

Gallatin National Forest Travel Plan Detailed Description of the Decision

Introduction

This document describes the final decision for a Gallatin National Forest Travel Management Plan. The Travel Management Plan identifies and establishes opportunities for public recreation use and access using the Forest's road and trail system. For each road and trail it specifies the types of uses that are appropriate including pleasure driving, high clearance and all-terrain vehicle use (ATVs), motorcycle use, biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, hiking and skiing. It also describes seasonal restrictions that may apply and programmatic direction that will provide guidance for future management proposals related to Forest travel. This document incorporates by reference three maps that display the opportunities provided on each road and trail and the sub-areas of the Forest that have snowmobile area restrictions. Refer to maps "Summer Motorized Final Decision," "Summer Non-Motorized Final Decision," and "Winter Final Decision." Lastly, this decision includes an amendment to the Gallatin National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) (USDA, 1987) that removes programmatic direction relevant to Forest travel. The rationale for this decision can be found in the Record of Decision; Gallatin National Forest Travel Management Plan.

How to Read and Understand This Document

The Travel Plan includes both programmatic and site-specific decisions. Programmatic decisions establish direction that drives future activities and programs (goals and objectives) and sets sideboards (standards and guidelines) within which future site-specific actions must take place. The site-specific decisions establish the modes of travel allowed on roads, trails and areas across the Forest. Forest-wide programmatic direction is described in Chapter I. Area-specific programmatic direction and the route-by-route decisions on use are described for each travel planning area in Chapter II. Chapter III identifies Forest Plan direction that has been removed through amendment.

CHAPTER I –Forest-wide Goals, Objectives, Standards and Guidelines

This Chapter describes forest-wide goals, objectives, standards and guidelines adopted as part of the Travel Management Plan. The direction for management of specific travel planning areas and routes described in Chapter II would be consistent with the direction in this Chapter.

Goals are statements describing desired results and/or conditions in general terms. No time period for achievement is specified. For example, forest-wide goals related to travel, access and public use would identify the overall types of recreation opportunities and other public uses to accommodate on the Gallatin National Forest road and trail system. **Goals** are also listed for other Forest resources to identify the overriding purpose of more specific objectives, standards and guidelines designed to maintain or improve environmental conditions as they are affected by travel management. The Forest transportation system will be designed and managed in pursuit of these forest-wide goals.

Objectives are statements identifying a measurable target for the planning period (approximately 15 years) designed to move toward achieving goals when current conditions are less than desired conditions. Objectives identify desired measurable targets for activities, use levels, or quality. Objectives are tied to an overriding goal.

Standards are binding limitations placed on management activities, not already covered by law or regulation, that are designed to maintain a specified minimum level of resource protection. In general, standards establish sideboards within which future road and trail use, construction, reconstruction, maintenance or decommissioning must take place. These potential management actions cannot depart from meeting a standard unless the Travel Plan is modified. Forest-wide standards (as opposed to area-specific standards) are those that apply universally over most, if not all of the Forest. Forest-wide standards are tied to the relevant goal.

Guidelines are preferable or advisable limits placed on management activities. Guidelines are similar to standards except they are non-binding. Future road and trail uses, construction, reconstruction, maintenance or decommissioning activities can deviate from a guideline without modification of the Travel Plan. A guideline has been used to direct management activities when there could be variability in specific situations such that a specific threshold (i.e. standard) cannot be identified.

CHAPTER II –Travel Planning Area Direction

This is the heart of the Travel Management Plan. It's the section to view when you want to know how a specific area will be managed. For the purposes of travel planning, the Gallatin Forest was divided into 39 "Travel Planning Areas" (TPA) (Figure I-1), each with their own unique management goals, objectives, standards, guidelines. In the electronic version of this decision, corresponding route-by-route management tables are linked within the travel planning area descriptions or you can click on these separately.

The goals and objectives for a travel planning area have been developed using the same principles as were the goals and objectives for the Forest only they have been tailored to apply to that specific location. The creation of travel planning areas organizes goals and objectives that take into consideration the unique and varied attributes of specific parts of the Forest. Terrain, location, the road and trail network, attractions, and other resource concerns were all factors considered in establishing travel management direction. Travel planning area goals and objectives reflect these considerations.

Similarly, standards and guidelines established for travel planning areas were developed using the same principles as described for forest-wide standards and guidelines in Chapter I. They set sideboards on future projects and activities in order to ensure protection of resources. Most of these apply to future proposals for road or trail construction, reconstruction or maintenance. At the travel planning area scale, standards and guidelines have been included due to a unique resource protection need in that area. More universal protection measures were established as forest-wide standards or guidelines.

There is a black and white map provided with each travel planning area that displays specific routes. This can be used in conjunction with the route tables to gain understanding of how a specific route will be managed. Some maps also display other “project roads”. Project roads are those that were constructed as access to carry out some project or activity such as timber harvest or mineral exploration and development. Any route not otherwise designated, whether it be mapped or unmapped, is closed to all public summer motorized use.

Lastly, Travel planning area direction includes tables displaying route-by-route designations for type of use by alternative. For each road and trail it specifies the types of uses that are to be emphasized (E), allowed (A), or prohibited (P) under each alternative whether it be pleasure driving, backcountry road use, motorcycle use, biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, hiking and/or skiing¹. The cells in the tables also identify applicable seasonal restrictions.

Alternative Maps

Another means to identify how each route and area will be managed is to view the forest-wide maps of the decision; one for summer motorized uses, one for summer non-motorized uses, and one for winter uses. These are available on the Gallatin National Forest website, on CD, or can be viewed in hard copy at each of the Gallatin National Forest offices.

CHAPTER III –Forest Plan Direction to be Removed

The Gallatin Forest Travel Management Plan is designed, in part, to remove outdated and/or poor management direction contained in the Gallatin Forest Plan relative to open road density and travel. This Chapter outlines the specific standards that are no longer applicable should a decision be made selecting an action alternative.

Glossary

After Chapter III there is a glossary that defines uncommon words and terms used in travel management planning.

¹ The Travel Management Plan decision, documented in the associated Record of Decision, determines whether uses are to be allowed or not on specific routes and then any seasonal restrictions that may apply. The identification in the tables of whether a use is “emphasized” (E), or “allowed” (A), is provided for information. It is an indicator of how the Forest Service views the quality of the experience and therefore the priority uses to be considered in the maintenance of the facility. For example, riding a horse on the Hyalite Road is allowed, but since it’s a paved road, that use is not an emphasis for management. Maintenance activity would be focused on accommodating passenger car travel.

Figure I-1

Gallatin National Forest Travel Planning Areas

