



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

**Southwestern
Region**

January 2011



Travel Management Planning – Information

Gila National Forest



Open House Schedule

The open houses provide an opportunity for reviewing, asking questions, and commenting on the DEIS for travel management.

Forest personnel will be on hand to answer questions at the following locations. Drop in anytime between the hours listed below.

Date	Time	Location
Thursday January 13, 2011	3 – 7 pm	Sierra Fair Building, Truth or Consequences, NM
Saturday January 15, 2011	10 am – 4 pm	Grant County Convention Center Silver City NM
Thursday January 20, 2011	3 – 7 pm	Catron County Fairgrounds Reserve, NM
Saturday January 29, 2011	10 am – 4 pm	Hotel Encanto Las Cruces, NM

How to Obtain More Information

- Visit the forest's website at: <http://fs.usda.gov/goto/gilatravel>
- Contact the Forest Travel Management Coordinator, Lisa Mizuno, at (575) 3888267,
- Contact your local Gila National Forest office.

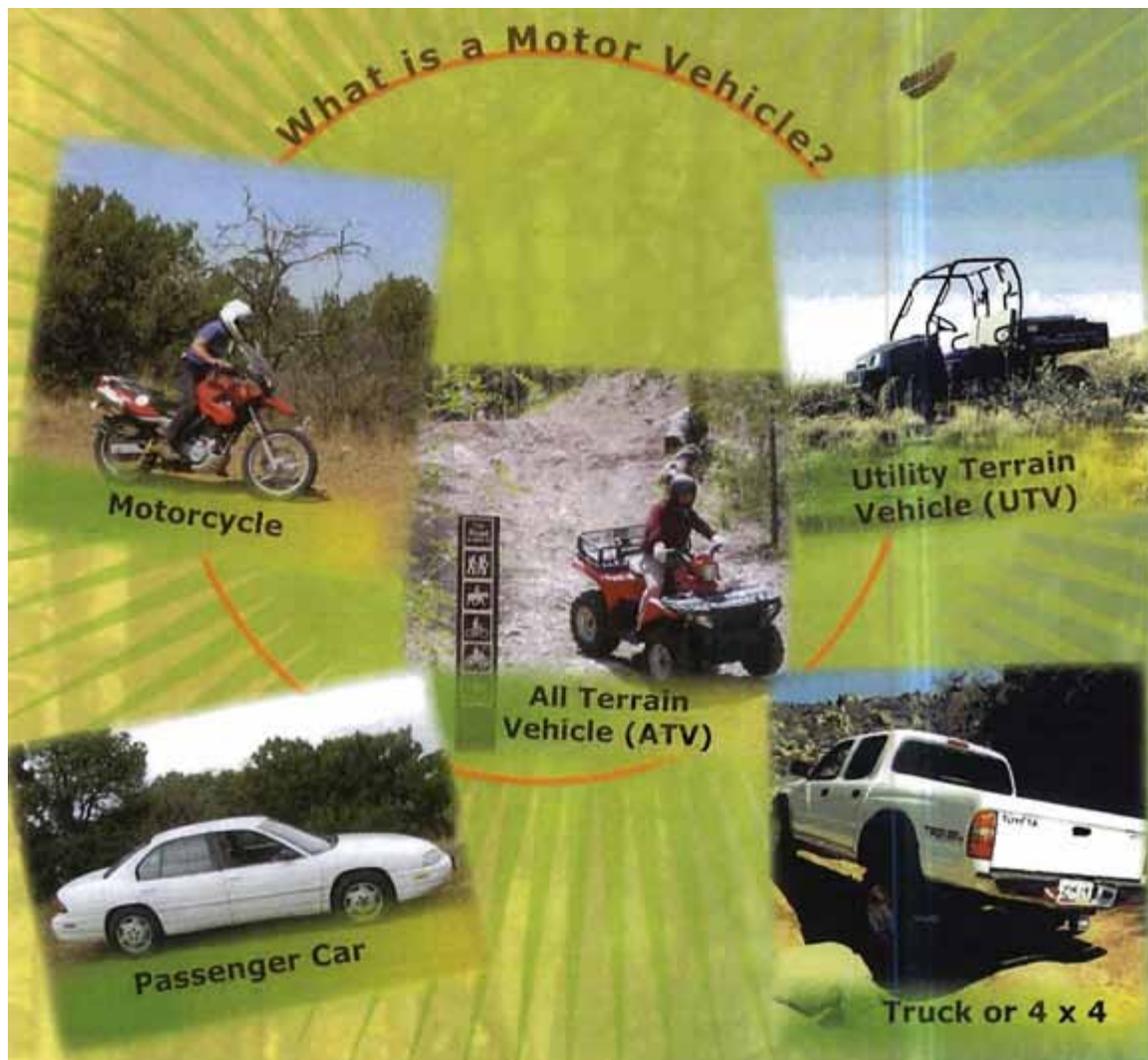
What is the Travel Management Rule?

The Forest Service recognizes that motor vehicles are a legitimate and appropriate use for people to enjoy their National Forests.

The Travel Management Rule establishes a designated system of roads, trails, and areas open to motorized vehicle use.

Each National Forest is working with the public and local communities, and coordinating with county, state, federal, and tribal governments in the designation process.

Travel management planning will result in the creation of a Motor Vehicle Use Map that identifies roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use.



History of the Travel Management Rule

The Travel Management Rule did not just appear in 2005. There were several events that led to its creation and implementation.

