

DRAFT TRAVEL ANALYSIS REPORT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

TRAVEL ANALYSIS PROCESS

The Forest Service has directed all National Forests to implement the 2005 Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212.5(b)) by FY 2015. Under this Rule, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest must identify the sustainable road system needed for safe and efficient travel and the protection, management, and use of national forest system lands. The Travel Analysis Process (TAP) was developed to help the agency accomplish its goals in implementing Subpart A of the Travel Management Rule.

The Forest Service has an extensive network of roads with an obligation to provide safe access for multiple uses. As a land stewardship agency, it also has an obligation to protect its natural and cultural resources. The ability to balance these obligations with decreased funding and increasing demands from users is challenging.

National Forest System roads are important for reasons that are diverse and often personal. Roads get you where you want to go and provide the freedom to explore, harvest and enjoy nature. One of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest's (GPNF) top priorities is providing a safe road system that is responsive to these public needs, as well as environmentally sound, affordable, and efficient to manage. Many roads on the GPNF are at or beyond their designed lifespan. Structural components such as bridges and pavements are failing. When aging roads are not maintained, closures compromise visitor experience and public safety is put at risk. Natural resources also suffer as unmaintained roads can degrade water quality and fish habitat. The cost of our current road system presents another challenge, as budgets for road maintenance has declined.

This travel analysis identifies the issues and opportunities around the GPNF's road system that will enhance land managers' ability to make better decisions related to the road network. The report evaluates the various sources and levels of past road maintenance funding; ensures that the GPNF transportation system provides sustainable access to national forest resources over the short and long term; and, identifies the minimum road system necessary for the safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

What happens with analysis information?

This analysis is not a decision document and will not make site-specific decisions about which roads will be retained or closed. Those decisions are made at the project scale with public input on site-specific situations. Recommendations and findings will instead be used to inform future decisions at the local level. Recommendations and findings are subject to change as new or better information becomes available.

How soon will you expect to be using this document?

We must have the final completed by September 2015, but we're a science based organization and will use the best information we have to make decisions. Right now this exercise has provided us the best information.

Are you recommending closing roads?

Yes, we are recommending 248.7 miles for decommission of which only about half are currently open for public use. We are recommending some roads to be changed from maintenance level 2 (open) to maintenance level 1 (closed). These do not include any specific roads mentioned from the public that you use.

Where did the info in this report come from?

From multiple public meetings and a questionnaire that was available to fill out for over a year; built on 2002 roads analysis, and the most recent science, forest plan direction, and law regulation and policy available to the GPNF. The analysis was GIS based without field verification.

How was my input incorporated?

To envision a more sustainable road system, the GPNF considered public input, and Forest Service administrative access needs on the forest. Forest staff identified environmental risk criteria for aquatic and terrestrial systems, and overlaid these risk criteria with known access needs. Forest staff then considered the costs of maintaining the current road system and evaluated options to bring maintenance costs in line with projected available funding.

Given the large number of roads the public mentioned as using, how are you adequately addressing environmental risk?

Investments will be focused on roads with higher environmental risks. For the multiple purpose roads, investments will include such treatments as fish barrier culvert replacements, surface rock additions, or regular maintenance, specifically culvert and ditch clearing. For Single Purpose Vegetation and Bough Management and No Access Need roads, prioritization for converting these will be based on the relative environmental risk.

Synthesis: How did you make recommendations around the actions to take based on access needs, aquatic and terrestrial Risks, and funds, for a particular road segment?

Recommendations were made first by filtering which roads would be needed for multiple purposes, and then investments were recommended to prioritize those roads with higher environmental risks. Recommendations for changing Single Purpose Vegetation and Bough Management roads to Level 1 maintenance will be prioritized by relative environmental risk. Maintenance costs were considered in an overall sense, in that limited maintenance funds necessitate a smaller overall open road system. Recommendations to reduce open roads with higher environmental risks will decrease the miles of roads requiring high cost annual maintenance.

Where can I find out more?

Additional information about the Travel Analysis Process can be found on our website below. The draft report is posted on the website. The final report will be posted when completed.

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/giffordpinchot/landmanagement/?cid=STELPRDB538890>

Where do I send my feedback on the draft report?

Please send your information by June 30, 2015 to:

comments-pacificnorthwest-giffordpinchot@fs.fed.us