

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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MOTORIZED ACCESS AND TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Umatilla National Forest
Pomeroy Ranger District
Asotin, Columbia, and Garfield Counties, WA
Wallowa County, OR

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Umatilla National Forest
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Motorized Access and Travel Management Plan
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MOTORIZED ACCESS AND TRAVEL MANAGEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
Pomeroy Ranger District
Umatilla National Forest

CHAPTER I
PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

PROPOSED ACTION

The Pomeroy Ranger District proposes to implement, over a period of three to five years, depending on budget considerations, a Motorized Access and Travel Management Plan for managing motorized vehicle use on the District's roads, trails and land. This plan is tiered to the Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), using Forest Plan direction, public input, and interdisciplinary team recommendations to formulate a program which is responsive to public desires, while implementing Forest Plan direction to protect and manage resources. The result should be a transportation system which provides for a broad mix of both motorized and nonmotorized recreation opportunities, while moving toward the Forest Plan's stated desired future condition (DFC) of about half of the Forest roads closed to motorized traffic (FP 4-7) in order to "maintain quality habitat and provide security for deer and elk" (FP 4-13).

Under the proposed action most major Forest access roads (arterials and collectors) would be open to public traffic. Most local roads (predominantly single purpose logging roads) would be closed to motorized traffic, particularly in areas identified by Forest Plan management area direction as elk habitat. Roads would be closed with a variety of closure devices from simple signing and/or earth barricades, to guardrail-type barricades, to gates, depending on the purpose of the closure, projected uses, topography, and anticipated level of compliance.

The proposed action also addresses off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on trails and cross country (off-road). The proposal includes some ATV (all terrain vehicle) trail construction projects identified for future planning.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Pomeroy District needs to produce a comprehensive motorized access and travel management (ATM) plan for the non-wilderness portion of the District. This is needed to form a consistent policy which brings the past planning efforts into compliance with the Forest Plan Record of Decision (ROD) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), and Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines. Through this planning process, the District needs to determine, not only which roads to close for wildlife and other resource management purposes, but also which roads (and trails) are to be left open for public access, administration needs, private land access, commodity production. The ATM plan needs to be understandable by both the Forest-using public and Forest Service personnel; be practical and

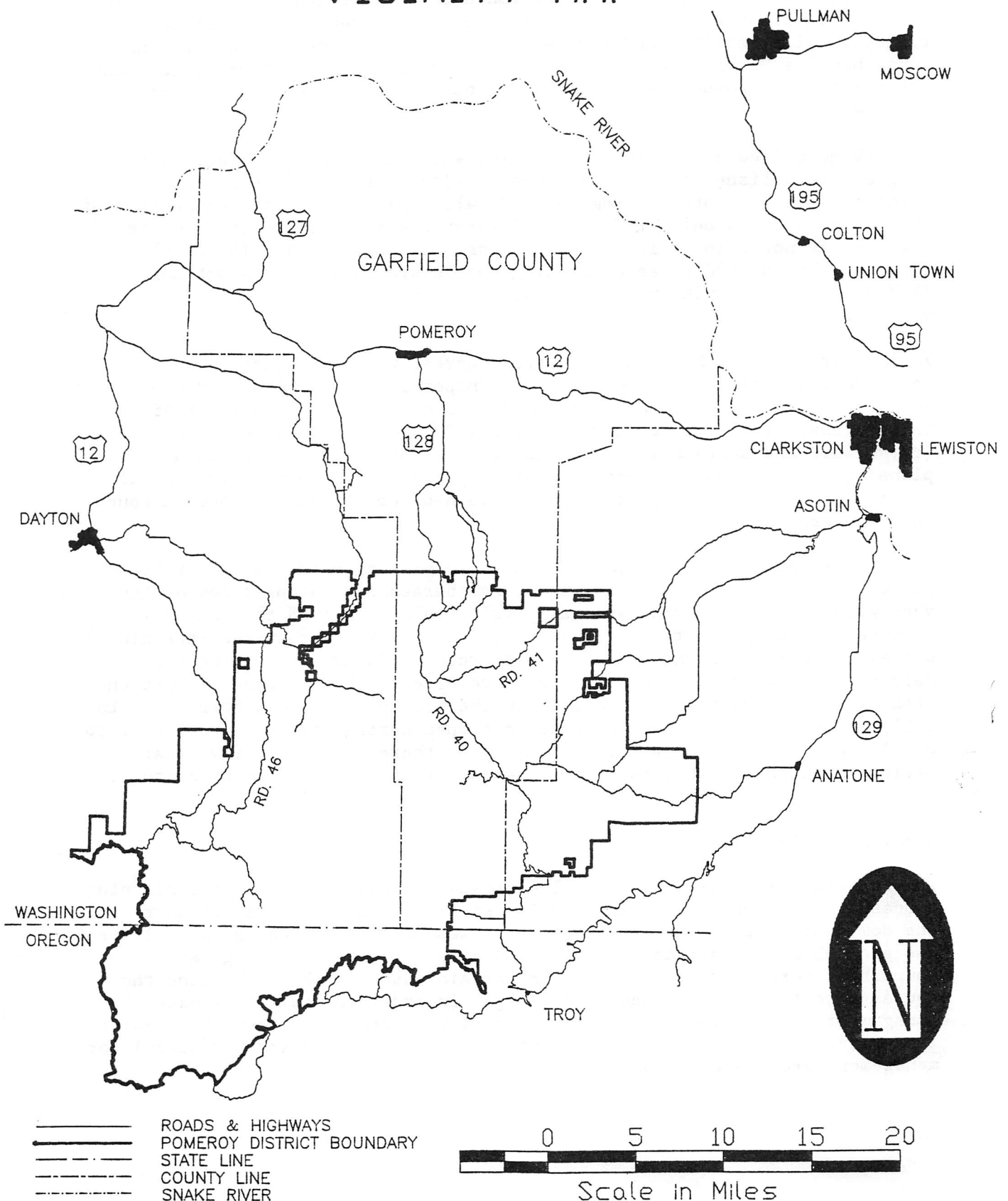
implementable; be enforceable; and be acceptable to the many publics which use the Forest for both their recreation and livelihood.

The Record of Decision (ROD) for the Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP, hereafter referred to as the Forest Plan), signed by the Regional Forester in 1990, states on page 11: "As an element in the overall calculation of HEI (Habitat Effectiveness Index, which is a measure of the quality of elk habitat), open roads also represent an important issue with the publics. Vehicle use is a factor in harassment and disturbance of big game. Explicit in this Plan is a commitment to address the interests of groups and individuals who are concerned with road densities and access on the Forest. ...Motorized Access and Travel Management Plans will be developed on the...districts with the cooperation of local landowners, state agencies, and other members of the public". It further states that "Elk management, other resource objectives, and public needs will 'drive' the process." Direction is thus given to each Ranger District to devise and implement a Motorized Access and Travel Management Plan.

