

DECISION NOTICE (DN) & FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
FOR THE
NORTH KAIBAB RANGER DISTRICT TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PROJECT
U.S.D.A. FOREST SERVICE – KAIBAB NATIONAL FOREST
NORTH KAIBAB RANGER DISTRICT - COCONINO AND MOHAVE COUNTIES, ARIZONA

INTRODUCTION

The Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Environmental Assessment (EA) of the North Kaibab Ranger District Travel Management Project are presented herein. The DN documents my decision and provides my explanation of the management and environmental reasons I used to make my decision. The FONSI presents the reasons why I find this action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and therefore an environmental impact statement was not required or prepared.

The Environmental Assessment completed for this project is incorporated by reference in this DN -FONSI which documents the following:

- Background information regarding my decision;
- The alternatives considered;
- My decision to select Alternative 2;
- The rationale for my decision;
- A Finding of No Significant Impact;
- The implementation date;
- The rights to appeal and administrative review;
- Contact information; and
- My signature and date, as the responsible official.

BACKGROUND

Travel Management Rule

In November of 2005, the Forest Service published final travel management regulations governing off-highway vehicles (OHV) and other motor vehicles on national forests and grasslands. These regulations amended part 212, subpart B of part 251, subpart A of part 261, and removed part 295 of Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Together, these regulations are referred to as the Travel Management Rule (TMR). The regulations implement Executive Order (EO) 11644 and EO 11989 regarding off road use of motor vehicles on Federal lands.

The TMR provides for a system of roads, trails, and areas that are designated for motor vehicle use. The TMR prohibits the use of motor vehicles off the designated system as well as use of



motor vehicles on routes and in areas not consistent with the designations (36 CFR 212.50). Therefore, under the TMR, forests that do not already restrict motorized travel to designated roads, trails, and areas must do so. The restriction on motor vehicle use off the designated system goes into effect once a forest has a designated system of roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use and has published a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM).

Additionally, regulation 36 CFR 212.51(b) states that the responsible official may include in the designation the limited use of motor vehicles within a specified distance of certain designated routes, and if appropriate within a specified time period, solely for the purposes of dispersed camping or for the retrieval of a downed big game animal by an individual who has legally taken that animal.

North Kaibab Ranger District Travel Management and the Forest Plan

Other than the congressionally-designated wilderness areas, the NKRK has few areas designated as restricted for off road motorized travel. Due to the potential for heavy snowfall in late fall through early spring, the NKRK does initiate seasonal restrictions for travel in some designated areas as displayed on their current District Visitor Information Map. Additionally, there are inclement weather restrictions when utilizing the NKRK transportation system for fuelwood gathering and other public uses. Sensitive areas such as open meadows also may have restrictions from use for protection and aesthetic value. However, to implement the TMR, the Kaibab National Forest Land Management Plan (Forest Plan; 1988 as amended) must be amended to reflect the 2005 final travel management regulations. Thus, the NKRK initiated its development of a Travel Management Project EA for the District in March 2010, which is intended to designate the minimum road system and improve the management of motorized vehicle use on the NKRK in accordance with the TMR (36 CFR 212, 251 and 261).

According to the TMR a desired minimum road system attempts to balance TMR requirements with Forest Plan requirements and stakeholder input to progress towards a road system which will be sustainable. The minimum road system is that which is needed for safe and efficient travel and for the administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands (36 CFR 212.5(b)). The minimum road system must also meet resource and other management objectives adopted in the Forest Plan (in accordance with 36 CFR part 219), laws and regulations, long-term funding expectations, and minimizes adverse environmental impacts. The final product of the NKRK Travel Management project will be the publication of a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) showing those roads, trails and areas designated for motor vehicle use. After the MVUM has been released to the public, travel off the designated system will be prohibited unless authorized by permit.

North Kaibab Ranger District Travel Management EA

An EA was prepared to document the results of the analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives to the proposed action.



An open, inclusive approach was used in the planning process to help me make this decision. My intent is to continue with this approach as we implement the travel management rule. Although I make this decision based on the best available science and information currently on hand, it is not without some uncertainty or risk. I fully expect that by placing an emphasis on monitoring, any identified course for corrections or adjustments will be made.

This project has revealed some deep-rooted social values that are difficult to capture and address, especially when considering the rules and regulations the Forest is required to implement. In my judgment though, the changes and restrictions that will result from this decision will be largely beneficial for the cultural and natural resources we all enjoy on the Kaibab National Forest. The decision I am making will provide ample opportunities for the public to continue to enjoy the NKRDR and will also substantially reduce the potential for resource damage in environmentally sensitive areas.

In the decision I considered the detailed analysis as completed in the Travel Analysis Process (TAP) Report for the NKRDR which I reviewed and signed in January 2010. Comments collected during the public scoping period (March-April of 2010), as well as individual comments received throughout the planning process were utilized to develop the Alternatives evaluated in the EA. Overall, I have made my decision after careful review and consideration of the public comments, and the Environmental Assessment (EA) which was prepared for this project.

A legal notice was published in the Arizona Daily Sun on April 25, 2011, inviting public comment on the NKRDR Travel Management Project Preliminary EA. This comment period provided an opportunity for the public and other government agencies to provide meaningful participation on the proposed action and other alternatives prior to a decision being made. The preferred alternative map and the non-significant amendment to the Kaibab National Forest Land Management Plan (Forest Plan) are attached to this DN-FONSI. The following pages document my decision and rationale.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Four alternatives were developed and considered in detail in the EA. These are discussed below. One additional alternative was considered but dropped from detailed consideration and can be found in Chapter 2 of the EA.

Alternative 1 – No Action

The No Action alternative was developed as a benchmark from which the agency could evaluate the proposed action. This alternative maintains current management practices and would not implement the travel management rule.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

To meet the Purpose and Need for Action, the following were proposed under Alternative 2 – the Proposed Action:

- Designate a road system on the NKRD with approximately 1,476 miles of roads open to motor vehicle use by the public.
 - Amend the Forest Plan to prohibit motorized travel off of designated routes on the District, except for roads identified as open on the MVUM.
- Close approximately 376 miles of system roads to motorized use by the public.
 - Eliminate vehicular traffic on 337 miles to all traffic, including administrative use.
 - Change the use and restrict 39 miles, of the 376 miles of open roads being closed, to administrative use only (i.e., for use by permit and by the Forest Service to monitor and carry out day-to-day resource management activities, as needed).
- Add 16 miles of unauthorized routes (i.e., user created roads) to the system as roads. The majority of these additional routes are short spur roads that originate at a main or secondary road, which provide access to campsites and other recreation opportunities.
- Designate corridors on all system roads; one mile off either side except where motor vehicles are restricted, for the sole purpose of motorized retrieval of a legally harvested elk or bison during any designated hunting season.
- Designate corridors of 300 feet from either side of 99 miles of specified roads for the sole purpose of motorized dispersed camping.
- Designate corridors of 100 feet from either side of 104 miles of specified roads for the sole purpose of motorized dispersed camping.