As far back as 1972, the potential for impacts to public lands by off road vehicle use was recognized. Executive Order 11644 was signed by President Nixon on February 8, 1972. Its purpose was described in the Executive Order as: *It is the purpose of this order to establish policies and provide for procedures that will ensure that the use of off-road vehicles on public lands will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands, to promote the safety of all users of those lands, and to minimize conflicts among the various uses of those lands.*

The growth in the use of off road vehicles (OHVs) grew more than tenfold between 1972 and 2004, from 5 million vehicles to 51 million. Additionally, sales of ATVs tripled between 1993 and 2003. Finally, technology has made these types of vehicles more capable of accessing increasingly more remote areas than ever before, exposing more and more open space to motor vehicles and the potential undesirable impacts they may cause.

The Forest Service does recognize that motor vehicle use is a legitimate use of the national forests, and that most people access the Forest by motor vehicle. And, though cross country motorized use is only a small percent of the motorized use, even that small amount of use can have a number of undesired impacts. Some of those impacts include: creation of new, unplanned roads and trails; damage to fragile soils and vegetation; damage to riparian areas and the species that depend on them; spread of invasive plant species; damage to cultural or historical sites; and disturbance to wildlife and its habitat.

Open space for off road activities is increasingly rare outside of public land, making public land more and more attractive for such activities. So, to address the needs to provide for motorized recreation and use of the national forests and grasslands, while protecting resources and minimizing conflicts between the various uses of those lands, the proposed travel management regulations were published on July 15, 2004. The final rule (TMR) was published on November 9, 2005 and became effective December 9, 2005.

Key components of the TMR are:

- Requires the designation of roads, trails, and areas, open to motor vehicle use by vehicle class
- Provides a consistent, national framework for local decisions
- Requires public involvement
- Prohibits motor vehicle use off the designated system, or inconsistent with the designations, with the publication of the motor vehicle use map (MVUM)
- Requires that designated roads, trails, and areas will be identified on a MVUM which will be available from local offices and on the internet.
- Exemptions from the prohibition on cross country use can be made for specific reasons through written authorization (Exemptions would most often be for allotment management and special use activities. Emergency vehicles would be exempt from the

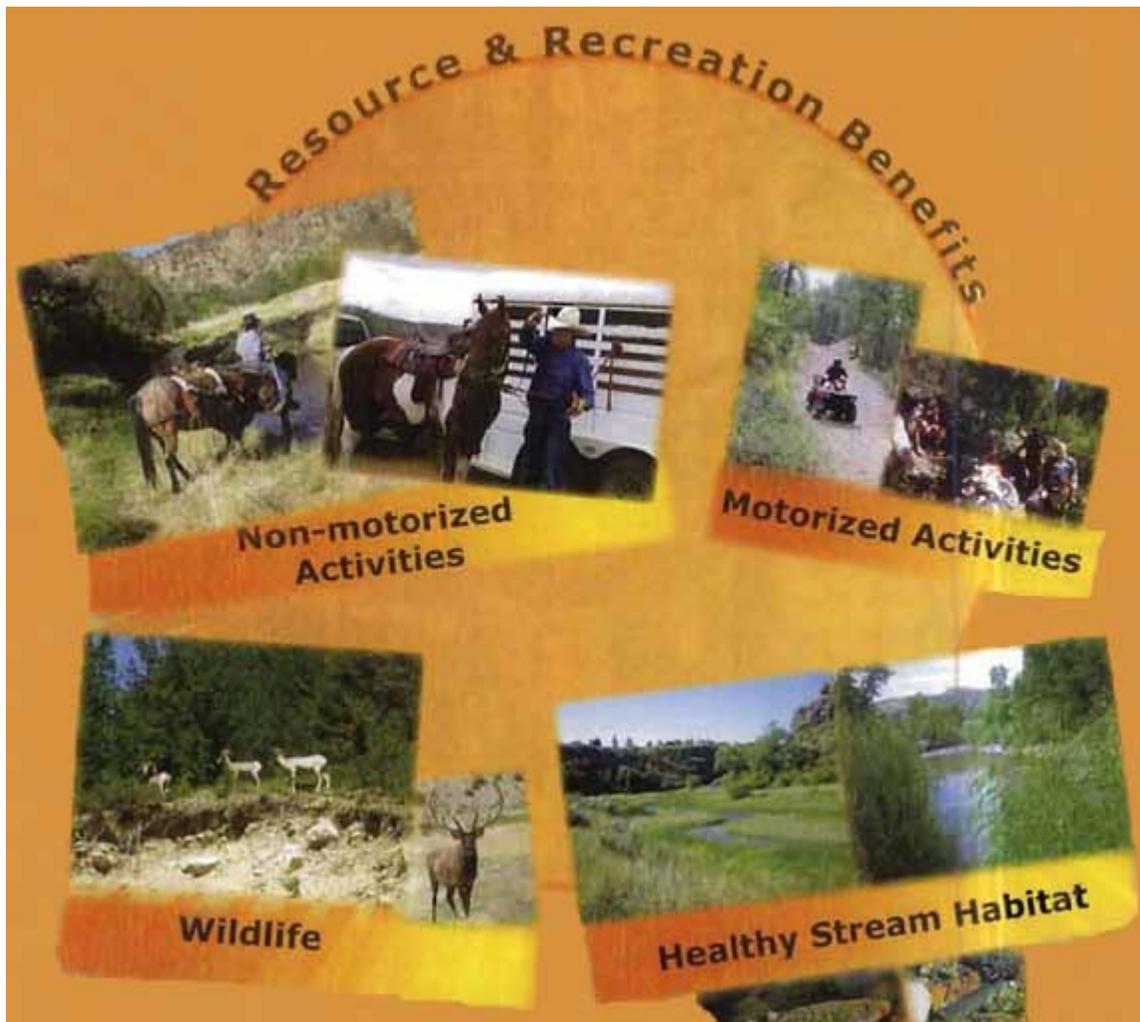
prohibition when access is needed for emergency purposes and would not need written authorization.)

