



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Umatilla  
National  
Forest

Pomeroy  
Ranger  
District

Route 1, Box 53-F  
Pomeroy, WA 99347  
(509) 843-1891

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1950/7700

July 22, 1993

Dear Forest User:

Enclosed is a copy of the Decision Notice for the Motorized Access and Travel Management Plan on the Pomeroy Ranger District.

Based on the environmental analysis, I have decided to implement Alternative 4. This alternative provides the best combination of responses to the key issues and the purpose and need for this project. In Alternative 4, resource protection is given full consideration while still allowing adequate public motorized access.

Thank you for your continued interest in our planning process. For additional information, please contact me or Joe Durnbaugh at (509) 843-1891.

Sincerely,

*Bob Housley*

*for*

DAVE PRICE  
District Ranger

Enclosures



DECISION NOTICE  
and  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Pomeroy Ranger District  
Motorized Access and Travel Management Plan

USDA FOREST SERVICE  
UMATILLA NATIONAL FOREST  
POMEROY RANGER DISTRICT

Asotin County, Washington  
Columbia County, Washington  
Garfield County, Washington  
Wallowa County, Oregon

This Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents the Forest Service decision to implement the motorized access management actions described in the Motorized Access and Travel Management Plan Environmental Assessment (EA).

These actions are described in more detail in the EA and the reader is referred to that document for further information. This EA is available for public review at the Pomeroy Ranger District office in Pomeroy, WA and the Umatilla National Forest Supervisor's Office located in Pendleton, OR. The EA is tiered to the Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

The area covered by the EA is the entire non-Wilderness portion of the Pomeroy Ranger District. Decisions regarding motorized access in the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness Area (approximately half of the area of the District) were made by an act of Congress in 1978 when the Wilderness legislation was enacted, permanently eliminating motorized use within the Wilderness. In addition approximately 44 square miles were identified in the Forest Plan for strictly non-motorized access.

The Decision

Based on the results of the analysis documented in the EA, it is my decision to implement Alternative 4, as recommended by the interdisciplinary team. This alternative strikes a balance between the other alternatives in that resource protection is given full consideration while still allowing adequate public motorized access. When fully implemented, Alternative 4 will involve the following:

1. Of the 623 miles of forest roads on the Pomeroy District outside of designated Wilderness, approximately 325 miles will be closed to

motorized vehicles (except that roads outside of areas classified as elk winter range will be open to snowmobiles during periods when elk are absent).

2. Of the 45.5 miles of trails outside of either designated Wilderness or areas designated for non-motorized access under Forest Plan standards and guidelines, 23.9 miles will be closed to motorized use year-round. This includes closing the Tucannon River trail.

3. Some roads and trails would be subject to seasonal traffic restrictions in elk winter range, spring calving areas, or during hunting seasons.

4. A District-wide area closure would be placed in effect. This will restrict motorized use to designated routes only. Off road driving will only be allowed for a distance of 100 yards laterally off of an open route for firewood cutting or camping purposes.

5. 26.9 miles of roads and trails will be open to OHV (off-highway vehicles, such as non-street legal motorcycles, 3 and 4 wheel ATVs, etc.) use.

6. The open road equivalent density (miles of roads and trails which are open to motorized use per square mile of land area) will decrease from the present 2.34 to 1.39 mi./sq.mi.. This figure should vary slightly through the normal year as seasonal closures go into or out of effect and some roads are opened for firewood cutting or administrative access.

### Alternatives Considered

Four alternatives were analyzed which address the issues developed out of the scoping process.

#### Alternative #1, NO ACTION:

This alternative maintains the current access strategy on the District. Access management planning would continue to be performed on a project-by-project basis. Many Forest Plan management area standards and guidelines would not be met, necessitating fairly extensive amendments to the Plan. This would be most apparent in strategy area (SA) 11, which calls for non-motorized access. The trails in the Menatchee Creek drainage are presently open to motorized use; allowing this to continue (and also continuing motorized use on road 4304-050, Mountain View rd.) would require changing standards and guidelines for management area A1. Forest Plan management areas which require area closure strategies (motorized travel on designated routes only) would also need amending to continue to allow off-road vehicles.