Alternative 3

To meet the Purpose and Need for Action, the following actions were proposed under Alternative 3:

- Designate a road system on the NKRD with approximately 1,386 miles of roads open to motor vehicle use by the public.
 - Amend the Forest Plan to prohibit motorized travel off of designated routes on the district, except for roads identified as open on the MVUM.
- Close approximately 466 miles of system roads to motorized use by the public.
 - Eliminate motorized traffic on 427 miles to all traffic, including administrative use.
 - Change the use and restrict 39 miles, of the 466 miles of open roads being closed, to administrative use only (i.e., for use by permit and the Forest Service to monitor and carry out day-to-day resource management activities, as needed).
- Add 16 miles of unauthorized routes (i.e., user created roads) to the system as roads. The majority of these additional routes are short spur roads that originate at a main or secondary road, which provide access to campsites and other recreation opportunities.

Alternative 4

To meet the Purpose and Need for Action, the following actions were proposed under Alternative 4:

- Designate a road system on the NKRD with approximately 1,476 miles of roads open to motor vehicle use by the public.
 - Amend the Forest Plan to prohibit motorized travel off of designated routes on the district, except for roads identified as open on the MVUM.
- Close approximately 376 miles of system roads to motorized use by the public.
 - Eliminate motorized traffic on 337 miles to all traffic, including administrative use.
 - Change the use and restrict 39 miles, of the 376 miles of open roads being closed, to administrative use only (i.e., for use by permit and the Forest Service to monitor and carry out day-to-day resource management activities, as needed).
- Add 16 miles of unauthorized routes (i.e., user created roads) to the system as roads. The majority of these additional routes are short spur roads that originate at a main or secondary road, which provide access to campsites and other recreation opportunities.
- Designate corridors on all system roads; one mile off either side, to allow motorized cross country travel in order to retrieve a legally harvested mule deer, elk, or bison during any hunting season.
- Designate corridors of 300 feet from either side of 99 miles of specified roads for the sole purpose of motorized dispersed camping (see Table 3).
- Designate corridors of 100 feet from either side of 104 miles of specified roads for the sole purpose of motorized dispersed camping (see Table 3).

DECISION

Based on the EA completed for this project and comments received from scoping and public review of the EA and proposed action (including Native American tribes and other government agencies), it is my decision to select and implement Alternative 2, hereafter referred to as the Selected Alternative. The Selected Alternative would result in a designated road system on the NKRD with approximately 1,476 miles of roads open to motor vehicle use by the public, including the newly added 16 miles of short road segments. Thirty-nine miles of road (not included in the total miles mentioned above) will be restricted to administrative use only and closed to the public except by permit, allowing limited use for administrative purposes such as continued administration of range permits and timber sale contracts.

My decision includes a non-significant amendment to the Kaibab National Forest Land Management Plan (see Appendix 1 to DN-FONSI, pp. 25-26) to make the plan compliant with the TMR, and will result in the publication of a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) showing those roads, trails and areas designated for motor vehicle use on the NKRD.

Features of the Selected Alternative

To meet the purpose and need for action in accordance with the Travel Management Rule, implementation of Selected Alternative, (Alternative 2) will do the following:

- Designate a road system on the NKRD with approximately 1,476 miles of roads open to motor vehicle use by the public.
 - Amend the Forest Plan to prohibit motorized travel off of designated routes on the NKRD, except as identified on the MVUM.
- Close 376 miles of system roads to motorized use.
 - Eliminate vehicular traffic on 337 miles to all traffic, including administrative use.
 - Change the use and restrict 39 miles, of the 376 miles of open roads being closed, to administrative use only (i.e., for use by permit and the Forest Service to monitor and carry out day-to-day resource management activities, as needed).
- Add approximately 16 miles of short spur roads to the designated system. These routes are user created routes and have historically provided access to the Forest for a variety of recreational activities including motorized dispersed camping.
- Allow the limited use of motor vehicles within one mile of all designated system roads (except where prohibited) to retrieve a downed bison or elk by an individual who has legally taken that animal:
 - Legally harvested elk or bison may be retrieved during the appropriate season as designated by the AZGFD, and for 24 hours following each season.
 - Only one vehicle (one trip in and one trip out) would be allowed for Motorized Big Game Retrieval (MBGR) per harvested animal (i.e., bison or elk).
 - Hunters will be required to use the most direct and least ground disturbing route in and out of the area to accomplish the retrieval.
 - Motorized big game retrieval (MGBR) would not be allowed in any existing off-road travel restricted area, or when conditions are such that travel would cause negative resource impacts.
- Designate corridors of 300 feet from either side of 99 miles of specified roads for the sole purpose of motorized dispersed camping.
- Designate corridors of 100 feet from either side of 104 miles of specified roads for the sole purpose of motorized dispersed camping.

The Selected Alternative would result in a designated road system on the NKRD with approximately 1,476 miles of roads open to motor vehicle use by the public, including the newly added 16 miles of short road segments. Thirty-nine miles of road (not included in the total miles mentioned above) will be restricted to administrative use only and closed to the public except by permit, allowing limited use for administrative purposes such as permittee access and continued administration of range permits and timber sale contracts.



Fuelwood Gathering and Special Forest Products Management Strategy

Fuelwood and Special Forest Product (SFP) collection on the NKRK are popular and necessary permitted activities for many local users of the National Forest. The TMR, 36 CFR Part 212, exempts permitted activities. Section 212.51 states that motor vehicle use that is specifically authorized under a written authorization issued under federal law or regulations are exempted from route and area designations.

Motorized uses that occur under permitted authority may allow for motorized use on non-designated routes or areas if it occurs under the terms of the permit. Therefore, since the selection of any of the action alternatives would not prohibit motorized travel occurring under an authorized permit (i.e., such as for the purposes of collecting fuel wood) this did not make a difference in selecting one alternative over the other. The NKRK will continue to offer fuelwood and SFP permits to meet local demands. The District will also continue to accommodate the collection of special forest products and fuelwood by Native Americans for traditional use as stated in the existing Memorandum of Understanding and law, regulation, and policy.