One of the purposes of access management, then, is to lessen disturbance to big game, primarily elk. The Forest Plan (pg 2-9) determined that elk are to be used as an indicator species. In general, land management practices which are good for elk are good for a variety of wildlife species. Improvement of elk habitat is not the only reason for managing roads, however. Access management is needed as a tool for reducing erosion and stream sedimentation caused by roads, improving fish habitat, and reducing road damage and maintenance costs. Road management is also needed to maintain snags and other woody material used by non-game species of wildlife by managing the areas accessible for firewood cutting.

Public desires are also a very important part of access management. If elk security was the only consideration, then closing all roads at the Forest boundary would achieve the desired result. This, of course, would be unacceptable to most people and goes against the Forest Service' mission of multiple use of natural resources and providing public access and recreation opportunities. The Forest Plan states (pg 2-7) that big game hunting is the most popular recreational activity in the Blue Mountains, and the Pomeroy District seems to be no exception. Many hunters have expressed a desire for more road closures to allow more walk-in hunting opportunities. Other hunters want more motorized access for easier hunting and less work in retrieving downed game. Other Forest users want motorized access for activities such as firewood cutting, mushroom and berry picking, or just pleasure driving. While still others want the solitude afforded by less motorized access to pursue non-motorized dispersed recreational activities like hiking, horseback riding, nature observation or wildlife photography. Access and travel management, then, should maintain appropriate amounts and types of motorized access to provide a diversity of recreational experiences for forest users.

UMATILLA NATIONAL FOREST POMEROY RANGER DISTRICT VICINITY MAP



HISTORY OF ACCESS MANAGEMENT ON THE POMEROY DISTRICT

Access and travel management (ATM) planning on the Pomeroy Ranger District has historically been done on a project by project basis. As projects were planned and implemented the transportation system in the project area was reviewed. If the need to manage access on individual roads was identified, road closures or other restrictions would be implemented accordingly. The majority of closures on the District were implemented in order protect the transportation facility and reduce road maintenance costs. To date, no comprehensive District-wide study of the entire transportation system, and its relation to resources, wildlife and public access needs, has been performed.

In 1978 motorized access on the district was dramatically changed when Congress established the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness Area. Although the Wilderness was on both the Pomeroy and Walla Walla Districts, management of the Wilderness was delegated to the Pomeroy District. Motorized access of any kind is not allowed in the Wilderness (36 CFR 261.16). The result is that, of the 352,000 acres comprising the Pomeroy District, about half (177,000 acres) is within Wilderness, and unavailable to motorized vehicles.

In the early 1980s the Pomeroy District agreed with the Washington Department of Wildlife to review the transportation system on certain portions of the District annually, and to propose road closures within these areas. The first closure resulting from this process was the Hogback (rd. # 4302 and surrounding area) hunting season closure. The annual planning process was followed sporadically, and resulted in only a small portion of the District's access and road management being planned through this process.

The Lick - Asotin Cr. winter range area closure began in the mid-1970s to protect wintering deer and elk herds from harassment during times of the year when the animals are especially vulnerable. In 1988 the seasonal closure on a large portion of this area (from Lick Cr. south to Park Ridge) was extended through the end of June to reduce disturbance during the calving and fawning season. This closure order is both a road closure and area closure. All roads are closed in the area during the winter (12/1 to 3/31) and only the main access roads are open during calving season (4/1 to 6/30). At that time it was determined that there would be a five year period in which to study the effectiveness of the calving season closure.

STRATEGY AREAS

The District was divided into twelve strategy areas as part of the planning process. These were determined by Forest Plan management area boundaries. The dominant Forest Plan management area was used as the basis for guiding the general access strategy within each strategy area. Strategy area boundaries were modified slightly in certain cases (such as shifting the boundary to the nearest road or drainage) in order to facilitate ease of management. Following is a description of the strategy areas. The reader is referred to the Forest Plan (Chapter 4, Forest Management Direction) for management area descriptions.

Strategy Area #1 (Skyline): VISUAL (WILDERNESS INFLUENCE)
4.06 sq. mi.

This is the Wilderness influence zone between the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness boundary and Forest roads 46, 64, and 6415. Also included is the area between the 4600-300 road system (Twin Buttes) and the Wilderness boundary. The area has numerous unimproved wheel tracks branching off of the Skyline road. These wheel tracks are generally eyesores and in some places violate the Wilderness boundary. The problem areas have been identified and in 1992 steps were taken to obliterate these wheel tracks. Dominant Forest Plan management areas are A3 and A4 viewsheds, with inclusions of A6 and C1.

Strategy Area #2 (Spangler): OHV RECREATION/WILDLIFE
6.35 sq. mi.

Management area A2, OHV recreation. Includes all of the Spangler Creek drainage. Access strategy will be largely determined by the Spangler OHV Plan.

Strategy Area #3 (Jim Cr.): DEER/ELK WINTER RANGE
3.51 sq. mi.

Composed predominantly of C3, with inclusions of C1 and C5, with a 160 acre piece of private land within the Forest boundary. Management emphasis is deer and elk winter range. Within this area is a 160 acre parcel of private ground in the Jim Cr. drainage which is used for cattle grazing.

Strategy Area #4 (Maloney-Meadow): BIG GAME SUMMER RANGE/TIMBER
30.66 sq. mi.

The dominant management area is C4, deer and elk summer range, with inclusions of C1, C5, A4 and A6, and some private land in the Maloney Mountain area. Boundaries are MA C3 in the northeast, Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness boundary on the east and south, MAs A2 and C3 on the west, and the Forest Boundary on the north. Management emphasis is spring/summer/fall deer and elk habitat.

Strategy Area #5 (Tucannon): DEER/ELK WINTER RANGE
28.37 sq. mi.

This area is comprised mostly of the C3 winter range in the lower Tucannon River drainage (from the Forest Boundary to Sheep Creek). It includes Washington State and private land along the river and parts of management areas A3, A6, C1, C5, and C8. The Tucannon River and adjacent road system receives the most concentrated spring and summer recreational use on the District.

Strategy Area #6 (Pataha): TIMBER AND BIG GAME SUMMER RANGE
44.53 sq. mi.

The guiding management area is E2, timber management with consideration for big game spring/summer/fall habitat. There are inclusions of A4, A6, A9,

C1, C5, and D2. This is the most densely roaded portion of the District and receives the heaviest dispersed recreation use on the District.

Strategy Area #7 (Asotin): DEER/ELK WINTER RANGE
42.07 sq. mi.

