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**RECORD OF DECISION**  
For  
**GUNNISON NATIONAL FOREST TRAVEL MANAGEMENT**  
  
**U.S. FOREST SERVICE**  
**GRAND MESA, UNCOMPAGHRE, AND GUNNISON NATIONAL FOREST**

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL**

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Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest

**PURPOSE AND NEED**

The purpose of this action is to improve travel management on NFS lands within the Gunnison and Paonia Ranger Districts of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre & Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests in accordance with regulations at 36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295, and as described in “Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use; Final Rule” (Federal Register, Vol. 70 No. 216; the 2005 Travel Management Rule, or, the Rule). This action is needed to designate a sustainable transportation system that provides for public and management access, recreation opportunities, natural and cultural resource protection, public safety and agency management success within its capabilities.

**DECISION**

This record of decision (ROD) documents my decision and rationale for the actions I am authorizing under the USDA Forest Service 2005 Travel Management Rule. This decision reflects over four years of highly engaged public involvement, collaboration, and consultation with individuals, groups, agencies, and local governments with both common and widely diverse interests. The contributions of science, data, information and perspective are compiled in the environmental analysis necessary for me to make an informed decision.

Based on my review of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the public’s comments, I have decided to designate, as open for public travel, those roads and trails shown on the Preferred Alternative map (Figures 1A, 1B, and 1C) including the depicted mode of travel (36 CFR 212.50). The corresponding tables included as an appendix to this decision document will serve as the route-by-route record of the travel designations for both roads and trails. Those tables cover both motorized and non-motorized modes of travel and includes season of use restrictions.

My decision largely reflects the Preferred Alternative with a few modifications described in this document and depicted on the accompanying maps and tables. The Preferred Alternative is

described and explained in the Final EIS (April 2010) on page 19 and pages 42 to 48 . The modifications or changes to the Preferred Alternative are intended to correct oversights or errors identified during the review period. The system of roads and trails designated as open to public travel represents what the Forest Service believes best meets the Purpose and Need for Action. This decision provides a sustainable transportation system that balances resource protection and public safety needs with recreation and access needs. The system of roads and trails to be managed under this Preferred Alternative defines the minimum transportation system (36 CFR 212.5(b)(1)) for the Gunnison National Forest because it both reduces the miles of system routes while providing continued recreational use and access on NFS lands and ensuring adequate resource protection and affording appropriate resource management. Based on this designation decision, pursuant to 36 CFR 212.56, the open motorized routes will be identified on a motor vehicle use map (MVUM). The MVUM will be published and made available to the public at all of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest's offices. MVUMs will be reviewed and reissued annually and can be updated to reflect revised travel designations (36 CFR 212.54). The MVUM will become one of the tools used by law enforcement personnel to implement these designation decisions.

## **PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

Alternative 5 from the Final EIS is the preferred travel management alternative. It best defines a transportation system that balances resource protection, recreational use, public access, and transportation costs into a sustainable system of open routes. Routes to most all popular attractions remain open, various modes of travel are afforded ample and adequate opportunity, and no areas are closed. It is recognized that some fragile environments or important habitat areas would not allow designated roads or trails to remain open to motorized and/or mechanized (i.e. bicycles) public travel to reduce the risk of adverse impacts. I understand that several specific motorized trails that are to be closed because of expected adverse impacts are very popular to a segment of the public. However, I have determined that those closures are necessary to protect the environment or the natural resources that depend upon those important habitats. There are seasonal restrictions that help mitigate the possible impacts to wildlife and their habitats as well as protect the transportation system capital investment.

I understand that road and trail closures are perceived by many as an adverse impact to their use and enjoyment of the National Forest. It should be noted that the mean segment length of roads to be closed is 0.36 miles (page 226, Final EIS). This indicates to me the majority of road closures are short spur routes and that the major arterial routes are still intact for transportation and recreational access. On NFS lands, there will be a reduction from existing conditions of about 750 miles of high clearance road; about 100 miles of those roads will become administrative roads (no public travel) and about 95 miles of those roads will be converted to motorized trails leaving about 550 miles to be actually closed. Considering the average length of the road segments to be closed and the actually miles of road to be closed, the level of impact to recreational travel is limited when compared to the almost 3,000 miles of road open to public travel on NFS lands.

This alternative also keeps several existing motorized trails open to public travel that some in the

public believed should be closed to such motorized use. My decisions to keep such routes open where there were differing perspectives on the appropriate mode of travel focused on meeting the purpose and need. Such routes where resource damage is not occurring or where such damage is minor and could be mitigated easily and where travel is consistent with the existing Forest Land and Resource Management Plan are to remain open for public travel.

## **BACKGROUND**

In April 2001 the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) finalized the decision to implement the Gunnison Travel Interim Restrictions for federally managed lands of the Gunnison National Forest and Gunnison Field Office (BLM) in western Colorado. Both federal land management agencies worked together on developing the interim restrictions since the concerns with off road travel were affecting both National Forest System (NFS) lands and BLM public lands. This partnership between the two agencies was intended to make seamless transitions at the boundaries and to provide coordinated management decisions. The 2001 interim travel decision restricted motorized and mechanized travel (wheeled vehicles used for human transport) to established routes. Established routes were those roads and trails recognized by the Forest Service and BLM as existing, on-the-ground routes as of January 12, 2001 and depicted on a map known as the “green to yellow” map. Travel by wheeled vehicles off of those established routes was prohibited. Included in the Interim Restrictions decision was the commitment by the Forest Service and BLM to complete subsequent route specific travel management analysis to determine whether the existing and established routes are needed and what uses should be allowed on them (i.e. mode of travel).

Forest Service regulations titled “Travel Management: Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use”, generally referred to as the 2005 Travel Rule (36 CFR 212), call for the designation of those motorized routes open for public travel to be determined and depicted on a motor vehicle use map. Based on the 2005 Travel Rule direction and the 2001 Gunnison Travel Interim Restrictions decision to complete a subsequent route-by-route travel management analysis, the Forest Service began the public participation portion of the travel analysis process in the spring of 2006 to define the existing or current transportation system and assess the existing motorized and non-motorized uses on the Gunnison National Forest. After receiving approximately 1,000 letters, emails, and maps from the public commenting on use preferences for specific routes and recreation or access needs, the Forest Service interdisciplinary travel analysis team began the analysis process and developed a proposed action that would designate routes to remain open for public travel on National Forest System (NFS) lands of the Gunnison National Forest. Elements of this travel analysis are documented in various chapters and sections of the final environmental impact statement (Final EIS) for the Gunnison Basin Federal Lands Travel Management and the administrative record for that document.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

In May 2007 the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) initiated formal scoping with publication of a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS in the Federal Register (Vol. 72, No. 84) for Gunnison Basin Federal Lands Travel Management. The proposed action set forth

in the Notice of Intent was a transportation system identifying routes that would remain open for public travel and the desired mode of travel on those routes. It addressed motorized and non-motorized travel outside of Wilderness areas. In addition to publishing the Notice of Intent, the Gunnison Travel Management project was listed on the GMUG Schedule of Proposed Actions which is posted on the GMUG website. Concurrently with these notices, approximately 1,800 notices were sent to interested parties and individuals announcing the availability of maps that depicted that proposed action and inviting the public to provide comments on the scope of the analysis, issues and possible effects of the proposed transportation system. The 90-day public comment period ended August 31, 2007. Approximately 928 comments were received. From this scoping information the agencies identified key issues and used the public concerns to craft alternatives to the proposed action for the Draft EIS.

The Draft EIS was released for public comment on March 6, 2009 and was noticed in the Federal Register on that date (Vol. 74, No. 43). The Forest Service sent out about 1,300 postcards to individuals, organizations and governmental entities notifying them of the availability of the Draft EIS and that they had 90 days to review and comment on the document. During the 90-day comment period, approximately 1,300 comments were received from individuals, organizations and agencies. These comments addressed specific routes, mode of travel preferences, management policies and travel management in general. While the travel management analysis process addressed over 3,700 miles of road, more than 350 miles of motorized trail, and about 430 miles on non-motorized trail, the route specific comments focused on about 50 routes. The public perspectives on the desired travel management for these 50 routes varied, but public preferences were clearly divided between keeping routes open for motorized travel and closing existing routes to motorized travel.

The Forest Service evaluated the public comments, considered new information available, and assessed the consequences of the alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS to develop a fifth alternative for the Final EIS. This fifth alternative is the agency's Preferred Alternative and is a modification of the Draft EIS Proposed Action drawing from some elements of all the alternatives considered in the Draft EIS. The Forest Service and the BLM released the Final EIS in April 2010. The Notice of Availability of this Final EIS appeared in the Federal Register on April 30, 2010 (Vol. 75, No. 83). In addition to the Federal Register notice, the Forest Service mailed out almost 2,000 postcards to individuals, organizations, and governmental entities who had previously commented on Gunnison travel management or the Draft EIS informing them of the availability of the Final EIS. Emails were sent out to those individuals that had commented on the Draft EIS via email informing them of the availability of the Final EIS. The Final EIS was posted on the GMUG website and hardcopies of the document placed at all of the local libraries and GMUG offices.

## ISSUES

The following issues were identified from scoping comments and were used to determine the scope of the analysis. A full description of issues significant to the proposed action appears in the Final EIS on pages 23 to 28.

**Significant Issues:** All of the significant issues were considered and the Final EIS addresses almost all of these issues, because not all significant issues identified by the public are within the

scope of this travel management decision.

**Issue 1: Scope of EIS analysis** --- The Forest Service did define the scope of the travel management analysis (Pages 16 and 17, Final EIS). The scope of the analysis and of this decision is limited to the designation of travel routes, by mode of travel to be managed as the agency's transportation system for the Gunnison National Forest. This includes travel management for conventional dry land travel (i.e. motorized, mechanized, foot and horseback). This analysis and decision does not address winter, over snow travel.

**Issue 2: Recreational Experience and Opportunity** --- Recreation experience and opportunities for motorized and non-motorized travel were evaluated (Pages 157 to 228, Final EIS). The Preferred Alternative provides a mix of opportunities with regard to those modes of travel consistent with the Purpose and Need.

**Issue 3: Route Integrity** --- The Preferred Alternative calls for short term closures to mend or repair routes where the travel integrity has been altered due to trail damage or the mode of travel has been changed to lessen user conflicts and better sustain travel routes condition over time.

**Issue 4: Resource Protection** --- The Preferred Alternative will close routes to motorized and non-motorized use that were determined to have a high risk for adverse impacts on cultural and natural resources (e.g. soils, water, fish, wildlife, vegetation and historic features) and will also make season of use restrictions on motorized and non-motorized travel that mitigate or lessen impacts to wildlife. Changes in the mode of travel (e.g. full-sized motorized use to ATV or motorized trail to non-motorized trail) are also used in the Preferred Alternative to lessen environmental impacts as well as create recreational opportunities or improve the experience (e.g. travel loops).

**Issue 5: Access** --- No areas will be closed to the public; however, the mode of travel may change in some areas. Roads and trails that provide public access to popular forest attractions typically remain open and routes that provide access to private properties and permitted activities are provided for under the Preferred Alternative.

**Issue 6: Compatibility and Safety** --- The majority of these issues relating to speed and safety are addressed and handled separately under other rules, regulations and authorities. As an example, safety concerns related to motorized mixed use are addressed and resolved as a separate and distinct action based on safety and engineering criteria. Changing the mode of travel (e.g. motorized to non-motorized) on some routes does provide for better compatibility, as user conflicts may be diminished. The continued adherence to the travel hierarchy (Page 18, Final EIS) provides separation of use and identifies management objectives the public can expect on open routes.

**Issue 7: Maintenance and Funding** --- The Preferred Alternative reduces the total miles of system routes thereby creating a more sustainable situation with respect to maintenance funding. The Forest Service continues to recognize the importance of grant funding, the volunteer work provided by special interest groups, and cooperative agreements with other governmental entities and organizations that provide valuable resources needed to sustain the Forest Service transportation system.

**Issue 8: Enforcement and Education** --- This travel management decision does not fully address issues relating to enforcement and education. These concerns are more appropriately addressed during implementation. Since this decision is focused on identifying routes to remain open, mode of travel and season of use (Purpose and Need), these implementation concerns were outside the scope of this decision. The production of the MVUM which is a direct outcome of

this travel management decision does provide an important education and enforcement tool during the implementation of this travel management decision.

**Issue 9: Societal Issues** --- The Final EIS evaluates the expected consequences with respect to the societal values. While decisions on which routes are to remain open and the mode of travel will not eliminate the impacts created by travel with respect to noise, dust and speed, there was sufficient information to determine that no alternative would have had less impacts, not even the environmentally preferable alternative; these impacts are not directly related to miles of road or trail, but are linked to the physical location of well-traveled roads and trails and the relationship of those routes to receptors (i.e. people in residential or camping areas). Economic contributions of travel were addressed in sufficient detail (Pages 241 to 245, Final EIS) to make decisions on which routes should remain open and are needed for public travel.

**Issue 10: Future Demands** ---This travel management decision identifies routes to remain open for public travel at this time. The travel management analysis and alternatives considered only a limited number of possible new travel routes, most of which were proposed by outside organizations or groups. The Forest Service did not consider the development of possible new routes as mitigation for closing routes that were determined to not be needed. About 40 miles of possible new routes were considered to improve recreational travel experiences rather than provide new opportunities or to meet future demand.

**Issue 11: Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and Monarch Crest Trail** --- With this decision, I am making specific designations regarding travel on the Continental Divide trail. The travel analysis process evaluated several options for mode of travel on the Gunnison National Forest portions of this national trail. The existing use on all segments of the trail outside of Wilderness is primarily motorized. Some is single track trail and some is a full-sized vehicle roadway. There is specific Forest Service Manual direction (FSM 2300, Ch. 2350) regarding management of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) which was followed. The manual direction allows for motorized use on the CDNST (36 CFR 212 (B)) provided it was allowed prior to November 10, 1978.