Cross country motorized travel for fuelwood and SFP gathering within the ponderosa pine and mixed conifer vegetation types (approximately 268,861 acres) would be allowed under the terms and conditions of the permit. However, certain resources will be protected by eliminating cross country motorized fuelwood and SFP gathering in certain areas, such as within the pinyon-juniper vegetation type. For persons holding a valid government permit (permittee), fuelwood/SFP gathering will continue to be permitted on the NKRK, provided the permittee follows the terms and conditions of the permit:

- Within pinyon-juniper vegetated areas, the permittee does not conduct motorized travel off of designated open system roads (except for roadside parking) and is in compliance with permit stipulations; or,
- Within designated ponderosa-pine and mixed conifer areas, the permittee may be authorized one-trip in and one-trip out for off road travel for collection of fuelwood or SFP. (Note: permits do not allow for scouting or locating fuelwood and SFP using motorized cross country travel; only gathering or collection.); and,
- During periods of wet-weather or moist conditions, motorized travel off of designated open roads is restricted if such travel would result in damage to soil or vegetation (i.e., when conditions are wet and muddy and would result in rutting or track-out of mud onto the designated open system of roads).

Areas that allow fuelwood/SFP collection off of the designated open road system through the issuance of a valid government permit will continue to be monitored for potential future impacts to resources. Future conditions may change from time to time; therefore, it is important to defer to the current permit terms and conditions for fuelwood and SFP gathering.

Mitigation Measures Specific to the Selected Alternative

Mitigation measures were developed to ensure environmental effects remain at acceptable levels during implementation of the project (see EA, Chapter 2, “Mitigation Measures” section). The Forest Service will apply the following mitigation measures to the Selected Alternative:

- Prohibit the use of motor vehicles for dispersed camping or for the purpose of retrieving legally taken big game when it results in damage to natural and cultural resources and/or compromises the ability of the Forest Service to meet management objectives.
- Prohibit the use of motor vehicle cross country driving to gather fuelwood in areas within the pinyon-juniper vegetation type in order to minimize damage to cultural resources, sensitive plants, and soils. [Note: there are specific areas within the pinyon-juniper vegetation type where fuelwood gathering may be allowed, but would be required to undergo or be covered under a separate analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.]
- Implement Appendix B “Design Features, Best Management Practices, and Mitigation Measures” in the “Final Environmental Impact Statement for Integrated Treatment of Noxious or Invasive Weeds on the Coconino, Kaibab, and Prescott National Forests within Coconino, Gila, Mojave, and Yavapai Counties, Arizona” (Forest Service 2005).
- Provide operator information and ethics guidance for OHV riders at portals located at main access points on the District, on the Motor Vehicle Use Maps, and in printed materials developed about travel management on the KNF.

Monitoring Specific to the Selected Alternative

Monitoring entails the gathering of information and observation of management activities to ensure that Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines as well as the objectives of the project are being met. Forest Plan monitoring and evaluation items will be implemented where appropriate. Additional monitoring needs were also compiled for this project to validate assumptions used in this planning process, and to verify that the project is being implemented as intended. This analysis includes the following project specific monitoring:

- Corridors with limited use of motor vehicles for the purposes of dispersed camping and big game retrieval will be monitored to assess for damage to natural and cultural resources and/or frequently occurring actions that compromise the ability of the Forest Service to meet management objectives.
 - ✓ If soil damage and/or excessive damage to vegetation are discovered, the Forest Service will take the necessary action to move the corridors into compliance with the Forest Plan. This may include temporarily or permanently closing corridors to motorized vehicle use. All permanent closure proposals will follow the required NEPA process.

- Designated roads as well as closed roads will be monitored periodically for ruts, erosion, or sedimentation of water bodies. This monitoring will occur in conjunction with other project or management activities.
 - ✓ If damage, erosion, or sedimentation of water bodies is discovered, the Forest Service may repair or upgrade the roads. Temporary or permanent closures of roads may be necessary. Decommissioning or obliteration of closed roads (i.e., block access, rip compaction, re-vegetate) may be necessary. Decisions regarding decommissioning or obliteration are outside the scope of this project; all closure, decommissioning, or obliteration proposals will follow the required NEPA process.
- Staff will continue to do annual invasive exotic weed inventory and monitoring in conjunction with other project or management activities. Areas targeted for weed surveys will include all roads and dispersed camping corridors.
 - ✓ If weed populations are discovered, the Forest Service may temporarily close specific roads, or corridors for motorized dispersed camping or motorized big game retrieval, until the weeds are controlled.
- Known rare plant populations will be monitored periodically for impacts. Surveys for new populations of rare plants will be conducted periodically in conjunction with other project and management work in the area.
 - ✓ If new rare plant populations are discovered, the Forest Service may close specific roads, road segments, and dispersed camping corridors, or prohibit the use of motorized vehicles for the retrieval of legally taken big game in the area. Road or area closures or road decommissioning may be needed if motorized vehicle travel is harming or has the potential to harm rare plants. All closure proposals will follow the required NEPA process.
- Monitor motor vehicle use for compliance with the Motorized Vehicle Use Map and Forest closures. Adjust management strategies as needed to increase compliance.

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

I made my decision based on the best science and information available, and carefully considered applicable laws, regulations and policy. I also considered the information disclosed in the EA, the Forest Plan and the project record. I considered how the alternatives in the EA met the stated Purpose and Need for Action, and how they addressed the key issues. I carefully considered public, tribal governments, and State and other Federal agencies' comments. In summary, my decision to select Alternative 2 is based on the following factors:

1. How the alternative meets the Purpose and Need for Action.
2. How the alternative addresses the Key Issues developed from scoping.
3. How the alternative affects economic, social, and environmental resources.
4. How the alternative responds to public comment.

Meeting the Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of this action is to improve the management of motorized vehicle use on National Forest System lands on the NKRD in accordance with the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212, 251 and 261). The action is needed to:

- **Amend the Forest Plan to prohibit motor vehicle use off the designated system of roads, trails, and areas on the District, except as displayed on the MVUM.** Currently, the Forest Plan allows for motorized travel off of Forest roads on the NKRD. Amending the Forest Plan will bring travel management policies into compliance with the TMR.
- **Reduce adverse resource impacts caused by roads and motorized cross country travel in order to maintain and restore the health of ecosystems and watersheds.** Some existing system roads are creating unacceptable resource damage while cross country travel has resulted in the creation of unauthorized roads, many of which can damage and/or provide unwanted motorized access to sensitive resources on the NKRD.
- **Specify the appropriate uses of motor vehicles on the designated road system and provide opportunities for motorized dispersed camping and motorized retrieval of legally taken big game (bison and elk) animals.** These popular activities each present social and environmental implications that need to be addressed in the implementation of the rule. Road designations and the accommodation of recreation opportunities must meet the social, environmental, and safety criteria outlined in the rule. Cooperation with State agencies in achieving game and habitat management objectives while protecting Forest resources is directed by the Forest Plan and other regional and national guidance.