The dominant management areas are C3, C3A, and C8, with inclusions of C1 and some private and State land. The area includes the lower reaches of Charley, Lick, and N. Fk. Asotin Creek drainages and Smoothing Iron and Park ridges. Management emphasizes winter and spring big game habitat.

Strategy Area #8 (Hardy-Hogback): WILDLIFE HABITAT/TIMBER MANAGEMENT
60.51 sq. mi.

Management direction is guided mostly by management area C4, deer and elk summer range. There are inclusions of A4, A6, A9, C1, C5, and C8. It includes much of the upper Tucannon River drainage and the higher elevation area tributary to Forest road 40 from Clearwater Junction, south and east to the Forest Boundary at Big Butte.

Strategy Area #9 (Bear): NON-MOTORIZED ACCESS
14.05 sq. mi.

This is the portion of the Upper Tucannon drainage bounded by the river on the north, and the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness on the south. Management areas are A1 (roadless area), A10 (Wenaha-Tucannon Special Management Area, which allows timber management, but no public motorized access), with inclusions of C1 and C5.

Strategy Area #10 (Grouse): DEER/ELK WINTER RANGE
9.77 sq. mi.

This is the strip of non-wilderness, non-roadless Forest land adjacent to Grouse Flat, the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness, and the Wenatchee roadless area. The dominant management area is C3, with inclusions of A4, C1, and C5.

Strategy Area #11 (Wenatchee): ROADLESS, NON-MOTORIZED
30.20 sq. mi.

Composed entirely of management area A1, with a small inclusion of State land in the lower Menatchee Creek drainage. The area is split by road 4304-050, which connects the Forest road system to Asotin County's Cougar Creek road. This is an old primitive road which has a history of use for fire access and recreation. The Forest plan did not allow for a corridor through A1 for this road.

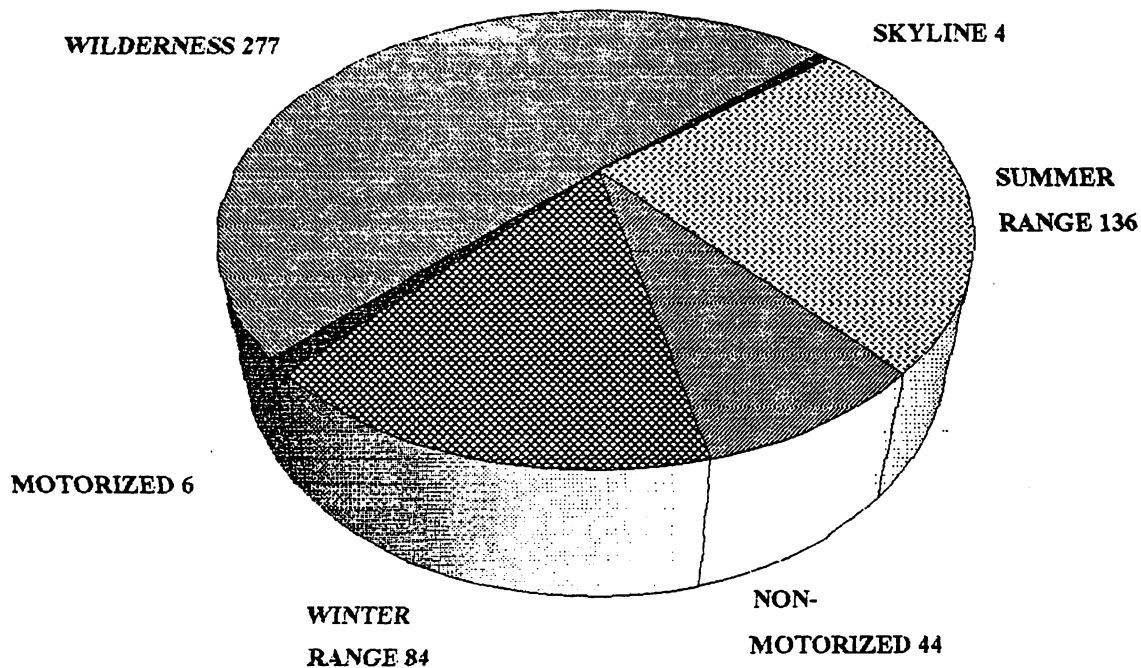
Strategy Area #12 (Wenaha-Tucannon): WILDERNESS
277.29 sq. mi.

Access strategy was decided by Congress in 1978. Motorized vehicles are strictly prohibited, except in emergencies. Management areas are B1, D2 and A7.

ACCESS STRATEGIES

POMEROY RANGER DISTRICT

STRATEGY TYPE & AREA IN SQUARE MILES



MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

The Forest Plan gives broad direction for access management. The Record of Decision, Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), and the main body of the Forest Plan all contain statements which guide the Districts in their development of Motorized Access and Travel Management Plans. The reader is referred to these documents for a detailed description of management direction.

Generally, the Forest Plan calls for closing about half of the Forest roads (FP pg. 4-7, 4-20) and estimates, in the section on Desired Future Condition, an average Forest-wide open road density of 2.0 miles per square mile (4-11). The Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines define open roads "as those which receive, on average, more than four (vehicle) trips per month" (pg. 4-58). The Forest Plan also calls for closing single use logging roads after termination of timber sale activities (pg. 4-86) and provides for granting permits for commercial, public and administrative use of closed roads, but states further that these permits will be rare: "if a road is authorized for use, generally it will be open for all uses" (pg. 4-86).

Additional general management direction is provided by the Memorandum of Understanding between the Washington Dept. of Wildlife; Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife; USDA Forest Service, Region 6; and USDI Bureau of Land Management, Oregon State Office. Under this MOU the above agencies adopt the Interagency Technical Guidelines for Managing Travel for Elk-Related Recreation. This document, which was signed by the Regional Forester in 1991, defines a closed road as having not more than one round trip by a motorized vehicle per month, during periods when elk are present (pg. 2). The Forest Plan is being amended to adopt this definition of a closed road, so this is the definition which this ATM plan will use. Beyond this, the MOU gives general direction on managing motorized access as it relates to elk habitat, reiterating Forest Plan direction on elk habitat management, public participation, and involving affected agencies in the planning process.

The Forest Plan ROD, pg. 3, summarizes the goal of access management on the Forest: "Provide a mix of unroaded, roaded, and closed road dispersed recreation and a moderate level of off-highway vehicle (OHV) opportunities compatible with other resource objectives". The ROD also refers to a request by the Governor of the State of Oregon to have no more than 1.0 mi./sq.mi. of open roads on elk winter range, and no more than 1.5 mi./sq.mi. on summer range, and states that this request will be given consideration in the access management planning process (pg. 11). Correspondence from the Washington Department of Wildlife has also requested these density figures.

