

Access and Recreation

Analysis Area

The analysis area for this topic is the NFS lands, roads, and trails of the IPNF and KNF.

Conditions and Trends for Access

The AMS and AMS Technical Report described the access and recreation revision topic and the conditions and trends. The following information is an update to the AMS, providing more detail and the results of the evaluation process.

Roads and trails that provide access to NFS lands are considered to be either Forest roads and trails or unauthorized roads and trails.

Forest roads and trails: A road or trail wholly or partially within or adjacent to and serving the National Forest System that the Forest Service determines is necessary for the protection, administration, and utilization of the National Forest System and the use and development of its resources.

Unauthorized road or trail: A road or trail that is not a Forest road or trail or a temporary road or trail and that is not included in a Forest transportation atlas.

Some Forest roads in the National Forests have not had a determination as to whether or not they are National Forest System roads (NFSR). These are inventoried as *undetermined roads*.

National Forest System road: A Forest road other than a road that has been authorized by a legally documented right-of-way held by a State, county or other local public road authority.

This summary and assessment will only include Forest roads and trails that are under Forest Service jurisdiction.

Transportation System

Current Condition of the Transportation System

On the IPNF there are approximately 11,770 miles of Forest road under Forest Service jurisdiction. Of these 11,770 miles, 8,853 miles are NFSR and 2,917 miles are undetermined.

On the KNF there are approximately 8,568 miles of Forest road under Forest Service jurisdiction. Of these 8,568 miles, 8,111 miles are NFSR and 457 miles are undetermined.

The first two columns in Table A-1 Summary of Forest Roads show how many miles of road were inventoried on the KNF and IPNF in 1987 and what is currently in the inventories. In brief, this table reflects that the total miles of National Forest System roads have decreased by 7 percent in the IPNF and increased by 29 percent in the KNF. It should be noted that the increase shown in the KNF is not exclusively related to new road construction. Over the last few years, a more thorough and accurate accounting of roads not previously inventoried has significantly increased the current total miles.

Columns 3 and 4 show the miles of road that were open yearlong in 1987 and what are currently open yearlong. The last two columns displays the miles of road in each Forest which are currently seasonally restricted or restricted yearlong.

The IPNF currently has about 59 percent of its Forest roads in yearlong or seasonally restricted status. This is at the high end of the 50 to 60 percent range that was projected in the 1987 Forest Plan (USDA 1987c, p. II-23).

The KNF currently has about 61 percent of its Forest roads in yearlong or seasonally restricted status. This is 4 percent higher than the 57 percent projected in the 1987 Forest Plan (USDA 1987a, p.II-10).

Table A-1 Summary of Forest Roads by Travel Management Status

Forest	Existing NFSR Under Forest Service Jurisdiction (mi.)		Miles of Roads Open Yearlong (%)		Miles of Roads Seasonally restricted (%)	Miles of Roads Restricted Yearlong (%)
	1987	Current	1987	Current	Current	Current
IPNF	9,500	8,853	*	3,601 (29)	1,003 (9)	4,183 (60)
KNF	6,300	8,111	4,530	2,907 (37)	735 (10)	4,220 (53)

*Information not available

Source - KNF Information = USFS Infra database as of 5/17/05

1. Queried using Route_status, Jurisdiction, and Map Code
2. Approx. 48 miles of road on the KNF have Map Code with no entry (null field)
3. Approx. 199 miles of road do not have a restriction order issued for them but are impassible to motorized use.
4. Approx. 2 miles of road are incorrectly coded as under FS jurisdiction

Source - IPNF Information = USFS Infra database as of 7/28/05

1. Queried using Route_status, jurisdiction, and Travel Management
2. Approx 60 miles of road on the IPNF have unassigned Travel Management Status
3. Approx. 6 miles of road are incorrectly coded as under FS jurisdiction

Table A-2, below, provides a comparison of the miles of trail (by type) inventoried in 1987 to what is present today. Information on the type of trail is not available for 1987. The increase in total miles of trails in both the KNF and IPNF from 1987 to present can be attributed to previously unmaintained and abandoned trails being “reactivated,” the conversion of other constructed features (e.g., roads, railroads, etc.) to function as trails and some limited new construction to connect existing trails to new trailhead locations.

The IPNF shows an increase of 38 percent in the total miles of summer trails (summer trails restricted and not restricted to motorized use combined) from 1987. Of the current total of 2,725 miles of designated summer trails, 1,553 (57 percent) contain no motorized use restrictions.

The KNF shows an increase of 14 percent in the total miles of summer trails (summer trails restricted and not restricted to motorized use combined) from 1987. Of the current of 1,477 miles of designated summer trails, 532 miles are available for summer motorized use and 189 miles are available for winter motorized use.