#### Alternative #2: MOTORIZED RECREATION

Motorized recreation opportunities on the District would be emphasized. This would leave the most roads and trails open to motorized access, within the Forest Plan standards and guidelines. Seasonal closures would be used extensively to meet wildlife objectives during sensitive times of the year. Area closures would be used sparingly. The C4 summer range strategy areas (SAs 4 and 8) would have spring and fall area closures, with the months of July and August being open to off-road motorized vehicles. This would require a modification to Forest Plan Standards and guidelines for

management area C4. SA 6 would have no area closure; wildlife objectives for open road densities would be met by seasonal and year-round closures on individual roads. The small inclusions of Forest Plan management areas requiring an area closure policy would be signed as such. Winter range strategy areas would have a 12/1-3/31 area closure, with some routes in SAs 5 & 10 being left open to snowmobiles and other motorized vehicles. The total winter area closure in the Lick Cr. winter range (SA 7) would continue, as would the calving (4/1-6/30) closure in the same strategy area, south of the Lick Cr. road. A winter 4-wheel-drive recreation area would be established in the Iron Springs Ridge area to accommodate 4X4 enthusiasts and reduce conflicts between them and snowmobile users. The Mountain View road (#4304-050) would remain open, requiring an amendment to the Forest Plan. This alternative would leave Tucannon Trail and the Diamond Peak road open to motorized vehicles. Park Ridge road and Hogback road would continue with the present seasonal closures.

#### Alternative #3: WILDLIFE

Motorized access would be minimized across the District for the security of elk and other wildlife. Motorized travel would be limited to designated routes only, while designated open routes would be kept to the minimum necessary to provide basic Forest access. Most arterial and major collector roads would remain open to public travel, while the majority of local roads would be closed year-round to motorized use. Emphasis would be placed on non-motorized dispersed recreation. The Mountain View road would be closed in order to comply with Forest Plan standards and guidelines. No amendment to the Forest Plan would be needed under this alternative. This Alternative would close the Tucannon Trail, Diamond Peak road beyond Kelly camp, and the Park Ridge road to motorized vehicles year-round. The Hogback seasonal closure would be extended from 9/1 to 6/30 annually.

#### Alternative #4: PREFERRED

This alternative provides a broad mix of recreational opportunities, both motorized and non-motorized. Emphasis would be on dispersed recreation of both types, with concentrated use in some campground and attractor areas, such as the Tucannon River. A mixture of open roads, seasonal restrictions, and year-round closures would allow the flexibility to meet the access needs of Forest users, while meeting resource protection objectives. The primary Forest access arterial roads, and most collector roads, would be open to public travel, with the exception that the Lick Cr. winter range closure would continue, which closes arterial roads 41 (Lick Cr.) and 44 (Smoothing Iron) during the 12/1 to 3/31 winter period. The entire District would be covered by a year-round area closure (except that snowmobiles would be allowed in summer range areas during the winter months), thus motorized travel would be limited to designated roads and trails. The winter 4X4 recreation area on Iron Spring Ridge would be implemented, with the provision that a snow depth of a minimum of one foot would be required at the Forest Boundary along road 42 for this activity to be allowed. Winter ranges would generally be closed to motorized traffic during the winter months, except that the main access roads along the Tucannon River would remain open, since at the present time no conflicts have been identified in the area between wintering big game and recreationists. Under this Alternative the Tucannon Trail will be closed to motorized traffic; the Diamond Peak road will remain open; Park Ridge road will be closed except during the modern rifle deer and elk seasons; and the present modern rifle closure will remain on the Hogback road.

## Other Alternatives Considered

Other alternatives considered were:

The ID team considered the possibility of opening all Forest roads and trails (non-wilderness) to motorized traffic. This would not comply with the Forest Plan standards and guidelines, although it would be preferred by some members of the public who want no restrictions on motorized access.

The team also considered closing the entire District to motorized traffic, year-round. This would not comply with the Forest Plan direction either, and would be unacceptable to most public users of the Forest.

A large number of alternatives exist for every segment of every road and trail on the District. To list every possible alternative, District-wide, would present an infinite number of alternatives. The alternatives shown here represent the possible array of alternatives available, given the issues developed during the scoping process.

## Issues

### KEY ISSUES:

Listed below are the three key, alternative-driving issues identified by the ID team and public comment:

#### 1. Elk Habitat

Unit of measure: Open road equivalent (roads and trails open to motorized vehicles) miles per square mile (mi./sq.mi.).