The following is a brief discussion of the access management direction from the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for the management areas (MAs) which were used as strategy drivers for the twelve strategy areas:

<u>MA</u>	<u>Strat. Area(s)</u>	<u>Forest Plan Management Direction</u>
A1	9,11	Roadless, no motorized vehicles. Existing roads obliterated or converted to trails.
A2	2	OHV recreation. Vehicles limited to designated trails and closed roads (area closure).
A10	9	Roads may be constructed for timber management purposes. Closed to all motorized use except commercial timber sale activity.
A3,A4	1	Viewshed (visual concerns). Roads may be closed, but efforts made to obscure closure devices as seen from main roads.
C3	3,5,7,10	Big game winter range. Motorized use restricted to designated routes (area closure). Motorized access restricted during winter big game use period.
C4	4,8	Big game summer range/timber management. Restrict vehicles to designated routes (area closure). Most roads and trails closed to motorized use, exceptions based on documented analysis.
E2	6	Timber management/big game summer range. Motorized travel may be restricted to designated routes.

Other, Forest Plan management area units are scattered through the strategy areas. Many of these MAs have specific motorized access direction, as specified in the Standards and Guidelines, which may be more restrictive than the surrounding MAs. These inclusions within the strategy areas have the potential to affect access strategy within the larger surrounding areas. Please refer to the section on Strategy Area Descriptions for the management areas within each strategy area. Other MAs and their access management direction are discussed below:

<u>MA</u>	<u>Forest Plan Access Management Direction</u>
A6	Developed recreation. Motorized vehicles restricted to designated roads and trails within the developed sites (area closure).
A9	Special interest areas. Motorized travel on designated routes only (area closure).

- C1 Dedicated old growth. Most roads closed to motorized use. Motorized vehicles allowed only on designated routes needed to cross the area to access adjacent areas (area closure).
- C5 Riparian zones. Should be avoided with travel routes as much as practical. Motorized travel on designated routes only (area closure).
- C8 Grass-tree mosaic (emphasize big game habitat). Most roads closed to motorized use. Motorized vehicles normally restricted to designated routes (area closure).
- D2 Research natural area. All motorized vehicle use is prohibited.

As per the advice in the Forest Plan ROD, the District will analyze an open road density of 1.5 mi./sq.mi. in summer range (MA C4) strategy areas 4 and 8. Strategy area 6, although identified as summer range (MA E2) in the Forest Plan, may have a somewhat higher open road density than this because of it's greater emphasis on commodity production and higher over-all road density. Under the present situation (No Action Alternative) winter range strategy areas (3,5,7,and 10) are generally below the recommended 1.0 mi./sq.mi. during the winter season, and no conflicts have been identified which would change the situation.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public has been heavily involved throughout the planning process. Access management is very dependant on public involvement. The scoping process began in the summer of 1991 with a public announcement soliciting comments from interested parties. Public meetings were held in Pomeroy, WA, Clarkston, WA, and Dayton, WA in October, November, and December, respectively, of 1991. These meetings were held in an open-house format where a map of the existing transportation facilities was displayed, along with Forest Plan maps and other related literature, and the public was asked to comment and talk with District representatives. The complete list of people, organizations and agencies contacted is available in the Access Management Project File at the Pomeroy Ranger District.

From early September through December 1991 copies of a questionnaire were distributed to the public requesting responses on various aspects of access management. These questionnaires were given to people in the field, were on display at the Pomeroy District office, and were also distributed at the public meetings. A total of 386 completed questionnaires were returned to the Pomeroy Ranger District office, displaying a high level of public interest. In general, the responses demonstrated much public support for road and area closures for the benefit of wildlife. Responses were about two to one in favor of additional closures for wildlife, area closures, and seasonal (as opposed to year-round) closures. Most respondents felt the present number of road closures was good, but most would accept additional closures to help wildlife. Also, 59% wanted more restrictions placed on ATVs (OHVs), while 34% did not want additional restrictions (7% didn't

care). A large majority felt that the present level of snowmobile access is acceptable. A complete summary of the responses is displayed in the Appendix, along with a sample of the questionnaire.

Public involvement, then, is not only a very important part of, but is a primary driving force behind, the access management planning process. This is directed by the Forest Plan, and NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act). Public support is absolutely necessary to create an effective, enforceable access management program. Access Management Planning is an open process, and public comments are continually invited. This ATM plan is meant to be dynamic and flexible, and will be reviewed annually to address changing public and resource needs, as required in the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines (pg. 4-52).

ISSUES

The list of issues was developed during the scoping process by the interdisciplinary (ID) team and from public comments.

KEY ISSUES:

Listed below are the three key, alternative-driving issues identified by the ID team and public comment:

1. Elk Habitat

Unit of measure: Open road equivalent (roads and trails open to motorized vehicles) miles per square mile (mi./sq.mi.).

As discussed in the Purpose and Need, and Management Direction sections, elk habitat is one of the important reasons for doing access management planning. Wildlife habitat is a major component of nearly all of the Forest Plan management areas on the District. Access management practices affect elk security, which in turn may affect elk survival in a number of ways. During winter elk are in a weakened condition. Disturbance from snowmobiles and other motorized vehicles, and associated problems resulting from increased human access (such as direct harassment and poaching), can elevate the stress level in the animals, with the results of increased miscarriages in the pregnant cows and decreased winter survival rates. Harassment during the spring calving season can separate the cows and calves, lowering calf survival rates and making them more available to predators. Disturbance during late summer/early fall (Sep. - Oct.) mating season can interrupt the breeding cycle, possibly resulting in fertile cows not being bred. The Washington Dept. of Wildlife is concerned about bull/buck escapement during the hunting season. Lower open road densities creates security areas of reduced hunting pressure to which animals may escape.

The Forest Plan identifies HEI (habitat effectiveness index) as the measure of the effectiveness of elk habitat. Components of HEI are cover, forage, and open road density (as expressed in open road miles per square mile). Access management deals only with the road density

component. HEI is designed to be analyzed on a sub-watershed basis for project-level decisions, and would be very difficult to calculate for the entire District.

Based on the Forest Plan ROD, the desired open road density for summer range is about 1.5 mi./sq.mi.. Summer range strategy areas are #4, and 8. Strategy area 6 is also identified as summer range, although with its increased emphasis on timber production, and the high road density in the area, a somewhat higher open road density may be acceptable. Winter range strategy areas are #3, 5, 7, and 10. Most of these areas are already below the ROD's desired maximum open road density of 1.0 mi./sq.mi.. Winter ranges are considered sensitive, however, and if there are no other conflicts, the objective for winter range will be as close to zero miles of open road per square mile as possible during the winter period.

Heavily used elk calving areas have been identified on both winter and summer ranges. These areas were considered for additional seasonal closures or restrictions on administrative access during the calving season (4/1 - 6/30, annually). Seasonal restrictions on public and administrative traffic may also be used during fall to increase elk security during mating and hunting seasons. During the months of July and August the elk and other wildlife are more widely distributed and somewhat less vulnerable to disturbance.