### Scoping Concerns

It was clear from scoping that the public is divided on travel designations, often with opposing perspectives and in particular with motorized trail use. There is a segment of the public that believes there is too much motorized use on the National Forests and that some roads and trails need to be closed to such use. There is also a segment of the public that believes as strongly that no existing road or trail should be closed to travel and that travel management needs to plan for more motorized travel opportunities. As the responsible official, I fully understand the differing perspectives and have sought to utilize a reasoned and science-based approach to analyzing travel options, looking to make sure natural and cultural resources are appropriately managed and motorized recreational users have a range of opportunities available to them. This rationale is the basis I used to balance the travel management designation decisions among competing public needs and desired conditions for cultural and natural resources.

It was clear from the public comments received during scoping that management direction on mountain bike use on the Gunnison National Forest was not consistent with existing Forest Service guidelines. The existing Gunnison Interim Travel Restriction trail designations were

also unclear about the differing modes of non-motorized travel. This decision addresses those issues and recognizes the lack of mountain bike travel planning in the 2001 Interim Restrictions.

Fish and wildlife habitat concerns were identified during scoping by the interdisciplinary team and other wildlife experts and were factored into the travel analysis process. Roads and trails have a great influence on wildlife, both in terms of habitat condition and habitat security. Issues related to road and trail density, distance of roads from important habitat features and stream crossing were important considerations in defining a sustainable transportation system. Wildlife play a major role in the recreational opportunities afforded the public on the Gunnison National Forest for hunting, viewing and photography are major attractions both in terms of recreation and local economics.

Over 3,000 public comments were received during the environmental impact assessment process. These comments were considered, evaluated, and in many instances directly addressed by the alternative developed and the direction chosen in the Final EIS Preferred Alternative.

## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR NOT SELECTING THEM

In addition to the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 5), I considered four other alternatives. These are described in detail in the Final EIS (Pages 31 to 53). In summary they are:

**No Action** --- would essentially designate those existing routes on an MVUM (Figures 3A, 3B, and 3C in the Draft EIS), with the current mode of travel and existing season of use restrictions identified in the No Action analysis in the Final EIS. After considering the consequences of no action and continuation of the status quo, I have determined that this alternative would not meet the purpose and need and would not provide for a manageable transportation that could be sustained by the Forest Service.

**Alternative 2** --- was the Draft EIS Proposed Action and was developed by the Forest Service as its initial travel management strategy. Based on public comment, additional information and re-evaluation of on-the-ground conditions, the initial Proposed Action (Alternative 2) was modified and redefined to create the Final EIS Preferred Alternative. The Forest Service believes the modifications to the initial proposed action better define a sustainable transportation system that also provides adequate resource protection while balancing the recreation and public access. I have determined the Preferred Alternative (Alternative 5) is an improvement over this alternative and better meets the travel management objectives and the purpose and need; therefore, I have not selected the Proposed Action alternative .

**Alternative 3** --- is the **environmentally preferable alternative** (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). I have not selected the environmentally preferable alternative because I have determined it would not provide adequate recreational use opportunities considering the public comments received regarding the need for more motorized and mountain bike opportunities. It does, however, have the potential to cause the least damage to the biological and physical environment. This determination is based on the assessments for most of the natural resources evaluated, that fewer road and trail miles generally have less environmental impact when evaluated at the broader landscape level and scale. Considering this positive aspect of the alternative with regard to soils, air, water, wildlife, cultural resources and transportation system costs. I also considered the

needs and desires of the public for recreational access and opportunity. After weighing all the factors associated with multiple uses, I have determined that this alternative does not meet the overall management objectives for travel on the Gunnison National Forest because it does not adequately balance all of the uses and restricts recreational opportunities the most.

**Alternative 4** – was supported by many who prefer motorized recreational travel over other types. I have determined that this alternative did not necessarily provide for more or better access to popular forest attractions or improve travel efficiency over the other alternatives considered. It did retain some parallel routes, keep open some user created routes that were short-cuts or “cross-overs” to other established routes, and would have also called for more miles of new trail to be built in the future. These aspects of this alternative are not consistent with the travel management objectives to define a more sustainable transportation system that meets transportation needs and provides for adequate resource protection, therefore I have not chosen this alternative. The increases in road and trail miles would not clearly improve recreational experiences, would not reduce the transportation system costs, and would retain several routes that clearly fragment wildlife habitats and some semi-primitive non-motorized recreational areas. Under this alternative there is greater potential risk to sustainability of natural resources associated with more motorized travel than in the Preferred Alternative. There is also no clearly improved recreational experience associated with more miles of road or motorized trail.

Table 2-7 of the Final EIS provides a summarized comparison of potential consequences anticipated for these five alternatives.

There were other alternatives considered but not fully evaluated in the Final EIS (Page 48-50). These other alternatives were considered unreasonable and failed to address the purpose and need for action (Pages 15 – 16, Final EIS). Other variations of the Proposed Action were also considered but there was little public support or interest for such variations and there were major concerns expressed by other state and federal agencies that these variations on travel management would be problematic for wildlife and endangered or threatened species. These alternatives would not meet the management objectives for travel on the Gunnison National Forest and further evaluation of them was not warranted.

## CONCERNS CONSIDERED

**Purpose and Need** --- The Forest Service set forth in the Purpose and Need for Action (Page 15, Final EIS) that the existing transportation system is not conducive to adequately protecting natural resources, it could not be adequately maintained with existing or projected federal funding and grants, and that recreational use opportunities needed to be balanced with public safety and management objectives for natural resources such as wildlife, fish, plants, water, air, aquatic habitats, timber and vegetative ecosystems, as well as cultural resources.

The Preferred Alternative reduces the size of the transportation system to a level that is more sustainable, considering maintenance and grant funding typically received by the agency each year. It will close those routes deemed not to be necessary to meet the access and recreational needs of the public. It continues to provide a full-range of recreational travel experiences accommodating use by full-sized vehicles, specialized four wheel drive vehicles, ATVs, UTVs,

motorcycles, mountain bikes, hikers and horseback riders. This decision to implement the Preferred Alternative will be the basis for the publication of the required Motor Vehicle Use Map designating routes open to the public for motorized travel. I have determined that this Preferred Alternative provides a balance between resource protection, recreational demand and use while continuing to provide needed access and transportation on NFS lands. The above attributes of this alternative are identified as elements of the Purpose and Need for Action relative to Gunnison National Forest travel management.

## Major Environmental Concerns

I have concluded from reading the Final EIS that the adverse effects resulting from this decision on the major components of the environment (e.g. soils, air, water, fisheries, wildlife, and vegetation) will be less than under current travel management (No Action alternative). The effects analysis for these aspects of the natural environment is disclosed in detail in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS.

- Soil Resources (Pages 56 – 57)
- Water Resources and Water Quality (Pages 58—75)
- Wetland and Riparian Vegetation, and Noxious Weeds (Pages 76 – 82)
- Aquatic Resources (Pages 85 – 110)
- Wildlife (Pages 111 – 156)
- Air Quality (Pages 246 – 254)

*Soil Resources* --- The Preferred Alternative will have fewer miles of road and trail in soils with high to very high erosion hazard and in fragile alpine soils than existing conditions (Page 57, Final EIS). It will also reduce motorized route density in all Lynx Analysis Units (LAU) over existing conditions (Table 3-32, Final EIS). The Preferred Alternative reduces the miles of motorized route in water influence zones by 22 % across the Gunnison National Forest (Table 3-9, Final EIS) and reduces the total number of road and trail crossings of streams over existing conditions (Table 3-8, Final EIS). Therefore, tangible benefits to watershed condition will occur across the analysis area by strategically reducing the footprint of the transportation network adversely affecting soil and water resources.

*Fish and Wildlife* --- Fish and wildlife habitats are enhanced with the reduction of the transportation network as well. The Elk habitat effectiveness (HE), a measure of potential use of suitable habitat (Pages 113 to 119, Final EIS), is slightly improved (1 %) by the Preferred Alternative over existing conditions. This slight increase meets the minimum standard for habitat capability index (HCI) for big game set forth in the GMUG Forest Plan (amended 1991) and HE levels are at, or above the 40% of potential. The environmental effects analysis for all terrestrial sensitive species found no impact or some impacts to individuals of the species, but not likely to result in loss of viability in the analysis area nor cause a trend toward federal listing (Pages 136 to 150, Final EIS).

*Gunnison Sage Grouse* ---The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) reviewed and concurred with the biological assessment findings on impacts to listed species predicted under the Preferred Alternative. It also expressed particular concern regarding potential impacts from travel on the

sensitive species, Gunnison sage-grouse. Although it is not a federally listed species, the concurrence letter documented support for reduced road miles and concerns of continuing human disturbance on the grouse's habitat.

The Final EIS evaluated the potential effects on Gunnison sage-grouse based on best currently available science (Pages 145 – 147). The Preferred Alternative reduces miles of road within breeding habitat (i.e. within 0.6 miles of a lek) and within nesting areas (i.e. within 4.0 miles of a lek), which is consistent with the local working group sage-grouse conservation plan for the Gunnison Basin(1997) and the Gunnison sage-grouse Rangewide Conservation Plan (2005). Cumulatively, reducing total miles of motorized routes within the project area will lessen impacts to sage-grouse below existing baseline conditions (Page 147, Final EIS).

The FWS is conducting a status review of the Gunnison sage-grouse to determine whether it warrants protection under the Endangered Species Act. We understand the FWS will be making a finding on whether or not to list it in September 2010. At about the same time, a new study by U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) which models sage-grouse habitat in the Basin should be published. The listing decision and expected publication will constitute new information about the species which could affect land management activities, including travel management. It may require the Forest Service to make new decisions regarding travel routes and their management.

The Forest Service will continue to meet and work with the FWS to adapt management activities as needed to promote the long-term conservation of Gunnison sage-grouse and other species. My decision to implement the Preferred Alternative now provides added protections to the sage-grouse that do not currently exist. It is part of an ongoing process to better manage motor vehicle use in the Gunnison Basin.

Under a separate decision, the Forest Service will also be implementing a seasonal closure restricting motorized travel in the Flat Top Mountain area from December 15, or beginning after the end of the last elk hunt (whichever is latest), to June 15 to provide additional protection to nesting and brooding sage-grouse in the area. This closure order will be in effect beginning December of 2010.

*Aquatic Resources* ---The Preferred Alternative will reduce the number of roads and trails crossing streams for all watersheds inhabited by common trout (Management Indicator Species) over existing conditions (Table 3-17, Final EIS). Stream crossing density for streams with Colorado cutthroat trout and bluehead sucker (Sensitive Species) are reduced below existing conditions under the Preferred Alternative (Table 3-20 and table 3-22, Final EIS). The environmental effects associated with Preferred Alternative on flannelmouth sucker, northern leopard frog and the boreal toad (Sensitive Species), while different for each species, collectively those environmental effects were determined to have some impact on individuals of the species, but not likely to result in loss of viability in the analysis area nor cause a trend toward federal listing.

*Vegetation* --- Vegetative concerns are primarily related to the potential spread of weeds and direct impacts on vegetation. One common vector for the spread of weeds are vehicles, bicycles, horses, pack animals and hikers when weed seeds are picked up by these mobile hosts

and redistributed on other areas. Closure of roads and trails will most likely reduce travel to some areas and thereby reduce the potential for spreading weed seeds to new areas. Road and trail maintenance as well as new construction of routes have the potential to spread weed seeds that attach to construction equipment that is routinely in contact with soils and other vegetation. Under the Preferred Alternative there is limited proposed new construction (40 miles of trail) where some earth moving equipment could be utilized. Mitigation measures for washing construction vehicles and continued eradication and control measures are planned to continue on the Gunnison National Forest. The overall contribution to the spread of weeds resulting from this travel management decision is expected to be minimal. A biological evaluation of potential environmental impacts on sensitive plants was completed and found that there would be no impact to the sensitive plant species found in the analysis area (Plant Biological Evaluation, 2008).

*Air Quality* --- Air quality is impacted by vehicle emissions and dust. Both pollutants are generated by vehicular travel. The Final EIS has determined that vehicle generated emissions have the potential to be reduced as a function of reduced miles of motorized road and trail. While reducing miles of road and trail may not change actual fugitive dust and vehicle exhaust emission levels, it does provide a mechanism to compare the alternatives considered in the EIS. Using this comparative tool, the environmentally preferable alternative (Alternative 3) has the greatest potential to reduce emissions (46%), and the Preferred Alternative could potentially reduce vehicle generated emissions by about 34% from existing conditions (Table 3-57, Final EIS).

*Climate Change* --- Potential effects on climate change were assessed in the Final EIS (pages 248 – 249). While vehicular travel emits carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), levels may be lower based on fewer miles of motorized road and trail. The photosynthesis process associated with all of the naturally vegetated lands within the analysis area (approximately 1.3 million acres) results in some utilization of CO<sub>2</sub> generated in this region. Thus, overall climate change effects as a result of this decision are expected to be slight and not considered adverse.

**Threatened and Endangered Species** – Biological assessments (BA) were completed for all threatened, endangered and candidate species listed for the analysis area. These species include the black-footed ferret, Canada lynx, Gunnison’s prairie dog, Mexican spotted owl, Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly, yellow-billed cuckoo, greenback cutthroat trout, Colorado pikeminnow, bonytail chub, razorback sucker, and humpback sucker. Additionally, a biological evaluation was done for federally listed threatened and endangered plant species. According to the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, Colorado Rare Plant Field Guide (1997) and field surveys conducted by Forest Service botanists, there are no threatened or endangered plant species found in the analysis area.