There are some trails in both Forests that, even though they do not have legal restrictions on motorized use, preclude motorized use due to the physical characteristics of the trail (too steep, too many physical barriers, etc.).

Table A-2 Summary of Trails

	All Trails (mi.)	Summer Trails Where Motorized use is Restricted Year-round (mi.)		Summer Trails Without Restriction to Motorized Use		Summer Trails with Seasonal Restrictions but allow Snowmobiles	Winter Cross Country Ski Trails (motorized use restricted)	Winter Designated Snowmobile Trails (mi.)
		1987	Current	1987	Current			
Idaho Panhandle	1,984	*	1,172 ²	*	1,553 ²	*	73 ³	1,244 ³
Kootenai	1,300	*	756 ⁴	*	532 ⁴	189 ⁴	36 ⁴	162 ⁴

Sources:

¹ KNF and IPNF 1987 Forest Plans,

² Meaningful Measures data,

³ R1 2001-2002 Summaries for Snowmobile and Ski Touring Trails,

⁴ KNF Recreation Staff Officer,

*Information not available.

Information on access and recreation from the Monitoring and Evaluation Reports for the 1987 Forest Plans is included in the AMS Technical Report (pages 109-111). This discussion is helpful in understanding access and recreation trends. In addition to the information reported in the AMS Technical Report, the 2004 Monitoring and Evaluation Report for the KNF included the following:

KNF Monitoring and Evaluation: Road Access Management Monitoring: Item L-1 (USDA 2004, p. 37):

Evaluation: By 1997, the objective of having restrictions on approximately 57 percent of the Forest’s roads (Forest Plan p. II-10) was achieved. By 2002, the percentage of existing roads in either yearlong or seasonally restricted status has reached 63 percent. In 2004, the percentage is stable at 63 percent. Table L 1-1, below, shows the progression. The roads in restricted status are both yearlong and seasonal restrictions. The percentage of roads in restricted status is 6 percent greater than estimated, and the total amount of unrestricted road access is 1,585 miles less than was estimated in the 1987 Forest Plan. This is partly a result of the fact that new road construction was less than anticipated due to reductions in the timber sale program. Road restrictions have been placed on previously existing unrestricted roads (which were not anticipated for a significant level or restrictions in the Forest Plan) and on newly constructed roads. The reasons for these unanticipated restrictions include additional wildlife habitat security measures, to decrease potential sedimentation, and to improve hydrological conditions. Table L-1-1 show the total miles of road increasing by 494 miles between 1997 and 2002 (a 7 percent increase). Only 13.8 miles are from actual new road construction. The balance results from a more thorough accounting of previously un-inventoried roads.

The trend over the last four years is that the number of roads that restrict motor vehicle use, either yearlong or seasonally, has started to level off. This is an indication that the Forest is approaching the necessary level of access management to achieve wildlife and watershed objectives.

Table L-1-1 Forest Roads Access Restrictions

FY	Total Miles of Road	Total Miles of Restricted Access *	Percent of Total Roads Restricted	Total Miles of Unrestricted Access	Difference in Miles of Unrestricted Access from FY 87
1987	6,200	1,669	27	4,530	0
1992	7,149	3,784	53	3,365	(1,165)
1997	7,460	4,275	57	3,185	(1,345)
2002	7,954	4,982	63	2,934	(1,596)
2004	7,916	4,971	63	2,945	(1,585)

Data Source: Infra / Travel Routes / Linear Events 5/11/2004

* National Forest System roads (NFSR) only where motor vehicle use is restricted either yearlong or seasonally.

Future Trends for the Transportation System

Under the Proposed Land Management Plans, the total miles of Forest roads are not expected to change. Road construction will be minimal. Travel management and project planning will determine where additional roads, if any, may be needed.

Infrastructure

Past Trends for Infrastructure

In the first 15 years of the 1987 Forest Plans, the total miles of Forest roads in the IPNF and KNF increased due to new road construction and improved inventories.

Current Condition for Infrastructure

As a result of financial limitations and requirements to meet other resource objectives, the trend in the last few years has been to progress toward fewer miles of National Forest System roads in both the KNF and IPNF. Over the last 5 years, the IPNF has decommissioned approximately 342 miles and the KNF 201 miles of road.

Future Trends for Infrastructure

Based on direction in the Proposed Land Management Plan for other resource objectives and the trend of decreasing budgets, it is likely that the total miles of National Forest System roads in both the IPNF and KNF will continue to decrease at a rate similar to the last 5 years.

