

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOREST SERVICE

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

7710

North Fork John Day Motorized Access and Travel Management Program  
Umatilla National Forest  
Grant, Umatilla, and Morrow County

Responsible Agency: USDA Forest Service  
North Fork John Day Ranger District  
P.O. Box 158  
Ukiah, Oregon 97880

Responsible Official: James A. Lawrence, Forest Supervisor  
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Abstract: The USDA Forest Service is proposing to implement a program to direct and control motorized access on the 464,000 acre North Fork John Day Ranger District. Managed access is desirable from the standpoint of reducing public conflict, road maintenance costs, and big game harassment. Alternatives formulated to address the proposal emphasize: A) No action, B) Multiple use, C) Wildlife and D) Recreation. The Forest Service preferred alternative is B) Multiple Use. The selected alternative will direct all management activities with respect to motorized use. Implementation will begin during the summer of 1990.



DECISION NOTICE  
and  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**NORTH FORK JOHN DAY MOTORIZED ACCESS  
AND TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

Grant, Umatilla, and Morrow Counties, Oregon

Umatilla National Forest

An environmental assessment that addresses an access management program and plan is available for public review at the District Ranger office in Ukiah, Oregon, and the Forest Supervisor's office in Pendleton, Oregon.

The proposed management area is the North Fork John Day Ranger District.

The proposed program and plan were developed by an interdisciplinary team of USDA Forest Service personnel from Resources, Timber, Wildlife, and Engineering, with review by the District Ranger and District staff. They were assisted by a public working group representing motorized vehicle users, nonmotorized vehicle users, Isaak Walton League/Nature Conservancy, grazing, mining, wood products industry, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the town of Ukiah, and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Key issues identified were (1) wildlife, (2) recreation, (3) economics, (4) administrative use, and (5) the ability to implement and enforce the selected alternative.

(1) Wildlife issues deal with effects on habitat, buck and bull escapement, harassment, and displacement of animals onto private land.

(2) Recreation issues focus on experience of the forest users, limited access, a potential to change traditional uses, more concentrated use, access for the elderly and handicapped, and the provisions for a wider range of recreational opportunities.

(3) Economic issues are concerned with increases in enforcement costs, a reduction in maintenance costs on system roads, unit costs for management activities, effects on local economies, and the cost of implementation.

(4) Administrative use issues focus on the effect of restricted access on all user groups, the necessity for coordination to accomplish management activities, and the effects on private land access.

(5) Implementation and enforcement issues deal with the reality of implementation, the enforceability of plan components, and the ability of the public to easily understand the proposed program.

Alternatives developed for the EA are as follows:

ALTERNATIVE A - Current Management/No Action

Emphasis is on no change. Does nothing to enhance wildlife or recreational experience. Would require no added effort or increase in funding to continue to administer. Is not responsive to public comments or Forest Plan.

#### ALTERNATIVE B - Multiple Use

Emphasis is on a unified approach to managing access. Responsive to wildlife, public, and resource concerns. Would require additional effort and an increase in funds to administer. Would require greater coordination in accomplishing targets. Responsive to public comments and Forest planning documents. Would broaden enforcement capability to include OSP (Oregon State Police). Would be consistent District-wide, easy to understand and inform the public of reasons for restrictions, and easy to identify opportunities for nonmotorized use.

#### ALTERNATIVE C - Wildlife

Emphasis is on the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat. Responsive to wildlife needs at the expense of some other needs. Would require additional effort and an increase in funds to administer. Would require greater coordination in accomplishing targets in areas identified as key to wildlife habitat. Would be somewhat responsive to the Forest Plan. Would be more difficult to understand and administer because of the seasonal nature on all closures. Would be easy for the public to understand the reasoning for closures.

#### ALTERNATIVE D - Recreation

Emphasis is on the enhancement of recreation activities, particularly those associated with motorized travel. It is not responsive to the needs of the recreationist desiring more semi-primitive, nonmotorized experience, except during the hunting season. It would not require an increase in funds to administer. It would not be responsive to the Forest Plan, and would not be responsive to the needs of wildlife.

