



File Code: 1950/2350-5/7710

Date: September 8, 2009

Dear Interested Party:

The Gila National Forest (Forest) announces the release of its Proposed Action for the implementation of the USFS Travel Management Rule to manage motorized vehicle use on the Gila National Forest. This proposal represents the start of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process (scoping phase) for this project.

Enclosed is a copy of the proposed action which will be summarized in a Notice of Intent to be published in the Federal Register. The Notice of Intent will be published on or shortly after September 11, 2009, which marks the start of the 45-day comment period. Check the Forest website (<http://fs.usda.gov/gila>) for exact date of publication.

Highlights of the proposal are:

- Continue to provide motorized access to the Forest;
- Prohibit cross-country motorized vehicle use off designated roads, trails, and areas;
- Reduce the miles of roads open to motorized vehicle use;
- Increase the miles of trails open to motorized vehicles less than 50 inches in width;
- Designate a fixed distance corridor along certain open roads for motorized dispersed camping;
- Designate a fixed distance off open roads for the purpose of motorized big game retrieval; and
- Amend the Gila National Forest Plan to comply with direction in the Travel Management Rule.

How to Get Information

The proposed action and maps may be downloaded from the forest's website at: <http://fs.usda.gov/gila>. There are two different formats for the maps, one displays an entire Ranger District, which are large files, and the other is in a form of an atlas, which breaks districts into smaller parts allowing for a more detailed view. Maps will be available for review at all ranger district offices and Catron, Grant, Hidalgo, and Sierra County offices. As additional review locations become available, they will be posted on the web site. The supervisor's office or any of the six ranger stations, upon request, will distribute a CD containing the same information. Contact information for each of the offices is enclosed.

If you have any questions about the NEPA process or how to provide comments, please contact the Forest Travel Management Coordinator, Lisa Mizuno, at (575) 388-8267 or r3_gila_travel@fs.fed.us. If you have specific questions on a road, trail, or area on a ranger district, contact one of the district rangers.

Commenting on the Proposed Action

We invite you to review the proposed action including the maps and provide us with comments. Many comments were received over the past three years that helped to develop the proposed



action. Even if you had commented previously, your input is still needed. These comments will be used to identify issues and develop alternatives to the proposed action.

The Forest recognizes that other designations of roads, trails, and areas may better meet the needs of the surrounding communities' diverse recreational interests, traditional or cultural uses, and other needs for access. Therefore, we are soliciting your involvement and are interested in new information related to the proposal that you think we may have overlooked. While opinions are also welcome, focused site-specific information on roads, trails, or areas you wish to see open or closed, along with your supporting information and rationale is most helpful for the responsible official to consider in making a good, informed decision.

How and Where to comment:

The Forest encourages electronic mail. If submitting comments electronically, the format of attachments must be in plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), MS-Word (.doc) or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf), and send to r3_gila_travel@fs.fed.us. Please enter "*TM comments*" in the subject line of the e-mail.

Written comments on the proposal can be mailed to Gila National Forest; **Attn: Travel Management Coordinator**; 3005 E. Camino del Bosque; Silver City, NM 88061. The fax number is 575-388-8222. Comments may be delivered by hand to the Gila National Forest Supervisor's Office or any District Ranger Office between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), please be advised that written comments received on this proposal, including names and addresses, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

How You Can Remain Informed

I encourage your involvement in this project. If you do not wish to receive additional mailings regarding this project, you may disregard this letter. Your name will be removed from this project's mailing list if you do not respond.

Those who comment will automatically continue to receive information regarding this project. In the event you have no comments at this time, but would like to stay informed about this project, please let us know by checking the appropriate space on the bottom of the commenting page. Include your name and mailing address, and return to Gila National Forest, Travel Management Coordinator, 3005 E. Camino del Bosque, Silver City, NM 88061; or by e-mail to r3_gila_travel@fs.fed.us.

We want to keep you informed of how we use your feedback and how we are progressing with travel management planning. We plan to keep the Forest website up-to-date with new information.

We look forward to hearing from you or seeing you at an open house.

Sincerely,

/s/ Richard E. Markley
RICHARD E. MARKLEY
Forest Supervisor