

Monitoring Question

To what extent is the Superior National Forest (SNF), in coordination with neighboring public road agencies, providing the minimum safe, affordable, and minimum impact road system for administrative and public use.

Monitoring Conducted

Road Inventories and Management Decisions

Objective. O-TS-3. *New roads built to access land for resource management will be primarily Objective Maintenance Level (OML)1 or temporary and not intended for public motorized use. Temporary roads will be decommissioned after their use is completed. All newly constructed OML 1 roads will be effectively closed to motorized road and recreation vehicles following their use unless they are needed for other management objectives.*

According to the SNF roads database there was no change in SNF *National Forest System* road mileage between 2005 and 2006. However, *unclassified* road mileage increased 61 miles between the two years. This increase was a result of enhanced inventories where previously unknown unclassified roads were discovered. The change in *National Forest System* OML 1 and 2 roads since 2004 is an increase of 83 miles. This increased road mileage was largely due to the designation of unclassified roads to *System* roads between 2004 and 2005 and not new construction. Table 1 displays road miles by OML class designated in four approved project decisions. The majority of designations involve converting unclassified roads to OML 1 and 2 roads.

Table 1. Actual Road Accomplishment Status from Infrastructure Database (INFRA)								
Year	OML1	OML2	OML3	OML4	OML5	Total System Roads	Unclassified	Total Roads
2004	883	867	248	322	86	2406	223	2629
2005	920	925	241	318	85	2489	238	2727
2006*	956	944	241	318	85	2489	299	2788

*Reflects 55 miles in approved decisions but not yet entered into INFRA.

Table 2. Proposed Road Designations and Motorized Use				
Decision	Change in Road Status (miles)			
New Roads Added; Designated to NFS System Roads. Closed to RMV's				
	<i>OML1</i>	<i>OML2</i>	<i>OML3</i>	<i>Unclassified</i>
'04* & 05 Decisions	5.2	.1		
Unclassified Road Designated to NFS System Roads. Open to RMV's				
'04* & 05 Decisions	14.5	17.9		
2006 Decisions	4.4			
Unclassified Road Designated to NFS System Roads. Closed to RMV's				
'04* & 05 Decisions	11.8	.5		
Unclassified Road Decommissioned. Closed to RMV's				
'04* & 05 Decisions				59.4
2006 Decisions				4.3
<i>Sub Total Open To RMV's</i>	19	18		0
<i>Sub Total Closed To RMV's</i>	17	.6		63.7
Total Open to RMV's	37 Miles			
Total Closed to RMV's	81 Miles			

One 2006 project decision designates 5 miles of unclassified roads to system roads and three 2005 project decisions re-designate 45 miles of unclassified roads to system roads. In addition, 5.3 miles of new roads were identified in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decisions to be added to the *National Forest Road System*. Table 2 portrays proposed new roads and road designation changes from 2004 to 2006, and resultant motorized recreation status by NEPA decision. Of 118 miles of roads to be added, re-designated, and decommissioned in 2005 and 2006 NEPA

decisions, 81 miles or 69% of the roads will be closed to recreation motor vehicles. Changes in open and closed roads influences the recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS). Further discussion on ROS can be found in the Recreation Section. Proposed temporary roads are not displayed as all these roads would be decommissioned following their intended use.

Road Decommissioning

Objective. O-TS-3. *New roads built to access land for resource management will be primarily OML 1 or temporary and not intended for public motorized use. Temporary roads will be decommissioned after their use is completed. All newly constructed OML 1 roads will be effectively closed to motorized road and*

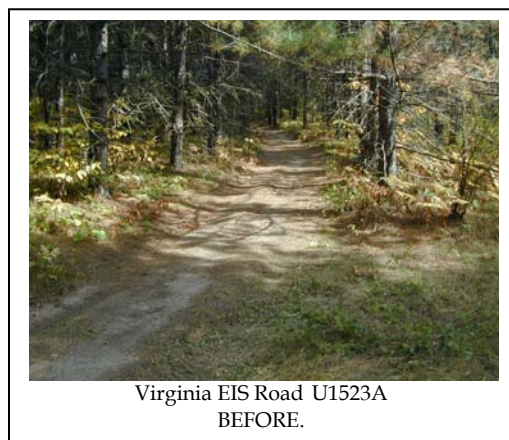
recreation vehicles following their use unless they are needed for other management objectives.