Elk habitat is one of the important reasons for doing access management planning. Wildlife habitat is a major component of nearly all of the Forest Plan management areas on the District. Access management practices affect elk security, which in turn may affect elk survival in a number of ways. During winter elk are in a weakened condition. Disturbance from snowmobiles and other motorized vehicles, and associated problems resulting from increased human access (such as direct harassment and poaching), can elevate the stress level in the animals, with the results of increased miscarriages in the pregnant cows and decreased winter survival rates. Harassment during the spring calving season can separate the cows and calves, lowering calf survival rates and making them more available to predators. Disturbance during late summer/early fall (Sep. - Oct.) mating season can interrupt the breeding cycle, possibly resulting in fertile cows not being bred. The Washington Dept. of Wildlife is concerned about bull/buck escapement during the hunting season. Lower open road densities creates security areas of reduced hunting pressure to which animals may escape.

2. Road Access

Unit of measure: Total road miles open to public travel (mi.).

This issue encompasses a number of other issues, such as; vehicular hunting access, walk-in hunting, mushroom/berry picking, woodcutting, camping, sight-seeing, etc.. The types of vehicles addressed here are road/highway vehicles such as passenger cars, trucks, "jeeps", campers and other motor vehicles normally used on public roads. Road conditions vary widely across the District, with some of the main access roads being suitable for all vehicle types, while many lower standard roads are appropriate only for high clearance vehicles. Roads are the primary means of Forest access for most Forest users. Even those who are advocates of non-motorized forms of recreation use roads to arrive at their points of departure. Some physically handicapped and elderly individuals may be adversely affected by increased motorized access restrictions. The question, then, is: "How much road access is needed for public access to the Forest, while providing for elk security and other resource needs as required by the Forest Plan?"

3. OHV (Off-Highway Vehicle) Access

Units of measure: miles of roads and trails open to OHV access.  
acres available to off-road OHV use.

OHVs are vehicles such as ATVs (all-terrain vehicles like three and four-wheelers), motorcycles, and snowmobiles. To many people OHV recreation is the primary purpose for using the Forest. For others these vehicles are just another means of transportation. To this group can be added off-road four-wheel-drive (4X4) recreation. Some organized 4-wheel-drive groups have requested areas set aside for winter 4X4 use, to minimize conflicts with snowmobiles.

Tracking Issues

The following two issues were identified as important, but not strong enough to drive alternatives. The effects on these "tracking issues" are compared between alternatives:

4. Administration

This is an umbrella issue, encompassing a number of "sub-issues", which basically describes how an alternative may be implemented and the closures administered. These "sub-issues" are listed below:

Cost

This is difficult to analyze quantitatively, but the alternatives can be compared on a relative basis to each other. This is the cost to implement (installation of gates or other closure devices), administer and enforce.

Administrative Access

This is the effect on Forest Service programs and other agencies (such as Washington Dept. of Wildlife) of managing the road closures; requiring field personnel, contractors, and permittees to walk to work sites behind closure devices, rather than

allowing vehicular access, will increase somewhat the cost of doing business. Many people don't like seeing Forest Service personnel driving behind closures, when they are told they can't. Should administrative access be allowed unrestricted, or should the Forest Service be held to the same restrictions as the public? Administrative access may also affect the closure status of a road (refer to definitions of 'closed road' in Management Requirements section).

#### Firewood Cutting

Closing roads will affect access for this activity. The option exists to open selected roads during specific time periods when the effect on wildlife may be minimized.

#### Commercial Access

How will restrictions on access be applied to commercial (timber sale) users? Normally the timber sale contract is an implied permit to use closed roads. However, some closures may restrict commercial access during critical time periods, such as winter range, calving, or hunting season closures.

### 5. Anadromous Fish

The listing of the Snake River salmon runs as threatened species has increased the need to protect spawning habitat by reducing sedimentation. Any additional road closures would be expected to have a favorable effect. There is the opportunity, however, to obliterate some roads near streams that may be a source of sediment and which are not needed for future access. Obliteration options run from simple elimination of motorized access and allowing the road to revegetate naturally, to physically removing the road prism and rebuilding the natural contour of the land. Usually road obliteration will involve removing of drainage structures such as culverts or bridges, outsloping and/or constructing drainage berms on the road surface, and grass seeding or planting shrubs on the surface and the cut and fill slopes to make the facility maintenance-free.

