

## CHAPTER 2 – ALTERNATIVES

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes and compares Alternative 1: No Action, Alternative 2: Proposed Action, and Alternative 3. Alternative 3 was developed to address the significant NEPA issues displayed in Chapter 1. Alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study, including the rationale for their elimination, are also presented. This chapter concludes with a comparative summary of the alternatives considered in detail (Section 2.5). This comparison, combined with the more detailed disclosure in Chapter 3, provides the information necessary for the responsible official to make an informed choice between alternatives.

### 2.2 PROJECT DESIGN FEATURES

In addition to Forest Plan standards and guidelines designed to mitigate impacts, the Interdisciplinary Team identified measures that would apply to all action alternatives. These design features, which have been incorporated to reduce or prevent undesirable effects resulting from proposed management activities, are listed below.

#### Motorized Vehicle Access to Dispersed Campsites (Exemption Areas)

**DC-1:** Alternative 2 and 3 would allow off-road motorized vehicle travel for up to 300 feet from an open NFS road, as designated on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM), to access dispersed campsites except on the road segments outlined in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1 – Summary of Road Segments that would not allow off-road motorized vehicle travel to access dispersed campsites.**

Unit Area	Road Segment	Rationale	Map Frame*
2	Exemption will not be allowed on NFS road 386 from district boundary to junction with NFS road 386J.	Wetland area protection	B
3	Exemption will not be allowed on NFS road 380 between NFS roads 397 and 380C.	Meadow protection	C
3	Pilot Peak Lookout area.	Sensitive plants	C
4	Exemption will not be allowed west of NFS road 362 from its intersection with State Highway 21 to Beaver Creek Trailhead.	Meadow protection	C, G
6	Exemption will not be allowed on NFS road 316 from NFS road 316B to Sunset Mountain Lookout.	Sensitive plants	D
6	Exemption will not be allowed on NFS road 327 from confluence of North Fork Rabbit Creek and Rabbit Creek to junction of NFS roads 327 and 310.	Riparian habitat protection	E
7	Exemption will not be allowed on NFS road 203L from NFS road 203 to Thorn Butte Lookout.	Sensitive plants	E

Unit Area	Road Segment	Rationale	Map Frame*
8	Exemption will not be allowed on segment of NFS road 314 from NFS roads 314C to NFS roads 314D.  Exemption will not be allowed on segment of NFS 314 from NFS road 314D to NFS road 314D1.	Meadow protection in Bear Run drainage.	D, F
9	Exemption will only be applied on north side of NFS road 326 from NFS road 310 along Meadow Creek to the end of the NFS road 326.	Meadow and riparian habitat protection.	E

\*Unit area maps are located in Appendix B of this document.

**DC-2:** Alternative 2 and 3 would allow off-trail motorized vehicle travel for up to 100 feet from motorized NFS trail, as designated on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM), to access dispersed campsites except on trail segments outlined in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2 - Summary of Trail Segments that would not allow off-trail motorized vehicle travel to access dispersed campsites.**

Unit Area	Trail	Rationale	Map Frame*
3	NFS Trail #163003	Sensitive Plants	C, D
3	Trail Segment #3-003	Sensitive Plants	C, D
6	NFS Trail #166003	Sensitive Plants	D, E
6	NFS Trail #167003	Sensitive Plants	D, E

\*Unit area maps are located in Appendix B of this document.

## 2.3 ALTERNATIVES ANALYZED IN DETAIL

### 2.3.1 Alternative 1: No Action

The No-Action Alternative would continue public motorized travel within the project area under current management direction. This would include:

- In Unit Areas 1-8 (“E” areas) motorized use would continue on all NFS roads and trails currently designated for motorized travel, as well as all established but currently unauthorized routes consistent with Forest Special Order #0402-00-05. This order provides for public motorized wheeled-vehicle travel in “E” travel management areas off of designated routes when routes are established, i.e. visible, clearly evident, single-track, or two-track route; and the width of the vehicle is less than or equal to the width of the trail or road profile.
- In Unit Areas 9-10 (“C” and “D” areas), public motorized travel would continue on authorized NFS roads and trails currently designated for motorized use only. Motorized use on unauthorized routes would not be allowed in Unit Areas 9-11<sup>1</sup>.
- No seasonal closures would be imposed on existing authorized NFS trails in the project area.

<sup>1</sup> In “C” and “D” travel management areas use of motorized wheeled vehicles is allowed on designated NFS roads and trails only. Although historic use of unauthorized routes in “C” and “D” areas has occurred, motorized use of these routes is not allowed.

- Motorized wheeled-vehicle use off road to access campsites within 300 feet of NFS roads that are open to motorized use and/or within 100 feet of NFS trails that are open to motorized use would continue.

The current established but unauthorized trail system is described in detail by trail segment in Appendix A. In addition, Appendix B contains maps for each alternative of the routes to be designated for motorized travel within each unit area.

