

The Malheur National Forest

will soon be seeking public comments on its Access and Travel Management Environmental Assessment (EA).

The EA evaluates a no-action alternative and three action alternatives.

The four alternatives will be displayed in detail on a map covering the entire Malheur National Forest. The EA and associated map showing the alternatives will be available online at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/malheur>

Copies of the EA and map will also be available for review at the following locations:

↪ **Malheur National Forest offices, 7:45 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.**

- **Supervisor's Office**
431 Patterson Bridge Road
John Day, OR 97845
- **Emigrant Creek Ranger District,**
265 Highway 20 South
Hines, OR 97738
- **Prairie City Ranger District**
327 SW Front Street
Prairie City, OR 97869

↪ **Grant County Library**
507 John Day-Burns Highway
John Day, OR 97845

↪ **Harney County Library**
80 West D Street
Burns, OR 97720

↪ **North Fork John Day Watershed Council**
695 North Highway 39
Long Creek, OR 97856

Comment Period

When the Access and Travel Management EA is available for comments, information on how to provide comments will be provided to the public.

Upon release of the EA, open-houses will be scheduled in John Day and Burns for public input.

For more information about the project, please contact Rick Vetter or Lori Bailey, Project Leads, at (541) 573-4300.



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service • Pacific Northwest Region

Malheur National Forest

Access and Travel Management Update March 2012



The Malheur National Forest is complying with the 2005 Travel Management Rule by preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for its Access and Travel Management Plan (ATM). Comments provided will help shape the Decision and may provide for additional motorized vehicle travel opportunities, such as motorized trails systems, in the future.

The Malheur National Forest, Access and Travel Management analysis was initiated in 2010. Public comments received during the scoping process were used in developing alternatives to the Proposed Action. A preliminary EA is expected to be released for comment late winter 2012/early winter 2013. The EA would restrict unregulated cross-country travel, identify areas where motorized travel would be allowed off of designated roads and trails as well as allow for motorized access for dispersed camping. Implementation would occur in 2014.

Important facts:

- Currently, approximately 5,800 miles of road and 38 miles of trail are designated open and are available to motorized travel on the Malheur National Forest.
- Access for firewood gathering would continue to be allowed as outlined in the terms and conditions of the Personal Use Firewood Permit. Access for emergency operations, special uses, range allotments, and mining claims would continue to be designated through permits and operating plans.
- Unregulated cross-country travel would be restricted as ordered by the final 2005 National Travel Rule.
- Roads are not being closed under this ATM project to meet road density standards. Road closures to meet road density standards for wildlife and/or other resource objectives may occur during site specific



project planning which is an ongoing activity on the Forest and part of NEPA.

- Forest officials recognize that there are roads that have been closed through previous NEPA decisions or Code of Federal Regulation Closure Orders that may not be apparent to the visiting public due to signs, gates, or berms being vandalized and/or displaced. As a result, visitors to the Forest have continued to drive on some of these closed roads.
- The Decision will address resource management concerns, while continuing to provide access to places across the Forest that visitors enjoy. The Access and Travel Management Plan will protect salmon, steelhead, and trout streams, and enhance wildlife habitat.
- Once the Decision is issued, the agency will publish and distribute Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUM) which will be updated annually. These maps will be free to the public and will aid visitors with identifying the designated motorized road and trail system on the Forest.
- The Motor Vehicle Use Maps will identify all roads that are designated open to motorized travel, thus helping the public to assist us with protecting big game habitat as well as fisheries habitat by utilizing only those roads intended for motorized travel.
- Information regarding Access and Travel Management Planning is available on the Malheur NF's website: www.fs.usda.gov/malheur.

Key Messages

The Malheur National Forest Access and Travel Management Plan **would:**

- Not close any of the 5,800 miles of road and 38 miles of trail currently available for motorized travel on the Forest.
- Designate areas for motorized travel and allow for motorized access for dispersed camping.
- Be developed based on public input.
- Address resource management concerns, helping to restore watersheds.
- Improve protection for salmon, steelhead, and trout streams.
- Improve conditions for a variety of wildlife.
- Be adjusted over time as monitoring identifies changes that would improve the Plan.

Again, the Decision would *not* close any roads or trails that are currently designated open for motorized travel, and permitted uses. Firewood gathering would continue to be allowed as outlined in the terms and conditions of the Personal Use Firewood Permit.

Access for other emergency operations, special uses, range allotments, and mining claims would continue to be designated through permits and operating plans.