*Based on the analysis and evaluation process carried out, I have decided to implement the proposed action: **Alternative B - Multiple Use.** Overall it best resolves the identified issues as follows:*

#### Wildlife

Alternative B meets the needs of wildlife by reducing road densities approximately 60 to 70 percent on a yearlong basis, enhancing buck and bull escapement on a sustained basis, providing protection for wildlife at key time periods (winter range and calving area/summer range), and reducing vehicle harassment on a sustained basis.

Alternative A does nothing to immediately effect road densities, provides no enhancement of buck and bull escapement, offers protection to only a few key winter range areas and does little or nothing to reduce vehicle harassment. Displacement of animals onto private land would continue as timber entry into undisturbed areas continued without control of constructed roads.

Alternative C would immediately reduce road densities by approximately 50 percent but many closures would be seasonal in nature. Key habitat areas such as winter range and calving areas/summer range would be restricted during use periods. Displacement would be reduced, but because of the seasonal nature of the closures would not be totally stopped. Buck and bull escapement would be enhanced during the hunting season. Harassment of game animals would be curtailed during critical times of the year.

Alternative D would maintain only existing winter range closures with no consideration given to calving/summer range areas. A seasonal closure would be in effect during hunting season to improve hunting experience and buck and bull escapement. Displacement of animals onto private land would be affected minimally by the seasonal closure during the hunting season.

## Recreation

Alternative B best meets recreational needs by creating a better balance between nonmotorized and motorized opportunities. Traditional areas of significant use would be maintained whenever possible. Conflicts between user groups would be reduced. The elderly and handicapped would have reasonable access to Forest land and would experience an increase in barrier-free facilities available for their use.

Alternative A does nothing to bring about a better balance between motorized and nonmotorized use. Nonmotorized experience may be further reduced by road entries into previously unroaded areas. All traditional uses of the Forest would be maintained. Conflicts between user groups would continue and possibly increase as recreation use picks up. Elderly and handicapped use would be restricted only by existing closure orders.

Alternative C would improve nonmotorized experiences during the hunting season and other seasonal closure periods. Nonmotorized experiences would be improved on a rotating basis. Existing closures would be maintained. Traditional use of the Forest would be subject to change only during the seasonal restrictions. Conflicts between user groups would continue. The elderly and handicapped would only be effected during the closure periods.

Alternative D would improve nonmotorized experience classes during the hunting season only. Traditional uses of the Forest would be effected only during the hunting season. Conflicts between user groups would continue. The elderly and handicapped would be effected seasonally by closures, limiting their ability to use all roads for motorized travel.

## Economic

Alternative B's economic effect would consist of increasing enforcement costs in the short term with a decrease over time. Road maintenance costs would decline sharply as a result of fewer open roads. Local economies may experience an increase in revenue; however, management is unsure of the overall effect. Implementation would be costly but partnerships would be sought to defray the initial expenditures. Unit costs for management activities would go up but the activities would be more responsive to public input.

Alternative A enforcement costs would remain stable or would increase slightly, due to the creation of new roads. Road maintenance costs would remain stable or will slightly increase because of new road construction. Unit costs would remain stable. Local economies would remain stable. There would be no increase in implementation costs except those associated with management of new roads. Management activities would not be responsive to public input.

Alternative C enforcement costs would remain high because of the rotating nature of the seasonal closures. Maintenance costs would be reduced slightly by road closures occurring during high use and wet periods. Impacts on local economies are not known; however, better hunting experiences may act as a draw to the area. Implementation costs would be high as would maintenance of the seasonal signing. Unit costs for management would be higher and to a degree be responsive to public input on management activities.

Alternative D enforcement costs would be slightly higher than Alternative A as a result of the hunting seasonal closure. Road maintenance would be higher as a result of having more roads open and available for travel outside the closure period. Local economies may experience a boost as improved hunting experience may be a draw to the area. Implementation cost would be slightly higher than the no-action alternative due to the seasonal closure. Unit costs for management would generally be less because of the more open nature of the road system; however, management activities would not be responsive to public input.