I find that Alternative 1 (the No Action alternative) does not comply with the Purpose and Need for Action since it would continue with the current management of the District transportation system and not implement the Travel Management Rule. Implementation of Alternative 1 would not restrict motor vehicle use or make any needed changes to the transportation system, and motorized cross country travel would continue to be allowed, except in the areas currently closed to off road vehicle travel (e.g., existing roads would remain open and unchanged). Motorized dispersed camping and motorized big game retrieval would continue to be allowed across the District. Unauthorized routes would continue to be available for public use, and would likely increase in number. The NKRD would continue to restrict travel on and off designated roads during periods of wet weather to reduce rutting and track-out onto the existing road system. A Forest Plan Amendment would not be included under the No Action alternative to prohibit cross country travel, and language in the Forest Plan would remain unchanged.

After careful review and consideration, I find that the action alternatives analyzed in the EA, including the Selected Alternative, meet the Purpose and Need for Action and the requirements of the Travel Management Rule. However, I believe the Selected Alternative best addresses the Purpose and Need for Action by keeping open 1,476 miles of road for public use and by reducing adverse resource impacts on 376 miles of roads and substantially reducing motorized cross



country travel while continuing to provide a variety of recreational opportunities and other resource needs. The Selected Alternative balances multiple uses such as fuelwood gathering, recreation activities (i.e., hunting, hiking, biking, site-seeing), and motorized travel by both off-road and on-road motorized vehicles (cars, trucks, and recreational vehicles), in that it allows for continued use and access to those areas which are, and have been, of value to the public and commercial ventures whom utilize the Kaibab Plateau and the NKRD, yet eliminates or reduces the overall public transportation system to protect resources in accordance with TMR.

Addressing Key Issues

The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) used scoping comments from the public, Tribal governments, State and other Federal agencies to identify the key issues to be analyzed. Four key issues were identified for this project and those issues, along with the indicator(s) of each issue are described in Chapter 1. Below is a brief summary of how the alternatives responded to each key issue and indicator.

Alternative 1 – No Action

Issue #1: The proposed action would allow for motorized dispersed camping corridors in several areas across the district, potentially leading to additional resource damage in those areas.

Alternative 1 would allow for continued motorized dispersed camping across the entire District, except in congressionally-designated wilderness and other prohibited areas. Cross country travel for purposes of dispersed camping and other activities would continue.

Issue #2: The proposed action would prohibit motorized big game retrieval for mule deer, thus restricting motorized recreation opportunities for hunters.

Motorized big game retrieval would continue under Alternative 1 in all areas of the District where motorized travel is not already prohibited. There would be no restrictions on species for motorized big game retrieval, and motorized cross country travel would continue.

Issue #3: The proposed action would allow motorized big game retrieval, creating opportunities for additional resource damage away from roads in large areas across the District.

Alternative 1 would allow for continued cross country travel for any purpose, including for purposes of motorized big game retrieval. Motorized big game retrieval would only be limited in areas with current prohibitions on motorized travel.

Issue #4: The proposed action does not close enough miles of road to protect wildlife and plant habitats.

Alternative 1 provides for 1,852 miles of National Forest System roads open to motorized use. There would be few restrictions on motorized recreation opportunities, and motorized cross country travel would continue. This alternative would not restrict access on any roads

identified as having resource concerns. There would be no change in road density, which would remain at 1.81 miles of road per square mile on the District.

Overall, Alternative 1 (the No-Action alternative) does not meet the stated Purpose and Need for Action and does not adequately address all of the Key Issues. Alternative 1 would not bring the District into compliance with the Travel Management Rule and would not make any changes to the District's transportation system to address resource concerns. Compared with the Selected Alternative and other alternatives analyzed in detail, implementing Alternative 1 would respond the best to Issue 2 because it would keep the current condition of having unrestricted travel and retain the most miles of road for public use. This Alternative is reflective of many comments we received by the public who desire to continue to travel cross country and not change the District's transportation system. However, Alternative 1 would not address Issues 1, 3, or 4 because it does not restrict cross country travel for any purpose. Motorized dispersed camping and motorized big game retrieval would not be used sparingly and user created routes are projected to increase across the District.

Alternative 2 – Selected Alternative and Proposed Action

Issue #1: The proposed action would allow for motorized dispersed camping corridors in several areas across the district, potentially leading to additional resource damage in those areas.

The Selected Alternative includes dispersed camping corridors of 300 feet from either side of the road on 99 miles of roads, and 100 feet from either side of the road on 104 miles of roads. This total represents 14% of the roads open under this alternative. On the remaining 1,273 miles of roads, roadside parking for any purpose (including camping) would be restricted to within 30 feet of the road. The area open to motorized dispersed camping under this alternative would be 20,382 acres.

Issue #2: The proposed action would prohibit motorized big game retrieval for mule deer, thus restricting motorized recreation opportunities for hunters.

The Selected Alternative prohibits motorized big game retrieval for mule deer. Motorized big game retrieval would only be allowed for elk and bison legally harvested during or up to 24 hours after the close of designated hunting seasons. Under this alternative, hunters would be allowed to travel up to one mile off any National Forest System road for purposes of retrieving a downed elk or bison, except where motorized travel is otherwise prohibited (e.g., Pedio cactus conservation areas).

Issue #3: The proposed action would allow motorized big game retrieval, creating opportunities for additional resource damage away from roads in large areas across the district.

Motorized big game retrieval under the Selected Alternative would be allowed for elk and bison legally harvested during or up to 24 hours after the close of designated hunting seasons. Under this alternative, hunters would be allowed to travel up to one mile off any National Forest System road for purposes of retrieving a downed elk or bison, except where motorized travel is otherwise prohibited (e.g., Pedio cactus conservation areas).

Issue #4: The proposed action does not close enough miles of road to protect wildlife and plant habitats.

The Selected Alternative includes 1,476 miles of open roads. It would close 376 miles of roads to all public use and motorized travel. It would eliminate vehicular traffic on 337 miles to all traffic, including administrative use, and change approximately 39 miles of roads currently open to motorized travel to be open for administrative use only. The Selected Alternative would open or add 16 miles of unauthorized routes to the system. These are short spur routes that have historically served as access to recreation opportunities such as dispersed camping on the district. The density of roads on the district would be 1.44 miles of road per square mile of National Forest System land.