2. Road Access

Unit of measure: Total road miles open to public travel (mi.).

This issue encompasses a number of other issues, such as; vehicular hunting access, walk-in hunting, mushroom/berry picking, woodcutting, camping, sight-seeing, etc.. The types of vehicles addressed here are road/highway vehicles such as passenger cars, trucks, "jeeps", campers and other motor vehicles normally used on public roads. Road conditions vary widely across the District, with some of the main access roads being suitable for all vehicle types, while many lower standard roads are appropriate only for high clearance vehicles. Roads are the primary means of Forest access for most Forest users. Even those who are advocates of non-motorized forms of recreation use roads to arrive at their points of departure. Some physically handicapped and elderly individuals may be adversely affected by increased motorized access restrictions. The question, then, is: "How much road access is needed for public access to the Forest, while providing for elk security and other resource needs as required by the Forest Plan?".

3. OHV (Off-Highway Vehicle) Access

Units of measure: miles of roads and trails open to OHV access.
acres available to off-road OHV use.

OHVs are vehicles such as ATVs (all-terrain vehicles like three and four-wheelers), motorcycles, and snowmobiles. To many people OHV recreation is the primary purpose for using the Forest. For others these vehicles are just another means of transportation. To this

group can be added off-road four-wheel-drive (4X4) recreation. Some organized 4-wheel-drive groups have requested areas set aside for winter 4X4 use, to minimize conflicts with snowmobiles.

A number of OHV trails may be constructed as part of the Spangler Complex OHV study. Vehicles will be limited to designated routes as per Forest Plan management area standards and guidelines. These trails should substantially increase OHV opportunities on the Pomeroy District.

Use of any of these vehicles off roads and other designated routes can cause resource damage and harassment to wildlife. Many of the Forest Plan management area standards and guidelines require limiting vehicles to designated roads and trails in order to reduce these conflicts. Forest policy (Forest Service Manual, Umatilla Supplement 7731.04b) allows use of motor vehicles up to 300 feet off of open roads within area closures for camping and woodcutting purposes.

TRACKING ISSUES

The following two issues were identified as important, but not strong enough to drive alternatives. The effects on these "tracking issues" are compared between alternatives:

4. Administration

This is an umbrella issue, encompassing a number of "sub-issues", which basically describes how an alternative may be implemented and the closures administered. These "sub-issues" are listed below:

Cost

This is difficult to analyze quantitatively, but the alternatives can be compared on a relative basis to each other. This is the cost to implement (installation of gates or other closure devices), administer and enforce.

Administrative Access

This is the effect on Forest Service programs and other agencies (such as Washington Dept. of Wildlife) of managing the road closures; requiring field personnel, contractors, and permittees to walk to work sites behind closure devices, rather than allowing vehicular access, will increase somewhat the cost of doing business. Many people don't like seeing Forest Service personnel driving behind closures, when they are told they can't. Should administrative access be allowed unrestricted, or should the Forest Service be held to the same restrictions as the public? Administrative access may also affect the closure status of a road (refer to definitions of 'closed road' in Management Requirements section).

Firewood Cutting

Closing roads will affect access for this activity. The option exists to open selected roads during specific time periods when the effect on wildlife may be minimized.

Commercial Access

How will restrictions on access be applied to commercial (timber sale) users? Normally the timber sale contract is an implied permit to use closed roads. However, some closures may restrict commercial access during critical time periods, such as winter range, calving, or hunting season closures.

5. Anadromous Fish

The listing of the Snake River salmon runs as threatened species has increased the need to protect spawning habitat by reducing sedimentation. Any additional road closures would be expected to have a favorable effect. There is the opportunity, however, to obliterate some roads near streams that may be a source of sediment and which are not needed for future access. Obliteration options run from simple elimination of motorized access and allowing the road to revegetate naturally, to physically removing the road prism and rebuilding the natural contour of the land. Usually road obliteration will involve removing of drainage structures such as culverts or bridges, outsloping and/or constructing drainage berms on the road surface, and grass seeding or planting shrubs on the surface and the cut and fill slopes to make the facility maintenance-free.

INCORPORATED ISSUES

The following issues deal with individual roads and trails, and are considered to be incorporated into the broader District-wide issues listed above:

6. Upper Tucannon River trail #3135.

This trail has a history of established motorcycle use, mostly during autumn hunting season. The Washington Dept. of Wildlife, along with other wildlife groups, contends that this trail should be closed to motorized use to protect wildlife and water quality, and that the intention of the wilderness legislation which created the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness Area was to eliminate motorized access along the upper Tucannon River.

7. Diamond Peak road #4030.

This is a popular access route to the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness. The road accesses two points which are heavily used as horse off-loading areas for Wilderness users: Kelly Camp and Jones Camp. The road beyond Kelly to Jones Camp (approx. 3 mi.) is a low standard dirt surfaced facility. It has been suggested to close the road at Kelly Camp and make Kelly Camp the main trailhead facility.

8. Park Ridge road #4400-140.

Numerous comments were received regarding management of this road. Respondents were concerned with access in the area for older hunters. They felt that this particular road is used by many older hunters and closing the road to them would eliminate their use of the area.

9. Hogback road #4302.

This road presently has a seasonal closure during the fall modern rifle big game hunting seasons (mid-October to December 1). A number of archery hunters felt the season should be extended to year-round, or at least to include the early fall archery hunting season. The Washington Dept. of Wildlife also felt that the area is important to elk during the rut (mating season) and should be closed for that reason. The area has established use during early fall by firewood cutters, berry pickers, and other Forest users.

Although comments were received on numerous other transportation facilities, those shown above generated the most comments. Comments on other roads and trails were incorporated into the analysis.

OTHER ISSUES

The following issues do not drive alternatives or affect alternative selection, but are addressed via public law, Forest Plan direction, or through mitigation measures:

10. Established Use.

This analysis needs to be sensitive to historical use of an area. Where possible, established use patterns should be continued. Where closures need to be implemented to meet objectives, then mitigation measures can be taken to provide alternative use areas; such as moving closure devices away from the junction of main roads to permit more secluded camping locations or, within area closures, permitting vehicle use up to 100 yards off of open roads for camping or woodcutting, as per current Umatilla Forest policy.

11. Access to Private Land

The Forest Service, by law (36 CFR 212.8a), must grant appropriate access to persons owning private property within the National Forest.

12. Inventoried Roadless Areas

The Forest Plan gives guidance for roadless area management in the Management Area Standards and Guidelines. Access management does not deal with which areas are to remain roadless, but only refers to the management of motorized access on the existing or future transportation system in an area.