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## Administrative

Alternative B's effect on administrative use would treat all user groups in the same fashion. Permits would be required for entry on restricted roads. Proposals for entry would be weighted against reasons for establishment of the restriction and permits issued accordingly. Managers would be required to do a better job of planning and coordination in order to complete assigned targets. Access to private land may be limited to fewer roads but would be mutually agreed to by the landowners. All administrative use would be strictly monitored and utilized in evaluations to determine changes in road status.

Alternative A would have little or no effect on administrative use by the Forest Service. Access would be restricted to other users and the public. Planning and project accomplishment would not require any special considerations. Administrative use would not be recorded or managed.

Alternative C's effect on administrative use would treat all user groups the same. All activities would be completed outside restrictive time periods and be accomplished using designated routes available and open. Managers would be required to schedule and complete activities outside seasonal closure periods. Access to private land may be more restrictive during seasonal closures. The elderly or handicapped would experience more limited access opportunities during closure period. Administrative use would not be allowed during closure periods.

Alternative D would effect all user groups the same during the fall seasonal closure. Motorized activity outside that time period would be relatively free and open. Conflict with management planning would be minimal. Private land access may be more limited during the fall seasonal closure. Administrative use would not be allowed on closed roads during the closure period.

## Implementation and Enforcement

Alternative B implementation and enforcement would require a substantial amount of initial cooperation and organization. All system roads and most trails would be signed to state the road or trails available for use or the reason motorized use was restricted. Enforcement capabilities would be enhanced due to consolidated and standardized management techniques. One written order would cover the District. The system would be user friendly.

Alternative A implementation would require no additional effort or cooperation. Enforcement capabilities would remain the same and continue to struggle with noncompliance. Public information would remain weak and confusing because of numerous closure orders and varying traffic control techniques.

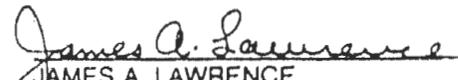
Alternative C implementation would require a great deal of time and initial planning. Separate implementation schedules would be required for each seasonal closure. Enforcement would be made easier because of the logical nature of the seasonal closures; however, enforcement difficulties may arise as a result of untimely or incomplete posting of area restrictions. Maps and closure orders would be complicated because of revolving nature of the closure areas and period.

Alternative D implementation would require a great deal of initial effort to identify adequate travel routes. A single effort would be required to identify roads and trails available for motorized travel during the hunting period. Motorized use outside the time period would be relatively free. Enforcement efforts would be confined to existing closures, and the seasonal closure during the hunting season. Reasons for the closure would be logical and easily understood; however, designated routes could be easily altered, causing enforcement problems.

Based on the Environmental Analysis and professional experience, I have determined that access management activities will have no irreversible or irretrievable adverse environmental effects, individually or cumulatively, to either biological or physical components of the human environment. Additionally I find it will have little or no effect on: Consumers, civil rights, minority groups, and women; prime farmland, rangeland, and forest land; wetlands and flood plains; threatened, endangered, or sensitive species; safety; cultural resources, soils, fisheries; or ecologically critical areas. The action does not pose a violation of Federal, State, or local law requirements imposed for the protection of the environment, and is within the scope of the Desolation and Heppner Unit Plans and is consistent with and will be tiered to the Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as implemented. Therefore I find an environmental impact statement is not needed.

This project will not be implemented for 7 days following the date of the legal notice announcing this decision.

This decision may be appealed in accordance with provision of 36 CFR 217 by filing a written notice of appeal within 45 days of the date that the legal notice of this decision appears in the East Oregonian newspaper. The appeal must be filed with John F. Butruille, Regional Forester, Pacific Northwest Region, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208; and a copy simultaneously sent to the Deciding Officer, James A. Lawrence, Forest Supervisor, Umatilla National Forest, 2517 S.W. Hailey Avenue, Pendleton, Oregon 97801. The notice of appeal must include sufficient narrative evidence and argument to show why this decision should be changed or reversed (36 CFR 217.9). Appellants must submit 2 copies of the Notice of Appeal to each officer if the notice is more than 10 pages in length.

  
JAMES A. LAWRENCE  
Forest Supervisor

6-5-90  
DATE







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Purpose of and Need for Action:

The North Fork John Day Ranger District proposes to adopt a program where all motorized access would be directed by a management strategy based on resource and public needs. A District wide program would assure a consistent approach to management of access and travel.