#### Rationale for the Decision

Alternative 4 was selected because it:

1. Provides a broad mix of recreational opportunities, both motorized and non-motorized.
2. Recognizes the Oregon Governor and Washington State Dept. of Wildlife request, as stated in the Forest Plan ROD, for an open road density of 1.5 mi./sq.mi. on elk summer range, and 1.0 mi./sq.mi. on winter range.
3. Recognizes the need for off-road vehicle recreation by designating the Stevens Ridge area for OHV use and allowing the opportunity for additional OHV projects in the future.
4. Is consistent with the Standards and Guidelines of the Forest Plan.

## Public Involvement

The public has been heavily involved throughout the planning process. Access management is very dependant on public involvement. The scoping process began in the summer of 1991 with a public announcement soliciting comments from interested parties. Public meetings were held in Pomeroy, WA, Clarkston, WA, and Dayton, WA in October, November, and December, respectively, of 1991. These meetings were held in an open-house format where a map of the existing transportation facilities was displayed, along with Forest Plan maps and other related literature, and the public was asked to comment and talk with District representatives. The complete list of people, organizations and agencies contacted is available in the Access Management Project File at the Pomeroy Ranger District.

From early September through December 1991 copies of a questionnaire were distributed to the public requesting responses on various aspects of access management. These questionnaires were given to people in the field, were on display at the Pomeroy District office, and were also distributed at the public meetings. A total of 386 completed questionnaires were returned to the Pomeroy Ranger District office, displaying a high level of public interest. In general, the responses demonstrated much public support for road and area closures for the benefit of wildlife. Responses were about two to one in favor of additional closures for wildlife, area closures, and seasonal (as opposed to year-round) closures. Most respondents felt the present number of road closures was good, but most would accept additional closures to help wildlife. Also, 59% wanted more restrictions placed on ATVs (OHVs), while 34% did not want additional restrictions (7% didn't care). A large majority felt that the present level of snowmobile access is acceptable.

On June 10, 1993 the District sent out a letter to the Access Management mailing list announcing that the EA was completed and was available for review and comment for a period of thirty days. There were a number of requests for copies of the EA during the 30 day review period, but no comments concerning the proposal were received at the Pomeroy District office during this time.

## Mitigation

Implementation of this plan will have an impact on some users of the Pomeroy Ranger District. Cross country motorized travel will be curtailed and a number of roads and trails will be closed to motorized use. Listed below are some projects for future planning which were identified in the EA.

1. Spangler Project. This project which is currently in planning stages may identify some trail projects for OHV recreation. This is located on the west side of the District in the Spangler Creek drainage, in Forest Plan Management Area A2.

2. Stevens Ridge. The EA identified most of the roads in this area (Road 4000-020 and tributaries) to be open to OHVs (generally defined as motorized vehicles under 50 inches in width). The area has many firelines and old skid trails which offer opportunities as designated routes for OHV use.

3. Mountain Road groomed snowmobile trail. For several years there has been a groomed snowmobile trail which roughly parallels Forest road 40 (Mountain Road). There is an opportunity to expand the use of this trail to a summertime OHV route. This will take further planning and some trail construction.

4. Some closed roads may be opened to the public periodically to allow access for firewood cutting and other recreation when compatible with wildlife and other resource protection criteria.

### Monitoring and Implementation

The selected Alternative will be implemented over a period of three to five years, depending on budget considerations. The District will establish priorities for an orderly implementation schedule. Umatilla Forest policy calls for signing proposed road and area closures one year in advance of the closure date. This policy will be followed unless there is an overriding need to implement a closure immediately to prevent or mitigate resource damage, to help strengthen and enforce existing closures, and when roads are to be obliterated and removed from the road system. Roads and areas which have an established closure, but which may have a change in the type or season of closure will be implemented immediately, if possible.

An access management plan needs to be flexible to allow for varying field conditions, established use patterns, and other unforeseen problems. Closure locations may vary from those shown on the Alternative maps in order to make the closures more effective and enforceable. Some short spur roads, shown as closed on the maps, may be left open if they cannot be closed effectively, and to provide dispersed recreation opportunities, if doing so still meets the objectives of the Strategy Area.