Why Management Travel

- To comply with the Travel Management Rule.
- Most people use motor vehicles to enjoy and access National Forests.
- Off-highway vehicles are growing in popularity and increasing in technological capabilities nationwide.

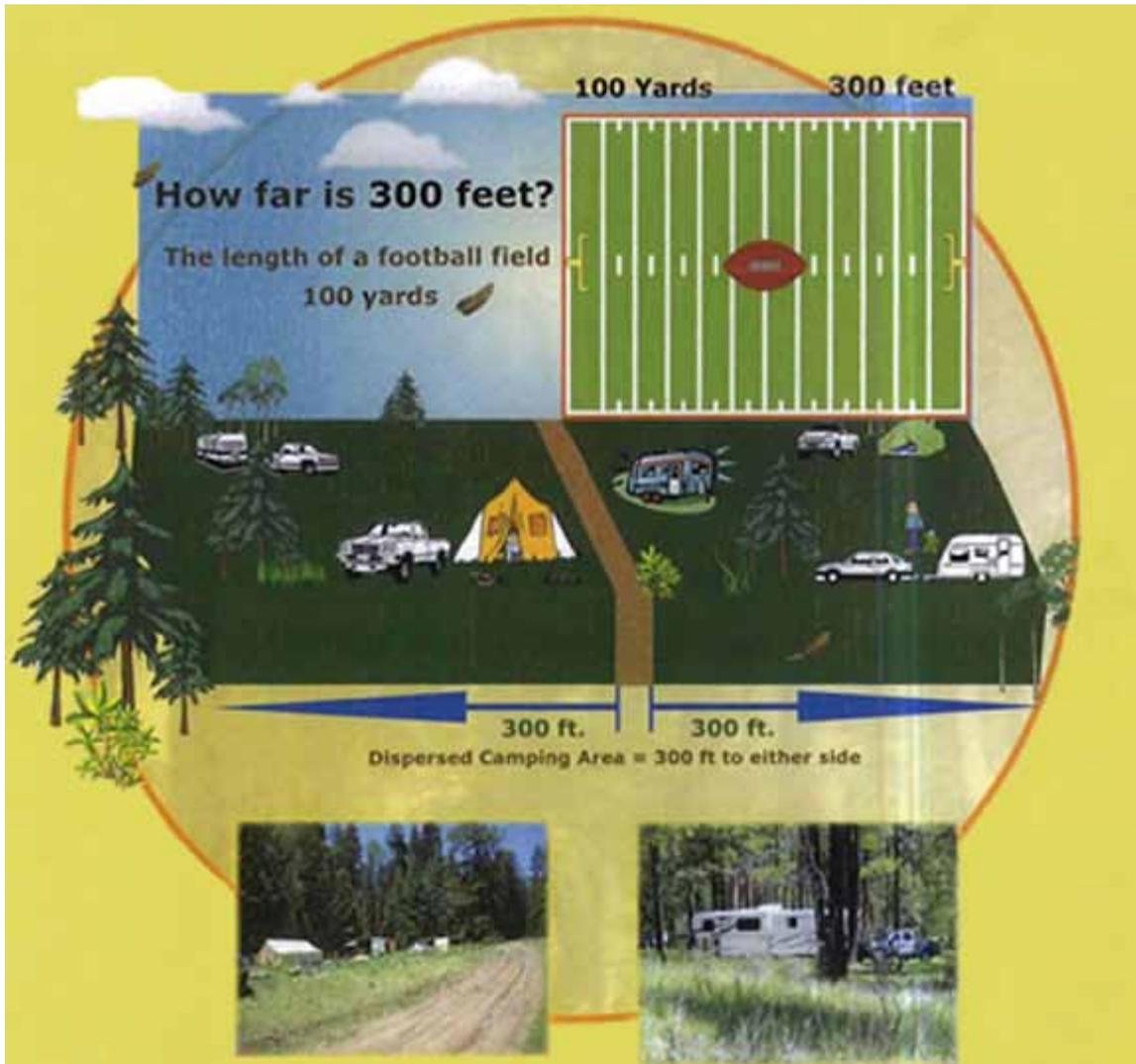
On the Gila National Forest, travel management planning is needed to:

- Evaluate the current system of roads and trails open to motor vehicle use to prevent or manage impacts to natural or cultural resources.
- Designate a system of roads, trails and areas open to motor vehicle use.
- Meet the regulation to close unlimited cross-country motor vehicle travel.



Motorized Dispersed Camping

- The majority of existing dispersed camping sites would remain open to motorized vehicle use along camping corridors.
- You may pull a motor vehicle (including trailer) completely off an open road and park within one vehicle length.
- Where camping “corridors” are designated, motorized dispersed camping would be allowed within 300 feet from each side of the road. See diagram below.