The District recognized in 1987 the need to address problems associated with management of its roads and trails. (1) Conflicts between user groups were increasing at an accelerated rate. For example, hunters on foot felt that the increasing number of hunters in vehicles were a detraction from their hunting experience, while (2) Other folks felt that elk were experiencing more and more harassment as a result of vehicle use. (3) It was recognized that Administrative and Maintenance costs associated with roads was high and needed to be reduced. In addition, Forest Plan comments for the Umatilla and other Forests in Region 6 revealed concerns over management of its transportation systems and finally the District realized they had more miles of road than necessary to adequately manage the land. In short, the action needed was a substantial decrease in the number of roads open and available for free travel.

Forest visitors and managers need a common understanding of the situation and a consensus on management guidelines for directing use. Both must realize that vehicle operation has potential to affect some natural resources, cause safety problems, and create user conflicts. Restrictions on times and methods of access are developed to protect and manage resources and should apply to managers and visitors alike. The opportunity exists to satisfy management and visitor needs, while keeping operational consequence within acceptable limits.

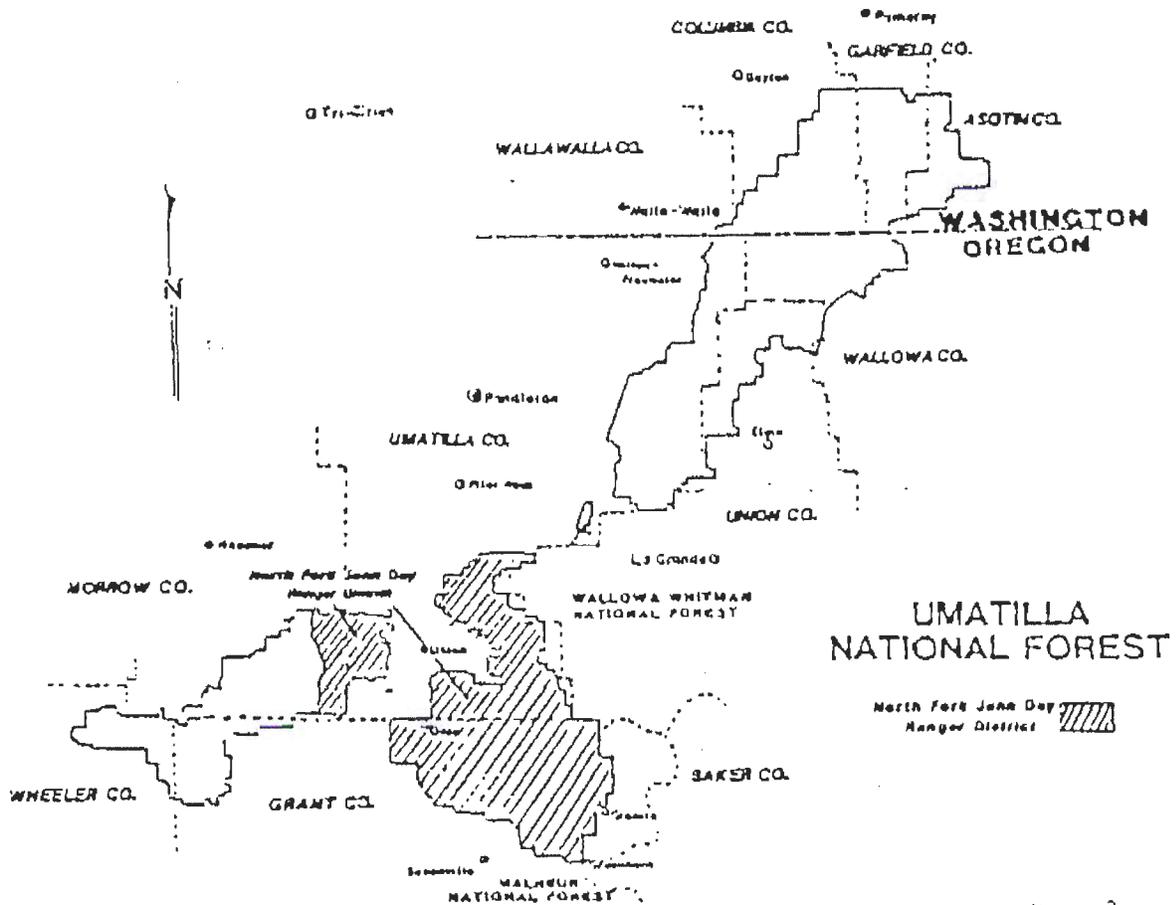
The EA has been written to provide the decision maker with sufficient environmental and economic information to aid in the selection of the preferred management alternative. The preferred alternative is the one that, in the opinion of the Forest Service, best meets public and resource needs while responding effectively to the public issues. The preferred alternative is the basis for, or the alternative developed as, the proposed Motorized Access and Travel Management Program. The "Motorized Access and Travel Management Program" is developed as a separate companion document. However, for purposes of public disclosure under NEPA, the EA and the accompanying proposed "Motorized Access and Travel Management Program" are treated as combined documents. The Motorized Access and Travel Management Program is intended to guide road management and motorized activities on a continuing basis with an update and review planned on a yearly basis.