The Gunnison Basin Federal Lands Travel Management Biological Assessment (BA) found that the Preferred Alternative *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* Canada lynx and greenback cutthroat trout. That assessment further concluded there was *no effect* to the Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly. All of the other threatened, endangered and candidate species were not found in the analysis area and there was no potential for occurrence and no further analysis was necessary.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has responded to the Gunnison Travel Management BA with a letter (May 25, 2010) stating they concur with the findings of the BA.

**Cultural Resources** --- The Forest Service has entered into a programmatic agreement with the Colorado State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) for National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) compliance related to Gunnison Basin federal land travel management. The SHPO signed that programmatic agreement on March 24, 2010 and it will serve as the protocol for compliance with NHPA. Local governments and affected Tribes were notified of the preparation of this programmatic agreement and were afforded opportunity to comment.

The Forest Service has consulted with Tribal representatives who may have concerns about travel management on the Gunnison National Forest. They have been afforded the opportunity to voice their concerns and all comments received by American Indian Tribes have been evaluated and considered. The Forest Service has concluded based on consultation with Tribes that sacred native properties would not be adversely affected by the Preferred Alternative. Based on the field evaluations and locations of known cultural resource sites it was determined that on NFS lands 17 out of 50 known sites would no longer be impacted by travel because of road and trail closures (Page 234, Final EIS) under this alternative.

## OTHER FACTORS CONSIDERED

**Civil Rights** – An analysis was conducted of the potential for civil rights impacts, as required by Department of Agriculture Regulation 4300-004. Based on this civil rights impact analysis and public comments received there is no indication that the implementation of the Preferred Alternative or any of the alternatives evaluated for Gunnison Travel Management would affect groups or classes of persons negatively (Page 246, Final EIS). This Travel Management decision applies equally to all members of the public including minorities, people with disabilities, and women; and, therefore is not discriminatory to any person or group.

**Environmental Justice** – I have also given consideration, in compliance with Executive Order 12898, to the potential for this decision to disproportionately affect minority, low income populations, or Indian Tribes. I find that there is not disproportionate effect on any of these populations. I base my findings on the fact that none of these populations can be identified with any specific or particular use of the NFS lands on this forest. All people are affected equally by the designations and restrictions imposed by this decision and the economic effects identified (Pages 241 to 245, Final EIS) are generally local and do not affect the economic interests of any of the above referenced populations in areas outside the analysis area.

**Travel Analysis** -- When the Forest Service ID team began the development of the Gunnison travel management proposed action, the agency's handbook for travel analysis was in draft form. For this reason, the ID team relied heavily on the Forest Service National OHV Implementation Team's *Motor Vehicle Route and Area Designation Guide* (November, 17, 2005) and the draft Forest Service Manual 7700 and draft Handbook 7709.55 for guidance, criteria, and

recommended process regarding route designations. The ID team conducted a travel analysis of existing routes using the above referenced guidance. Public comment and input was taken during the early planning stages (May to October 2006) to help define existing uses, route locations, and desired modes of recreational travel. The ID team also relied on technical information (best available science) regarding soil characteristics, water quality, locations of wetland and riparian vegetations, stream inventories, aquatic species inventories, wildlife habitat and population surveys and inventories, noxious weeds infestations, suitable timber, fragile alpine environments, and cultural resource inventories. Additionally, the ID team knowledge of on-the-ground conditions relating to recreation uses and travel, past user conflicts, road and trail maintenance history, traditional dispersed camping locations, hunting pressure and purposes of use for existing routes. This travel analysis process was used to conduct route-by-routes assessments to determine if there was a need for change, and inform managers on possible route designations. The travel analysis criteria and screening processes (Pages 10 to 14, Final EIS) were used to help assess environmental consequences as documented in Chapter 3 of the Final EIS and aided in the development of the agency's proposed action published in the Notice of Intent (May 2007). The route by route evaluation files used in the travel analysis are part of the project record and were considered in the development of the Proposed Action (Draft EIS) and subsequent Preferred Alternative (Final EIS).

The Forest Service completed a travel analysis by an ID team to develop the proposed action, including publishing the Notice of Intent, May 2007, before the current Forest Service Handbook 7709.55 and Manual 7700 were approved and took effect. The manual states that that units issuing a proposed action for travel management prior to January 8, 2009 are not required use the final travel analysis process to inform travel decisions regarding designating roads and trails. Therefore, it is my determination that the provisions contained in the current FSM 7700 regarding travel analysis are not applicable to this decision. Further, since there is no requirement to conduct a travel analysis, the requirements to prepare a report documenting that process and publication of such a report are not applicable. My decisions on travel management designations have been aided by the ID team's efforts to incorporate much of the early guidance contained in the draft manual and National OHV Implementation Team's guide. The travel analysis that was conducted was the basis to help define transportation system in this decision and would constitute the minimum road system for the Gunnison National Forest.

**Roadless Areas** – The Forest Service analyzed the potential effects this travel management decision on roadless areas within the Gunnison National Forest. Debate about the inventory and management of roadless areas has been ongoing for many years and decisions concerning the future of these areas are pending in the federal court system and by the Secretary of Agriculture. There is legal and regulatory uncertainty about management of these areas.

It is important to note however, that neither of the two pending roadless rules (2001 Roadless Rule or the 2010 Revised Petition for the Colorado Roadless Rule) will direct, nor prohibit travel management activities on existing roads and trails. This travel management decision is consistent with guidance in both the 2001 Roadless Rule and the 2010 Revised Petition for the Colorado Rule.

While eliminating motorized travel with roadless areas is not a consistency finding as stated in

the previous paragraph, the elimination and restrictions on motorized uses within roadless areas can be considered as an enhancement to “roadless characteristics”. There are seven segments of primitive, high clearance road, totaling about 2 miles within roadless area (revised inventory for the 2010 Colorado Roadless Petition) that will be affected by this decision. Those roads will be closed to motorized use.

This travel management decision does authorize the continued use of motorized vehicles on trails within some of the inventoried roadless areas. In particular, the decision to keep the Carbon trail (#436) open to motorcycles and mountain bikes is of concern to some of the public. Many of cited the Roadless Rule as a reason to prohibit such use. More detailed rationale for the Carbon trail decision is covered in the following section of route specific decision rationale.

**Recreational Opportunity Spectrum** --- the Forest Service has documented the recreational opportunity spectrum (ROS) assessments completed for travel management in the Final EIS. There were concerns expressed by the public that the recreational opportunity spectrum (ROS) assessments completed for the Gunnison National Forest travel management analysis were not included in the Draft EIS. It has been included in the Final EIS (Pages 223 – 228). I find that this decision will not have adverse effects on the ROS objectives for the Gunnison National Forest.

In the GMUG Forest Plan (1991 amended) there are only two non-wilderness Management Area prescriptions (2A and 3A) within which specific ROS objectives are prescribed for travel management. The 2A Management Area ROS objective calls for semi-primitive motorized recreational opportunities. The 3A Management Area ROS objectives call for semi-primitive non-motorized recreational opportunity. All of the other Management Area ROS objectives allow for a range of possible recreational travel opportunities. In particular, the 2A and 3A Forest Plan ROS management objectives have influenced my decisions regarding travel on two controversial trails. One is the Carbon trail (#436) where a significant portion of the trail lies within a 2A Management Area. This area designation supports my decision to continue to allow motorcycle use on that entire trail, as opposed to restricting such use as many public comments suggest. The other is the Eyre trail (#561) where a significant portion of the trail lies within a 3A Management Area. This area designation supports my decision to close that trail to motorized use. More detailed explanations for the Carbon trail and Eyre trail decisions are covered in the following section on route specific decision rationale.

**Societal Values** --- The Forest Service has assessed the potential impacts of travel management options on some societal values such as noise, dust, vehicle speed, and economics (Pages 237 – 245). These values essentially address potential impacts to people rather than to the natural environment. I find that my decision will not have a direct adverse effect on any of these values. People are affected by noise, dust, vehicle speed and economic activity, and travel management decisions have little potential to change or alter those effects. While I understand that closure of roads and trails has the ability to eliminate vehicle-caused dust or noise, I conclude few people will actually notice a change for either of these values due to the location, length and proximity to residential areas to the routes that would be closed. Existing conditions are expected to continue.

Economic factors associated with travel were considered. Recreational use of NFS lands contributes greatly to the local and state economy (Pages 241 -242, Final EIS). From the assessment of potential impacts to the economic elements associated with recreational travel, I have concluded that this travel management decision will not change the demand for and the use of the Gunnison National Forest by the public. There may be some users that choose to recreate in substitute areas but there would also be other users that will come to the Gunnison area based on preferences in mode of travel and recreational experience expected because of these travel management decisions. Overall while there is a reduction in miles available for motorized travel, there is no indication or study available that would suggest this would directly impact the number of users, the amount of expenditures recreational travel generates statewide or even at the local level. Motorized user numbers are not expected to diminish but rather are expected to continue increasing according to economic reports published by the Outdoor Industry Foundation (SCORP, 2008) and the Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO, 2009). Based on the information available (Pages 242 – 245, Final EIS). I have determined that there would be little or no adverse impacts to the local economy from these travel management decisions.

**Transportation System** --- One of the major objectives for completing travel analysis and developing the Preferred Alternative was to better define a manageable and sustainable transportation system on NFS lands. This Preferred Alternative considers the existing and expected funding, grants, and other volunteer contributions related to road and trail maintenance in its assessment of scope and sustainability of the transportation system. The travel analysis done by the Forest Service interdisciplinary team also used defined criteria to develop a sustainable and desirable transportation network (Page 256, Final EIS). Recreational objectives as well as safety, route integrity, and sustainability were also considered in the development of the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative defines a transportation system of open roads and trails, administrative roads, and non-motorized trails that meet the management objectives for transportation, access, public safety, and recreational opportunity. The Preferred Alternative also defines what would be a minimum transportation system. I find that the Preferred Alternative and this decision best balance the needs associated with multiple-use management, and which is physically sustainable (Pages 265- 266, Final EIS).

## **DECISIONS COMMON TO ALL ACTIONS**

In the Final EIS there were conditions common to all alternatives that are to be carried forward by this decision. Based on that information and other aspects of the current travel management plan, I have concluded that the following determinations and continuation of certain existing policies and procedures shall be included in this Travel Management decision:

- Administrative access will continue to be allowed under the existing permits, authorizations, easements, or rights-of-way.
- Access will be provided to certain private property inholders, as required by Section 1323(a) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (P.L. 96-487; 16 U.S.C. 3210). Such access may be closed to the general public and managed as an administrative access on a case-by-case basis in this decision.

- Travel by motorized vehicles used for emergency purposes, such as fire, national defense, combat, law enforcement, and emergency services shall be exempted from these travel designations (36 CFR 212.51). Law enforcement vehicles used in response to violations or in pursuit of persons or vehicles violating the law or travel restrictions are exempt from travel designations.
- Administrative roads and trails are closed to public travel, unless otherwise specifically designated in this decision. Such routes where public travel is allowed are depicted on Figures 1A, 1B and 1C with the acceptable mode of travel shown. Closed administrative routes will be signed as closed routes and will not be shown on the MVUM.<sup>1</sup> In this decision the Forest Service has designated some previously open Forest system routes as administrative routes because they serve a single purpose and public travel is not needed. Additionally, this decision recognizes and carries forward previous administrative route designation decisions (e.g. special use permits, access agreements, site-specific project decisions).
- Motorized travel by recreational off-highway vehicles such as hovercraft, tracked vehicles, aircraft or other motorized craft other than the more typical automobiles, trucks, SUVs, ATVs, UTVs, motorcycles, and bicycles are not included in these travel designation decisions.
- Other forms of motorized or mechanical transport that may be developed in the future that could facilitate human travel not addressed in the FEIS or by this decision would be required to travel on designated roads open for public travel.
- These decisions on motorized travel designations are not applicable to winter travel over snow. Current winter travel management direction would still remain in effect.
- The existing requirements that all motorized and mechanized travel is restricted to designated routes remains in place. This requirement is consistent with 36 CFR 212.50 and 51.
- I have decided that the travel designations previously approved for the Fossil Ridge Recreation Management Area as depicted on the 1999 recreation management area map of the July 1, 1991 road and trail inventory will remain in place and be incorporated into this decision (36 CFR 212.50 (b)). Those travel designations were authorized by the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993 that created the Fossil Ridge Wilderness and the Fossil Ridge Recreation Management Area and were based on an inventory of roads and trails. The Forest Service relied on agency information and surveys as well as public input gained through a series of meetings between 1995 and 1997 to develop the road and trail inventory as of July 1, 1991. Based on that information and the public involvement incorporated in the preparation of the *Fossil Ridge RMA Roads Finding and Trails Finding Report* (March 9, 1999). That report defined and depicted the existing roads and trails that Congress designated as open for motorized and mechanized travel in the RMA. It is my determination that there is no need for change. The hierarchy currently in use for

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<sup>1</sup> As further clarification, existing policies do not restrict hikers and horseback riders to designated routes and those users can travel cross country. Their travel would be unaffected by these designations for administrative access.

modes of travel on the other forests of the GMUG National Forest would continue to be used and apply to this decision. This hierarchy is defined and discussed in the Final EIS, Chapter 1, Decisions to be Made section (Page 18, Final EIS) and is shown below under Decision Rationale – Travel Hierarchy.