### 2.3.2 Alternative 2: Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would limit public motorized wheeled-vehicle travel to a system of designated routes throughout the project area on the Idaho City RD. This would include:

- Designation and addition to the authorized NFS trail system of about 66 miles of the 127 miles of known and established unauthorized routes for public motorized wheeled vehicle travel in Unit Area 1-8 (“E” Areas) only. Approximately 28 miles of these routes would be designated for vehicles 50” or less in width and about 38 miles would be designated for motorcycle use only.
- Seasonal closures (September 15<sup>th</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup>) to address impacts to Rocky Mountain elk and mule deer would be applied to about 10 miles of the trails proposed for motorized use designation.
- Motorized wheeled-vehicle use off-road to access dispersed campsites within 300 feet of NFS roads and 100 feet of NFS trails designated for motorized use would continue, with exceptions as described in Design Feature DC-1 and DC-2 (Section 2.2).

The Proposed Action is described in detail by trail segment in Appendix A. In addition, Appendix B contains maps for each alternative of the routes to be designated for motorized travel within each unit area.

Minor changes to the Proposed Action have been made based on consideration of public comment and further evaluation of available route data. They are:

1. Expansion of the project area into “C” and “D” areas immediately adjacent to “E” areas. These “C” and “D” areas are delineated as Unit Areas 9, 10 and 11 (Figure 1.1). This expansion adds about 30,640 acres to the project area. The project area was expanded in response to public comments during the scoping period to incorporate routes in “C” and “D” areas that connect to routes in “E” areas.
2. Approximately 2 miles of trail (segment 3-003) changed from “open to all vehicles” to “open to vehicles less than 50” in width.” Trail Segment 3-003 is in the Wilson Peak Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA). Region 4 direction discourages the designation of routes within IRAs as “open to all motorized vehicles” (Regional Forester letter, 2008).
3. Increase in the miles of routes to be designated for motorized vehicle use from about 51 to 66 miles based on the following: a) the original proposed action did not take into account about 9 miles of “pending”<sup>2</sup> trail segments, b) there were numerous miles of

---

<sup>2</sup> Alternatives 2 and 3 include a total of 10 “pending” trail segments (nearly all in units 2 and 3) encompassing a total of 8.85 miles. “Pending” segments are proposed NFS trail segments: 1) that have been identified by the public during the scoping period, that lead to private lands, and 2) that have been identified by the ID team as sustainable and manageable. With this decision, these “pending” segments would be included in the National Forest system trail database. However, the segments would not be signed on the ground nor designated as open on the Motor Vehicle Use Map unless or until the respective owner or land manager affirms that use is appropriate on these segments. These specific trail segments are identified in Appendix A, and displayed in maps included in Appendix B.

trail segments that were inadvertently duplicates of Maintenance Level 2 or above road segments in the original proposed action, and c) several database errors were identified and corrected during the scoping period.

### 2.3.3 Alternative 3

This alternative was developed to address the general concerns expressed regarding the reduction in motorized recreation opportunity, lack of continuous off-highway vehicle (OHV) loop trail opportunities, and public safety resulting from the elimination of motorized travel on established but unauthorized routes in the Proposed Action. This alternative was formulated by adding specific motorized opportunities to the Proposed Action identified through public comment and/or agency knowledge. Only those routes determined to be both sustainable and manageable were included.

Alternative 3 would limit public motorized wheeled-vehicle travel to a system of designated routes throughout the project area on the Idaho City Ranger District. This would include:

- Designation and addition to the authorized NFS trail system about 146 miles of the 172 miles of known and established but unauthorized routes for public motorized wheeled vehicle travel. Approximately 79 miles of these routes would be designated for vehicles 50" or less in width and about 67 miles would be designated for motorcycle use only. The miles to be designated would include a total of about 112 miles in Unit Areas 1-8 ("E" Area) and 34 miles in Unit Areas 9-11 ("C" & "D" areas). OHV loop trail opportunities are outlined below.
  - Three OHV loop opportunities were developed for this alternative.
    - Loop 1 (Pike Fork Area) would be designated for motor vehicle use for vehicles less than 50" in width. This loop is located in Unit Area 4 and consists of trail segments 4-004 to 4-024 (Appendix B – Map Frame G) which utilize a system of Maintenance Level 1 NFS roads<sup>3</sup> (see description of dual designation below). This trail system would provide approximately 22 miles as a loop opportunity.
    - Loop 2 (Thorn Creek Butte Lookout Area) would be designated for motor vehicle use for vehicles less than 50" in width. This loop is located in Unit Areas 7 and 10 (Appendix B – Map Frames D and E). The loop trail consists of the following trail segments 7-023, 7-026, 7-040, 7-041, 7-042, 7-043, 7-044, 7-053, 7-054, 10-031, 10-032, 10-033, 10-034, 10-035, 10-079, 10-080, 10-081, and 10-082. This loop requires several trail segments on lands administered by Idaho Department of Lands. This trail system would provide approximately 15 miles as a loop opportunity.
    - Loop 3 (Granite Creek/Rabbit Creek Area) would be designated for motorized vehicle use for motorcycle only. This loop is located in Unit Areas 6 and 10 (Appendix B – Map Frames D and E) and utilized both existing NFS trails and established but unauthorized routes proposed for designation. The loop trail consists of the portions of NFS trails 167003, 291003, 292003, 293003, and 294003 and trail segments 6-009, 10-010, 10-017, 10-065, 10-067, 10-068, 10-069, and 10-070. This trail system would provide approximately 25 miles as a loop opportunity.