Motorized Access

Past Trends for Motorized Access

In the first 15 years of the 1987 KNF Forest Plan, the total miles of road available for motorized use (open yearlong) decreased from approximately 4,530 miles to 2,934 miles. This is a reduction of approximately 35 percent. The change in motorized access since 1987 in the IPNF is not known, however, it is probably a similar percentage.

The site-specific types, quantities, and distribution of motorized access in the IPNF and KNF were determined at the District level through the NEPA process and depicted on maps and associated legal orders.

The IPNF 1987 Forest Plan (Appendix R) gives direction for the development of District Road Management Plans, which would be used to establish policy for each individual road on the District. The Kaniksu NF (2004), Coeur d'Alene NF (2003), and St. Joe NF (2004) have Forest Visitor Maps that depict which roads and trails are available for use. Winter trail maps are also produced in cooperation with the State, counties, and local snowmobile clubs. The individual ranger district offices produce and provide information pamphlets and maps with this information.

The KNF 1987 Forest Plan provides the following direction for Travel Planning, “The Forest Travel Planning process will be used to review, evaluate, and implement the goals and standards of the Management Areas, with regard to roads, trails, and motorized-vehicle use.”

In the KNF, individual districts have been performing Travel Planning in conjunction with project level planning and are following the Northern Region Guide for Access and Travel Management. The results of the decisions made through project level planning are displayed on the individual Travel Access Maps that are prepared by each ranger district. A winter *Kootenai Snow Trails* map that depicts snowmobile and cross-country ski trails in the Forest is also produced in cooperation with the State and local snowmobile clubs. The individual ranger district offices produce and provide information pamphlets and maps with this information.

Current Condition of Motorized Access

In the last few years the total miles of road available for motorized use on the KNF (open yearlong plus open seasonally) has increased slightly from approximately 2,934 miles to 2,945 miles. This change in miles of road available for motorized use on the IPNF over the last few years is not known.

In January 2001, the Off-Highway Vehicle Record of Decision and Plan Amendment for Montana, North Dakota, and Portions of South Dakota was issued. It restricts yearlong wheeled motorized cross-country travel where it is not already restricted. This decision applies to the KNF but not the IPNF.

The site-specific types, quantities, and distribution of motorized access in the KNF and IPNF continue to be determined at the District level through the NEPA process and depicted on maps and associated legal orders.

Future Trends for Motorized Access

It has been recognized at the national level that the trend of unmanaged recreation has the potential to affect our ability to meet sustainability goals in the National Forests. As a result, on December 9, 2005, revised regulations 36 CFR 212, 251, and 261 were issued that provide new direction for Travel Management on National Forests. The final rule requires **designation** of those roads, trails, and areas that are open to motor vehicle use. Designations will be made by class of vehicle and, if appropriate, by time of year. The final rule will prohibit the use of motor vehicles off the designated system, as well as use of motor vehicles on routes and in areas that is not consistent with the designations.

The site-specific types, quantities, and distribution of roads, trails, and areas designated for motorized use in the KNF and IPNF will be determined at the district level through the NEPA process and depicted on Motorized Vehicle Use Maps. Travel management planning will make site-specific determinations on motorized and non-motorized access.

Based on Plan direction and the need to meet other resource objectives (e.g. Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones), the total miles of National Forest System roads available for motorized use is likely to decrease over the next five years in both the KNF and IPNF.

Road Maintenance

Past Trends for Road Maintenance

The ability to provide motorized access is related to the amount of annual and deferred maintenance completed on roads. Different roads require varying degrees of maintenance. Needs are based on the assigned road maintenance level. Five different levels of maintenance are assigned to NFS roads:

Maintenance Level 1 – Basic custodial care - Assigned to intermittent service roads during the time they are closed to vehicular traffic.

Maintenance Level 2 – High clearance vehicles - Assigned to roads operated for use by high clearance vehicles.

Maintenance Level 3 – Suitable for passenger cars - Assigned to roads operated and maintained for travel by a prudent driver in a standard passenger car.

Maintenance Level 4 – Moderate degree of user comfort - Assigned to roads that provide a moderate degree of user comfort at moderate travel speeds.

Maintenance Level 5 – High degree of user comfort - Assigned to roads that provide a high degree of user comfort and convenience. (FSH 7709.58)

Past road maintenance trends were described in the AMS Technical Report (page 114 – 115). The amount of road maintenance that can be completed is directly related to budget allocations. The amount of funding available through the appropriation process has not kept pace with the needs. As annual and deferred maintenance remains undone, there is a potential for increased costs in the future and for resource impacts to occur.