Overall, I find that the Selected Alternative is consistent with the Travel Management Rule and meets the stated Purpose and Need for Action. I find it adequately addresses the Key Issues identified and the comments that were submitted during this planning process. It prohibits motorized travel off the designated roads system except as identified on the MVUM and reduces the potential risks for effects to natural and cultural resources.

The Selected Alternative does not respond to Issue #1 as well as Alternative 3. However, the Selected Alternative responds directly to the number of commenters who sought more and varied motorized dispersed camping options while adhering to the principle of limited use of dispersed camping corridors.

Compared with Alternatives 1 and 4, my decision to select Alternative 2 would allow for motorized big game retrieval sparingly (Issue #3). Current conditions and existing policy allow an unlimited number of trips for all aspects of hunting that including scouting, MBGR for all species with no limit on the distance traveled from system roads, no restrictions on seasons or weather conditions and no requirement for use of a direct route. The Selected Alternative applies limits on all of these currently unlimited activities. The Selected Alternative does accommodate concerns from Issue #2, as MBGR would only be allowed for legally harvested elk and bison.

The Selected Alternative responds better than Alternative 1 and equally to Alternative 4 in terms of miles of closed road. Overall, 376 miles of road would be closed to public motorized use under the Selected Alternative. Alternative 3 would close an additional 92 miles of roads.

When considered in combination with the effects of limiting cross country travel to dispersed camping corridors and motorized big game retrieval, the Selected Alternative will have substantial beneficial effects over the current condition and I find that the Selected Alternative is the most balanced alternative on both the social and environmental scale.

Alternative 3

Issue #1: The proposed action would allow for motorized dispersed camping corridors in several areas across the district, potentially leading to additional resource damage in those areas.

Under Alternative 3, there would be no designated corridors for motorized dispersed camping. On all 1,386 miles of roads, roadside parking for any purpose (including camping) would be restricted to within 30 feet of the road. The area open to motorized dispersed camping under this alternative would be 10,516 acres.

Issue #2: The proposed action would prohibit motorized big game retrieval for mule deer, thus restricting motorized recreation opportunities for hunters.

Alternative 3 does not include an allowance for motorized big game retrieval for any species. Hunters would be prohibited from driving cross country for the purposes of retrieving any downed animal.

Issue #3: The proposed action would allow motorized big game retrieval, creating opportunities for additional resource damage away from roads in large areas across the district.

Alternative 3 does not include an allowance for motorized big game retrieval for any species. Hunters would be prohibited from driving cross country for the purposes of retrieving any downed animal.

Issue #4: The proposed action does not close enough miles of road to protect wildlife and plant habitats.

Alternative 3 includes 1,386 miles of open roads. It would close 466 miles of roads to all public use and motorized travel. It would change approximately 39 miles of roads currently open to motorized travel, to be open to administrative use only. The density of roads on the District would be 1.35 miles of road per square mile of National Forest System lands.

Alternative 3 meets the Purpose and Need for Action. It responds directly to Issue #1, and is the only alternative that does not include camping corridors. It also would prohibit all motorized big game retrieval, which relates directly to Issue #3. Alternative 3 also would close 466 miles of roads to public use, compared to 376 miles in the Selected Alternative and Alternative 4, with no closures under Alternative 1. With respect to Issue #'s 1 and 3, Alternative 3 responds best.

Alternative 3 would not provide for MBGR in any form, and therefore does not respond to Issue #2.

Alternative 3 responds directly to issues raised in written comments. However, it does not address the desires for access, camping opportunities, and MBGR opportunities that were expressed throughout all of our public involvement efforts. It would provide the strictest implementation of the Travel Management Rule on an environmental scale, but falls short of reaching the social and environmental balance afforded by the Selected Alternative.

Alternative 4

Issue #1: The proposed action would allow for motorized dispersed camping corridors in several areas across the district, potentially leading to additional resource damage in those areas.

Alternative 4 includes dispersed camping corridors of 300 feet from either side of the road on 99 miles of roads, and 100 feet from either side of the road on 104 miles of roads. This total represents 14% of the roads open under this alternative. On the remaining 1,273 miles of roads, roadside parking for any purpose (including camping) would be restricted to within 30 feet of the road. The area open to motorized dispersed camping under this alternative would be 20,382 acres.

Issue #2: The proposed action would prohibit motorized big game retrieval for mule deer, thus restricting motorized recreation opportunities for hunters.

Alternative 4 includes a provision allowing motorized big game retrieval for mule deer. Motorized big game retrieval would only be allowed for elk, bison and mule deer legally harvested during or up to 24 hours after the close of designated hunting seasons. Under this alternative, hunters would be allowed to travel up to one mile off any National Forest System road for purposes of retrieving a downed elk, bison, or mule deer, except where motorized travel is otherwise prohibited (e.g., Pedio cactus conservation areas).

Issue #3: The proposed action would allow motorized big game retrieval, creating opportunities for additional resource damage away from roads in large areas across the district.

Motorized big game retrieval under Alternative 4 would be allowed for elk, bison, and mule deer legally harvested during or up to 24 hours after the close of designated hunting seasons. Under this alternative, hunters would be allowed to travel up to one mile off any National Forest System road for purposes of retrieving a downed elk, bison, or mule deer, except where motorized travel is otherwise prohibited (e.g., Pedio cactus conservation areas).

Issue #4: The proposed action does not close enough miles of road to protect wildlife and plant habitats.

Alternative 4 includes 1,476 miles of open roads. It would close 376 miles of roads to all public use and motorized travel. It would change approximately 39 miles of roads currently open to motorized travel, to be open to administrative use only. The density of roads on the District would be 1.44 miles of road per square mile of National Forest System lands.

Alternative 4 also meets the Purpose and Need for Action. This alternative provides the same responses to Issues 1, 3, and 4 as the Selected Alternative. It responds more directly than Alternatives 2 and 3 to Issue #2, but less directly than Alternative 1, which would allow unlimited MBGR in all areas not prohibited to motorized use.

Overall, the benefits of Alternative 4 are similar to those of the Selected Alternative. However, Alternative 4 is less effective in meeting the intent of limited and sparing application of MBGR, for the protection of resources (i.e., archeological sites, control of invasive species, and protection of sensitive areas). Damage under Alternative 4 would be higher due to the numbers of annual cross country trips for retrieval of mule deer. Under the Selected Alternative, the MBGR trips would typically be less than 20, compared to several hundred trips under Alternative 4.