Management direction has been planned with respect to guidance outlined in the Umatilla National Forest Plan and E.I.S. In general the proposed program will meet or exceed guidelines outlined in the above mentioned document.

Program Objectives:

- a) Responsive to public and resource needs
- b) Easily understood
- c) Useful in management of future activities
- d) Consistent throughout the North Fork John Day Ranger District
- e) Implementable and Enforceable

# VICINITY MAP



### Decision to be Made

There is a need to change the methods used in managing road systems and motorized access. The issues identified are an indication of the public and other agency views and preferences for the direction of access management. The decision to be made by the Forest Supervisor will establish a reduction in road densities district wide, provide for the tracking of administrative use and guide all road construction and management activities for the future.

### Scoping Summary:

The following are issues and concerns identified during interdisciplinary and public scoping. Scoping procedures consisted of discussions with District, Forest, and Regional personnel as well as State, Private industry and other Federal Agencies. Public polls were conducted during the 87, 88, and 89 hunting seasons and a series of public meetings were held to solicit information relative to the management of access. Many similar issues were identified during the Land and Resource Management Planning process for the Umatilla National Forest. Relevant and key issues have been identified. Those identified as "key" will be tracked through the document with respect to the alternatives being evaluated.

### Key Issues Identified:

#### Wildlife

- \* Open road densities are so high that animals have only limited habitat not affected by access.
- \* Buck and bull escapement is reduced by existing open road densities.
- \* Disturbance caused by vehicle travel in summer calving and winter range areas have the potential to reduce populations.
- \* Disturbance and harassment by vehicle travel on National Forest Land has displaced animals onto private land.

#### Recreation

- \* Open road densities and travel have a negative effect on some forest users and their experience. (dust, noise, solitude)
- \* More restrictive road management will mean less access for the public.
- \* More restrictive road management may mean a change in traditional use of the forest (camping, driving, hunting experience, OHV use, wood gathering, mushrooming, etc.).
- \* More restrictive management may result in heavier impact to some areas.
- \* More restrictive management will concentrate OHV use.
- \* More restriction management may limit some access for elderly and handicapped.
- \* A restrictive management strategy must provide a wide range of experiences.

#### Economics

- \* Restrictive road management will increase enforcement costs.
- \* Maintenance cost of the transportation system will be reduced.
- \* Unit costs for forest management activities will increase.
- \* The local economy may be affected.
- \* Implementation will cost money.

#### Administrative Use

- \* Restricted road access would affect all user groups: general public, Forest Service personnel, permittees, commercial operators and other agencies.
- \* Creates conflicts in timing to perform or accomplish management activities.
- \* Restricted access may affect private land holders.
- \* Administrative use by Forest Service personnel on closed roads is not adequately restricted.

#### Implementable and Enforceable

- \* A plan must be constructed in such a way that it can realistically be implemented.
- \* Plan components must be enforceable once in place.
- \* A plan must be easily understood by all forest users.