Current Condition of Road Maintenance

In the last five years, an intensive field inventory of deferred and annual maintenance needs has been conducted, and an estimate of costs to bring all roads to their assigned maintenance levels has been completed. Table A-3 displays the mileage of roads in the five different Objective Maintenance Levels and the estimated annual and deferred maintenance costs.

For the IPNF, the annual maintenance budget would need to be approximately \$7.6 million dollars and the cost to bring all roads up to their assigned maintenance level is estimated at \$44.4 million dollars.

For the KNF, the annual maintenance budget would need to be approximately \$11.3 million dollars and the cost to bring all roads up to their assigned maintenance level is estimated at \$203.5 million dollars.

Table A-3 Summary of Estimated Maintenance Costs and Miles of Classified Roads by Objective Maintenance Levels

FOREST	Total Miles	Estimated Annual Maintenance Costs	Estimated Deferred Maintenance Costs
IPNF			
Objective Maintenance Level 1	4,105	\$1,450,000	\$1,950,000
Objective Maintenance Level 2	2,370	\$743,000	\$1,960,000
Objective Maintenance Level 3	1,909	\$4,420,000	\$30,480,000
Objective Maintenance Level 4	268	\$907,000	\$6,870,000
Objective Maintenance Level 5	97	\$129,000	\$3,120,000
TOTAL	8,749	\$7,645,000	\$44,380,000
KNF			
Objective Maintenance Level 1	4,387	\$1,050,000	\$530,000
Objective Maintenance Level 2	1,760	\$2,200,000	\$11,240,000
Objective Maintenance Level 3	1,532	\$5,680,000	\$112,120,000
Objective Maintenance Level 4	121	\$1,910,000	\$42,360,000
Objective Maintenance Level 5	98	\$440,000	\$37,290,000
TOTAL	7,898	\$11,280,000	\$203,540,000

Source: USFS Infra database: Deferred Maintenance Summary Oct. 2004

Current funding is not sufficient to adequately maintain all of the existing roads in the IPNF and KNF. There is currently a downward trend in available funding for road maintenance. In Fiscal Year 2003, the KNF had approximately \$1.64 million available. In Fiscal Year 2005, that amount dropped to \$1.14 million (30 percent decrease).

Future Trends for Road Maintenance

At the national level, the trend for road and trail maintenance funding is projected to continue to decline, causing a commensurate decline in the amount of road maintenance that can be completed. Although the Proposed Land Management Plans include objectives to complete road maintenance, the ability to meet these objectives will be directly related to the available funding.

Conditions and Trends for Recreation

Current Condition of Recreation

The current condition for recreation is described in the AMS and the AMS Technical Report. Since the AMS was written, both Forests have completed a recreation visitor use inventory under the National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) program. This effort collects information on National Forests and Grasslands related to visitor satisfaction and use. This program develops summary reports on the amount of visitation by type. For more information, see the NVUM reports for each Forest on the web at <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/nvum/>.

Trends for Recreation

Trends in recreation use are described in the AMS Technical Report on page 121. In the Proposed Land Management Plan, recreation use will continue to increase as population increases. There is also an expected increase in motorized recreation, as population ages and technology in off-road motorized vehicles (snowmobile and ATV) advances.

Travel management planning will be completed in the near future, providing a system of open roads, trails, and areas designated for motorized use by vehicle class and season of use. This will provide motorized use opportunities that are commensurate with other resource objectives.

The amount of land available for wilderness recreation will increase slightly under the Plan. In the IPNF, areas managed for wilderness attributes (i.e., designated wilderness, recommended wilderness, and primitive areas) will increase from 147,000 acres in the 1987 Forest Plan to 160,200 acres in the Plan. In the KNF, the amount of land managed for wilderness attributes (i.e., designated wilderness and wild lands) will increase from 102,500 acres in the 1987 Forest Plan to 127,000 acres in the Plan. This will provide an increase in wilderness characteristic opportunities.

The majority of undeveloped, inventoried roadless areas will be managed as backcountry (Management Areas 5, 5a, 5b, or 5c), providing opportunities for a mix of nonmotorized and motorized opportunities. The amount of land managed identified as backcountry increased in the IPNF from 188,300 acres under the 1987 Forest Plan to 679,000 acres under the Proposed Land Management Plan. In the KNF, areas allocated to backcountry management increased from 330,300 acres under the 1987 Forest Plan to 418,800 acres under the Proposed Plan. This increase in backcountry management provides opportunities for solitude and primitive and semi-primitive recreation.

For a discussion on changes in other Special Area designations (SIAs and RNAs), see the CER Special Interest Areas section. For a discussion on changes in Wild and Scenic River designations, refer to the CER Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers section.