Effects to Economic, Social, and Environmental Resources

Given the NKRDR's proximity to Grand Canyon National Park, I took special note of the variety of multiple land uses occurring on the District. Activities such as dispersed camping, special use permit motorized tours and outfitter guides, big game hunting, cattle grazing, fuelwood gathering, and Native American cultural activities fill a niche for the local communities such as Fredonia, Arizona and Kanab, Utah. The District has a long-term relationship working with the Grand Canyon National Park and Tribes to ensure that forest users are well aware of the forest boundaries and motorized vehicle use rules of each area.

The EA described the present conditions of the environment on the NKRDR. It also disclosed the probable consequences (impacts and effects) of implementing each Alternative (Chapter 2) on selected environmental resources (Chapter 3). The EA provides an analytical basis to compare the Alternatives.

The Selected Alternative can be implemented without significant adverse effects on economic, social and natural resources as documented in the EA (Chapter 3). There are no expected significant adverse effects on Transportation Management, Recreation and Scenic Resources, the Social and Economic Environment, Soil and Watershed Health, Wildlife, Noxious and Invasive Weeds, Sensitive Plant Species, Cultural Resources, Vegetation Management, Fire and Fuels Management, or Range resources, due in part to an extensive list of Mitigation Measures (see Chapter 2). Any effects are expected to be minor and short in duration. Thus, the Selected Alternative will not affect either the short-term or long-term productivity of the Kaibab National Forest, in terms of sustainability of the resources or outputs associated with them.

Overall, I find that the Selected Alternative has no significant resource or social impacts (EA, Chapter 3). Furthermore, there are no significant adverse cumulative effects expected (EA, Chapter 3). The Mitigation Measures for the Selected Alternative were specifically designed to additionally minimize resource impacts on wildlife, recreation visitors, and other resources (EA, Chapter 2).

PUBLIC COMMENT

I want to thank the individuals, organizations and agencies that participated and provided comments for this analysis. The input was valuable in helping me make my decision.

Public involvement was a key component in the planning and decision making process (EA, Chapter 1, Public Involvement section). Public comments were received during the scoping period and throughout the planning process. The IDT responded to comments in various ways throughout the NEPA process, including refining alternatives, adding or modifying mitigation and monitoring measures, responding to key issues and enhancing the analysis. Appendix 4 contains the comments received during the comment period and the Forest Service's response to those comments.



The public comments we received on this project were important to me in making my decision. I have reviewed the many public and agency comments we received and the responses to those comments. I have also reviewed the changes made to the EA from when it was sent out for Comment to the final EA. I want to specifically address some of the comments here in order to better explain my decision.

Significance

Some of the comments received stated that we should prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for this project given the size and scope of the area. In my review of the EA, I find that it appropriately and adequately defines the effects from the federal action and the effects from the non-federal activities. I carefully considered that the NKRD is bordered by Grand Canyon National Park and lands managed by the Arizona Strip office of the Bureau of Land Management to ensure that any effects defined from the federal action and non-federal activities are not significant. I also considered that the NKRD has worked with Grand Canyon National Park, the Bureau of Land Management, and Tribal governments to ensure that boundaries were well established and respective land use rules are enforced.

The analysis in the EA was conducted in compliance with NEPA. Detailed biological, physical and social data were assembled and evaluated in the EA (Chapter 3). Public comments were used to identify key issues (Chapter 1). The Forest Service used an IDT of qualified professionals to conduct a thorough analysis, and the effects analysis in Chapter 3 consistently indicated no adverse significant effects were expected. The cumulative effects analysis (Chapter 3) provides an integrated review of relevant biological, physical, and social components and did not indicate significant adverse effects. The best available and high quality scientific information was used throughout the analysis. Comments received did not refer to or cite better quality information that was relevant to this project that should have been considered. I find the information presented in the EA allows for a meaningful analysis of the environmental impacts of the proposed action and selected alternative by presenting the information in comparative form, sharply defining the issues and providing a clear basis for choice.

Alternatives

We received some comments regarding the range of alternatives and suggestions for additional alternatives. The final EA considered these alternatives, analyzed one of them but did not consider the others in detail (Chapter 2, Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study). I believe that an adequate range of alternatives has been presented in response to public comments that dealt with the key issues as well as the Purpose and Need for Action. Upon review, I agree with the rationale as to why some roads were not added to an alternative to be considered in detail.

Fuelwood

Many comments came in regarding the ability to collect fuelwood. This is a popular and necessary activity on the NKRK. The District will continue to accommodate fuelwood collection through a permit system to meet local demands provided that the permittee only travels off of designated open system roads as allowed by, or as designated in the terms and conditions of the permit. There are restrictions within certain areas for travel off the designated road system within pinyon-juniper vegetated areas and during wet weather, which are stipulated in the fuelwood permit.

In choosing the Selected Alternative, I carefully considered the effects of not being able to travel off road for fuelwood. I am confident that there is an abundant supply of fuelwood that can be found on the District and that the District will continue to meet local demands with implementation of the fuelwood strategy described earlier as part of the features of the Selected Alternative.

Motorized Dispersed Camping

We received comments expressing concern about the motorized dispersed camping corridors included in the proposed action. In response to this issue, we included no corridors in Alternative 3 and evaluated the effects of that approach. The Selected Alternative includes either 300 foot or 100 foot corridors on 203 miles of roads, and would designate 796 spur routes totaling approximately 16 miles in the open road system. These additions are important for meeting the demand for motorized camping opportunities, especially in peak times (e.g., holiday weekends and hunting seasons).

The NKRK was careful and thorough in their evaluation of the potential corridors and spur routes; any areas of resource concern were either eliminated or would be mitigated through implementation. Coupled with campers' ability to park within 30 feet of any open road (unless otherwise prohibited), I expect these changes to reasonably accommodate current and anticipated demand for camping opportunities. I concur with the effects analysis in Chapter 3 of the EA that this approach would be sufficient to reduce the potential for resource damage while providing ample opportunities for motorized dispersed camping.

Motorized Big Game Retrieval

Motorized big game retrieval was also a common topic throughout our public involvement process. Some people wanted MBGR for all species while others commented that it should not be allowed (EA, Appendix 4). In developing the EA we considered a range of alternatives, from alternatives that would continue to allow MBGR for all species to an alternative that would not allow MBGR at all.