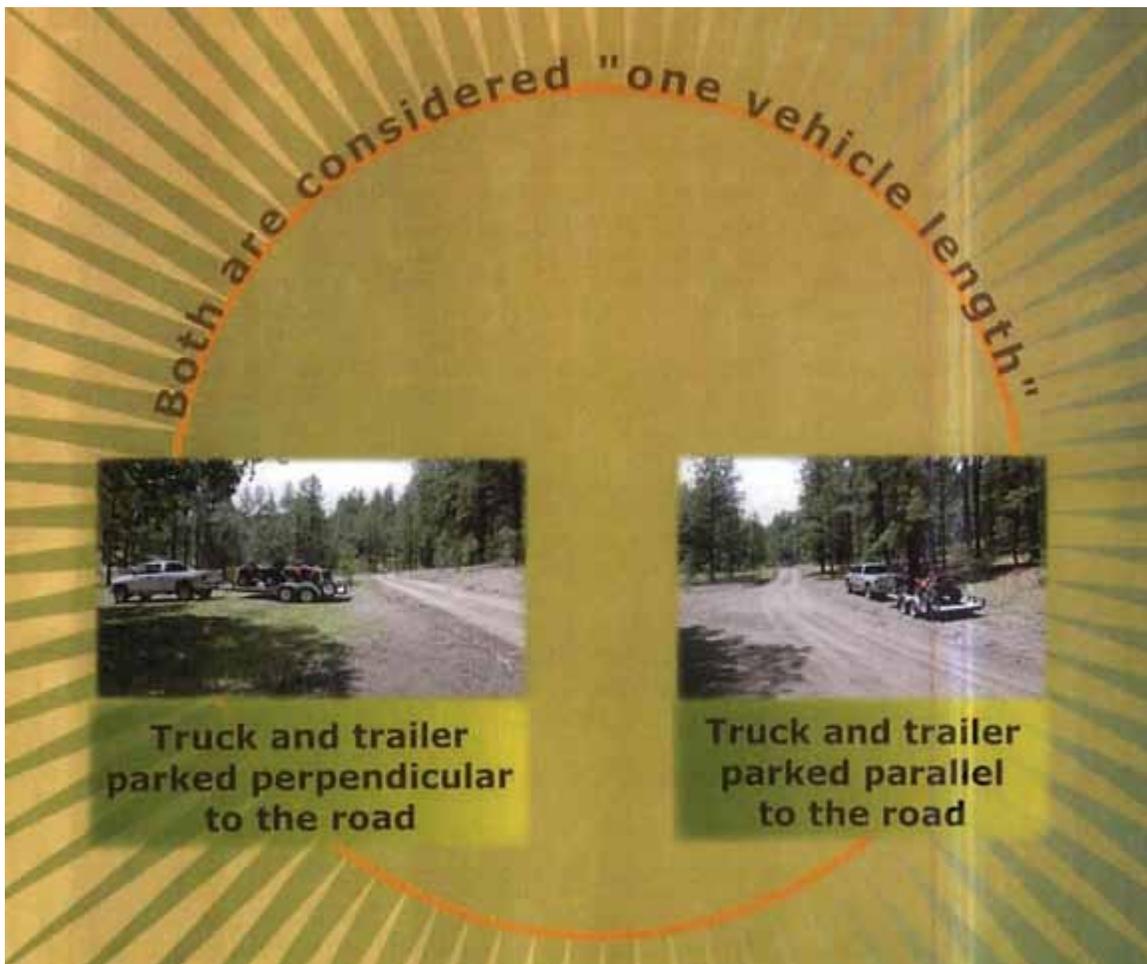
Parking

When parking along any open road, you may:

- Park within ONE vehicle length from the side of the road edge•
- If towing a trailer, the "vehicle length" includes the vehicle plus the trailer.

When camping within 300-foot "corridors" designated for dispersed motorized camping, you may park anywhere within 300 feet on each side of the road.

Safety is an important consideration when parking along roadsides. Be sure your vehicle is completely off the roadway.



Big Game Retrieval

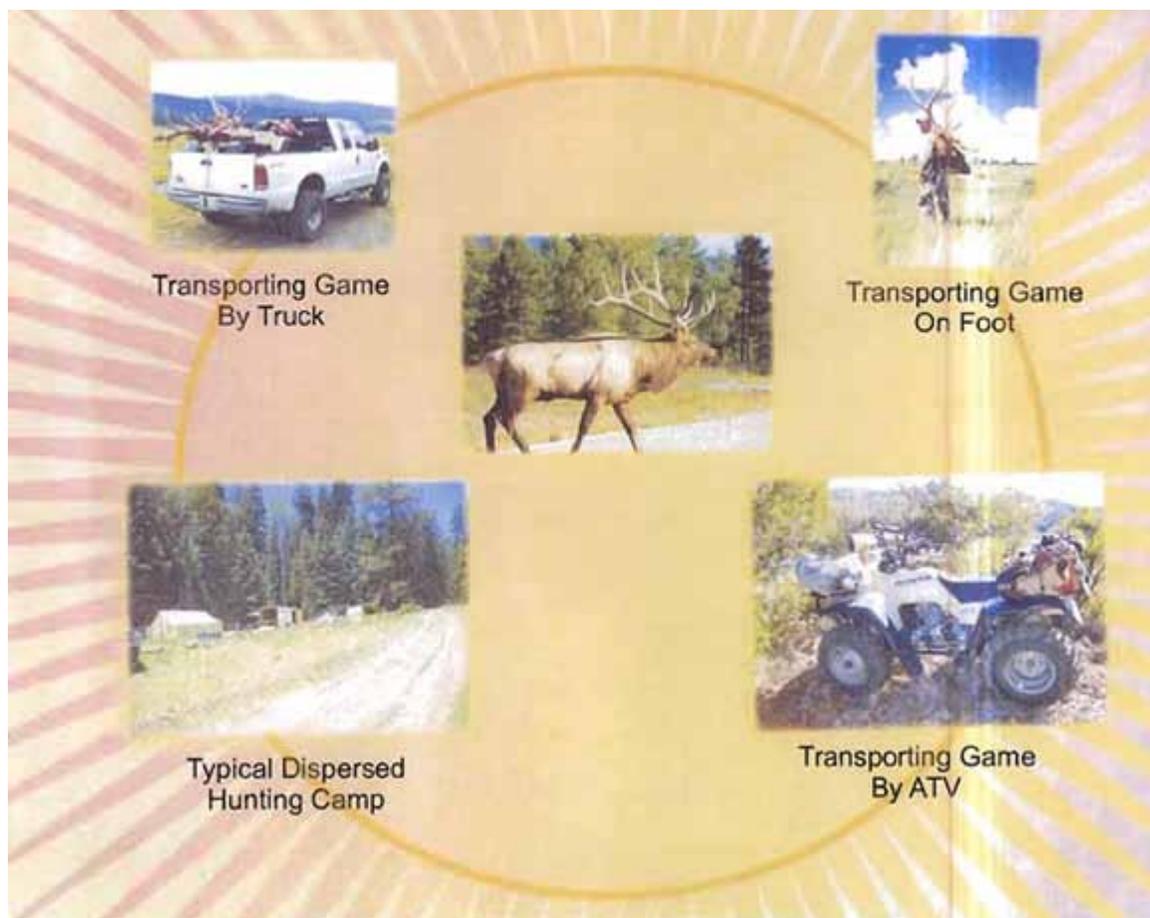
National Forests in the Southwest provide hunting opportunities that are nationally recognized and contribute to local economies.