13. Threatened and Endangered Species

Access management may be used as a mitigation measure for protection of T&E species, and would not be expected to adversely affect them. A Biological Evaluation has been performed to determine any possible impact to T&E or other species. This is located in the Project File at the Pomeroy Ranger District office. See Issue #5, Anadromous Fish.

14. Cultural Resources

Normally, restrictions to vehicular access would not be considered to have an impact on cultural resources. Before any earth moving activity occurs, such as gate or barricade installation, or trail construction, clearance from cultural resource specialists will be obtained, and needed mitigation measures will be taken, where appropriate.

15. Coordination With Neighboring Districts

Coordination with adjoining Walla Walla District is essential to insure that the access strategy along the District boundary is compatible. This has been done through the planning process and will continue through implementation.

16. Enforcement

An Access Management Plan must be enforceable to be effective. Law enforcement is an integral part of the implementation process. The District will perform random patrols to check for compliance of access regulations. The District will continue the cooperative enforcement agreement with the Washington Dept. of Wildlife. All closures will be backed up with official orders, signed by the Forest Supervisor, to ensure enforceability. Any selected plan must be flexible enough to allow modifications for field conditions. Care will be taken to ensure that locations for closure devices are selected so they are effective and do not encourage violations. Through signing, distribution of readable travel plan maps and other literature, the public will become more aware of the reasons for closures and the need for access management. Hopefully this will lead to widespread public support for the District's access management policies, and lessen the need for enforcement action in the future.

17. Handicapped Access

Applying additional restrictions to motorized access will have some unavoidable adverse impacts on physically handicapped individuals. General access to the Forest, and accessibility to developed recreation sites, should not change under this plan.

18. Compatibility with Spangler Complex OHV Plan

The District ATM plan is not expected to change decisions made in the Spangler planning process regarding ATV trails. Some restrictions

regarding use seasons may be needed to ensure compatibility with strategy area objectives. Planned ATV trails outside of the A2 (OHV) Management Area should be compatible with the objectives of the Strategy Area involved.

19. OHV Conflicts With Other Vehicles on Open Roads.

Certain types of OHVs, namely 3- and 4-wheelers, are being used increasingly on Forest roads open to public travel, resulting in conflicts with other types of traffic. This is a safety issue, since many of the drivers are under-aged and not licensed. Washington State law does not allow vehicles which are not street-legal on public highways, but defers to the regulations of land management agencies concerning OHV use on their roads. Umatilla National Forest regulations do not currently address on-road OHV use, therefore State laws apply. Forests are allowed the discretion to regulate any road use and vehicle types via 36 CFR 261.54. There have been numerous reports of these vehicles being seen driving 2 or 3 abreast on heavily used single-lane Forest roads. Safety issues will normally be resolved on the side of public safety. If these vehicles are prohibited from any Forest roads, the impact to their users may be mitigated by providing off road trail systems (such as the Spangler Project), little-used back roads and opening some closed roads for ATV use.

20. Plan should be compatible with the Umatilla N.F. Land and Resource Management Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision.

Management Requirement. This plan must comply with, and is tiered to, the Forest Plan FEIS, Standards and Guidelines, and Record of Decision. Where there is a conflict either the Access Management Plan will be modified, or the Forest Plan will be amended. Any amendments to the Forest Plan will require an environmental analysis.

CHAPTER II
ALTERNATIVES

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The alternatives were developed by the Interdisciplinary Team out of the scoping process. The three action alternatives were based on issues and direction which were derived from the following sources: comments from the public received at the three public meetings; correspondence from interested publics; results from the questionnaire which was distributed to Forest users in the field, at public meetings, and at the Pomeroy Ranger Station; correspondence and other communications received from the Washington Department of Wildlife; local knowledge of the road and trail system from long time District employees; Forest Plan Forest-wide and management area standards and guidelines; Forest Plan FEIS; Forest Plan ROD; and "Managing Travel for Elk-Related Recreation", Supplement to Other Existing Master Memoranda of Understanding between the Washington Department of Wildlife, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the USDA Forest Service (Region 6), and the USDI Bureau of Land Management, Oregon State Office.

ALTERNATIVES ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

Other alternatives considered were:

The ID team considered the possibility of opening all Forest roads and trails (non-wilderness) to motorized traffic. This would not comply with the Forest Plan standards and guidelines, although it would be preferred by some members of the public who want no restrictions on motorized access.

The team also considered closing the entire District to motorized traffic, year-round. This would not comply with the Forest Plan direction either, and would be unacceptable to most public users of the Forest.

A large number of alternatives exist for every segment of every road and trail on the District. To list every possible alternative, District-wide, would present an infinite number of alternatives. The alternatives shown here represent the possible array of alternatives available, given the issues developed during the scoping process.

ITEMS APPLICABLE TO ALL ACTION ALTERNATIVES

Snowmobile Access

Routes located in summer range areas are open for snowmobile access during the winter months when elk are not present. Snowmobile access will remain basically the same in all action alternatives.

Winter Range Areas

All winter range Strategy Areas will have an area closure during the 12/1 to 3/31 period, where motorized travel will be limited to designated routes only, except that access will be permitted to the private parcel in Jim Cr. (SA 3) for the owner of that land. Lick Cr. (41) and Smoothing Iron (44) roads and their tributary roads and trails within Strategy Area 7 will be closed to motorized travel through the winter period in all alternatives.

Administrative Access

Motorized access to closed routes and areas, for Forest administration purposes, may be allowed by permit on a case-by-case basis. Strategy Area and road management objectives will be considered before issuance of any permit. Generally, permits for administrative use will not be issued for winter range and calving area closures. Only where an overriding need exists, such as tree planting which can only be done during the spring of the year, will permits be issued for these closures. The modern rifle big game season will also be considered a sensitive time period, with permits normally not available. Timber sale contracts are generally considered to constitute a permit to use the closed roads within a timber sale area, this will normally not apply to winter and calving closures, however. Federal, State, and local officers and members of official search and rescue or fire fighting forces are permitted in closures when needed while performing emergency law enforcement, search and rescue, and fire fighting duties.

OHV Use on Open Roads

The use of vehicles which are not licensed and "street legal" on Forest roads which are open to mixed vehicle traffic, or driving on such roads without a valid State-issued driver's license, is a violation of Washington State law, and is often a safety hazard. The District will implement a policy prohibiting unlicensed vehicles or drivers on open roads which have a maintenance level of 3, 4, or 5. These are roads which are built and maintained for passenger car traffic and are covered under the Federal Highways Safety Act. Maintenance level 2 roads, which are maintained for high-clearance vehicles, may be left open to these vehicles, though some individual roads may be closed to them for safety or resource reasons. These restrictions will apply to open roads, closed roads will normally be closed to all motorized vehicles, unless designated otherwise.

DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

Four alternatives were analyzed which address the issues which developed out of the scoping process. The reader is referred to the Alternative maps included with this document. In order to reduce clutter and confusion, roads which are proposed for year-round closure are not shown on the maps. Only roads which are either open year round or have a seasonal closure of some type are illustrated on the Alternative maps. The map of the existing transportation system shows all inventoried roads and trails on the Pomeroy District.

Alternative #1, NO ACTION:

This alternative maintains the current access strategy on the District. Access management planning would continue to be performed on a

project-by-project basis. Many Forest Plan management area standards and guidelines would not be met, necessitating fairly extensive amendments to the Plan. This would be most apparent in strategy area (SA) 11, which calls for non-motorized access. The trails in the Menatchee Creek drainage are presently open to motorized use; allowing this to continue (and also continuing motorized use on road 4304-050, Mountain View rd.) would require changing standards and guidelines for management area A1. Forest Plan management areas which require area closure strategies (motorized travel on designated routes only) would also need amending to continue to allow off-road vehicles.

Alternative #2: MOTORIZED RECREATION

Motorized recreation opportunities on the District would be emphasized. This would leave the most roads and trails open to motorized access, within the Forest Plan standards and guidelines. Seasonal closures would be used extensively to meet wildlife objectives during sensitive times of the year. Area closures would be used sparingly. The C4 summer range strategy areas (SAs 4 and 8) would have spring and fall area closures, with the months of July and August being open to off-road motorized vehicles. This would require a modification to Forest Plan Standards and guidelines for management area C4. SA 6 would have no area closure; wildlife objectives for open road densities would be met by seasonal and year-round closures on individual roads. The small inclusions of Forest Plan management areas requiring an area closure policy would be signed as such. Winter range strategy areas would have a 12/1-3/31 area closure, with some routes in SAs 5 & 10 being left open to snowmobiles and other motorized vehicles. The total winter area closure in the Lick Cr. winter range (SA 7) would continue, as would the calving (4/1-6/30) closure in the same strategy area, south of the Lick Cr. road. A winter 4-wheel-drive recreation area would be established in the Iron Springs Ridge area to accommodate 4X4 enthusiasts and reduce conflicts between them and snowmobile users. The Mountain View road (#4304-050) would remain open, requiring an amendment to the Forest Plan. This alternative would leave Tucannon Trail and the Diamond Peak road open to motorized vehicles. Park Ridge road and Hogback road would continue with the present seasonal closures.

Alternative #3: WILDLIFE

Motorized access would be minimized across the District for the security of elk and other wildlife. Motorized travel would be limited to designated routes only, while designated open routes would be kept to the minimum necessary to provide basic Forest access. Most arterial and major collector roads would remain open to public travel, while the majority of local roads would be closed year-round to motorized use. Emphasis would be placed on non-motorized dispersed recreation. The Mountain View road would be closed in order to comply with Forest Plan standards and guidelines. No amendment to the Forest Plan would be needed under this alternative. This Alternative would close the Tucannon Trail, Diamond Peak road beyond Kelly camp, and the Park Ridge road to motorized vehicles year-round. The Hogback seasonal closure would be extended from 9/1 to 6/30 annually.

Alternative #4: PREFERRED

This alternative provides a broad mix of recreational opportunities, both motorized and non-motorized. Emphasis would be on dispersed recreation of

both types, with concentrated use in some campground and attractor areas, such as the Tucannon River. A mixture of open roads, seasonal restrictions, and year-round closures would allow the flexibility to meet the access needs of Forest users, while meeting resource protection objectives. The primary Forest access arterial roads, and most collector roads, would be open to public travel, with the exception that the Lick Cr. winter range closure would continue, which closes arterial roads 41 (Lick Cr.) and 44 (Smoothing Iron) during the 12/1 to 3/31 winter period. The entire District would be covered by a year-round area closure (except that snowmobiles would be allowed in summer range areas during the winter

months), thus motorized travel would be limited to designated roads and trails. The winter 4X4 recreation area on Iron Spring Ridge would be implemented, with the provision that a snow depth of a minimum of one foot would be required at the Forest Boundary along road 42 for this activity to be allowed. Winter ranges would generally be closed to motorized traffic during the winter months, except that the main access roads along the Tucannon River would remain open, since at the present time no conflicts have been identified in the area between wintering big game and recreationists. Under this Alternative the Tucannon Trail will be closed to motorized traffic; the Diamond Peak road will remain open; Park Ridge road will be closed except during the modern rifle deer and elk seasons; and the present modern rifle closure will remain on the Hogback road.

At present there are 625 miles of non-wilderness roads on the Pomeroy District (there are 1.7 miles within the Wilderness boundary which are closed by the wilderness designation). There are approximately 71 miles of non-wilderness trails on the District. Of these, 620.4 road miles and 45.5 trail miles are in Forest Plan management areas which do not exclude motorized vehicle access (all Strategy Areas except 9 and 11, which are limited to non-motorized access only). For calculations of open road density in this report Strategy Areas 9 and 11 have been excluded. This gives a more accurate portrayal of road densities in areas available for motorized access.

The road and trail lengths were combined for calculation of open road equivalent densities. This assumes that any route which is open for any type of motorized vehicle will have a similar effect on wildlife. Trails are not a significant component of the non-wilderness transportation system and including them in the open road density calculations does not have a material effect on the results.

The following table illustrates the total miles of roads and trails closed year-round by Alternative. Closures in summer range or other non-winter range Strategy Areas specifically allow snowmobiles during the winter period, since no issues have been identified which would exclude them, except for some individual routes which may influence or enter winter range areas. Year-round closures in winter range are closed to all motorized vehicles. Data shown in the table is for all non-wilderness portions of the District and for all Strategy Areas where motorized access is not prohibited by Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines (District minus wilderness and Strategy Areas 9 and 11).

Table 1
District-Wide Non-Wilderness Motorized Access Statistics

Alternative	Roads (mi.)		Trails (mi.)		Open Road Equivalent Density (mi./sq.mi.)
	Closed	Open*	Closed	Open*	
1 (No Action)	124.8	500.2	11.4	59.6	2.04
(-SAs 9, 11)	123.1	497.7	11.4	39.1	2.34
2 (Motorized)	122.0	503.0	31.9	19.8	2.06
(-SAs 9, 11)	120.3	500.5	6.4	19.8	2.45
3 (Wildlife)	448.9	175.7	56.9	14.1	0.69
(-SAs 9, 11)	444.7	175.7	31.4	14.1	0.83
4 (Preferred)	325.4	300.0	49.4	21.6	1.17
(-SAs 9, 11)	323.3	297.5	23.9	21.6	1.39

* Some routes classified as open may have seasonal restrictions, but will be open to some vehicles at certain times of the year.