One specific concern that arose through public involvement centered on the impacts of MBGR on California condors, a federally listed endangered species. The concern is that without MBGR

for mule deer, more gut piles could potentially be left in the woods, which would increase the likelihood of lead exposure in condors. However, lead exposure to condors is not isolated to the NKRD or to specific game species, but exists with all wildlife dispatched with lead ammunition throughout the condor's range (eastern Nevada, southwestern Arizona, east along the Mogollon Rim to the New Mexico border, and as far north as far as Flaming Gorge Wyoming). On the NKRD, the majority of the deer hunts occur September through November, when the deer are on the winter range located on the east and west sides of the District. These areas are predominately pinyon-juniper with cryptobiotic soils, which are vulnerable to erosion from cross country travel, including big game retrieval. These areas also typically have high concentrations of archaeological sites, which are generally vulnerable to damage from wheeled vehicles. In reaching this decision, I considered the potential effects of MBGR on wildlife along with other resources affected by implementing the rule, and concluded that the Selected Alternative provides the best balance of protection for the full range of resources.

In review of the EA, I find that the Selected Alternative will greatly reduce the potential for damage to all resources of concern, compared to the current condition. While Alternative 3 would provide the greatest protection, I am fully aware of the impacts of allowing MBGR with this decision (EA, Chapter 3), and view this decision as directly within the intent of the Travel Management Rule. Allowing MBGR for elk and bison only will assist the District in meeting management objectives outlined in the Forest Plan. I find the potential impacts are not significant and that the mitigation and monitoring measures incorporated into this decision will adequately reduce the risk of resource damage.

SUMMARY OF DECISION RATIONALE

In making my decision, I considered the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of implementing the Selected Alternative. My decision requires the implementation of mitigation measures to help ensure protection of scenic resources, soils, watershed conditions, wildlife habitat, cultural resources and other resources. I find the mitigation measures will be effective in avoiding or minimizing environmental harm. These mitigation measures, combined with monitoring, ensure the project's objectives will be achieved in an environmentally sensitive manner.

The Selected Alternative best addresses the project's Purpose and Need for Action and responds best to the issues as a whole. When compared to the other alternatives, the Selected Alternative is the most inclusive and complete with regards to the incorporation of site-specific comments from individuals, advocacy groups, and other government entities. As such, I believe that it achieves the best balance between competing interests.

Scientific information and assessments along with many situation-specific judgments are incorporated into this final decision, reflecting the intent to balance our multiple use and resource protection responsibilities. The Selected Alternative will continue to provide for motorized recreation opportunities while protecting the forest resources.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

I find the Selected Alternative is consistent with applicable Federal, State, and local laws and requirements for the protection of the environment and with agency policy and direction. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA. The Selected Alternative is also consistent with the 1988 Kaibab National Forest Land Management Plan, as amended.

I have reviewed the environmental effects described in the EA and evaluated whether the alternative I have selected constitutes a significant effect on the quality of the human environment or whether the environmental impacts would be significant based on their context and intensity as defined by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) using the criteria in the implementing regulations (40 CFR 1508.27). I have determined that an environmental impact statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

I have determined that the implementation of the Selected Alternative will not result in any anticipated effects that exceed the level at which a significant effect on the human, biological, or physical environment in terms of context or intensity would occur. Both beneficial and adverse effects have been considered. Beneficial effects have not been used to balance, mask, or off-set adverse effects because there are no significant adverse effects. Any effects from the Selected Alternative are expected to be minor as all actions incorporate monitoring, best management practices and mitigations. These effects are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique and unknown risks. The action will not, in relation with other actions, cause cumulatively significant impacts.

CONTEXT:

Context is the scale of aspect. The EA considers the effects of this project on multiple resources at multiple scales of analysis (EA, Chapters 2 & 3) and fully discloses them. The North Kaibab Ranger District Travel Management Project is Forest/site specific or a local project and by itself would not cause any significant adverse effects nationally, regionally, or at the statewide level. Both short-term and long-term effects of the project have been considered, including cumulative effects that are limited to the North Kaibab Ranger District on the Kaibab Plateau (EA, Chapter 3).

INTENSITY:

The following discussion is organized around the ten (10) intensity factors, which refers to severity of impact; the intensity of effects considered is in terms of the following:

1) Environmental Effects (Beneficial & Adverse)

For this project there are no known significant irreversible resource commitments or irretrievable losses of timber production, recreation opportunities, wildlife habitats, or soil productivity. The environmental assessment provides sufficient information to determine that this project will not



have any significant adverse impacts and that implementation of the Selected Alternative will be beneficial to natural and cultural resources (EA, Chapter 3).

2) Public Health and Safety

The project activities will comply with all state and federal regulations. There are no adverse effects expected to public health or safety under any of the alternatives (EA, Chapter 3).

3) Unique Characteristics of the Geographic Area

I find there will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the NKRK such as historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, floodplains, wild and scenic rivers, congressionally-designated wilderness or ecologically critical areas. I carefully considered that the NKRK is bordered by Grand Canyon National Park and lands managed by the Arizona Strip office of the Bureau of Land Management to ensure that any effects defined from the federal action and non-federal activities are not significant. I also considered that the NKRK has worked with Grand Canyon National Park, the Bureau of Land Management, and Tribal Governments to ensure that boundaries are well established and respective land use rules are enforced.

The Selected Alternative will have no adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and there is no loss of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources (EA, Chapter 3). Implementation of the Selected Alternative will not change nor negatively or adversely affect approximately 114,209 acres of the NKRK that is currently administratively closed to motorized cross country travel. This includes Kanab Creek and Saddle Mountain Wildernesses, and the several meadow areas already under motorized use restriction. The Selected Alternative is also not likely to adversely affect any ecologically critical areas important to any Management Indicator Species nor any Threatened, Endangered or Sensitive Species found on the District (EA, Chapter 3, “Wildlife” section).

4) Controversy over Effects

I recognize that elements of the Selected Alternative have generated controversy; however, there is no substantiated scientific controversy over the effects as described. The protection of natural and cultural resources as well as the opposing opinions related to the motorized recreation opportunities and non-motorized recreation opportunities were addressed during alternative development (EA, “Public Involvement” and “Issues” sections).

5) Uncertainty

The effects analyses in Chapter 3 of the EA show the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk. Mitigation measures, management requirements, standard practices, and monitoring will ensure effects are within the expected parameters (EA, Chapter 2).

6) Precedent

I find that implementation of the Selected Alternative is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. Making changes to the designated system of roads based on the need to reduce adverse resource impacts does not establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Procedures are in place to periodically review and annually revise the MVUM to accommodate changes to the designated system as a result of future management decisions. Any future actions that alter the designated road system, alter motorized big game retrieval restrictions or affect motorized dispersed camping opportunities will have to be evaluated under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for significant effects.