- There are no designated open public roads within the Crested Butte Mountain Resort (CBMR) permit area, either on Mount Crested Butte or Snodgrass Mountain. That situation will continue. Evaluations of and decisions on mountain bike use on non-motorized trails within the ski area's permit boundary will be made in the future as the Forest explores public access needs with CBMR.
- Motorized mixed use determinations (i.e. use of unlicensed OHVs on passenger car roads), restrictions or mitigations are outside the scope of this decision. These are separate and distinct actions covered by decisions that are made based on safety and engineering criteria. Those existing or future motorized mixed use determinations are independent of, and not constrained by these travel designation decisions.
- Roads crossing NFS lands on the Gunnison National Forest that are under the jurisdiction of federal, state, or county governments by agreement, easement, or right-of-way are outside the scope of this decision. The use and allowed modes of travel on these roads are not subject to these travel designations.
- Rules and regulations regarding state and federal highway speed limits, vehicle registrations, driver licensing, and noise standards are not within the scope of this decision. These aspects of motorized travel are under the jurisdiction and management discretion of the appropriate and applicable local, state or federal governmental agency.
- Decisions with regard to road and trail maintenance objectives for designated routes are not made by this decision. Road and trail maintenance objectives represent one aspect of implementing travel management decisions, and as such are required to be consistent with use designations in this decision. However, the preparation of such maintenance objectives for roads and trails will be done prior to the release of the MVUM with the approval by the Forest Engineer.
- As required in the Forest Service's Travel Management Manual, Section 7711.3 – Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUMs), the agency will “Review and reissue MVUMs annually, regardless of whether there are any changes to designations. Update MVUMs to reflect revisions to designations (36 CFR 212.54).” These annual reviews will be conducted for all National Forest System lands with travel management plans, including the Gunnison Basin.

## **DECISION RATIONALE FOR SPECIFIC ROUTES AND OTHER ASPECTS OF TRAVEL**

The basis for my decisions for designating routes as open to motorized and mechanized travel, the desired and appropriate mode of travel and any seasonal use restrictions is tied to the travel analysis process. From that analysis process the proposed transportation system was developed (Proposed Action) and was evaluated with environmental consequences assessed. Public comment and additional information provided on the Draft EIS has further refined and modified

the Proposed Action into a Preferred Alternative which represents my decision with some minor modifications documented in this section.

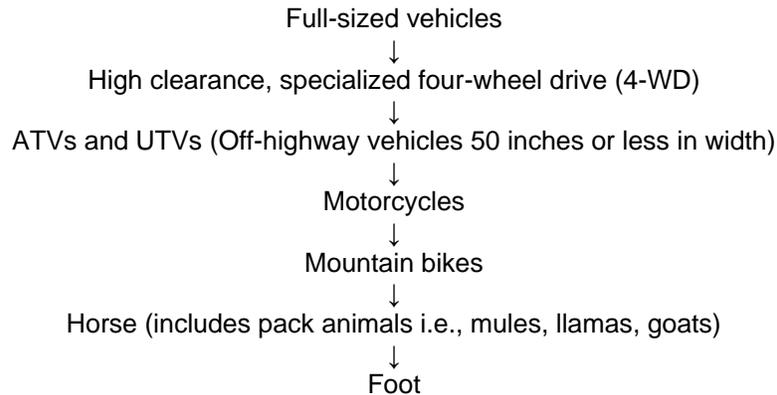
There are some routes and aspects of travel where, due to public interest and differing public perspectives on the most appropriate modes of travel, I have chosen to explain and further clarify my rationale and considerations (below) taken into account in making the decision on Gunnison National Forest travel management.

**Dispersed Camping** --- it is my decision that for the majority of the areas on the Gunnison National Forest the existing situation that allows for motorized travel off of designated roads, up to 300 feet on either side of the centerline of the road (further clarification of the Preferred Alternative), for the sole purpose of camping will be continued. This decision on dispersed camping is similar and consistent with the other units of the GMUG National Forest. This exemption to the requirement that all motorized travel is restricted to designated roads and trails is consistent with the 2005 Travel Rule (36 CFR 212.51). The Forest Service will actively work to educate and inform the public of the need to utilize existing camp sites and the routes leading into them, minimize vegetation damage, restrict off-road travel within the 600-foot corridor, and discourage creation of new dispersed camping sites and access routes if other existing sites are available.

Based on further evaluation of the dispersed camping situation on the Gunnison National Forest, I have also determined that there are some areas where this exemption for dispersed camping may be causing unnecessary resource damage and may be resulting in less than desirable recreational experiences. It is also my decision that for the 12 road corridors listed in the Final EIS (Pages 47 – 48) that the Forest Service will, in the future, designate road spurs off the designated open roads as open to public travel solely based on the need to provide access to appropriate and suitable camping areas. Motor vehicle parking will be allowed within 30 feet of the edge of the designated roads so that the public can camp or engage in other recreational activities. It should be noted that it will require the Forest Service to conduct field assessments, mapping and suitability determinations on existing and potentially new dispersed camping road spurs before these more detailed road designations can be made. Until those field assessments are completed, the existing 300-foot motorized travel exemption off of designated roads solely for the purposes of dispersed camping will remain in place. Once the Forest Service has completed those dispersed camping assessments and the public has been notified of the assessment findings, the agency will then restrict motorized travel associated with dispersed camping to designated roads only. The 300-foot motorized travel exemption for dispersed camping will no longer apply in these areas. When the final determination for those spur roads to be designated as system roads is completed, they will be depicted on the MVUM and become part of the Forest Service transportation system. If the designated dispersed camping spurs are existing routes and there would be no ground disturbing actions needed to accommodate access and parking, further environmental compliance should not be needed. However, other requirements associated with cultural resources clearances and the Endangered Species Act compliance may necessitate the Forest Service obtain additional approvals or concurrence from the appropriate regulatory agencies. We expect to complete the dispersed camping field assessments and within 6 years of the signing of this decision. Areas will be assessed and spur roads designated based on need to rectify resource damage issues or user conflicts. The

timetable for conducting such field assessments may be affected by funding and the availability of qualified staff to complete the assessments.

**Travel Hierarchy** --- This decision will continue to follow the standard hierarchy for modes of travel that are currently in use on both the Grand Mesa and the Uncompahgre National Forest of the GMUG. That hierarchy is:



This hierarchy for the mode of travel is based on an understanding that where use of full-sized vehicles is designated, all of the other modes of travel that follow are allowed, unless specifically designated otherwise. Quality recreational experiences may not be necessarily be provided at the higher levels of the travel hierarchy for those lower hierarchal levels of travel. The hierarchy of travel is further explained in the Final EIS (Pages 18 and 255).

**Routes Leading into Wilderness** --- Roads and trails may begin outside of wilderness and lead directly into a designated Wilderness area where motorized and mechanized travel is not allowed. Some of these routes may lack typical Wilderness trailhead amenities, including parking areas. Sometimes these trail segments are short and other times they are a couple of miles in length before entering the Wilderness area. Routes outside of Wilderness are generally open to designated mode of travel as determined by travel management objectives. There are some situations when managers restrict if it is determined to be unsafe, conflicts with desired management objectives, has design limitations unfavorable to certain types of travel, or has a history of user conflicts. Recreation experience expectations for use of these routes leading to wilderness and the ability to manage the full range of travel is also considered. My decisions on the mode of travel for these types of trails in the Gunnison National Forest vary because I have taken into account the different situations and conditions on a route by route basis.

**Motorized Mixed Use Determinations** --- are not within the scope of this travel management decision. These determinations are based on safety issues and engineering criteria relating to road design and maintenance. These mixed use (unlicensed vehicles traveling on roads with licensed vehicles) determinations have been made based on recent assessments conducted by Forest Service engineers. General Forest Service guidance calls for no mixed use on maintenance level 4 and 5 roads (Appendix A, Page 1) but after the completion of mixed use analysis on the Gunnison National Forest it was determined that mixed use could continue on all maintenance level 4 roads (PSG4, Final EIS Appendix A) with mitigation (e.g. warning signs,

educational signs, and speed controls). Mixed use would not be allowed on maintenance level 5 roads (PSG5, Final EIS Appendix A).

**Game Retrieval** --- by motorized vehicles traveling off of designated roads and trails was not allowed by the 2001 Gunnison Travel Interim Restrictions decision. It is my decision to continue this restriction. There has been no information submitted by the public or other agencies that would warrant making an exemption for such motorized travel off of designated roads and trails as provided for by the 2005 Travel Rule (36 CFR 212.51(b)). To further clarify this restriction, I have decided mountain bikes (bicycles) cannot be used to travel off of designated roads or trails to aid in the retrieval of game.

### **Specific Routes**

**Agate Creek trail** -- The decision to continue to allow motorcycle use on this trail was based on a re-evaluation of trail conditions, watershed concerns, Monarch Crest trail connection and the beneficial recreational opportunities afforded by continuing to keep this connector route open motorcycle use and mode of travel on this trail is directly affected by my decisions for the Monarch Crest trail segment of the CDNST. Further assessment of the potential user conflicts between motorcycles and mountain bikes indicates that there is limited conflict and continued use by both motorcycles and mountain bikes seem to be compatible. Because of the length and location of this trail, it has limited appeal to hikers and horseback riders as a connector route or a destination hike or ride. Existing trail use in this watershed has had little direct or indirect effect on watershed condition or sedimentation in Agate Creek. The major source of sediment in Agate Creek comes from highway runoff and winter road sanding. For these reasons, I have decided to continue to manage this trail as a single-track motorized trail. This includes the Agate Creek trail spur that connects to road #777.

**Antelope Creek road and trail** --- See rationale under Hidden road and trail.

**Baxter Gulch trail** --- This trail (#565) is often confused with the Carbon trail. It is a little used non-motorized trail that originates on private land south of Crested Butte and connects with the Carbon trail (#436) about 1.7 miles from the forest boundary. This is a very primitive trail and often difficult to locate along some segments. It is my decision to keep this trail as a non-motorized trail but not to allow mountain bike use. There is little demand by mountain bike users to travel up this drainage and the condition of the trail makes it better suited to hikers and horseback riders.

**Bear Springs and Black Gulch roads** – These two high clearance roads are open to full-sized motorized travel under existing conditions. They are parallel ridge line roads on the east and west sides of Steuben Creek. Colorado DOW and agency wildlife specialists expressed concerns with road densities in this area and the lack of wildlife security for big game movement. The Black Gulch road (#859.2A) dead-ends at private land on the forest boundary where there is no public right-of-way across those private lands. The Bear Springs road (#609.A2) is difficult for full-sized vehicle travel and is mostly used by OHVs. It is my decision to close both of these roads since neither road provides the public with needed access and closure would benefit wildlife in this area. Big game hunting is the primary recreational management objective for this area and wildlife habitat preservation or enhancement is consistent with that objective.

***Beaver Slide and Hunter's Hill trails*** --- These two trails provide parallel access from Cement Creek road (#740) to the Double Top trail (#405). Beaver Slide trail (#580) is currently a non-motorized trail often used by mountain bikes. The Hunter's Hill trail (#410.0A) is a parallel spur to the Hunter's Hill trail (#410) running up the ridge line. Both trails are duplicative, parallel access from the Cement Creek road to the Double Top trail. The travel analysis determined that there was limited need for parallel trails in this area and duplicate access. The ridgeline alignment of the Hunter's Hill trail (#410.0A) creates an adverse visual impact and is a poor location prone to erosion and down-cutting. Beaver Slide trail is also a ridgeline trail with similar attributes as the Hunter's Hill spur trail. It is my decision to close both of these trails. Neither of these trails provide needed access to the Double Top trail that is not already available on adjacent trails and both trails are poorly located.

***Brush Creek road and trail*** --- This route is currently open to motorized travel and connects the main Brush Creek road (#738) with the Taylor River basin. The first 2.4 miles of the route is currently open to full-sized motor vehicles and the remaining 5.2 miles of trail is a single-track motorized trail (#400). Because the road portion of this route has become increasingly difficult to travel in a full-sized vehicle and there is no logical terminus for the road, it is my decision to convert the 2.4 miles of the Brush Creek road (#738.2B) starting from the its intersection with the main Brush Creek road (#738) to a single-track motorized trail. This is consistent with existing mode of travel on the route as it heads north over the pass into the Taylor River basin. This trail (#400) is a popular and well used motorcycle trail that is a major connector route to many looped trail riding opportunities in the Cement Creek and Brush Creek drainages. While there were many public comments suggesting this route to be converted to non-motorized use, the recreational opportunities it creates for looped trail rides and the traditional use of these trails by motorcycle riders along with the mountain bike use that occurs on this single-track trail outweigh the purported need to change this trail to non-motorized travel. Influencing this decision is the existence of several other non-motorized routes in this general area (Deer Creek trail, UT-7736.1B, and Strand Hill trails) that afford quiet travel desired by many who suggested change on trail #400.

***Cannibal Plateau trails*** --- There are four trails in an area of NFS land on Mesa Seco. The Cannibal Plateau trail (#464), Brush Creek trail (#457) and the Calf Creek Plateau trail (#458) are all motorized trails on Mesa Seco that are used by ATVs. These trails connect to create a 10.5 mile loop off of Los Pinos-Cebolla road (#788). The Deer Lakes campground is often a staging area for trail riders and these trails provide an ATV trail riding recreational opportunity for campers that use the Deer Lakes facility. The Canyon Infierno trail (#461) from the Los Pinos-Cebolla road to the intersection with the Calf Creek Plateau trail (about 1.7 miles) has been used by motorcycles that typically turn back onto the Calf Creek Plateau trail and loop back to the Deer Lakes campground. Both the Calf Creek Plateau and Canyon Infierno trails continue on into the Powderhorn Wilderness area.