State agencies are responsible for managing big game.

Alternatives that allow the use of motorized vehicles to retrieve big game contain the following conditions:

- Off-road travel is limited to hunters with a legally harvested and properly tagged animal.
- Hunters should take a direct and safe route that protects natural and/or cultural resources.
- Hunters should use the minimum number of trips to retrieve a downed animal.

Retrieval would be limited to species, location and distances identified in the alternatives.



Gathering Firewood and Other Forest Products

Gathering forest products like firewood and piñon nuts is a valued tradition for many people in the Southwest.

Firewood

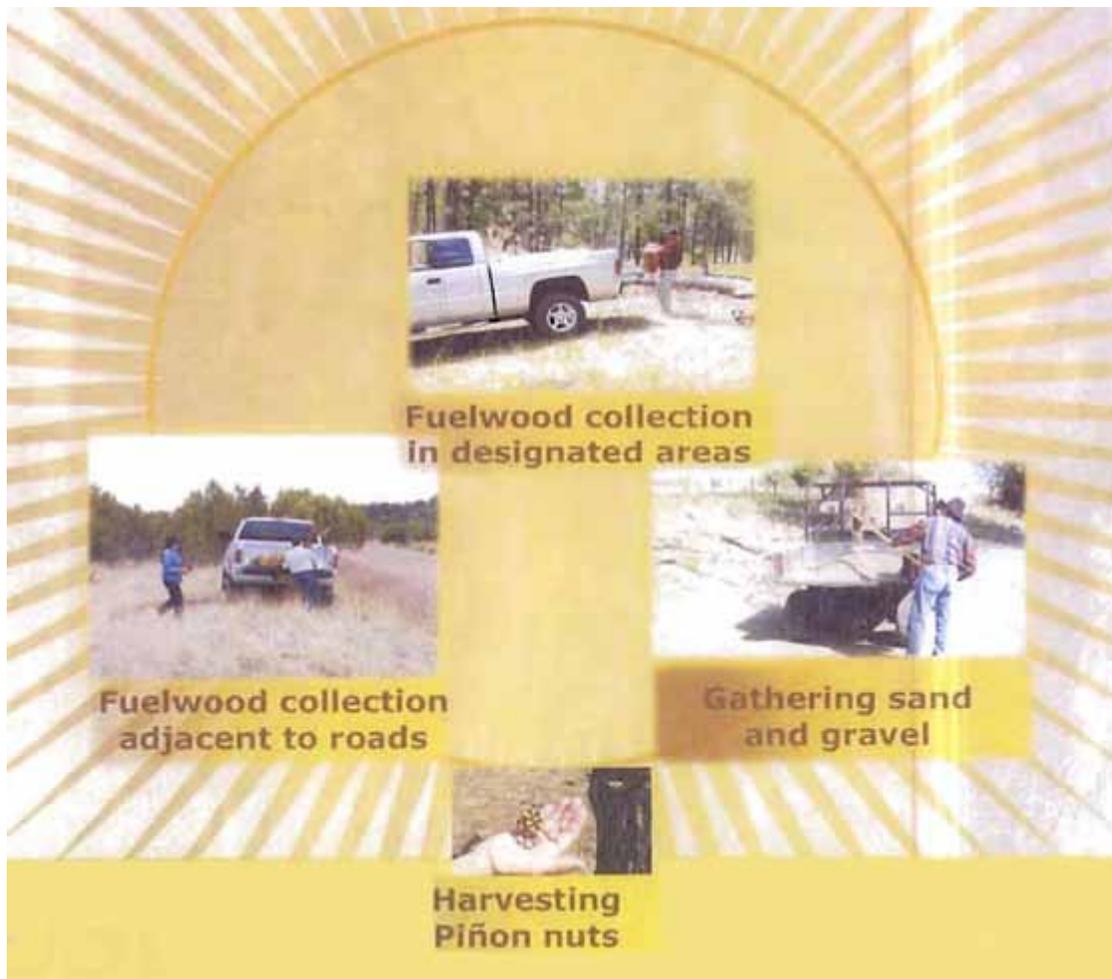
- Motorized vehicles may travel cross-country in designated areas to cut firewood (fuelwood).
- Dead and down wood may still be gathered along roadsides provided that vehicles park parallel or perpendicular to the road as shown

Piñon Nuts

- Collection of piñon nuts would continue. Motor vehicles would be limited to roadside parking only.