7) Cumulative Effects

The Selected Alternative was evaluated in the context of other past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions (Appendix 2). When considering other activities within the area affected, the cumulative effects of implementing the Selected Alternative are anticipated to be minor and are not likely to impede the attainment of Forest Plan goals and objectives (EA, Chapter 3). This action does not result in cumulatively significant effects.

8) Sites or Properties on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places

I find that the action will have no adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. (EA, Chapter 3, Cultural Resources). The State Historic Preservation Office concurred with these findings on August 26, 2010.

9) Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species (TES)

The Biological Evaluation (BE) completed for wildlife species determined that the Selected Alternative would not jeopardize the continued existence of California condors. The action would not affect Mexican spotted owls, Mexican spotted owl critical habitat, Sonoran Desert Area bald eagles, and black-footed ferrets because the NKRD is either outside of their range and/or the District lacks suitable habitat. Other species listed under the Endangered Species Act and identified by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for Coconino and/or Mohave Counties would not be affected by the project because the NKRD is either outside of their range and/or the District lacks suitable habitat.

The BE completed for plant species determined that the proposed action will have No Impact upon plant species listed as sensitive. The wildlife BE determined that the proposal will have No Impact upon the majority of the Forest's sensitive species and May Impact individuals of some species but would not cause a trend towards Federal listing or result in loss of viability in the planning area. Species specific information is included within the BE (project record and summarized in EA "Wildlife" section). I concur with the determinations made within these documents.



10) Compliance with Federal, State, or local laws, or for Environmental Protection

The Selected Alternative will not violate Federal, State or local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. The action is consistent with the Kaibab Forest Plan, as amended, with this decision. The Kaibab National Forest conducted extensive government to government consultations with all concerned Tribes (EA Chapter 4).

Summary

I find that the decision and Environmental Assessment are in compliance with all Federal, State, and local environmental protection laws. Based on the EA and the above considerations, I find that the Selected Alternative is not a major action and it will not constitute a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, it does not require the preparation of an environmental impact statement.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to regulations at 36 CFR 215. Those who provided comments during the comment period are eligible to appeal the decision under the regulations. The appeal must be filed (regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, express delivery or messenger service) with the appropriate Appeal Deciding Officer. Submit appeals to:

Corbin L. Newman Jr., Regional Forester
Appeal Deciding Officer
333 Broadway SE,
Albuquerque, NM 87102
Fax: (505) 842-3173
Email: appeals-southwestern-regional-office@fs.fed.us

If hand delivered, the appeal must be received at the above address during business hours (Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. MDT) excluding holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an e-mail message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Adobe (.pdf), or Word (.doc). The appeal must have an identifiable name attached to it. Verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic appeals.

Appeals, including attachments, must be in writing, fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14, and filed (postmarked) within 45 days following the date this notice is published in the Arizona Daily Sun. This publication date is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. When using the electronic mailbox, you will receive an automated reply if the message is received. If you do not receive this automated reply, it is the responsibility of the appellant to ensure the appeal is received by the deadline. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframes provided by any other source.

Individuals or organizations who submitted comments during the comment period specified at 215.6 may appeal this decision.



EXPECTED IMPLEMENTATION DATE

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

CONTACT / ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information concerning this decision, contact:

David Vincelette, Environmental Coordinator
North Kaibab Ranger District
430 S. Main St.
Fredonia, AZ 86022
Phone: (928) 643-7395

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL'S SIGNATURE / DATE SIGNED

I am delegated the authority and am the Responsible Official for the decisions outlined in this Decision Notice. This decision summarizes information described more completely in the Environmental Assessment. For more detailed information, please refer to the EA and project record.

MICHAEL R. WILLIAMS
Forest Supervisor/ Kaibab National Forest

9/17/2012
Date

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY).
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Appendix 1 – Forest Plan Amendment

Application of Significance Criteria

The Forest Service Land and Resource Management Planning Manual (FSM 1926.5) provides a framework for consideration when determining if a proposed change to a Forest Plan is not significant or significant. The proposed amendment is not significant because it does not significantly alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management or significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goods and services originally projected (dispersed Recreation Visitor Days) for the Kaibab National Forest (AMS 1986).

This standard will improve the District's ability to meet the resource goals and objectives of the Forest Plan. The original EIS for the Forest Plan recognized that "ORV use will increase and future closures or restrictions may be needed for protection of natural resources" (p. 104).

The 1988 Forest Plan, as amended, provides direction to "Establish off-road vehicle [ORV], (corrected to off highway vehicle [OHV]) closures as needed to maintain other resource objectives. Manage OHV use to provide OHV opportunities while protecting resources and minimizing conflicts with other users" (Kaibab Forest Plan p. 18).

The proposed amendment will allow the North Kaibab Ranger District to provide ample services, including opportunities for recreational activities (EA, Chapter 3). The 36 CFR 212.51(a) exemptions allow the District to authorize exceptions for permitted activities and administrative uses which mitigate potential effects to other uses and management objectives of the Forest Plan.

Conclusion on Significance or Non-Significance

Based on the criteria set forth in FSM 1926.51 and 1926.52, I have determined that this amendment is not significant because it will not significantly alter the multiple-use goals and objectives in the plan. Although this amendment applies to the entire North Kaibab Ranger District, the change affects only a small proportion of recreation use (see Chapter 3 of the EA).

Kaibab Forest Plan Amendment

Since the 1988 plan (as amended) permits cross country travel in most areas of the North Kaibab Ranger District, and does not incorporate the MVUM as the enforcement tool for motorized travel designation, the plan would be amended to implement the MVUM provisions of the Travel Management Rule for the North Kaibab Ranger District.

To provide for consistency between the plan and the Travel Management Rule, the following amendment is made:

Add the following Forest-wide Standard (page 34-1; just above "Other Forest-wide Guidelines"):

7. Motor vehicle use off the designated system is prohibited on the North Kaibab Ranger District, except as identified on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM).

Appendix 1 – Forest Plan Amendment (continued)

Correction to the Forest Plan

The following direction regarding off-highway vehicle use in the Forest Plan would be corrected. This does not constitute an amendment because the intent of the Forest Plan direction is not being changed.

Change Table 7 (page 11 of the Forest Plan) to the following:

Table 7. Acres Closed to Off-Highway Vehicle Use.*		
	This Plan (as amended)	Previous Plan
Acres Closed	1,565,734	11,392
* These figures do not include acres of classified wilderness also closed to OHV use or significant landforms on the Forest effectively closed because of rough terrain.		