your point/perspective, but from my perspective (in my opinion)..."
- "I take your point, but that isn't the way I see it; instead, I..."
- "I'm not sure I agree with you on..."
- "I like what you've proposed about X and Y. I don't think Z should be changed at this point because..."
- "I prefer..."



HOW TO DISAGREE WITHOUT BEING DISAGREEABLE (CONTINUED)

AVOID SAYING:

- "That's wrong. / You're wrong."
- "You ought to..."
- "That's stupid. / You're stupid."
- "That's not what happened!"
- "You're focusing on the wrong thing."



What is the Gila's Infrastructure?

Definition:

“Includes: Roads, Trails, Recreation Facilities, Administrative Facilities, Airstrips, and other facilities needed on or near the forest...(FSH 1909.12 – Chap. 20 para. 23.23)”

What Forest Planning says about Infrastructure...

From the Forest Service Handbook:

- “Most design related to Infrastructure occurs at the project or site level with a specificity that is not appropriate for a Land Management Plan.”
- “The central consideration in Land Management Planning for Infrastructure is that the integrated desired conditions and other plan components set a framework for the sustainable management of the plan area's infrastructure and mitigation of adverse impacts.”

What Forest Planning says about Infrastructure...

Typical infrastructure-related considerations for an interdisciplinary project team are to:

1. Review the Assessment Phase information and subsequent Public Input concerning Infrastructure and determine how well the current Infrastructure supports or contributes to the social, economic, and ecological sustainability of the project and what proposals might be considered to improve the current condition.
2. Develop project proposals that reflect the extent of Infrastructure that is needed to achieve desired conditions and meet the objectives of the project.
3. Develop project proposals that are within the fiscal capability of the planning unit and its partners, consistent within our own Authority (USFS) and are within the inherent capability of the affected area.

What Forest Planning says about Roads and Trails...

“Roads/Trails – the Plan’s desired condition should describe a basic framework for an appropriately sized and sustainable transportation/trail system that can meet the identified needs of the planning area(s)...”

Current Roads and Bridge Infrastructure

- 5,065 miles of designated system roads
 - OML 3-5: 397 miles (Passenger Car)
 - OML 2: 3,261 miles (High Clearance)
 - OML 1: 1,407 miles (closed)
- 12 road bridges; 11 of which have been in service for 50 years or more
- Eight bridges are scheduled for replacement or rehabilitation as funding becomes available
- Bridges are inspected every two years



Question:

The current plan only provides the consideration of ecological impacts from roads associated with wildlife habitat. For the revised plan, we have thought to include effects to: cultural resources, soils, watershed and water quality. Question: can you think of other impacts/resources to be considered?

Current Trails Infrastructure

1,927 miles of trails

- 1734 miles non-motorized
- 193 miles motorized



What Forest Planning says about Facilities...

“The Plan may include Desired Conditions, Objectives, Suitability, Standards/Guidelines and other Resource Plans designed for the management of Infrastructure...”(paraphrased)

For instance, the plan may direct the forest to make all new or (newly modified) facilities more energy efficient, to the maximum reasonable extent possible.

Current Administrative Facilities

- Six ranger district offices, one is combined with the supervisors office – all but two are agency owned
- The Gila NF owns the buildings, but leases the land for the Air Tanker Base and Cache at the Grant County Airport
- Several work centers and administrative facilities throughout the Forest
- Many remote range cabins and barns that are owned by the Forest and are maintained by permittees
- Ten active lookout towers

Current Recreation Facilities

182 developed recreation sites
105 trailheads, etc.
35 campgrounds
5 picnic areas



What the Gila National Forest is doing outside of the Planning Rule



We are monitoring how many folks visit the Gila and why....

Visitation Trends

(Data from 2006 and 2011 National Visitor Use Monitoring Surveys)

Increased visitation: 514,000 visitors in 2011, 69% increase from 2006

Trend in recreation activities from developed sites to dispersed recreation

Hiking, hunting, and viewing natural features are the most popular activities

Increased trends of local visitation (people living within 50 miles of the Forest)

Increased visitation by individuals 60+ years old and decreased visitation by individuals less than 30 years old

We are studying our recreation fee program.

(part of the Gila National Forest 'Sustainable Recreation Strategy' Program)

The Gila National Forest is currently engaged in a 5-year Sustainable Recreation Strategy which includes reviewing where and how we charge recreation fees.

Our main recreation 'niche' is dispersed camping with sparse amenities provided.

Traditionally, the GNF has had extremely high Customer Satisfaction numbers (from NVUM) possibly due to low expectations as related to our dispersed camping niche.

Our Fee Proposal Program may greatly increase revenues that would be used for Operation and Maintenance of our Recreation facilities and to improve some services.

Fee compliance continues to be an issue that is only solvable with more personnel (Law Enforcement, Forest Protection Officers, volunteer Camp Hosts....)

We are quantifying (and determining how to reduce) our deferred maintenance needs...

Financial constraints that limit full maintenance increases the amount of deferred maintenance

Deferred Maintenance for the Gila NF

An estimate of deferred maintenance for Forest system roads is \$272,265,429

Deferred maintenance of administrative facilities is valued at over \$7.3 million dollars

Replacement of 17 vault toilets in poor condition is estimated to cost \$680,000

Deferred maintenance of septic/wastewater systems on the Forest is estimated at \$300,000

Deferred Maint. (Rec.) for the Gila NF

Deferred maintenance of developed recreation facilities is valued at \$437,547.

Total annual operations and maintenance costs of recreation developed facilities is \$1,347,408.

Unsustainable trail system due to more miles of trail than can be maintained with over 60% budget decrease since 2012.

Some recreation facilities and trails were poorly designed and located which increases maintenance cost and environmental impacts

We are balancing how to maintain an ever aging infrastructure with declining and/or flat budgets

Consequences of Reduced Budgets Associated with Infrastructure

Reduced ability to fully maintain system roads (increases deferred maintenance and our liability)

Prioritizing facilities maintenance may decrease the condition rating of lower priority facilities

Current plans for existing water systems are to correct issues and maintain a good condition rating; installation of any new water systems is discouraged

It is likely that some infrastructure will deteriorate beyond repair, forcing decisions to consolidate and/or decommission

Opportunities to Reduce Maintenance Cost

- Reduce overall footprint of facilities and consolidate resources in order to reduce maintenance costs
- Utilize leases for specialized facilities or locations (Grant County Airport, Black Range District, Silver City District/Supervisors Office currently leased)
- Share facilities and coordinate on improvements with different agencies (National Park Service, New Mexico Game and Fish Dept.) to share maintenance costs
- Continue to work with local governments to assess and assign jurisdictional responsibilities (mostly roads related)
- Continue to utilize permittees/operators to complete regular maintenance on infrastructure associated with their permit/operations
- Reduce standard of facility (for instance road and trail OMLs)

Are there other opportunities?

Question:

What are the drivers (considerations, factors, etc.) that would help us prioritize where and how we apply limited maintenance budgets to our assets? (Roads/Trails/Facilities) i.e., resource damage, public safety, etc.

Last Question:

We currently operate and monitor Facebook, Twitter, and other types of social media and web-based email accounts...are there other ways to effectively engage our public on the topic of Infrastructure?

Thank you!

...for your willingness to participate in these collaborative meetings and for your future engagement in developing the revised Gila Forest Plan