Other Products

- Motor vehicle access for other products such as sand, gravel, rock, and "wildings" (live young trees for transplant) would be consistent with the Travel Management plan



Exemptions and Written Authorizations

To implement the Travel Management Rule, cross country travel or use of closed roads or trails by motor vehicle will be generally prohibited. However, there are some exemptions in the Rule (§212.51a) including:

- Emergency or law enforcement official vehicle use
- Limited Forest Service administrative use
- Written authorization issued under Federal law or regulations for activities authorized under special-use permits (Le., utility company access, livestock grazing permits, mining plans of operations, etc.) For example, a written authorization might be issued for motorized use of single-purpose roads for the purpose of maintaining a utility corridor, or it might allow for limited cross-country travel for the purpose of maintaining grazing allotment improvements. Single purpose routes would not be open to the general public.

Private Property Access

The Travel Management Rule recognizes (§212.55d and 36 CFR 212.6b):

1. Valid existing rights; and
2. Access by residents within areas administered by the Forest Service to their homes and use of their property, as long as the use conforms to rules & regulations.

Private property access may be allowed through various types of written authorizations. Some examples include:

- Rights-of-way
- Permit to use the road for the single purpose of accessing the property
- Temporary permit

Utilities

Utility companies have **permits** and a need to maintain their facilities. Specific roads, trails and occasionally cross country travel may be needed to accomplish this. The special use permits used to allow the utility companies to maintain facilities on the national forest will include permission to use motor vehicles on specific routes.

Livestock Grazing Allotments

Livestock grazing permittees have **permits** which also include the Allotment Management Plan (AMP) and Annual Operating Instructions (AOI).

Examples of considerations for written authorization through permit documents:

- Historic patterns of travel (e.g., 10-20 years), access to improvements (such as water developments, etc).
- Annual discussion of motor vehicle use needs, including provision for unplanned or emergency type travel.
- Special authorizations apply only to activities in the permit.

- Authorizations for motorized travel are subject to other existing regulations intended to protect natural and/or heritage resources.

Mining Access via Roads

- Because this activity is exempt from the Travel Management Rule, no proposal or decision will be made in the NEPA analysis associated with implementing the Travel Management Rule.
- If motor vehicle access on a closed road is requested in order to conduct mining related work, the effects to various resources would be disclosed as part of the environmental analysis decision process associated with approval of a mineral plan of operation.
- If motor vehicle use is approved, this use would be **specifically** authorized under a mineral plan of operation.
- The approved mineral plan of operation would serve as the written authorization.

How We Developed the Proposed Action

Public Involvement

- Public involvement is a critical part of developing a proposed action.
- Between 2006 and 2008, Ranger Districts held 64 public workshops with over 1700 people attending.
- Over 2000 comments were received during this informal process.

How Were Your Comments Used?

- Public comments combined with forest information were used to prepare the Proposed Action.

What is the Gila National Forest's Proposed Action?

- The Proposed Action identifies changes from **current** motor vehicle uses across the forest.
- It will identify roads, trails and areas that will be open to motor vehicle use.

Scoping on the Proposed Action

- In September 2009, the Proposed Action was released to the public .
- Approximately 4,000 individuals, agencies, and organizations were contacted.
- 10 Open Houses were held and attended by over 300 people.
- Over 16,000 comments were received.

People's opinions and comments on Travel Management varied widely. Desires ranged from **don't change anything** to **minimize the road system**. The Forest recognizes that there are many traditional uses as well as resource concerns.

Your comments were used by the Forest to identify significant issues and to develop alternatives to the proposed action.



How Were Alternatives to the Proposed Action Developed? What is a “Modified Proposed Action” and a “Preferred Alternative”?

In September 2009, the Gila National Forest released a "Proposed Action" for the Travel Management Plan. With the release of the Proposed Action, we asked the public to comment on the proposal during the scoping period. Approximately 16,000 individuals, agencies or groups responded with their concerns, issues, likes and dislikes.

All comments were read and categorized them according to the issue or concern, or whether they were identifying specific routes of concern. By categorizing the issues and concerns, we were able to develop specific issue statements that reflected the areas of concern raised by public comments. You can find these issue statements on pg. 9-10 of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Using these issue statements, the interdisciplinary team (IOT) considered various alternative ways to implement travel management planning, attempting to satisfy the issue while still meeting the purpose and need for travel management planning.

The IOT developed a framework or criteria to work with to develop the details of each alternative, depending on the emphasis of the alternative. The framework put the bounds on each alternative, keeping them within the regulations for travel management, threatened and endangered species, and cultural resources, to name a few. For instance, if the alternative emphasized motorized recreation and uses, the framework described what kinds and levels of activities and routes would be included in that alternative. The same process was used for the emphasis of each alternative.

Once the framework was developed, the IOT, along with Ranger District and Forest staff, looked at each road and determined, by alternative, whether it should be included in that alternative. All roads and motorized trails were considered, as well as many unauthorized routes.

This effort led to a *modified proposed action (Alternative F)*, and four alternatives to the modified proposed action. Reasons for modifying the proposed action are listed in the DEIS (pg. 31). Alternative F is similar to the original proposed action.

A *preferred alternative (Alternative G)* has been identified, however, a final decision on which alternative will be implemented has not yet been made. The preferred alternative identifies what the Forest Supervisor would likely choose today with the information that is provided in the analysis and comments received to date. The final decision will take into account any further information provided during the comment period. Looking at the preferred alternative may help you focus your comments on the DEIS by comparing it to the other alternatives.

What is a DEIS?

A **Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)** is a public disclosure document that provides detailed information about a particular action a federal agency is proposing to implement. The DEIS is released prior to making a decision to allow the public the opportunity to review and comment. The DEIS is made up of several sections:

Abstract — a very brief description of the document

Summary — a summary of the contents of the DEIS

Chapter 1 — overview of the DEIS which:

- Discusses the structure of the DEIS,
- Provides a background for why this action is being taken,
- Describes the purpose and need for the action,
- Provides information about the what the decision needs to consider
- Describes what public involvement has occurred
- Discloses how comments from the public were considered and what issues were identified from those comments

Chapter 2 — This chapter may provide the best overall information about the alternatives and a brief description of the effects. If you don't want to read the entire effects section in Chapter 3, you can get a very brief description in the table found at the end of this chapter.

- Discusses how alternatives to the proposed action were developed
- Describes the alternatives in detail
- Provides a comparison of the alternatives
- Provides a summary of the effects of each alternative

Chapter 3 — This chapter is the meat of the effects analyses. It describes the potential effect of implementing each alternative on specific resources. Resources analyzed in this DEIS are:

- Roads
- Recreation
- Air Quality
- Watershed and Soils, including riparian
- Aquatics
- Wildlife
- Sensitive Plants
- Invasive Species

- Cultural Resources
- Social and Economics

Chapter 4 – Lists

- Preparers and Contributors to the DEIS
- Agencies and tribes who were coordinated with

Index and Bibliography

Issue Statements

Motorized Routes

The proposed changes to motorized routes, specifically the type, extent, level of use and location of motorized routes, may lead to resource, recreation, social and economic effects.

This issue includes the following concerns:

- Increasing motorized routes and road densities may have adverse effects to watershed, fisheries, wildlife, air quality, invasive plant and animal species, sensitive plants and cultural resources.
- Decreased motorized routes may have adverse effects to motorized access to the Forest, leading to fewer motorized recreational opportunities.
- Motorized routes may lead to conflicts with non-motorized users, or, conversely, the concentration of motorized use.
- The type, extent, and location of motorized routes could have social and economic effects by impacting tourism, traditional uses, and other recreational pursuits, both motorized and nonmotorized.

Motorized Dispersed Recreation

The proposed change to motorized dispersed camping to limit it to proposed designated corridors and areas may lead to resource, recreation, social and economic effects.

This issue includes the following concerns:

- Motorized camping corridors may have adverse effects to watershed, fisheries, wildlife, air quality, invasive plant and animal species, sensitive plants and cultural resources.
- Limiting motorized camping corridors may result in reduced motorized recreation opportunities.

Motorized Big Game Retrieval

The proposed change to motorized big game retrieval (MBGR) may lead to resource, recreation, social and economic effects.

This issue includes the following concerns:

- Allowing motorized big game retrieval may have adverse effects to watershed, fisheries, wildlife, air quality, invasive plant and animal species, sensitive plants and cultural resources.
- Restricting motorized big game retrieval may have adverse effects on the economies of local communities.
- Motorized big game retrieval should be restricted to the same corridors as motorized dispersed camping to reduce creation of additional routes and potential habitat degradation.

Areas

The proposed change to designated areas specifically for OHV activities may lead to resource, recreation, social and economic effects.

This issue includes the following concerns:

- Designating areas may have adverse effects to watershed, fisheries, wildlife, sensitive plants, invasive plant and animal species and air quality.
- Designating areas may lead to uncontrolled OHV activity within the area leading to conflicts with other users.

Description of Alternatives

Alternative A is the proposed action alternative. This alternative has been modified as shown in Alternative F. Alternative A was dropped from detailed analysis.

Alternative B is the no action alternative. It represents the existing condition, which is our best estimate of where people are driving now.

Alternative C provides the most motorized opportunities. Only those routes that are needed to meet laws, regulations or policies would be closed.

Alternative D would provide for moderate motorized access with additional protection of sensitive resources, such as threatened, endangered, and sensitive species; high density cultural sites; riparian and wetland areas; low condition watersheds; and road less areas.

Alternative E provides for the least motorized access, most resource protection, and emphasized non-motorized recreation.

Alternative F (modified proposed action) emphasizes motorized recreation opportunities while considering sensitive resources such as threatened, endangered, and sensitive species; high density cultural sites; riparian and wetland area; low conditions watershed; and roadless areas.

Alternative G (preferred alternative) combines elements from other alternatives to provide a mix of motorized and non-motorized opportunities.

Note: Detailed descriptions of all alternatives can be found in Chapter 2 of the DEIS.

Table 1. Comparison of motorized system resulting from changes to alternative B, no action (asterisk means item will not be shown on the motor vehicle use map)

	Alternative B (No Action)	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E	Alternative F (Modified Proposed Action)	Alternative G
Miles of roads designated open to the public for motor vehicle use	4,604	4,266	2,977	2,332	3,343	3,323
Miles of motorized trails (less than 50 inches in width)	16	204	125	0	182	182
Miles of single-track motorcycle trails	0	64	0	0	0	0
Miles of routes for administrative use or by written authorization only *	0	183	354	439	298	299
Total percent change in motorized roads and trails	0%	-2%	-33%	-50%	-24%	-24%
Miles open for motorized dispersed camping (300 feet on each side of the road)	5,197 (no distance limit, forest is open)	1,538	1,183	0	1,447	1,327
Motorized big game retrieval	No limit on distance or species. Forest is open.	1 mile from each side of designated open roads, county roads, and state and federal highways for retrieving elk, deer, bear, mountain lion, javelina, pronghorn	300 feet using same motorized dispersed camping corridors for retrieving elk and deer	No motorized big game retrieval allowed	1/2 mile from each side of designated open roads, county roads, and state and federal highways for retrieving elk only	300 feet using same motorized dispersed camping corridors for retrieving elk and deer
Number of areas (acres) open to all vehicles	No limit, forest is open	38 (29)	0 (0)	0 (0)	38 (29)	38 (29)
Number of areas (acres) restricted to ATV and motorcycles only	No limit, forest is open	1 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (8)	1 (8)

We want to hear your comments about the Travel Management Plan DEIS

The purpose of soliciting comments at this time is to:

- Help to correct incomplete or incorrect information.
- Reconsider specific routes or areas of concern.
- Make minor modifications to one or more alternatives where new information suggests that the alternative could be improved.
- Reconsider the effects analysis where more accurate.

To be helpful comments should:

- Provide specific information on the motorized routes or areas that are of most interest to you and why.
- Be clear, concise, and relevant to the analysis.
- Describe why a particular alternative or element would or would not work.
- Offer a new idea or solution that would accomplish the purpose and need.
- Provide information about how particular proposals in the DEIS would affect how you use the forest.

How do I make comments on the DEIS that are constructive and helpful to the Forest Supervisor

A review of the Travel Management Rule may help you understand what Travel Management Planning *is* and what it *isn't*. A copy of the Travel Management Rule can be found at: <http://fs.usda.gov/goto/gila/travel>.

Your comments must be received by the end of the 60 day comment period. The comment period begins on the date of notification in the Federal Register. Persons submitting comments after the 60 day comment period will not have appeal standing.

How will your comments be used?

Your comments will be considered in the development of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and decision. Some of the ways your comments will be used include:

- Helping to correct incomplete or incorrect information.
- Reconsider specific routes or areas of concern.
- May make minor modifications to one or more alternatives where new information suggests that the alternative could be improved.
- Reconsideration of the effects analysis where more accurate information is provided.

How to comment

Some comments, though they may express your concerns about an alternative, do not provide especially useful information. For example, a comment such as: "I don't think any roads should be closed" will not be particularly helpful. It does not specify which routes you are most concerned about or why you don't want any roads closed. Without specific information it is difficult to address this concern.

To be helpful comments should:

- Provide specific information on the motorized routes or areas that are of most interest to you. State what route(s) you are concerned about and why. It would be helpful if you attach a map with the routes you are concerned about highlighted.
- Be clear, concise, and relevant to the analysis.
- Describe why a particular alternative or element would or would not work.
- Offer a new idea or solution that would accomplish the stated goals; pay particular attention to the purpose and need described in the DEIS. Include specific examples where possible.
- Provide information about how you use the Forest and how particular proposals in the DEIS would affect that use.

Remember, commenting is not a form of "voting" on an alternative. The number of comments received that are negative or simply oppose the project will not prevent the project from moving forward.

Travel Management Contacts

Gila NF Travel Management website: <http://fs.usda.gov/goto/gila/travel>

Travel Management email inbox: r3_gila_travel@fs.fed.us

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Getting to a Decision

You may be wondering what comes next in this process of making a decision on how to manage travel on the Gila National Forest. So far, we've:

- Released a proposed action (September 2009) for comment,
- Determined issues based on the comments we received,
- Developed alternatives to the proposed action to address the issues that were raised,
- Analyzed the effects of each alternative and,
- Published the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for comment.

While we are much closer to making a decision about which alternative will be selected and implemented as the Gila National Forest Travel Management Plan, there are still few more steps before that decision can be made.

With the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), a 60 day Notice and Comment period began. The start date for that comment period began the day after the DEIS's availability was published in the Federal Register. All comments received during this comment period will be read and considered before the final decision is made. The time it takes for us to complete this part of the process will depend on how many and what types of comments we receive, but we expect to be able to complete our analysis of the comments by the beginning of April 2011.

We'll use information from the comments to finalize the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Edits to correct or clarify information in the DEIS will be made to produce the Final EIS (FEIS). The Forest Supervisor will then make a decision by selecting the alternative to implement and document the decision in a Record of Decision (ROD). That decision will be based on all of the information provided in the FEIS and consideration of comments received from the public. He/she will be looking at the substance of the comments, not the total number of similar comments. We expect the FEIS to be ready and released in May 2011.

Finally, there will be an appeal period. After the decision is made and signed, the decision will be subject to appeal by anyone that commented during the 60 day Notice and Comment period. The appeal period will be 45 days from the date of notification in the Federal Register that the FEIS and ROD is available. We'll have another 45 day to respond to any appeals of the decision.

Once the appeals are all resolved, we will begin implementation by producing a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). We expect that we should be able to complete the MVUMs and have them printed for implementation by December 2010 to January 2011. MVUMs will be free to the public.

Important timeframes to remember:

- January 2011 -60 day Notice and Comment period (begins with the notice of availability of the DEIS in the Federal Register).
- May 2011-anticipated release of the FEIS and ROD
- 90 days for appeal period and resolution of appeals
- December 2011 or January 2012 -anticipated release of the MVUMs available free to the public and begin implementing the decision

What Happens When a Decision is Made

A motor vehicle use map (MVUM) will be published.

An MVUM is a map that displays roads, trails, and areas open for motorized vehicle use, including where motorized dispersed camping and motorized big game retrieval is allowed.

The MVUM will specify the classes of vehicle and, if appropriate, the times of year for which use is designated.

The first MVUM may not display all open motorized routes and corridors.

- Corridors designated for motorized dispersed camping may not be initially available for dispersed camping. As cultural resource clearances are completed, they will become available .
- The MVUM will be updated as appropriate to reflect changes.

The MVUM will be made available free to the public at the Supervisor's Office, Ranger District Offices, and the Gila National Forest website.