#### Additional Issues and Concerns:

Other issues and concerns were recognized as important or affected by adoption of the proposal but were considered insignificant with respect to final selection of a preferred alternative. These issues were considered but will not be carried through the Environmental Consequences Section of the EA.

#### Wetlands

- \* What will the effect of more restricted access be on wetlands.

Mitigation: Impacts to wetlands were considered, but consensus was that any alternative requiring more restrictive management of motorized access would have a positive effect on the wetlands resource.

#### Cultural Resource

- \* What will the effect of more restrictive access have on cultural resources?

Mitigation: Impacts to cultural resources were considered, but since the proposals deal with the reduction of existing roads and control of motorized access, the potential to affect this resource is effectively reduced. Action intended by the proposal will reduce access to potential or known sites and will not involve any new construction. Overall the effect of any proposal reducing access is considered beneficial.

#### Old Growth

- \* What will be the effect of more restrictive access on Old Growth areas.

Mitigation: Impacts to dedicated old growth areas would be reduced by any proposal limiting access either through or adjacent to the area. Overall effects of managing access would be beneficial.

## Fisheries

- \* What will be the effect of more restrictive access on fisheries.
- \* Protection of Lost Lake. There is a need to restrict motorized access.

Mitigation: Impacts to fisheries were considered, but it was felt that any proposal which limited access would have a positive affect on that resource. Less access means many streams or reaches of streams would improve in quantity and quality of fishes. The restricted access would mean that recreationists would have to walk to fish some streams now accessible by motorized vehicles. Additional protections for Lost Lake should be incorporated into the selected management proposal to protect the susceptible species present in the Lake.

## Safety

- \* What will be the effect of fewer open roads on the safety of travel.

Mitigation: By decreasing the amount of roaded access, travel on designated routes will be more concentrated. The level of concentration, however, is not expected to be significant enough to create safety problems above what would normally be expected on low standard mountain roads. All proposals would have varying degrees of concentrated use.

## Soils

- \* What will be the general effect of more restricted access on soil erosion and compaction.

Mitigation: Impacts on soils were considered, but it was felt that any alternative requiring more restrictive management of motorized access would lessen compaction and erosion.

## Threatened and Endangered Plants

- \* What will be the general effect of more restrictive access on T & E plants.

Mitigation: Since all proposals deal with the reduction of existing roads and control of motorized access, the potential to affect this resource is minimal. Overall management actions of this nature are considered beneficial. Concentrations of camping and other activities may affect Threatened and Endangered Plants. Monitoring of public activities and camping practices will be necessary to see if modifications are necessary.

## Threatened and Endangered Animals

- \* What will be the general effect of more restrictive access on T & E animals.

Mitigation: Since all proposals deal with the reduction of existing roads and control of motorized access the potential to affect this resource is actually reduced. Overall the effect is considered beneficial. Concentrations of camping and other activities may affect Threatened and Endangered Animals. Monitoring of public activities and camping practices will be necessary to see if modifications are necessary.

#### Permits

There are no Federal or State permits, licenses or other entitlements necessary to implement any of the alternatives addressed in this EA.

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Alternatives

## I. Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

This section has three parts: 1) a description of the process used to formulate alternatives. 2) a description of the alternative considered. 3) identification of the preferred alternative.

### 1. Process used to formulate the Alternative

In the formulation of alternatives the ID team utilized the proposed project objective, public issues, state, Forest Service and other agency concerns, Forest Supervisor guidance, existing opportunities, past management considerations and public input.

The alternatives are responsive to: Identified public and resource needs. The need for an access management system which is easy to understand and can be useful in directing future management activities. Need for a consistent system of management district wide and a system that can be implemented and enforced.

Special attention was given alternatives that enhanced wildlife conditions and recreation opportunities.

Each of the alternatives are subject to management direction as stated in the Forest Standards and Guide found in the Umatilla National Forest Plan. Standards and guidelines which apply to the preferred alternative are found in the North Fork John Day Motorized Access and Travel Management Program, which accompanies this document.