Table 3. Road Decommissioning (miles)			
Decision	Accomplished	Future	Total
<i>'04* & 05 Decisions</i>			
Dunka Env Assessment		30	30
Virginia EIS	3	22	25
Tomahawk EIS			4.4
<i>2006 Decisions</i>			
Inga South Env Assessment		4.3	4.3
Sub Total Change	3	60.7	63.7

During this reporting period, approximately 12 roads totaling 3 miles were decommissioned within the Virginia project area. The intended outcome of decommissioning roads is to “make the road disappear to a casual viewer and to

render it not drivable from the beginning of a road to the furthest point seen from a Forest system road or other public road” (Forest Plan Appendix F). A number of practices and techniques were implemented for decommissioning temporary roads, including removal of drainage structures and temporary bridges, removal of ruts and berms, reshaping and re-contouring, seeding and mulching, drainage control, and effective road blockage. In addition, approximately 63 miles of roads were identified for decommissioning in four other decisions. Table 3 outlines accomplished and future miles of roads to be decommissioned by decision.

The below photos compare a road before and after decommissioning:



Evaluation and Conclusions

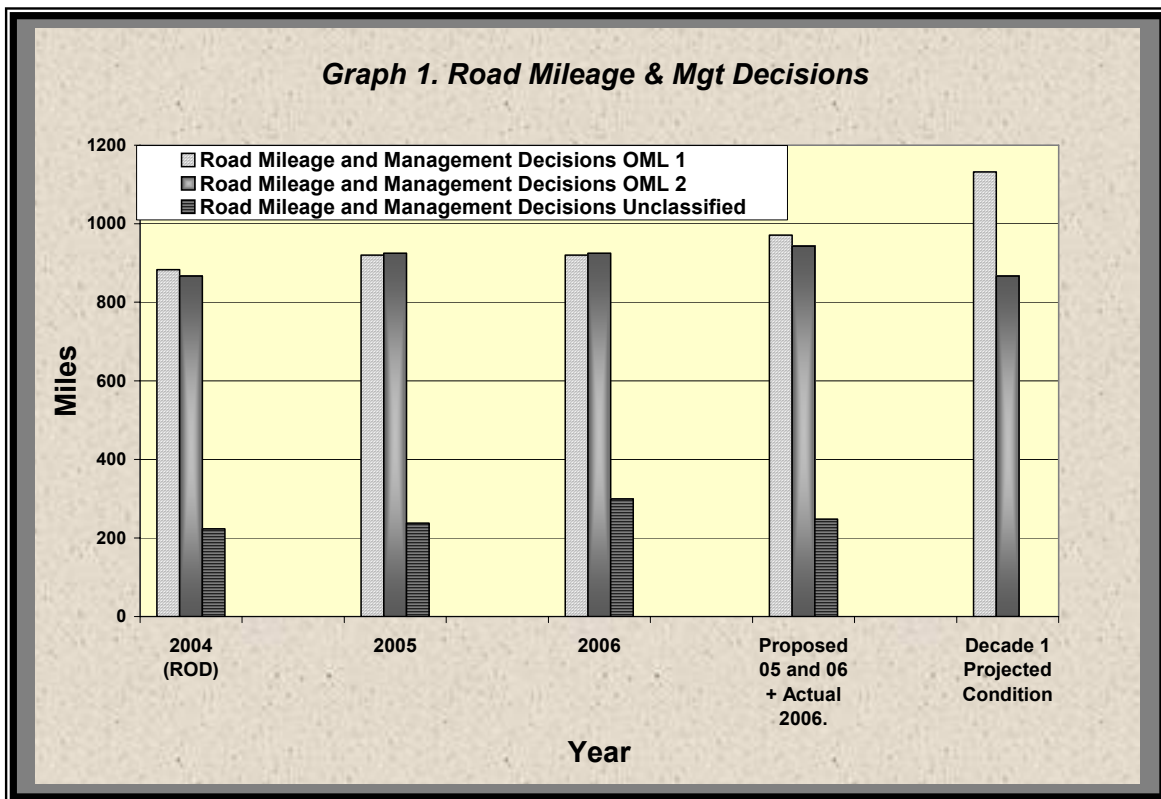
Road Inventories and Management Decisions

