



Travel Management Plan Discussion Paper—Draft: 7.19.12

Big Game Retrieval

What Is the Concern?

Big game hunting is a primary recreational pursuit on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Deer and elk are the primary game species. Under the proposed travel management plan, the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest will close some roads and limit cross-country motorized access. Hunters are concerned that it will be more difficult to transport big game animals from the field to their vehicle for the timely care of edible meat.

Oregon state law prohibits the waste of any game animal or parts thereof (except for the meat of cougar). Inherent in this law is the timely field care and retrieval of usable meat so that it does not spoil or get scavenged by other animals.

It is the responsibility of the hunter to judge the circumstances of a hunt and decide if a game animal can be retrieved from the field in a timely manner to meet the hunter's legal and ethical responsibilities associated with meat care.

Timely game retrieval is affected by many things, including time of day, weather, physical condition of the hunter, modes of transportation at the hunter's disposal, size of the game animal, and distance from a road. The hunter has control over only a few of these factors; distance from an open road is perhaps the most important one for hunters who are not using livestock.

How Will This Concern Be Addressed?

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest will make available accurate maps containing currently open roads and trails to facilitate game retrieval. The forest also will maintain signage so that hunters can plan their hunting and game retrieval according to their physical abilities and the legal modes of transportation at their disposal.

Closed roadbeds also provide relatively flat routes that can facilitate game retrieval with the use of nonmotorized vehicles such as game carts, livestock, and mountain bikes.



Potential Benefits to Fewer Roads

Reduced road densities will have a positive effect on the distribution of elk in many areas. This may increase hunter success because more elk will likely be in their summer ranges on public land during the hunting seasons.

Routes—the network of open roads and trails—differ in their density and distance from one another across the project area. Areas with lower route densities often have more elk, which contributes to increased hunter success. These areas tend to appeal to hunters who are willing and able to walk longer distances from their vehicles. Examples of areas with lower route densities include Five Points Creek, Bennett Peak, Dry Beaver/Ladd Canyon, and Davis/Swamp Creeks.

Some areas would have many routes, which means hunters would have more options and shorter distances to transport game to their vehicles. However, fewer elk tend to use areas with higher route densities, so hunter success may be lower. Examples of areas with higher route densities include the Sumpter area, Upper Meadow Creek, Little Fly and Upper Fly Creeks, Salt Creek Summit, and the Billy Meadows area.



Opportunities for illegal, unsafe, and unethical hunting practices are reduced when road densities are reduced.

Are There Exceptions or Options?

Federal, state, and private land managers have tried various options to facilitate game retrieval, but all resulted in significant increases in administration costs and enforcement due to noncompliance. Options that have been tried include identifying specific routes where motorized access is

permitted only to retrieve game, designating certain hours when motorized vehicles can be used to retrieve game, and issuing permits case by case. Additional options may be discussed and considered during public workshops.

Your Comments Are Appreciated

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest will be hosting several community workshops to discuss the specific issues raised by the public regarding the proposed travel management plan. Please check for notices of the public meetings at <http://www.fs.usda/wallowa-whitman/>.