There were public comments supporting continued motorized use on all of these trails outside of the Wilderness. Wildlife specialists and agency resource specialists expressed concerns with the proliferation of dead-end spur trails being created by ATV riders off of the Cannibal Plateau trail. There were also public comments supporting non-motorized use in the area to improve hunting. While I have concerns regarding the proliferation of user-created spurs off of these trails, I have decided that the long-term management direction for this area should include

motorized access by ATVs. It is my decision to keep the Cannibal Plateau trail (#464) open to ATVs to the intersection with the Brush Creek trail (#457). Beyond that intersection the trail up to Antenna peak will be closed. Brush Creek trail (#457) will remain as a motorized trail open to ATVs. The 1.4 mile segment of the Calf Creek Plateau trail (#458) from the campground to the intersection with the Brush Creek trail will remain a motorized trail open to ATVs. I have decided that the short segment of the Calf Creek Plateau trail (0.4 miles) to the wilderness boundary will be closed to motorized use and be converted to a non-motorized trail that allows mountain bike use. The short segment (1.7 miles) of the Canyon Infierno trail (#461) from the Los Pinos-Cebolla road to the intersection with the Calf Creek Plateau trail will be converted from single-track motorized to non-motorized use that includes mountain bikes. The trail's short distance to the wilderness boundary and its location along a stream make it better suited as a non-motorized trail and provides a desirable loop riding opportunity for mountain bikes from the Deer Creek campground.

***Canyon Creek and Horseshoe trails*** – These trails will continue to be managed as motorized single-track trails. The Waunita trail (#497) provides access from the Whitepine area over to the Waunita Pass area and the Canyon Creek trail for motorcycles and avoids travel on county roads 888 and 887. The Canyon Creek trail (#481) and Horseshoe trail (#482) connect with the Waunita trail to create a popular loop trail for motorcycles and a challenging mountain bike ride. Concerns about motorized use in areas where there are no existing roads and motorized intrusions affecting wildlife security were considered and the potential effects of keeping these trails open to motorized use were assessed. I have determined that existing environmental conditions did not warrant further restrictions of recreational use on these trails. There is no evidence that wildlife populations are being adversely effected by existing use and there is little evidence of unacceptable resource damage associated with the existing uses.

***Carbon Trail*** --- This 6.3 mile trail is currently a single-track motorized trail that connects the Ohio Pass road (#730) and the Kebler Pass road (CR 12). While lightly used because of its degree of difficulty and trail conditions, it has been open to motorcycles and mountain bikes for many years. The Forest Plan management area prescriptions for this area include 2A, 2B, and 7A. The recreational travel objectives for these management area units all allow motorized travel. The 2A management area recreational opportunity objective is specifically designated as semi-primitive motorized recreation. The Carbon trail is the only travel route within this management unit, therefore it is the only travel opportunity that can meet this objective.

The public has submitted many comments regarding travel on this trail, probably more than any other route. Generally they portray conflicting and opposing preferences for travel management on this trail. I recognize that the travel designation on this trail is highly controversial.

The Carbon trail is located within an inventoried roadless area. Some contend that this area's roadless nature and efforts to obtain a wilderness designation for it should be managed through non-motorized travel designation. Additionally, some suggest that continued use by motorcycles and mountain bikes compromises the wilderness character of the area. Still others contend that because the trail has been traditionally open to motorized and mechanized trail riding, which is consistent with Forest Plan direction, there is no need for change. I have considered these assertions and find that the area's current wilderness character exists with motorized and mechanized use; and therefore, continued use should not change its character. There is nothing in Forest Service policy or regulations that would call for eliminating existing motorized use on

trails in inventoried roadless areas. Further, none of the pending roadless rules (2001 or 2010 revised petition for the Colorado Rule) would eliminate motorized trails or prohibit motorized use on those trails. I am fully aware of the details of recent Forest Plan revision considerations for this area. Those draft plan revision management objectives were not subject to public review and comment because the public was not afforded a full comment period (Northern District of California, Citizens for Better Forestry vs. U.S. Department of Agriculture Summary Judgement, 2007) on those draft plan objectives. The Forest Service has never been able to determine or gauge the public's support or opposition to the draft Forest Plan revision (2007) that could have affected travel management decisions in the future. Therefore the current Forest Plan (1983 as amended) direction is still in effect. When there are specific Forest Plan objectives that influence or effect travel management those plan requirements are intended to guide management decisions. It should be noted that future Forest Plan revision efforts would again evaluate the wilderness suitability and potential eligibility of this Carbon/Whetstone area. There is the possibility that Forest Plan revisions may necessitate changes in travel management for this area in the future.

Considering the Forest Plan direction and public support for maintaining the existing modes of travel on the Carbon trail (#436) it is my decision that no change is needed. The Carbon trail will remain as a motorized single track trail. This designation affords motorcycles, mountain bike riders as well as hikers and horseback riders use of the trail. I will further stipulate that the northern segment of this trail in an area known as the Wildcat canyon section will be closed to all motorized or mechanized modes of travel until resource damage concerns associated with the trail can be mitigated, repaired or resolved. Once those problems have been taken care of the trail will reopen to the public.

**Castle Creek trails** --- There are several non-motorized trails in this area that lead to a series of wilderness trailheads as well as connect to provide a long (14 miles) trail that traverses NFS lands from the north end of Ohio Creek (road #730) to the Mill Creek road (#727). From the Swampy Pass Trailhead, the Swampy Trail (#439) provides access to the Little Pass Creek trail (#563). Little Pass Creek Trail also connects with the Lowline trail (#438) that heads west into the wilderness area and southeast to the Mill Creek road. The Costo Lake (#425) wilderness trail, the Castle Pass (#441) wilderness trail and Mill Castle (#450) wilderness trail can be accessed off the Little Pass Creek trail and the Lowline trail. It is my decision to continue to keep all of these trails as non-motorized trails, but only the Swampy trail (#439) to Little Pass Creek trail (#563) connection, Little Pass Creek trail (#563) and the Lowline trail (#438) outside of the West Elk Wilderness area would allow mountain bike use. These trails connect to offer a unique backcountry, wilderness-like mountain riding opportunity that is not available in other locations on the Gunnison National Forest. The other trails, (#439 ,beyond the Little Pass Creek trail connection, #425, and #450 are best suited for hiker and horseback use only.

The roads in this area are not accessible by the public because of the lack of documented rights-of-way on private land, but were developed on NFS lands to access water diversions and range improvement developments in the area. It is my decision to manage these roads for administrative use. Only authorized users will be able to travel on these roads.

**Cathedral Peak roads** ---- There are a series of roads originating off of private land adjacent to the Cathedral Peak that dead-end on NFS lands or loop back onto private land. These roads include road #749, Z749.3A road, and road #749.3G. There is no documented right-of-way for

public access to these roads. Travel analysis indicated that there is no need for these roads to remain on the public transportation system without public access and that closure would create a wildlife security area. Comments were received from adjacent landowners wanting these roads to remain open to motorized travel citing the need for access to private water development facilities in the area.

It is my decision to change these roads to administrative use only. Access to private water developments may be authorized for the owners of those facilities for purposes of maintenance and repair, as requested. This designation will eliminate exclusive use of public forest roads by adjacent landowners and provide for wildlife benefits.

***Cement Creek and Crystal Peak trails*** --- These two single-track trails are open to motorized travel under existing conditions. The Cement Creek trail (#612) parallels the Cement Creek road (#740) on the western side of the valley along Cement Creek. It provides access up the valley as and connects with the Waterfall trail (#555), Block and Tackle trail (#545) and Hunter's Creek trail (#410). Crystal Peak trail (#583) is about 2 miles in length and connects the Cement Creek basin with the Brush Creek trail (#400) in the East Fork of Brush Creek drainage. There is a need to provide for a balance of non-motorized and motorized use in this Cement Creek area based on the public comments received. Under existing conditions all of the trails in this area allow motorized use. Recognizing the need to provide a variety of travel opportunities for this area, it is my decision to convert a portion of the Cement Creek trail (#612) from its junction with the Waterfall trail (#555) up to the Hunter's Creek trail (#410) to a non-motorized trail that allows mountain bike use. Additionally, it is my decision to change 1.2 miles of the Crystal Peak trail from its terminus with the Cement Creek road (#740) to the top of the ridge and its junction with Mount Tilton spur trail (#582.1A) to a non-motorized trail. From the Mount Tilton spur trail intersection to the Brush Creek trail (#400) the Crystal Peak trail will remain a single-track motorized trail.

The 0.8 mile segment of the Cement Creek trail (#612) from its terminus with the Cement Creek road (#740) at the bridge up to the intersection with the Waterfall trail (#555) will also be managed and remain open as a single-track motorized trail to facilitate motorcycle traffic to access the Waterfall trail without crossing Cement Creek. Without this motorized access to Waterfall trail, user created, unauthorized crossings of Cement Creek could become more commonplace creating unnecessary and avoidable resource damage to riparian and stream habitats along the creek. It is my desire that this 0.8 mile segment be improved in the near future to facilitate continued use of this trail as it is starting to deteriorate.

***Cochetopa Hills*** – There are several motorized trails (#490, #491, #492, #488, #489, #578 and #480) in this area that have traditionally been open to motorized travel. It is my decision to continue to allow the existing modes of travel on these trails (Figure C). There were those that commented this area should be managed as more of a semi-primitive non-motorized setting and that some of these routes should be closed to improve wildlife security and reduce habitat fragmentation. These concerns were considered and the existing motorized use was evaluated in terms of its effects on the natural environment and the recreational opportunity provided. Based on information available to me, there does not appear to be resource damage concerns with the use of these trails by motorized vehicles and they provide a series of looped trail riding opportunities that are highly desirable from a recreational use perspective. The tracts of NFS land that continue to be free of roads or trails are fairly substantial in size (Long Branch west ≈

7,000 acres, Long Branch east  $\approx$  7,400 acres and Baldy Lake  $\approx$  3,000 acres) and I believe these areas would continue to provide valued and adequate wildlife habitat/security without additional closures. There is a large tract of NFS land north of trail #491 where several dead-end routes are to be closed. Motorized and mechanized travel in this area will be eliminated, creating a 7,000 acre-area of non-motorized semi-primitive environment.

There were concerns that two of the trails (#491 and #489) transition from a trail managed for ATV use to a narrower single-track trail open to motorcycles at what appears on the map to be an illogical terminus or transition point. In both situations, these transition points are well defined based on topography and difficulty of travel and have served as transition points under existing conditions. District staff has indicated there have been no problems with ATV users stopping and returning on the trail at the transition point where the trail goes from one mode of travel to another at these locations. The ATV use on these trails has been typically related to fall hunting access and ATV riders are accustomed to turning around at these locations and traveling back the way they have come to dispersed camping areas at the beginning of these trails.

***Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST)*** -- It is my decision to continue to allow the existing modes of travel on the CDNST. This includes the Monarch Crest trail (#531) where motorcycles, mountain bikes, hikers and horseback riders would continue to be allowed to use that segment of the CDNST from Monarch Pass to Marshall Pass. It is understood that allowing the existing modes of travel on the CDNST is controversial, but I have found that continuing to allow existing travel is consistent with recent Forest Service Manual direction (FSM 2300, Ch 2350, 11(e)(1 and 2)) regarding management of the CDNST (Page 28, Final EIS). There is public (Draft EIS comments) pressure to convert all of the CDNST to non-motorized use because of the primitive nature of the area and the legislative direction for non-motorized management of this trail. However, it should be noted, the existing motorized use and the use of existing routes as part of the trail on the Gunnison National Forest has been occurring prior to the enactment of the CDNST legislation. Further, to make changes on those portions of the CDNST that are on the Gunnison National Forest has the potential to affect other trails on adjacent forests. A comprehensive CDNST travel plan does not exist; therefore, it is not possible to take a look at travel on the CDNST that takes into account adjacent forest's management. Changes to mode of travel would also be problematic if done from only a single forest's perspective. Maintaining the status quo for travel on the CDNST within the Gunnison National Forest affords the agency the ability to coordinate the needs of adjacent forests. There may be the need to revisit the travel designations on the CDNST if a comprehensive plan for the trail in this area is completed in the future. The existing use and modes of travel have not been shown to result in unacceptable levels of environmental impact and continued motorized use was supported in many of the public comments. Those segments of the CDNST that traverse the La Garita Wilderness are open to only hikers and horseback riders.

***Curecanti road and trails*** – The Curecanti road (#720) and the connecting trail (#870) create a long access route (about 29 miles) from the forest boundary to the West Elk Wilderness boundary. The route parallels the Curecanti Creek the entire way. Under existing conditions there is full-sized motorized access about 6.6 miles from the forest boundary, then the road turns into a non-motorized trail and continues to the wilderness boundary. There are two non-motorized trails that connect the Black Mesa area with the Curecanti trail (#870). These trails, the Trail Creek trail (#872) and the Piburn trail (#880) provide linkage to several other non-

motorized trails and full-sized vehicle roads to the west. All of these trails allow mountain bike use under the existing travel designations.

Some suggest the Curecanti Creek basin area should be considered for expansion of the West Elk Wilderness because of its wilderness values and suitability for such designations. Therefore, they are opposed to allowing mountain bikes on these non-motorized trails. The Forest Plan (1983, as amended) does not recommend the area for wilderness designation. The existing Forest Plan direction designates the area semi-primitive non-motorized for 3A and semi-primitive motorized and non-motorized for 6B. The Gunnison travel analysis did not identify a need for change and the environmental consequences assessment did not identify adverse environmental impacts associated with existing modes of travel. Changing the overall management objectives for NFS lands (e.g. wilderness recommendations) is appropriately done through Forest Plan revisions, not travel management planning.

It is my decision, based on travel analysis and lack of environmental concerns to continue to allow the public to travel on these trails and roads with the same mode of travel as afforded them under existing conditions, which I find to be consistent with the Forest Plan.

***Dinner Station road*** – This road (3.1 miles) parallels the main Taylor Park road (#742) and has served as a short cut for ATVs and motorcycles coming from the Dinner Station campground and heading up to Lily Pond and other roads off of the Rocky Brook road (#748). This is a parallel road that dead-ends at the Taylor River because the existing bridge does not accommodate full-sized vehicles. For these reasons it was determined that the road did not need to remain open nor did it meet the objectives of the minimum transportation system, it is my decision to close the road to motorized travel.