According to the SNF INFRA database, there was no change in *National Forest System* road mileage but an increase of 61 miles of known *unclassified* roads during 2006. The 2006 OML 1 and OML 2 road mileage represents approximately 15% and 107% respectively of the Decade 1 mileage projections (See Table 4 and Graph 1). When approved (but not yet implemented) project road decisions are included, OML 1 and OML 2 road mileage achieves approximately 30% and 109% of Decade 1 desired or projected conditions respectively. Overall, *National Forest*

System road trends towards Decade 1 projections are acceptable, with the exception of overachieving OML 2 mileage expectations.

Year	OML 1	OML 2	Unclassified
2004 (ROD)	883	867	223
Actual 2005	920	925	238
Actual 2006	920	925	299
Proposed 05 & 06 + Actual 06.	971	943	120
2014 Decade 1	1,132	867	0

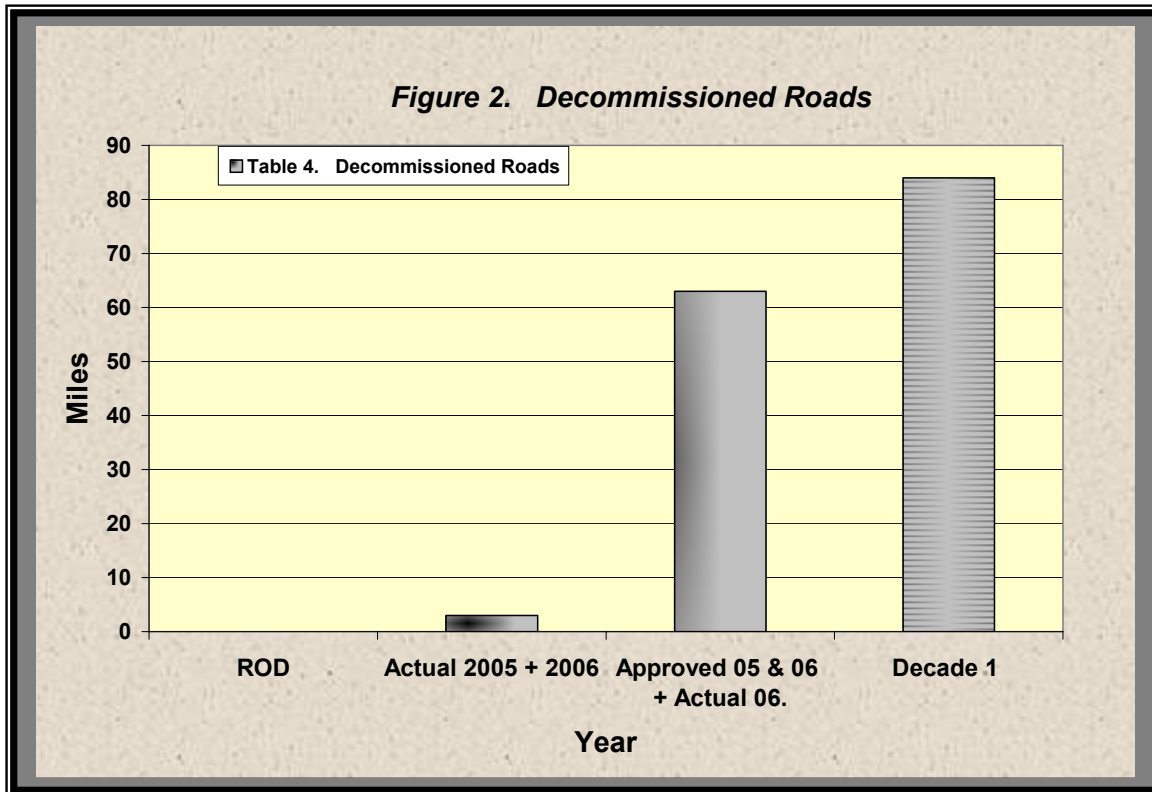
Unclassified road mileage will be reduced approximately 113 miles when approved projects are implemented. This reduction as a percentage of unclassified road mileage known in 2004 represents 46% achievement of Decade 1 projections. However, when the unclassified road reduction is compared to revised 2006 mileage, Decade 1 attainment drops to 38%. Regardless of starting point mileage, the reduction of unclassified road mileage is trending towards Decade 1 projections (See Table 4 and Graph 1).