The Access Management Plan will be reviewed annually, during and after implementation, to monitor its effectiveness and propose any needed changes. The plan may be revised biennially in order to implement changes which have been determined to be needed. This is in accordance with the Umatilla Forest Plan Forest Management Objectives (pg. 4-52). At the time of the annual review, any proposals for temporary openings of road closures (to allow access for woodcutting or other activities) and anticipated needs for administrative or commercial access for the coming year will also be reviewed and analyzed.

As future timber sales and other projects are planned the open road densities, as a component of the Habitat Effectiveness Index (HEI), will be analyzed on a sub-watershed basis. If minimum HEI (as established in the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines) is not met, the open road density will be examined and necessary adjustments made (through additional road closures) in order to meet HEI requirements. Existing open road density will also be compared to the projected density to determine consistency with this plan.

The District will initiate a permit system, as required by the Forest Plan (pg. 4-86), for administrative use of closed roads and areas. Those needing access to a closure will normally be required to enter via non-motorized means. Permits for motorized access may be issued based on an analysis of need, benefit and cost. For instance, if a Forest Service crew or contractor needs to bring in heavy equipment for a project, then a permit may be issued based on need. Permits must also be consistent with Strategy Area and road management objectives. Permits will usually not be issued for motorized entry to winter range, calving or hunting season closures. Requirements for permits will be somewhat less stringent in general summer range closures. Administrative motorized use permits will generally be denied for entry onto any closures during the big game modern rifle hunting seasons.

The Pomeroy Ranger District will keep a record of permits issued as part of its monitoring program. Permits will be the minimum necessary to accomplish Forest Service management objectives and those of cooperating agencies and permittees. As stated in the Forest Plan, pg. 4-86: "Limited single use permits will be rare; if a road is authorized for use, generally it will be open for all uses". The first response to a request for a permit will usually be that if the employee, crew, permittee or agency can perform their job on foot, horseback, or bicycle, and/or if the work can be performed at a different time of year (for seasonal closures), then the permit will not be issued.

A timber sale contract is considered to be a permit to use the roads specified in the contract. Seasonal restrictions may be placed on timber sale operations in sensitive areas, such as winter range or calving area closures. These limitations will be addressed during project planning, and implemented through the timber sale contract. New low use, local roads which are built for timber sale access in the future will be closed upon termination of timber sale activities, as per Forest Plan direction (pg. 4-86).

#### FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

I have determined that, based on the EA, this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore I find that an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed for implementation of this program.

This determination is based on the following factors:

1. The alternative selected will protect public health and safety, plants and animals (including those threatened, endangered or sensitive), cultural values, and sensitive environments.
2. No wetlands or floodplains will be adversely affected.
3. There are no known irreversible or irretrievable commitment or loss of Forest resources.
4. Cost and efficiency have been considered.
5. Impacts to Forest users and measures to mitigate these impacts have been considered.
6. The proposal is consistent with direction and guidelines of the Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (except as noted above) as well as the Pacific Northwest FEIS for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation to which this assessment is tiered.

7. Consumers, civil rights, minority groups and women will not be significantly affected.

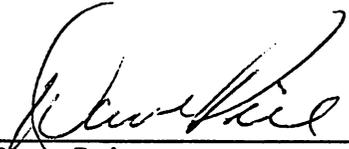
Dates and Information

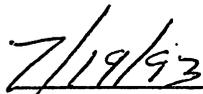
Implementation of this program will not begin before September 1, 1993.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 (Content of a Notice of Appeal) and must include the reasons for appeal. The Notice of Appeal must be filed in duplicate with the Reviewing Officer, Jeff Blackwood, Forest Supervisor, 2517 S.W. Hailey Avenue, Pendleton, Oregon 97801, within 45 days of the legal notice appearing in the Eastern Oregonian newspaper.