***Doctor Park trail*** – This 19-mile trail (#424) was formally the Gunnison spur of the Colorado Trail. Over time this trail which was constructed as a hiking/horseback riding trail is now a single-track motorized trail and is a very popular motorcycle connector from the Taylor Park area over to the Deadman (420), Cement Mountain (#563), Bear Creek (#415) and Reno Ridge (#607) system of motorcycle trails. The southern segment of this trail, from Manganese Peak downhill to the North Bank campground bisects an important big horn sheep migration route and spring lambing and rearing habitat. It also terminates into a Forest Service campground before connecting to the Taylor River road (county road 742). Comments received during pre-scoping showed that there were many who found the motorcycle traffic through the campground to be annoying and in conflict with their recreational activities associated with camping. These concerns and input from wildlife experts regarding the potential for adverse effects on the Matchless Mountain big horn sheep herd from motorized use in an area that is used for spring migration, lambing and rearing lead the Forest Service to propose closures on the southern 6.5 miles of trail to motorcycle use. That segment of trail will also be closed to all users in the spring season as a way to protect bighorn sheep habitats and eliminate user conflicts in the North Bank campground. Public comments received on the Draft EIS demonstrated a diverse response to this proposed closure. There were many who were opposed to such closures and many others who supported them. Wildlife experts and staff wildlife biologists concurred with the need to reduce motorized travel on a trail that bisects a major bighorn sheep migration route and habitat area and to reduce human intrusions during the more critical spring season.

After considering the full range of comments, public opinion and best available science, it is my decision to keep the northern 12.3 miles of trail open to motorized travel to a terminus that connects to the Doctor Gulch road (#554) which allows trail riders to access the many motorized trails to the west on Cement Mountain and Reno Ridge. The southern segment of this trail (6.5 miles) from a saddle near Manganese Peak to the North Bank campground terminus will be managed as a non-motorized trail that allows mountain bikes (bicycles). I am further restricting non-motorized travel on this southern segment by closing the trail to all users in the spring season from March 1 to Memorial Day weekend (see Appendix H, ROD). The non-motorized use on the southern segment of this trail would reduce wildlife impacts associated with noise and human intrusions while the spring season closure to all users is expected to provide a more secure migration and lambing area for the bighorn sheep. This closure to motorized travel works together with the decision to close much of the Matchless Mountain trail (see rationale) to provide more secure habitat and potentially improve habitat conditions for this valuable and important big horn sheep herd. Eliminating motorcycles from traveling through the North Bank campground addresses camper concerns about traffic in the campground and reduces user conflicts for hikers on the trail. It is also expected to reduce erosion on the steeper portions of this downhill trail to some extent because there should be fewer wheeled vehicles on the trail.

***Eyre Basin trail and road*** --- This route starts as a road (#742.3M) off of the Taylor Park road (#742) and travels essentially uphill for about 1½ miles before it turns into a trail. According to local land owners the Eyre trail (#561) has been a historic trail used by miners traveling over to Aspen from mines on and around Italian mountain. More recently it has been used by motorcycles and is currently open to single-track motorized use. Its terminus is at the Star Mine private property. The Forest Service does not have a public access agreement or documented right-of-way across the private lands. The Eyre trail is a steep, difficult trail that is best suited for experienced and expert riders. The Forest Plan (1983 as amended in 1991) management area direction for the NFS lands within this area traversed by the trail are set by 3A and 7A objectives. Management unit objectives for 3A call for non-motorized recreation in a semi-primitive area while the 7A objectives are for wood fiber production with non-motorized and motorized recreation objectives. A portion of the trail is within management unit 3A and the road portion of this trail is located in 7A which would allow motorized recreation as an ROS objective. Considering that there is no documented right-of-way across private lands and the Forest Plan objectives for a major portion of this trail call for non-motorized access, keeping this trail open and part of the Forest Service transportation system would not meet the objectives for a minimum transportation system and would not comply with Forest Plan direction. It is my decision to close the entire route, both trail and road, to motorized and mechanized travel and remove the trail from the Forest Service transportation system. While not the primary reason for this decision, there are added benefits to wildlife that occur with this closure. It creates a large tract of secure wildlife habitat with no motorized intrusions. Private landowners have expressed concerns that closure of this trail will limit their egress from their property in the event of fire. While this is an important consideration, there is road egress in two separate directions, south and east from these private land inholdings and I believe this to be adequate. The travel rule also provides for emergency exemptions in situations related to fire or emergency (36 CFR 212.51 (a)(5)).

***Farris Creek connection trails*** --- There are several trails in the Point Lookout area that connect the Farris Creek road (#736) to the Cement Creek road (#740) and the Double Top trail (#405).

Under existing conditions, the 5.2 miles of the Farris Creek trail (#409) is a single-track motorized trail. It is one of a couple of motorized trails (#409.5A and #412/406) that connect the Farris Creek road to the Cement Creek road and the Double Top trail. Public comments strongly supported conversion of some motorized trails in this area near the Crested Butte south residential area to non-motorized travel. Conversion of trail (#409), the western 0.8 miles of Double Top (#405) and the Walrod/Caves trail (#418) from single-track motorized to non-motorized travel provides a system of non-motorized trails near the adjacent residential area. Motorcycle users would continue to have access off of the Double Top trail to Farris Creek (via #409.5A) and Cement Creek (via #405.2A to #412 to #406 and road #740.2C). Conversion of some motorized trails to non-motorized trails provides for a mix of recreational use in the area where under existing conditions all the managed trails are motorized use trails. It is my decision to convert 5.2 miles of the Farris Creek trail (#409) from the Farris Creek road (#736) to Cement Creek road (#740) to a non-motorized trail. Additionally, the western 0.8 miles of Double Top trail (#405) from trail #409 to the junction with #409.5A and trail #418 from #409 to road #740.2C will be converted to non-motorized use by this decision.

***Farris Creek road, Strand Hill road, Canal, Strand Bonus and Strand Hill trails*** --- All of these routes rely on access off of the Brush Creek road (#738). The first several hundred feet of the Farris Creek road (#738) is on private land. Previously and throughout much of the travel management planning this access road across private land has been open to the public. Public input for this area of roads and trails supported multiple modes of travel including non-motorized travel to continued motorized travel. Under existing conditions all travel on the routes in this area are motorized. Recognizing a need to separate and balance recreational opportunity and experiences for this area which is near Crested Butte and offers close access to public lands for local residents and visitors, the preferred alternative considered various modes of travel. Based on the travel analysis and public comments on the various alternatives considered, it is my decision to change the Canal trail (#408) Strand Bonus trail (#407) and Stand Hill trail (#556) to non-motorized trails where mountain bikes are allowed. These trails provide a desired series of trails that can be ridden to connect to roads and trails further up Brush Creek or as loops. The Stand Hill road (#736.1A) will continue to remain open to full-sized motorized travel. The Farris Road (#736) has provided full-sized vehicle access into an area where dispersed camping is popular during the summer and in the fall hunting season. This road provides motorized access to: the Farris Creek bypass trail (#409.5A), the northern segment of the Farris Creek trail (#409) and the UT-7736.1B trail. The Farris Creek bypass trail and the northern segment of the Farris Creek trail are to be designated as motorized single-track trails and trail UT-7736.1B that connects the Farris Creek area with Brush Creek is to be managed as a non-motorized trail. It is my decision to keep the Farris Creek road (#738) open to full-sized motorized travel as the long-term desired condition for travel management. This decision also recognizes that such use may not be available to the public until access agreements (i.e. rights-of-way) across the private property can be obtained. Until then, the Farris Creek road (#738) will be gated and closed at the FS boundary. It is also my decision that if public access agreements cannot be obtained, the Forest Service will explore alternative access road and trail alignments to achieve desired travel management objectives. Any new road or trail construction will be subject to further environmental assessment and public involvement.

***Granite Basin/Eccher Gulch trails*** – These trails (#558 and #559) have been non-motorized trails and it is my decision to keep these trails open to non-motorized users including mountain

bikes. There are concerns with these trails since both dead-end at the forest boundary with no connection across private lands to other public roads. Because the northern terminus of the Granite Basin trail (#558) on NFS lands ends at private land where there is no open trail beyond that point, the northern segment of the trail (1 mile) will be closed to as a system trail from its intersection with the Eccher Gulch trail (#559) to the forest boundary. The Eccher Gulch trail also terminates at a private property boundary where there is no public access from the forest to State highway 135. Because the Forest Service believes that there may be a way to develop a connection from the end of the Eccher Gulch trail to the state highway by obtaining an easement across the private land or through the State of Colorado land just south and adjacent to the forest boundary, it is my decision that the long-term desired travel management for this trail is to keep it open. Under the existing situation, the trail would be a dead-end trail (requiring out and back travel). For that reason it will signed as a dead-end trail. The Forest Service will continue to work of obtaining public right-of-way agreements across adjacent lands so that this trail will provide a through connection rather than be a dead-end trail.

**Green Lake trail** --- This trail (#566) is about 0.9 miles from the forest boundary to Green Lake. The trail is bisected about half way by the Carbon trail (#436). Currently the single-track trail from the intersection with the Carbon trail to Green Lake is open to motorcycles. The segment back to the east from the Carbon trail intersection to the forest boundary is a non-motorized trail. This trail originates outside of Crested Butte and crosses about a mile of private land before crossing BLM lands and then onto NFS lands. The private land access restricts use on this trail to hikers and mountain bike riders. It is my decision to keep the Green Lake trail (#566) as a non-motorized trail. I am closing the western segment (0.47 miles) to mountain bikes because the desired recreational objective for that portion of trail is to provide for a unique destination hiking opportunity outside of wilderness. There was considerable public support for creating such an opportunity near Crested Butte. Mountain bike riders riding on the Green Lake trail from the Kebler Pass road trail head will have to use the Carbon trail (#436) to either return to the Kebler Pass road (CR 12) or go further west on the Carbon trail to the Ohio Pass road (#730), either way creates a looped riding opportunity for mountain bike riders. This designation is consistent with travel management on BLM and private lands that this trail traverses.

**Hidden road and trail (Antelope Creek)** --- Under existing conditions this road (#818.1A) and trail runs along and through Antelope Creek on NFS lands for about 3 miles. It is open to motorized travel with only a single-track segment of trail separating the two road segments. Antelope Creek has a population of greenback cutthroat trout, a federally listed endangered species. There are also Colorado River cutthroat trout (CRCT) in this small creek.. Like the greenback trout, the Forest Service as a federal land managing agency has obligations to recover and protect CRCT populations.

It is my decision to close this road and trail in the Antelope Creek bottom and the trail will be removed from the Forest Service transportation system. The Forest Service has consulted with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on our assessment of biological effects associated with the Preferred Alternative which shows this road and trail to be closed. The USFWS concurs with the Forest Service determination that greenback cutthroat trout may be affected but is not likely to be adversely affected (USFWS letter, May 25, 2010). There is desire from the public through organized groups representing off-highway vehicle users to keep this route open to motorized use. Changing planned closures of roads and trails that have direct effects on endangered species

could cause the Forest Service to again consult with the USFWS on the biological assessment. Failure to make the finding of no adverse affect on endangered species would most likely require additional mitigation or other route closures.

***Italian Connector trail*** --- This trail (UT8282) provides a motorized single track connection from the Italian Creek road (#759) and the Spring Creek reservoir area. It provides for looped riding opportunities in connection with the Star trail (#411), Flag Creek trail (#422), trail Z9634 and the Lily Pond trail (#534). There were comments received in favor of keeping this trail open to motorcycles. It is my decision to keep this trail open for motorized single-track purposes. There were comments received that opposed keeping this trail open as it was perceived to be an illegal, user-created trail. The trail was identified as an established trail on the “green to yellow” map (April, 2001) and information available to me from the District staff indicate it was originally mapped out and developed under a special use permit prior to the 2001 Gunnison Travel Interim Restrictions. Development of such trails during that time was allowed. For these reasons I do not concur that keeping this trail open authorizes travel on an illegally created route.

***Jackson Gulch and Pitkin Area roads*** – There are many historic mining roads in this area. Many are on NFS lands and private lands. They often dead-end at old mine locations or private land. It is my decision to no longer manage these spur roads as part of the Forest Service public transportation system. Most will be closed and some converted to administrative access roads for private landowners with inholdings. The Forest Service will keep the main access roads (#770, #766 and #766.1C) open to public travel. These roads provide important access to private inholdings and to the Fairview motorcycle trail (#426). Access to this recreational facility and to private lands is needed and the three roads to remain open constitute the minimum transportation system necessary to meet multiple use objectives.

***Lily Lake trail*** --- This trail is currently an old road that has been closed to motorized travel. The old road alignment is about 3.5 miles in length and connects the Splains Gulch road (#885.1A) with the Ohio Pass road (#730). It is my decision to designate this old road as a non-motorized trail (#885) that would allow mountain bike use. As a trail, it provides a loop riding opportunity for mountain bike riders and offers a hiking trail to a small lake.