Road Decommissioning

During Fiscal Year 2006, three miles of *National Forest System* road were decommissioned. In addition, approximately 63 miles of roads approved for decommissioning but not yet implemented were identified in four Decision Documents. The miles of roads decommissioned and approved to be decommissioned represents 75% of the 83 miles projected by the end of decade 1. Table 5 and Graph 2 display achievement of Forest Plan Direction.

Year	Road Decommissioned
2004 (ROD)	0
Actual 2005 & 2006	3
Approved 05 & 06 + Actual 06.	63
2014 Decade 1	84



Standards and Guidelines

Five transportation system Standards and Guidelines (S&G's) were monitored during 2006. These S&G's predominately dealt with effectively closing and/or decommissioning existing and temporary un-needed roads. Three of the S&G's addressed road decommissioning and all were found to be fully met. Monitoring revealed that road decommissioning practices and procedures have been effective at re-vegetation and prevention of unwanted motorized use. One S&G pertaining to use of minimum road construction standards was adhered to across the SNF. However, only partial compliance was achieved in preventing ATV's use around road barriers. Motorized vehicles were found to be traveling on closed roads on 21% of eighty roads visited during 2006. Ineffective travel barriers contributed to this un-authorized travel.

Necessary Follow-up Actions and Management Recommendations

After reviewing monitoring findings, the Forest Interdisciplinary Team identified four Follow-up Actions to carry forward.

Follow-up Actions

- * During project planning, consider analyzing and making transportation decisions within the entire project planning area, including roads not associated with vegetation management projects.
- * Avoid designating RMV use on roads which terminate in sensitive areas that may result in or encourage resource impacts (i.e. wetlands).
- * Ensure that thorough and accurate road inventories are completed and entered into the roads database.
- * Ensure that once NEPA decisions are made, information is shared with appropriate program leaders to be entered into the appropriate data base.

Management Recommendations

- * Recognize that if and when planned road decommissioning projects are implemented and if this current pace of road decommissioning continues, the projected Decade 1 decommissioned mileage will soon be achieved. Further road de-commissioning will exceed 2014 projections. A full list of Follow-up Actions and Management Recommendation are displayed in Appendices A and B.

Collaborative Opportunities To Improve Efficiency And Quality Of Program

Partnerships

The SNF worked with the state, counties, and local clubs to achieve common outcomes. Partners are shown in Table 6 and in Appendix F.

Table 6. Collaborative Opportunities		
Partner	Monitoring Activity	Accomplishment
DNR/Counties	Coordinate closure of high clearance roads.	Increase efficiencies of closures.
Local Motorized Recreation Clubs	Identify motorized recreation opportunities	Assisted w/ designation & maintenance of motorize trails

Summary Conclusions

- * Unclassified road mileage increased 61 miles since Fiscal Year 2005 due to discovery of previously unknown unclassified roads.
- * National Forest System OML 1 and 2 roads increased 83 miles since 2004 largely due to the designation of unclassified roads to System roads and not new construction. This increase in OML 1 and OML 2 road mileage achieves approximately 30% and 102% of Decade 1 projected conditions respectively.
- * Three miles of National Forest System road were actually decommissioned and approximately 63 miles of roads approved for decommissioning but not yet implemented were identified in four Decision Documents. The miles of roads decommissioned and approved to be decommissioned represents 75% of the 83 miles projected by the end of Decade 1.
- * Monitoring revealed that road decommissioning practices and procedures have been effective at re-vegetation and prevention of unwanted motorized use.