### 2. Description of Alternatives

#### ALTERNATIVE A - CURRENT MANAGEMENT/NO ACTION

Description: The no action alternative would continue to manage access by reacting to situations or resource needs as they occur. There would be no guidelines to implement new management requirements District wide. Existing travel requirements or restrictions would be maintained or improved. Under this alternative access would be discouraged on many roads through use of barricades, berms or gates, but actual enforceable closures would be limited to only those roads or areas covered by an actual order.

#### Management Requirements

- \* District personnel would have to be alert to resource, wildlife, and public conditions requiring access management actions.
- \* Orders related to prohibited activities would need to be maintained on a "as need basis".
- \* Maps would need to be updated as access requirements and new orders were added.
- \* Seasonal closures would require continued administration.

#### Monitoring Requirements:

- \* District Personnel would continue monitoring use for compliance of written orders.
- \* The Oregon State Police (OSP) would continue to aid in monitoring use and reporting violations to District law enforcement personnel.

#### ALTERNATIVE B - MULTIPLE USE

Description: The multiple use alternative would actively manage all motorized access. Area strategies based on resource and public requirements would be developed. Motorized access would be directed according to the driving resource requirement associated with the strategy devised for management areas. A positive system of reinforcement, such as green dot, would be used to indicate motorized opportunities. Areas restricting motorized use would utilize positive signing stating the reason for restrictions and point out other acceptable uses of the area, road or trail. When possible and appropriate existing management facilities such as gates could be used. Restrictive devices or technique would be appropriate for specific sites or conditions, such as camouflage, obliteration, etc. The entire District would be covered by a unified approach to access management and a single written area order. The order would be written to allow OSP (Oregon State Police) enforcement authority. A permit system would be instituted to allow and account for access on restricted travel routes.

#### Management Requirements

- \* District personnel and the public would have to accept the fact that access would be reduced.
- \* A permit system would have to be developed for use on restricted routes.
- \* District personnel and the public would be required to obtain permits to travel on restricted routes.
- \* Maps would need to be changed to reflect new access requirements.
- \* Write an area closure that encompasses the entire District.
- \* New signing would be required.
- \* More coordination would be necessary to accomplish assigned District management activities.

#### Monitoring Requirements

- \* District personnel would need to monitor use to assure that restrictions were appropriate and make adjustment on a yearly basis.
- \* Techniques used to restrict travel would need to be evaluated for their effectiveness and changed if necessary.
- \* Public should be polled to determine if the management system is meeting its intended goals.
- \* Monitor for compliance.

## ALTERNATIVE C WILDLIFE

Description: The wildlife alternative would manage access in a way that would benefit the wildlife resource.

Emphasis would be placed on seasonal closures: Winter closures on winter habitat areas, Spring and Summer closures on calving and rearing areas, and closures encompassing all forest lands during hunting season to facilitate better buck and bull escapement during the hunting season.

Motorized access opportunities would change on a revolving basis to meet wildlife needs or to coincide with hunting season dates with more liberal motorized opportunities available outside seasonal restrictive time periods.

A positive system of reinforcement, such as green dot, would be used to indicate motorized opportunities. Areas of restricted access would utilize seasonal signing that stated reasons for restrictions. Areas outside defined seasonally restricted areas would remain constant in the number of open and available roads for travel. Travel in a restricted area would be limited to designated routes only. Any management activity conducted in the area would be confined to time periods outside the restrictive period.

### Management Requirements

- \* District personnel would need to accurately define areas and time periods of seasonal wildlife use.
- \* District personnel would need to identify reasonable access routes and camping opportunities to accommodate forest users during hunting season.
- \* District personnel would need to establish a program for changing seasonal closures.
- \* Maps would need to be changed to reflect the seasonal nature of travel restrictions.
- \* Management activities would need to be scheduled outside restricted time periods.
- \* Write separate closure orders to accommodate seasonal uses.

### Monitoring Requirements

- \* District personnel would need to monitor designated areas to assure their appropriateness and make changes where necessary.
- \* Monitor signing to assure the system of implementation was followed.
- \* Monitor compliance of seasonal closure.
- \* OSP (Oregon State Police) continue to aid in monitoring use and reporting violations to District law enforcement personnel.