***Matchless trail*** --- This 7.6 mile motorized trail connects the Taylor Park road (#742) with the Rocky Brook road (#748). The trail runs along the western shore of Taylor Reservoir for several miles then heads up over Matchless Mountain and down to Rocky Brook road. About 5.8 miles of the trail on the eastern side of Matchless Mountain and along the reservoir bisects important summer range for bighorn sheep. The Matchless Mountain bighorn sheep herd has historically inhabited this area and is not a transplanted or reintroduced herd. This herd’s population has been dwindling for the past several years and the cause for the decline in this herd has not been attributed to any one factor, but adverse impacts associated with motorized travel is believed to be a potential factor. Habitat fragmentation and human intrusions into key summer range is also considered to be adverse. It is my decision to close about 6 miles of this trail within the identified bighorn sheep summer range in an effort to reduce human intrusion and create a larger tract of un-fragmented habitat. This trail will be removed from the Forest Service transportation system as well. Information available from the Colorado Division of Wildlife suggests that these types of steps would reduce potential adverse effects on this herd of bighorn sheep. I am fully aware that there would be a loss of recreational opportunity on a popular trail, but believe these

steps are warranted given the continued decline of this valuable natural resource and the potential adverse impacts continued travel may have on these bighorn sheep.

***Middle Quartz Creek trail*** – The existing trail upstream from the Middle Quartz Creek campground was historically a road that has been reduced to an ATV trail (#544). This route parallels the old railroad grade road (#839) up to the Alpine tunnel and Williams Pass. It is my decision to close the ATV trail from the campground up to the private lands and the connection to road #767.1B. This route alignment follows a perennial stream and crosses the stream a couple of times as well as runs through riparian and wetland areas. The environmental consequences of continued use of this trail would adversely impact the stream and fragile wetland/riparian areas. The current alignment of this trail suggests that long-term sustainability of the trail by ATVs and motorcycles without undue resource damage occurring is not possible. It should be noted that this is also a parallel route and access to the Alpine tunnel and Williams pass is still available to ATV riders on road #839.

***Needle Creek/Razor Creek trail*** – This motorized trail which will be managed for ATV use is created by changing use on a portion of the Needle Creek road (#781) south of the reservoir to ATV trail. The connecting Razor Creek trail (#487) is currently an ATV trail. This trail affords motorized access around the edges of a large tract of un-roaded NFS lands (approximately 10,500 acres) surrounding West Baldy peak which is a popular hunting area. Conversion of the Needle Creek road south of the Needle Creek reservoir was done to reduce vehicle impacts associated with use by heavier full-sized vehicles traveling up sections of this road that are often wet or muddy because of the close proximity to Needle Creek.

***Oh-Be-Joyful Pass road*** --- This road (#754) crosses the Slate River on BLM lands and traverses NFS lands before it ends at the Raggeds Wilderness boundary. The road is currently open to full-sized motorized vehicles. While the road is open, it is a difficult road to travel and receives limited use. Both of the federal land management agencies determined through the travel analysis process that full-sized vehicle access was not needed to the wilderness boundary and that the low water crossing at the Slate River posed a public safety hazard. It is my decision that this road will be converted to a non-motorized trail on NFS lands. This is consistent with the management objectives for the road on BLM lands. The new trailhead for trail #836 would begin on BLM lands in the vicinity of the Slate River. The BLM proposes to designate the new trail on BLM lands as being closed to motorized and mechanized use. Therefore, it is my decision that the new segment of trail #836 on the NFS lands would not be open to mechanized use (mountain bikes). ***Overland Ditch road*** --- This road (#705.1A) is the access road for the Overland Ditch which conveys irrigation water from Overland Reservoir to irrigated private lands in the Redlands Mesa area. Under existing conditions, the 10 miles of road along the ditch from the reservoir south is not open to public travel and is an administrative access road for the Overland Ditch Company. There is a segment of the ditch road that is currently being used by the public in full-sized vehicles and ATVs. The Preferred Alternative in the Final EIS proposed to convert this segment of the ditch road from open to full-sized vehicles to a motorized ATV trail for public travel and continue to provide administrative access for the Overland Ditch Company for repair and maintenance on their ditch. There was public support to allow ATV riders to use the ditch road for access in this area and to connect with Julian Camp road (#701.3A) and the Schoneman Park road (#703), creating a loop off of the Stevens Gulch road

(#701). The Overland Ditch Company has objected to this proposed public access on the ditch road.

In a letter dated, May 27, 2010, the Ditch Company cites conditions contained in the 1986 Easement for Reservoir and Service Trail (a.k.a. Overland Ditch road) signed by the Forest Service Regional Forester that public use of the Overland Ditch Company's service trail shall be limited to pedestrian and equine traffic. Based on this information and the Ditch Company's desire to adhere to that restriction on the ditch road, I am not going to adopt the Final EIS Preferred Alternative's travel designation for OHV use by the public on any segment of the Overland Ditch road. It is my decision, based on the 1986 Easement, that the ditch road will continue to be an administrative road used by Overland Ditch Company for maintenance and repair of the ditch and that public access will be limited to hikers and horseback riders pursuant to that easement.

These decisions and rationale are based on understanding of the environmental consequences identified and disclosed in the Gunnison Basin Federal Lands Travel Management Final Environmental Impact Statement (April 2010).

***Pioneer Ski hiking trail*** --- It is my decision to take this 2.6 mile non-motorized hiking trail (#560) out the Forest Service transportation system. There is no documented right-of-way for public access to the trail head and with little need or few prospects to obtain such access. The condition of the trail made it unsafe for horseback riders, which further supports my decision to take this rarely used, single-purpose trail out of the managed transportation system.

***Paonia non-motorized trails*** --- There are 12 non-motorized trails shown on the Final EIS Preferred Alternative maps as being restricted to mountain bike use. That was not the desired management direction for those trails. My decision is to keep those 12 trail segments (#834, #824, #837, #830, UT-8081, #875, #860A, #860, #861, #870, #843, and #836) outside of wilderness open to hikers, horseback riders and mountain bike users. While this is a change from the Preferred Alternative, this was the intended management objective for these trails. Allowing mountain bike use on these trails was evaluated as part of the No Action alternative in the Final EIS, therefore the consequences of such use was addressed in the EIS. The result of this correction is that there will be about 300 miles of non-motorized trail open to mountain bike use rather than 279 miles as disclosed in Table 2-7 of the Final EIS and in the text of the EIS.

***Powerline road and trail*** --- This Powerline road and trail (#708) follows a high voltage powerline that runs north and south over the Buzzard Divide on the Paonia Ranger District. Under existing conditions, part of this route is open to full-sized vehicles and some is open to ATVs. This route runs parallel to the Stevens Gulch road (#701), a well developed and maintained passenger car road. Since this route provides a parallel access to a well traveled road and is needed for administrative access to the powerline, it is my decision to designate this administrative road as an ATV trail and close it to the public for full-sized vehicle travel. The route will continue to provide administrative access by full-sized vehicles for powerline maintenance and repair. There will be dual use. This decision will offer ATV riders a way to travel off of the Stevens Gulch road and continue to access high clearance roads and trails that connect to the Stevens Gulch road in this area of the Paonia Ranger District.

***Quakey Mountain trails*** -- The three main trails in this area have been open to motorcycles in the past, but it is my decision to restrict travel on the northern segment of the Quakey Mountain

west trail or left hand trail (#538) and the eastern loop of that trail or right hand trail (Z7358) to hikers and horseback riders to be more consistent with the management objectives for this area. The Quakey Mountain trail (#537) will remain open to motorcycle use. This trail and the connecting Dawson Ridge road (#819) provide a popular and well used motorized connection from Monarch Pass via Agate Creek to the Canyon Creek and Stella Mountain motorized trails. The recreational opportunity provided by this connection is the basis for my decision to keep these routes open to motorcycles.

The southern segment of the Quakey Mountain west trail that runs south into the Irby Gulch road (#913) in Dawson Creek then up Swag Gulch into Hicks Gulch is to be closed as a system trail. This route terminates at private land where there is no public access allowed. Keeping these roads and trails open creates a dead-end or out and back travel situation. There are other existing roads (#768.2A and 2B, #677.1A and #677.2) off of the Horn Gulch road (private road) that dead-end on NFS lands (Figure C). These roads are to be closed. My reason for closing these roads is that there is no public access, thereby creating a situation where the public cannot use the roads on NFS lands. Keeping these trails and roads that originate on private lands with no public access easements or agreements as part of the Gunnison National Forest transportation system is inconsistent with the management objective to define and manage a minimum transportation system. Keeping these roads open would give those adjacent landowners exclusive access and use of NFS roads.

**Road Gulch and Wolverton Roads** --- The Road Gulch road (#849.1B) is currently open to full-sized vehicle travel but requires access across private land where there is no documented right-of-way for public access. It is also a dead-end road because there is private property that prevents the public from connecting to other open roads. The Wolverton Road (#849.1A) is currently shown as an open road but does not have documented public access rights-of-way across the private lands that it crosses. Neither of these roads is accessible off of the Aspen road which is closed to the public after it enters the Aspen Leaf Ranch property. Both roads provide access to private land inholdings, therefore it is my decision to convert both of these roads to administrative use. Those landowners that use these roads for access to their properties would most likely be afforded access, but would need to request such access and obtain the necessary authorizations. Use on these roads will be for the expressed purposes of ingress and egress to the private land inholdings by the land owners. The effect of this decision is that ATV riders using the Ault Reservoir trail (#849.1B1) will not be authorized to travel south on the Road Gulch road. The reason for closing the Road Gulch road to the general public is to avoid an “out and back” travel situation that often results in trespass issues on adjacent private lands. The Ault Reservoir trail extension (planned route) would be a new trail that would, when approved and constructed, connect the old Ault Reservoir road (converted to ATV trail) with a new segment of ATV trail with the Sheep Park road (#851). To further clarify this decision, designating this route for ATV use means that further site-specific environmental assessment and public involvement is required before the new segment of trail can be built; it only defines the planned and allowed mode of travel.

**Sawtooth Mountain area** --- There are many roads surrounding Sawtooth Mountain that dead-end. Public comments received on the Draft EIS supported extending many of these dead-end roads to provide new connections with possible new roads on adjacent BLM lands creating new east/west motorized access in this area. There were also comments suggesting many of the dead-

end roads on the north side of Sawtooth Mountain on NFS lands should be connected to provide north/southeast motorized access. The public also commented that they supported keeping the Sawtooth Mountain area roadless because of the quality big game hunting afforded by this area of public land. These divergent perspectives on the recreational and travel objectives for this area were considered and fully evaluated.

At my direction, agency staff developed a Preferred Alternative for travel in this area based on a management objective that the primary recreational opportunity objectives are to sustain quality big game hunting and allow for some motorized and non-motorized travel opportunities. This travel direction is consistent with the Forest Plan (1983, as amended) that designates the majority of the Sawtooth mountain area as management area 7A (wood fiber production, semi-primitive motorized and semi-primitive non-motorized ROS) and 6B (livestock grazing, semi-primitive motorized and semi-primitive non-motorized ROS). There are no system or managed non-motorized trails in this area, so all non-motorized travel is by foot or on horseback. It should be noted that the desire to develop some through motorized travel in the area would require construction of new roads or trails on NFS lands and BLM lands. Developing new roads solely for the purposes of increasing motorized travel fails to meet the purpose and need of action (Page 15, Final EIS). It is my decision to adopt the Preferred Alternative system of roads for the Sawtooth Mountain area and that there is no need to provide for through motorized travel in this area at this time. I made this determination based on the clear public support for maintaining limited motorized access that allows dispersed camping and creates jumping off points for non-motorized hunting access.

***Scarp Ridge and Gunsight Pass trails*** --- The Gunsight Pass road (#585) is a steep, historic mining road. The road crosses the Slate River on private land then switchbacks up through BLM lands and on to NFS lands. At a point about 3 miles from the forest boundary the road becomes rougher, narrows and is over-steepened creating difficult and challenging driving for full-sized vehicles. It is my decision to keep the Gunsight Pass road open to full-sized vehicles from the forest boundary to the pass. The pass is a popular recreational travel destination and the historic mines in the area are local attractions. The final half mile of road will be managed as a jeep trail, meaning that it will remain in its current condition providing challenging back country driving. The full-sized vehicle road (#585) will terminate at the pass and the trail off of the pass to the southwest, will continue to be a non-motorized trail (#585) where mountain bikes are allowed. This trail will connect with road #585.2A and it is my decision to convert this road to a non-motorized trail that would allow mountain bikes. This non-motorized trail connects back to the Kebler Pass road (CR 12) and the Kebler Wagon trail (#606). This decision continues to provide full-sized vehicle access to the popular Gunsight pass area and does create a looped riding opportunity for mountain bikes out of Crested Butte linking high clearance roads with non-motorized trails.

The Scarp Ridge trails (#421 and #419) are currently non-motorized. Segments of the Scarp trail (#421) have been badly down-cut and eroded. There is a user created trail that links Gunsight pass with the Scarp trail which is unauthorized because it was not in the inventory of existing and established routes covered by the 2001 Gunnison Travel Interim Restriction decision. The recreational objective for the Scarp ridge area is to provide hiking and horseback riding opportunities originating from the Lake Irwin area. It is my decision to keep Scarp trail (#421) and the Ridge 70 trail (#419) open as non-motorized trails but to close them to mountain bike

use. The rationale for this restriction on mountain bikes is to provide hiking opportunities and prevent the continued use of the unauthorized, user-created route connecting Gunsight Pass to the Scarp trail.

***Snow Mesa trail*** --- This short segment (1.3 miles) of the Continental Divide trail (#787) off of Highway 149 near Spring Creek pass is currently shown as a non-motorized trail that allows mountain bike use under the No Action alternative. This designation is consistent with the current Forest Order that closed this segment of the Continental Divide trail to motorized travel. There is some confusion by the public because the travel management decision for the Snow Mesa trail on the Rio Grande National Forest allows for motorized travel (motorcycles). Under the current situation, this creates a conflict for motorized trail riders at the boundary between the two National Forests. The Gunnison travel management Preferred Alternative in the Final EIS makes no change from the No Action existing conditions (see decision rationale for the Continental Divide trail) for the Snow Mesa trail. Continuing with that management direction would perpetuate a mode of travel conflict for the public. It is my decision not to adopt the Preferred Alternative determination for this short segment of the Snow Mesa trail (#787) on the Gunnison National Forest, but instead to match the management direction set forth by the Rio Grande National Forest and designate this segment of the Snow Mesa trail as a single-track motorized trail. The Rio Grande travel management plan for the Continental Divide trail allows for continued motorized travel; my decision is consistent with that adjacent unit's plan (FSM 2300, Ch. 2350 (11)).

