

2 -WHEN ARE FOREST ROADS CLOSED AND WHY?

CLOSED “TWO TRACK” ROADS:

The term, “two track,” comes from describing a road that gets so little use that grass grows between the tire tracks. Two-tracks are often closed to use by motorized traffic after they have served a short-term purpose, such as accessing a timber sale. Entrance will be blocked by either a gate or earthen berm (as shown here). Closed two-tracks remain open to non-motorized uses (foot, horseback, or mountain bicycle).



In some circumstances, such as

the Aspen Loop on the Dolores Ranger District, they may also be designated as appropriate for motorcycles or ATVs, but not full-sized vehicles. Some closed two-tracks are scheduled for rehabilitation to a natural state, while others continue to receive basic custodial maintenance to control erosion and allow Forest Service crews intermittent access for administrative purposes, such as firefighting or fuels reduction. Currently, there are about 1,000 miles of closed two-tracks on the San Juan National Forest.



TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURES:

Several situations can trigger the need for temporary closures of Forest roads. Spring and fall in the high country often bring unpredictable and wet weather. When unpaved roads are muddy, they are very susceptible to damage from motor vehicles. Therefore, some are temporarily closed during wet conditions to protect road surfaces and prevent erosion. Forest roads traveling through important

deer and elk habitat may also be closed seasonally on an annual basis to protect wildlife in winter or spring (annual seasonal closures are noted on the San Juan National Forest Recreation Map.) Forest roads can be temporarily closed during emergency situations, such as landslides or rockslides, to protect public safety. Forest roads are also temporarily closed when they are damaged from overuse or misuse – this most often occurs from rutting during wet weather. Do not try to drive on extremely muddy roads – you risk getting stuck in a remote location and can cause damage that will require the road be closed.

WINTER ROAD CLOSURES:

National Forest roads are not designed for all-season use and are not usually plowed for snow removal. Although unplowed Forest roads are not open to motor vehicles, they are very popular with those recreating on snowmobiles, skis, snowshoes, or by dogsled.

The Forest Service is not funded by Congress to remove snow from its road system, however, some National Forest

roads may be plowed on a limited basis for administrative purposes. Some counties also help maintain some National Forest roads under cooperative agreements. Snow removal on a National Forest road requires a permit and an agreement to be liable for any damages that occur as a result of snow-removal activities or resulting traffic on the road.