- Dual designation of motorized trail and Maintenance Level 1 NFS roads<sup>3</sup>.
  - In Unit Area 2 – Dual designate approximately 6 miles of Maintenance Level 1, NFS roads with a “motorized trail open to vehicles 50” or less in width.” Entire lengths or portions of the following NFS Maintenance Level 1 roads 343A1, 343A2, and 386A (Appendix B – Map Frames A, B, C, and F).
  - In Unit Area 4 - Dual designate approximately 21.5 miles of Maintenance Level 1, NFS roads with a motorized trail open to vehicles 50” or less in width. Entire lengths or portions of the following Maintenance Level 1, NFS systems roads would be included 312A, 312A1, 312A2, 312B, 348I, 348I1, 348I2, 348I3, 348J, 348J1, 348J3, 348J5, 348J6, 348J8, 348J9, 348JA, and 348JB (Appendix B – Map Frame G).
- Seasonal closures (September 15<sup>th</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup>) to address impacts to Rocky Mountain elk and mule deer would be applied to about 59 miles of the trails proposed for motorized use designation.
- Motorized wheeled-vehicle use off-road to access dispersed campsites within 300 feet of NFS roads and 100 feet NFS trails designated for motorized use would continue with some exceptions as described in Design Feature DC-1 and DC-2 (Section 1.2.2).

This alternative is described in detail by trail segment in Appendix A. In addition, Appendix B contains maps for each alternative of the routes to be designated for motorized travel within each unit area.

## **2.4 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED IN DETAIL**

### **2.4.1 Designation of All Unauthorized Routes**

Such an approach would result in all currently established, but unauthorized routes within the project area being designated for motorized use and incorporated into the Forest Service official transportation system. While such an approach would possibly best address desires of many motorized recreationists who currently use the project area, it was deemed to be inconsistent with the agency’s national policies. The result would be a network of unplanned and unrelated routes, some of which are unsustainable and unmanageable, are redundant with other routes, and/or provide limited recreational opportunities. In addition, inventorying, mapping, and signing of all these routes would be impractical and result in a system infeasible to effectively manage and administer. For these reasons, this alternative was considered but eliminated from detailed study.

### **2.4.2 Designation of Only Routes Currently on Forest Service’s Authorized Transportation System**

This alternative would limit designated routes to only those that are currently on the NFS authorized transportation system. This alternative was considered and eliminated from detailed study because it would not address management needs and concerns for motorized access raised by the public.

---

<sup>3</sup> Maintenance Level 1 roads are closed to all motorized vehicles. A Maintenance Level 1 route may be dual designated as a motorized trail.

## 2.5 SUMMARY AND COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

Indicator	Alternatives		
	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2 Proposed Action	Alternative 3
<b>Designations of Motorized Routes in the Project Area (Miles)</b>			
NFS trails open to vehicles less than 50"	11	39	90
NFS trails open to motorcycles only	57	95	124
Unauthorized Routes open to Vehicles less than 50"	62	0	0
Unauthorized Routes open to Motorcycle Only	65	0	0
Total Miles	195	134	214
<b>Achieve Project Purpose</b>			
Complies with the Travel Management Rule	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Response to Significant Issues</b>			
<b>Miles of Routes by Unit Area</b>			
Unit 1	17.9	4.5	4.5
Unit 2	11.4	3.6	11.6
Unit 3	27.6	19.3	19.6
Unit 4	0	0	21.5
Unit 5	0	0	0
Unit 6	11.1	2.2	4.3
Unit 7	41.4	27.6	37.1
Unit 8	17.7	9.0	13.5
Unit 9	0	0	15.3
Unit 10	0	0	13.2
Unit 11	0	0	5.5
Total Miles	127.1	66.2	146.1
<b>Miles of Loop Trail Opportunities by Alternative</b>			
Loop 1 (Pikes Fork Area) – Vehicles less than 50" in width	0	0	22
Loop 2 (Thorne Butte Lookout Area) – Vehicles less than 50" in width*	0	0	15
Loop 3 (Granite Creek/Rabbit Creek Area) – Motorcycle Only**	0	0	25
<b>Safety</b>			
Number of open NFS road and motorized trail intersections per mile of trail.	1.2	0.6	0.8

\* This loop requires several trail segments on lands administered by Idaho Department of Lands (IDL). Mileage Loop 2 does not include trail segments on lands administered by IDL.

\*\* Mileage for this loop includes existing NFS trail segments required to make connections to the trail proposed for motorized designation.