***Somerset and Coal Creek Mesa roads and trails*** --- The West Flatiron mesa area has several roads and administrative routes that have been developed because of energy exploration and development in the area. Under existing conditions several of those administrative roads are open to ATV travel. The #871 trail and 711.A1C trail both allow ATV use on existing administrative roads. Such use has not resulted in conflicts and has provided desired ATV riding opportunities in his area. It is my decision to continue to allow ATV use on these two administrative roads by designating them as ATV trails (i.e. dual use).

The Coal Creek mesa roads (Dry Fork Minnesota Creek road #711, East Flatiron road #711.3B, The Pines road #711.3C) are currently full-sized vehicle roads. The last half mile of the East Flatiron road has been converted to an ATV trail. Public comments indicate support for keeping these roads open to full-sized vehicles, and there is a historic cow camp off of road #711 that permitted livestock operators use via motorized access. There were comments concerning roadless area impacts associated with these roads. They are not within the 2010 revised Roadless inventory. Some of these roads existed prior to the RARE I or RARE II inventories as undeveloped roads on NFS lands, others were built after the 1980 Colorado Wilderness Bill. That Bill allowed the Forest Service to manage those NFS lands not designated as Wilderness for multiple use (See Page 236, Final EIS). It is my decision to keep these roads open to full-sized motorized use. The Forest Service will manage road #711 beyond the junction with The Pines road (#711.3C) to its terminus as a jeep trail.

***Soro Park and Blue Creek trails*** --- The Blue Creek road (#790.1I) had been proposed to be converted to an ATV trail in the Draft EIS. The unauthorized, user-created ATV trail connecting two Soro Park spurs was to be designated an ATV trail and the two spur roads converting to trails in the Draft EIS proposed action. Based on comments received on Draft EIS regarding designation of user created routes to system trails and agency re-evaluations of wildlife

and recreational needs for this area, those two proposed ATV trails were dropped from the Final EIS Preferred Alternative. It is my decision that these two trails are not needed, and if they are left open to travel would potentially have adverse effects on soils, wildlife and vegetation. These routes will be closed to the public and they will be removed from the agency's transportation system.

***Steers Gulch road, April Gulch road, and West Beaver trail*** --- This combination of roads and trails creates a major north/south access route for motorcycles and full-sized vehicles in this area west of Gunnison. Steers Gulch road is a high clearance road that takes off north from CR 726 and terminates at the West Elk Wilderness boundary and the trailhead for the Beaver Creek trail (#464) in the upper Antelope Creek watershed. The Old Antelope road (#726.3A) is a parallel route that creates a short-cut off of the Steers Gulch road. The April Gulch road (#726.2A), a steep, rough and eroding road, leaves the Steer Gulch road and terminates at West Beaver Creek and the West Beaver trailhead (#447). The West Beaver trail is a single-track trail, open to motorcycles that parallels the creek and crosses it several times until it leaves the federal land and enters Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW) land. At the boundary with Colorado DOW land the trail is now closed to motorized and mechanized travel, creating a dead-end for those users. This situation has lead to some users pioneering a trail back to the east across BLM land to connect with Steers Gulch road. Such cross-country travel is illegal on BLM lands.

Beaver Creek has a conservation population of Colorado River cutthroat trout (see Pages 95 to 98, Final EIS) that has was stocked in the segment of the stream on NFS lands 15 years ago. The Forest Service is party to the Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Colorado River Cutthroat Trout (April 2001) which commits the agency to maintain and restore conservation populations and eliminate threats to Colorado River cutthroat trout (CRCT).

Public comments have been received regarding travel on the April Gulch road and Beaver Creek trail. The Colorado DOW as well as agency wildlife and fish specialists expressed concern with motorized travel along this stream and within this drainage. The wildlife and fish concerns are related to stream crossings, erosion, and motorized route density in this watershed. Many motorized users want to continue to use this trail and have requested that the BLM consider constructing a new trail to avoid the dead-end situation at the Colorado DOW land boundary. They contend this is a unique and valuable single-track trail riding opportunity in this area. Other public comments support closing the trail to motorized use.

After evaluating the technical information available, consulting with BLM managers, and considering public comments, it is my decision to close the Beaver Creek trail (#447) on NFS lands to motorized and mechanized use. This decision provides for greater protection of the CRCT population in Beaver Creek by eliminating potential threats to their habitat (e.g. reduce stream crossings by wheeled vehicles, reduce erosion, sustain riparian and wetland areas). It also eliminates the problems created when motorized and mechanized trail riders come to the Colorado DOW land boundary closure. My decision recognizes the loss of a single-track trail riding opportunity for motorcycle and mountain bike riders, but the environmental and resource management objectives outweigh the isolated opportunity provided by the 4 mile Beaver Creek trail. These motorized and mechanized users are afforded access on the Steers Gulch road that connects the motorized single-track Little Mill trail (#455) with CR 726 and U.S. Highway 50.

This decision also includes closing the April Gulch road (#726.2A) to motorized and mechanized travel by converting this road to a non-motorized trail that does not allow mountain bike use. The Old Antelope road (#726.3A, #726.3B, and #726.3C) will also be closed since it only provides travel on a parallel route and would further reduce road density in the Beaver Creek watershed.

***Teocalli Mountain and Ridge trail*** --- This is an extremely popular and controversial trail. There were many comments received regarding what the public believed to be the appropriate and desired mode of travel. These two trails (#554 and #557) create a 4.2 mile single-track trail that allows for users to make a loop off of and back to the Brush Creek road (#738). These trails are currently open to motorized travel (motorcycles). There is extensive down-cutting on the ridge trail (#557) for about a mile from its intersection with the Brush Creek road. The down-cutting is so extensive that it has adversely affected the recreational experience for all trail users. It is extremely difficult and unpleasant to hike or ride. The Forest Service considered in the Draft EIS alternatives that would close the two trails to all users and to restrict travel to non-motorized use. Based on public comments received on the Draft EIS and the popularity of the trails, it is my decision to keep the two trails as motorized single-track trails. This decision is the long-term travel management objective for these trails, but I have also decided that the entire 4.2 mile loop will be closed to all users until the problems with down-cutting on the trail can be resolved. This may require reconstruction of some segments or possible re-alignment of the trail. Reconstruction of the trail or new trail construction on another alignment will be subject to further environmental analysis.

***Texas Creek Spur road*** – This dead-end road (#755.1H) parallels the Texas Creek road (#755) and in many locations is located within riparian areas or the water influence zone of Texas Creek. There is little need for a parallel route that traverses fragile riparian and wetland habitats and it is my decision to close this road to protect natural resources.

***Upper Illinois road*** – Currently, the first 4 miles of this road (#671) is open to the public for travel and the final 3 miles has been closed to the public and maintained as an administrative road for timber management. It is my decision to open 2½ miles more of the road to public travel so that the public can access the trail to Illinois Lake (Z9414.1A) and the Timberline trail (#414). This is a change from a previous decision that managed this segment of road for administrative use and relied upon an understanding that the public was to be allowed access to the Illinois Lake trail (Z9414.1A) across private lands on another road. But, those access agreements across private lands have not come to fruition. This decision will rectify the loss of the other public access road across private lands. There will be no new construction or road improvements needed to accommodate public access to the Z9414.1A trailhead.

***Wager Gulch spur road*** -- This spur road (UX-1403) off of the Wager Gulch road (#568) crosses BLM lands then enters NFS lands and dead-ends at an old mine site. In the Preferred Alternative (Final EIS) this spur road was to be closed. Additional information has come to my attention on the public use of this short segment of road and some of the local social values associated with access that this hilltop location provides. It is my decision to not close this road, but to instead convert it to ATV use. Designated ATV use on this trail was evaluated under Alternative 4 in the Final EIS. This decision is consistent with BLM travel decisions for the segment of the road crossing BLM lands. This decision is a change from the Final EIS Preferred Alternative.

**Waterfall Cutoff and Fenceline trails** --- These two trails are shown as existing and established trails in the 2001 Gunnison Travel Interim Restrictions “green to yellow” map. They are essentially parallel routes on the northern side of the Cement Creek valley. The Fenceline trail (UT-7071) was a motorized trail and has been more recently restricted to non-motorized users only because of private land owner objections to motorized use on their private lands that the trail crosses. The Waterfall Cutoff (UT-7164 and UT-7073) has been used by motorcycles. Both trails provide a connection to upper valley trails (#555 and #612) and are alternatives to traveling on the Cement Creek road (#740). When considering the desired transportation system in this area it is noted that the Double Top trail (#405) is a single track motorized trail that also parallels these two trails. There is considerable public interest in providing a non-motorized trail on the northern side of the valley to take hikers, horseback riders and mountain bikers off of the Cement Creek road. The travel analysis for this area determined that the Waterfall Cutoff trail would provide access up the valley for non-motorized users and that with the continued motorized use on Double Top trail, there would be adequate yet separate motorized access on parallel routes. With Waterfall Cutoff and Double Top providing motorized and non-motorized access up the valley off of Cement Creek road there is little need for the Fenceline trail. Additionally comments were received from adjacent private land owners along the Fenceline trail complaining that motorcycle and mountain bike riders had used the trail to trespass onto their property. Based on the travel analysis and public comments, it is my decision to change use on the Waterfall Cutoff trail (4.5 miles) to non-motorized use that allows for mountain bike riding. The Fenceline trail (2.6 miles) will not be retained as a Forest Service system trail. Double Top trail (#405) will continue to be managed as a single-track motorized trail (12.2 miles). This decision meets the recreational objectives for separated motorized and non-motorized use in this area and provides access up the valley off of the Cement Creek road as well as provides increased recreational opportunity for non-motorized users in an area where, under existing conditions, most all travel on trails is motorized. The Waterfall Cutoff trail will now be labeled as one trail, #638 rather than two separate trails UT-7074 and UT-7164.

## **FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

This decision is consistent with the **Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan** (1983 as amended in 1991 and 1993). This decision does not require any amendments to that plan in order to implement the designations and produce an MVUM for the Gunnison National Forest.

The decisions regarding travel on the **Continental Divide National Scenic Trail** (CDNST) call for continuation of the existing modes of travel, all of which have been in place prior to the designation of the trail (P.L. 95-625, 1978). It is also consistent with recently updated Forest Service manual direction (FSM 2300, Ch. 2350) for the CDNST.

This decision closes all roads located within areas defined as roadless in the **2010 revised Colorado Roadless petition** inventory. Motorized trail use would continue in some inventoried roadless areas, but the presence of those trails is not considered in conflict with the roadless area management objectives.

As the responsible official, I have ensured that potentially affected **Tribal representatives** who may have concerns about travel management on the Gunnison National Forest have been

consulted. They have been afforded the opportunity to voice their concerns and all comments received by American Indian Tribes have been evaluated and considered.

Compliance with the **National Historic Preservation Act** has been achieved by entering into a programmatic agreement with the Colorado State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) that defines protocols where travel management decisions have the potential to affect historic properties.

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for compliance with Section 7 of the **Endangered Species Act** has been completed and the Forest Service has received a letter of concurrence with our findings that the Preferred Alternative in the Final EIS *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* Canada lynx and greenback cutthroat trout. That assessment further concluded there was *no effect* to the Uncompahgne fritillary butterfly.

The Final EIS found the effects of travel designations water quality and air quality would not result in degradation of existing conditions to levels that are unacceptable or would violate air and water quality standards as defined for Colorado under the **Clean Water Act** and the **Clean Air Act**.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES**

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11 by individual or organizations meeting the requirements of 36 CFR 215.13. A written appeal must be submitted within 45 days following the publication date of the legal notice of this decision in the Grand Junction Sentinel, a Grand Junction, Colorado newspaper. It is the responsibility of the appellant to ensure their appeal is received in a timely manner. The publication date of the legal notice of the decision in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Appellants should not rely on date or timeframe information provided by any other source. The appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer in writing. It is the appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient project or activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why the decision should be reversed. At a minimum, the appeal must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14, and include the following information:

- ✓ The appellant's name and address, with a telephone number if available;
- ✓ A signature, or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the appeal);
- ✓ When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;
- ✓ The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the date of the decision;
- ✓ The regulation under which the appeal is being filed, when there is an option to appeal under either 36 CFR 215;
- ✓ Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;
- ✓ Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;

- ✓ Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official's decision failed to consider the substantive comments; and
- ✓ How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy.

Appeals must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery) with the Appeal Deciding Officer at:

Appeals  
USDA Forest Service  
Rocky Mountain Region  
740 Simms  
Golden, Colorado 80401

The office business hours for submitting hand-delivered appeals are 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to [appeals-rocky-mountain-regional-office@fs.fed.us](mailto:appeals-rocky-mountain-regional-office@fs.fed.us). In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an electronic message, a verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature is one to provide verification.

### **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

The implementation of this travel management decision will take effect with the publication of the Public Notice of availability in the Grand Junction Sentinel, the GMUG paper of record. That notification is expected to be contained in the July 1, 2010 edition of the Grand Junction Sentinel. The implementation of the travel management designations for motorized travel will come with the release of the Gunnison National Forest Motor Vehicle Use Map. Those travel designations that pertain to non-motorized travel will take effect upon the completion and release of appropriate forest orders.

### **CONTACT PERSON**

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*/s/ Charles S. Richmond*

*June 28, 2010*

Charles S. Richmond

Date

Forest Supervisor

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest