

## **SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST**

### **Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Motorized Travel**

#### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

##### **Why is the Forest doing Travel Management? Why not leave it like it is?**

The Forest Service identified four threats to National Forests. The threats are: 1) the risk of catastrophic wildfire; 2) loss of open space; 3) invasive species; and 4) unmanaged recreation. The latter included the use of OHVs (trucks, motorcycles, ATVs) in the National Forests. The Travel Management Rule requires that all National Forests designate all roads, trails and areas where motorized use is permitted and eliminate cross-country motorized use everywhere else. This process is complex now, but will likely get more difficult over time as motorized recreation use increases.

##### **Why is the Forest spending so much time and energy on OHV use?**

OHV use is a valid and growing recreational activity on national forests. Doing nothing to manage cross-country (off-road) travel would be irresponsible. The Forest is proposing to manage this growing recreational use by eliminating cross-country travel and by designating roads and trails that are appropriate for use by vehicles by vehicle type and time of year.

##### **What was the process for Public Involvement?**

Public meetings and workshops were held in 2006 and 2007 to learn how people use the national forest. That input helped inform an analysis of the road system resulted in a Travel Analysis Process (TAP) report which identified the minimum road system needed; and it helped us formulate the Proposed Action (7/2008). The public comment on the forest's Proposed Action helped us identify significant issues and formulate alternatives to the Proposed Action, which are analyzed in the DEIS. Public comment on the DEIS will help the Forest Supervisor make a final decision.

##### **Why did you take so long to develop the DEIS after the public comments in 2008?**

Designing and analyzing the effects of various alternatives on important forest resources has been a complex process. The Travel Management system will change the way people use and enjoy the Santa Fe National Forest and restrict motorized use. For this reason, it is important to take the time to develop a system that best protects natural resources, reduces user conflicts, provides a more coherent and integrated system and still allows for uses people expect from the forest.

### **Why don't you have a preferred alternative?**

The Forest Supervisor believes the NEPA process really works to get all the information needed from all the affected parties to make the best decision on this complex question. And he believes that, in this case, we will hear the most comprehensive and useful information with which to inform the decision if he remains open until after this public comment phase.

### **Is the Forest proposing new OHV (off-highway vehicle) opportunities?**

Overall, all alternatives will decrease available OHV opportunities from the existing condition. However, some additional trails may be designated for OHV use that were not designated as system trails in the past. Many roads and trails were being used for OHV recreation, with or without official designation. Some of these are well located and provide appropriate OHV opportunities.

### **Is the Forest taking away all opportunities for OHV riders?**

No, the Forest recognizes OHVs to be a legitimate recreational use and knows that the OHV community will agree that not addressing current resource problems associated with this type of use will limit their future enjoyment in the National Forest. Understanding where and when OHVs are allowed on the Forest will be beneficial to all users.

### **Are you making decision about other road jurisdictions?**

This decision will cover only routes on the National Forest System, although the MVUM will show some routes under other jurisdictions as available to motorized use if it is open under that jurisdiction

### **How will this affect hunting and fishing experiences?**

Hunters and anglers will continue to have motorized access to much of the Forest through a designated system of roads, trails and areas, as well as having foot or horseback access to other non-motorized areas of the forest including Wilderness areas. Part of the final Decision will be whether or not to allow travel off the designated road system for downed game retrieval.

### **What opportunities are available for quiet, non-motorized recreation?**

The Forest offers 637 miles of non-motorized system trails in Wilderness areas and other areas on the forest.

### **Will there be exceptions to the prohibition of cross-country motorized use for people with disabilities?**

No, there will not be a blanket exemption for people with disabilities.

### **What happens next?**

The public will have an opportunity to comment on the DEIS during this **45-day “notice and comment”** period. Based on the information in the DEIS and public input, the Forest Supervisor will make the decision which will be published as a **Record of Decision**. The Forest plans to have a Decision before the end of the calendar year.

**Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) → 45 day Notice and Comment → Record of Decision**

### **During the public comment process, what’s the best way to ensure that my comments about the DEIS are addressed?**

Your comments should be as specific as possible. For example: rather than saying, “I don’t want roads closed”; it would be better to state: “I’d like to keep Forest Service Road 182 open as my family uses this road every year to access our favorite Trail #49”.

### **How do I make sure my ATV route gets included into your decision?**

Make your specific comments and we will consider them along with many other considerations to come up with a viable action alternative for our decision.

### **Do votes count (form letters)?**

We use the comments provided in form letters, but receiving multiple copies of the same letter does not give that comment more weight.

### **Who is making the decision about where OHVs and other vehicles can go?**

Based on the analysis in the Environmental Impact Statement and public input, the Forest Supervisor will decide: 1) which roads, trails, and areas will be designated for motorized use by the public by type of vehicle and time of year, 2) where motorized dispersed camping would be allowed; and 3) whether to allow vehicles to travel off the designated system to retrieve downed big game.

### **Will you have signs showing the public which roads are open and closed?**

The Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) will be the official record of which roads, trails and areas are open for motorized use. Signs are not a requirement under the Travel Management Rule because it is impossible to guarantee they will always be in place. However, we recognize the MVUM will not be as useful unless there are signs so the public can match locations on the map with where they are in the field. We began signing our main roads in 2009 and are continuing that task this year.