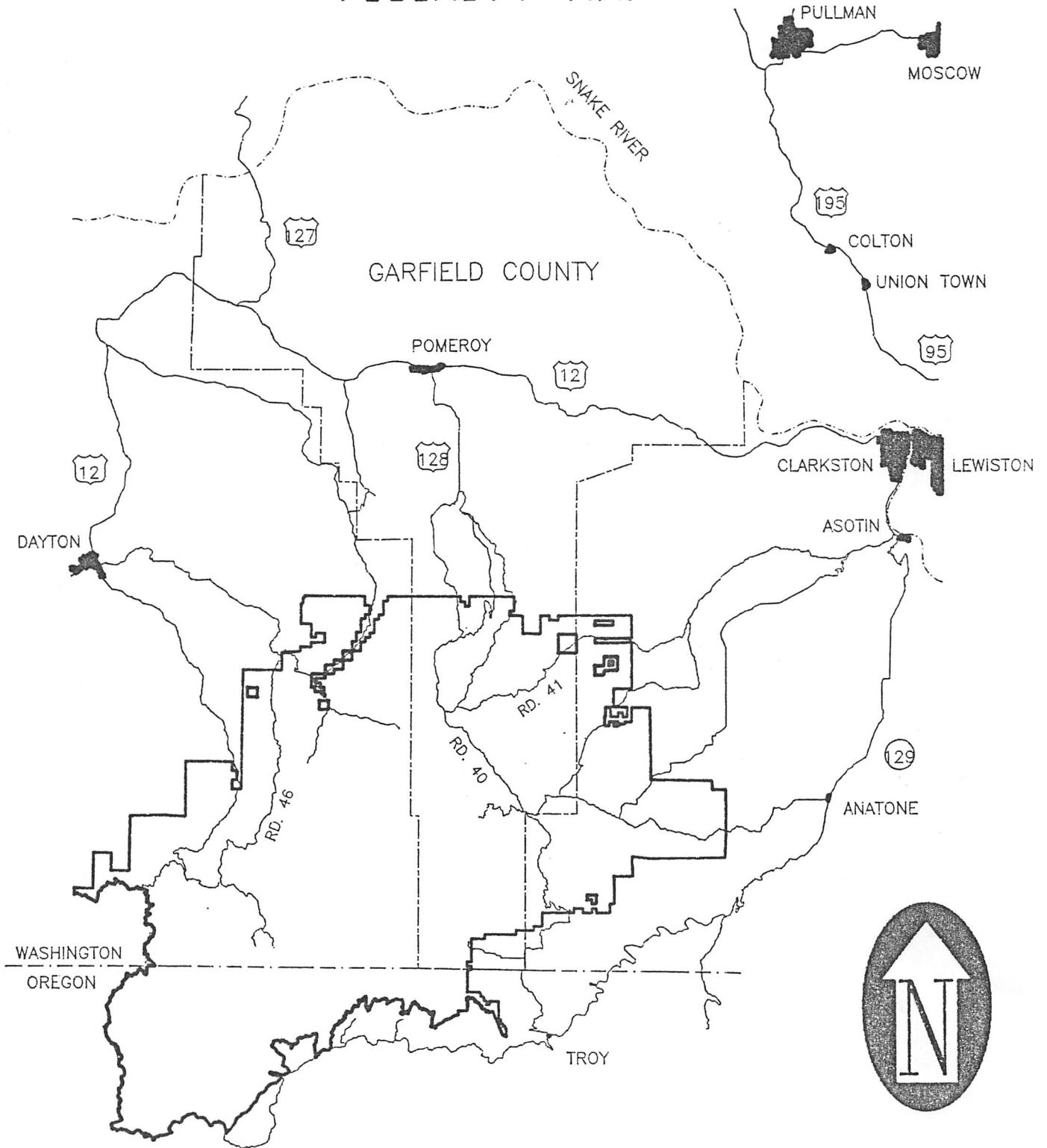
For Further Information

For further information or to relate comments or concerns which may influence similar decisions in the near future, contact myself or Joe Durnbaugh, District Law Enforcement Officer/Access Management Coordinator, Rt.1 Box 53-F, Pomeroy, WA 99347; telephone (509) 843-1891.

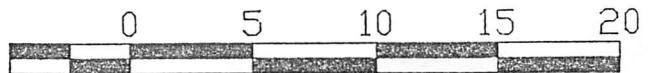
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dave Price  
District Ranger

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# UMATILLA NATIONAL FOREST POMEROY RANGER DISTRICT VICINITY MAP



- ROADS & HIGHWAYS
- POMEROY DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- - - STATE LINE
- - - COUNTY LINE
- - - SNAKE RIVER



Scale in Miles

