Transportation System

Goal: Develop and manage roads to support resource management activities; recognize the potential for future development of major transportation and utility systems.

Objectives: Roads trails and utility systems are developed and managed to support resource management; recognize the potential for future development of major transportation and utility systems.

Transportation Question 2: Are roads and trails maintained in accordance with management objectives?

Evaluation Criteria

Road systems are evaluated to determine if significant motor vehicle traffic exists on roads that have been recently closed. Once a road system has been selected for monitoring, at least ten percent of roads that have been closed during the past one to three years will be randomly selected from the INFRA database.

- Ketchikan – Shoal Cove- 8400000, 8430200, and 8435000 from a pool of roads stored in 2004.
- Petersburg – Kuiu Island- 6409 from a pool of roads stored in 2010.
- Ketchikan – Shoal Cove- 8400000, 8430200, and 8435000 were selected from a group of roads that had been closed between 2004 and 2011.
- Petersburg – Kuiu Island- 6409 from a pool of roads closed in 2010.

The INFRA database will be utilized to determine the roads that have been closed on a given road system during the past one to three years. Since most motorized traffic occurs on road systems connected to or near communities, the monitoring effort will likewise focus on those systems. Road systems will be evaluated to determine where significant motor vehicle traffic exists on roads that have been recently closed. Once a road system has been selected for monitoring, at least ten percent of roads that have been closed during the past three years will be selected for monitoring. The Shoal Cove system is a short boat ride from the city of Ketchikan. The Kuiu Island road system considered remote because it is a long distance from any community.

Monitoring Results

All Operational ML1 roads monitored from FY2010 to 2012 have been removed from the MVUM prior to monitoring activities unless they were dually designated as trails. Dual designation refers to closing a road from a transportation perspective and opening a motorized trail on the same route. The responsibilities for maintenance shift from engineering to recreation on a dual designated route. Dual designation does not preclude the ML1 road being reopened and maintained as an active road at some point in the future. Routes that receive the dual designation are listed as motorized trails in the MVUM. Only operational ML2-5 (open) roads show on the MVUM as roads. The MVUM is updated annually to the extent necessary to reflect revisions to travel management decisions (36 CFR 212.54 and 212.56). The MVUM for each district can be accessed at this web site: http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/tongass/maps-pubs

Signs of unauthorized have been very limited throughout the monitoring period. Most roads that did show use were dually designated as motorized trails. But the motorized trails such as the 8400000 road that was evaluated in 2012 showed little use and use was terminated at a blowdown. In 2012 minor unauthorized use was documented along the 8430200 road. Road use ended a short distance from the beginning of the road at the first stream crossing. No damage was caused by the unauthorized use. It appears that the attraction was a dispersed camping spot.

Open Roads Maintenance Level 2-5

Through road maintenance, surface reconditioning, and grading, the road surface and road site erosion has been minimized. The roads are maintained to meet BMPs regardless of the methods used to obtain the maintenance work. The roads were managed to provide cost-effective support to LUD objectives and safe travel to users of the system while protecting the environment, adjacent resources, and the public investment. Consistent with the road management objectives, design features were incorporated to protect water quality by minimizing long-term maintenance needs (e.g., drivable dips adjacent to culverts, oversized culverts, outsloping roads). Road running surfaces, bridge decks, ditches, and culverts were maintained to keep water effectively flowing, provided for the disposal of materials collected during road maintenance (soil, rock, debris) in a manner that minimizes sediment entering streams and lakes. There were some minor road surface maintenance needs noted during monitoring to limit surface runoff through ditch maintenance and culvert cleaning.

Road maintenance plans are developed and approved on the Tongass districts for all NFS roads based on Access and Travel Management Plans and Road Management Objectives. The road maintenance plans encompass both short-term and long-term needs. The road maintenance plans are revised as necessary to respond to emergencies and meet changing resource and traffic needs. Condition surveys have been performed in accordance with national guidelines. Bridges were inspected at frequency and standards specified in FSM 7730.

Evaluation of Results

The monitoring protocol was revised between the 2009 and 2010 field seasons. With the publication of the MVUM maps for all the districts on the forest by 2009, it was necessary to examine the effectiveness of the closures.

In 2005, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) revised regulations regarding travel management on NFS lands to clarify policy related to motor vehicle use including the use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs). The 2005 Travel Management Rules requires the designation of those roads, trails, and areas that are open to public use. It prohibits the use of motorized vehicles off the designated system, as well as use of motor vehicles in areas not consistent with the designations. The 2005 Travel Management Rule also required the development and implementation of Access and Travel Management Plans (ATMs) for each district by the end of 2009. These plans were developed, but not fully implemented forest wide until the end of 2009. Part of these plans included developing Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUMs) for each district. In essence, the 2005 rule changed the management strategy from “all roads are open unless blocked or designated closed” to “all roads are closed unless designated open on the MVUM or by permit” The MVUMs are updated annually to reflect the current management status of the roads.

Monitoring efforts between 2010 and 2012 showed that stored roads have been effectively closed to motorized traffic through a combination of prohibition and elimination. Environmental damage from unauthorized motorized use has not been seen. Roads that have the culverts and bridges pulled are effective in eliminating unauthorized motorized use. Even a series of large water bars is enough to discourage many riders to find another trail. Monitoring efforts between 2010 and 2012 showed that

roads are being maintained at the level stated in their Road Maintenance Objectives.

Action Plan

Access and Travel Management Plans need to be dynamic documents that adapt to the forest's needs and goals. Additionally, timber management, subsistence and recreation needs are important in the management of the transportation system. Periodic public meetings are recommended either as part of larger projects, or simply as outreaches to generate input from the public with their needs and desires.

Continue to monitor roads for established use on ML2-3 roads and document unauthorized use on ML1 roads. Due to the limited opportunities for timber harvest, subsistence, free use timber, small sales, recreation, etc., there may be needs for transportation access that the district ATMs did not anticipate.