CHAPTER III
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This chapter discloses the probable environmental consequences of implementing the alternatives described in Chapter II and forms the scientific and analytic basis for the comparisons of alternatives.

KEY ISSUES:

ISSUE #1, ELK HABITAT

Table 2 compares the four alternatives and their impact on the elk habitat issue through measurement of open road and trail miles per square mile (open road equivalent density) for each Strategy Area (SA). This is the open road density which results from year-round road and trail closures, and does not include densities resulting from seasonal closures.

Table 2
Year-Round Open Road Equivalent Density
(Mi./Sq.Mi.)

<u>Stra. Area</u>	<u>Alt. 1</u> <u>No Action</u>	<u>Alt. 2</u> <u>Motor. Rec.</u>	<u>Alt. 3</u> <u>Wildlife</u>	<u>Alt. 4</u> <u>Preferred</u>
1*	2.27	2.27	2.04	2.04
2	1.42	1.42	1.24	1.42
3	0.43	0.00	0.00	0.00
4*	2.94	3.03	1.09	1.58
5	1.03	0.94	0.63	0.72
6*	3.10	3.87	1.01	1.89
7	1.50	1.70	0.33	1.15
8*	2.79	2.65	0.85	1.45
9	0.28	0.00	0.00	0.00
10	2.85	2.03	1.22	1.30
11	0.63	0.08	0.00	0.08
District Average:	2.04	2.06	0.69	1.17
Avg. W/O SAs 9, 11:	2.34	2.45	0.83	1.39

* Closed routes in these SAs are open to snowmobiles during winter, but are classed as closed since elk are not present in the winter months.

Table 3 illustrates the effects of seasonal closures on open road equivalent densities in the summer range and winter range Strategy Areas. The seasons used for measurement are as follows: Spring calving (4/1 - 6/30), summer (7/1 - 10/10, Alt. 3: 7/1 - 8/31), fall hunting season (10/10 - 11/30, Alt. 3: 9/1 - 11/30), winter (12/1 - 3/31). In Alternative 3 the hunting season closures were extended to include early fall archery/elk mating season. The 9/1 and 10/10 dates are approximate; 9/1 indicates the week following Labor Day weekend, and the 10/10 closure would actually begin 3 days prior to the opening of the modern rifle big game season.

Table 3
Seasonal Open Road Equivalent Density
(Mi./Sq.Mi.)

Alt.	<u>Winter Range *</u> (SAs 3, 5, 7, 10) (83.72 sq.mi.)				<u>Key Summer Range *</u> (SAs 4, 8) (91.17 sq.mi.)			<u>Tmbr./Smr. Range *</u> (SA 6) (44.53 sq.mi.)		
	<u>Wtr</u>	<u>Spr</u>	<u>Smr</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>Spr</u>	<u>Smr</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>Spr</u>	<u>Smr</u>	<u>Fall</u>
1	0.70	1.10	1.45	1.45	2.82	2.84	2.49	3.10	3.10	3.10
2	0.50	0.91	1.41	1.41	2.45	2.78	2.17	3.42	3.87	3.87
3	0.22	0.42	0.52	0.52	0.76	0.93	0.76	0.96	1.01	1.01
4	0.27	0.79	0.97	1.06	1.47	1.50	1.38	1.84	1.89	1.89

* Elk are assumed to not be present on summer range during winter, but may be present on winter range year-round.

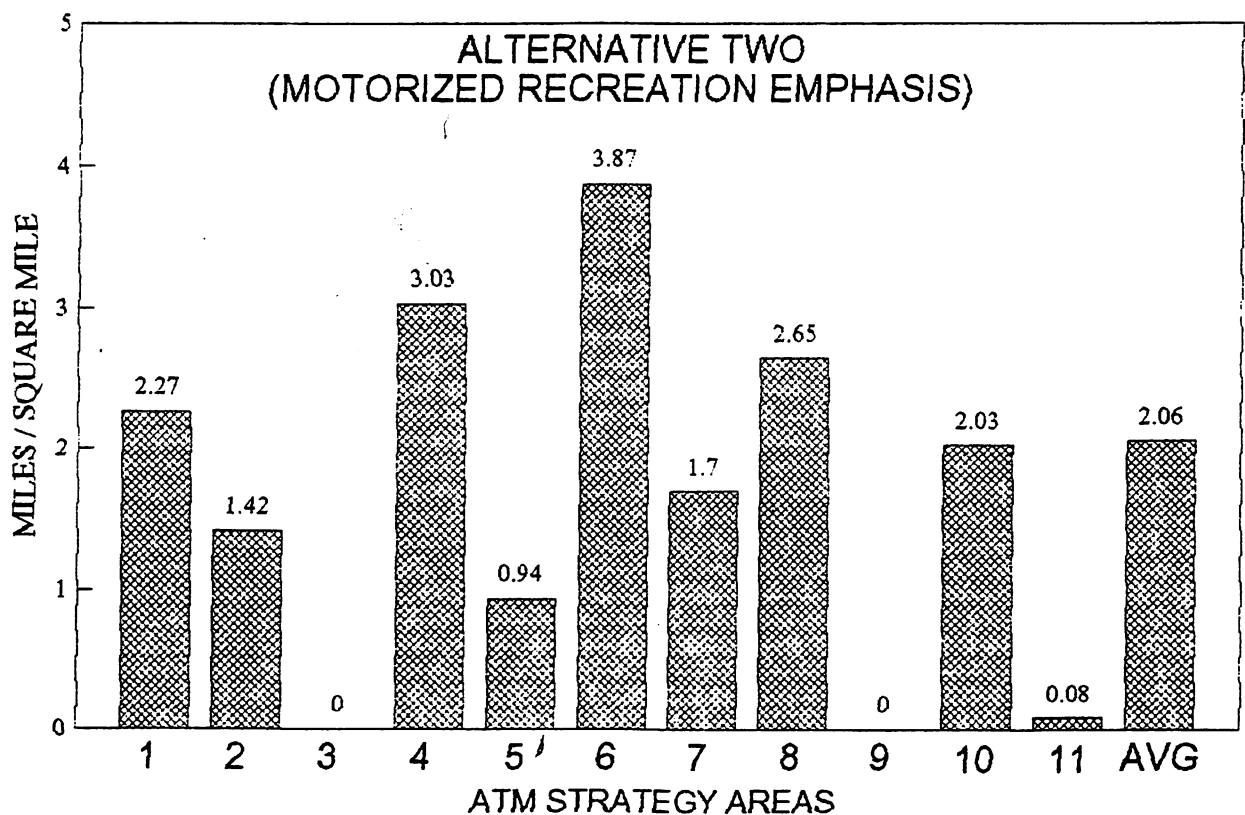
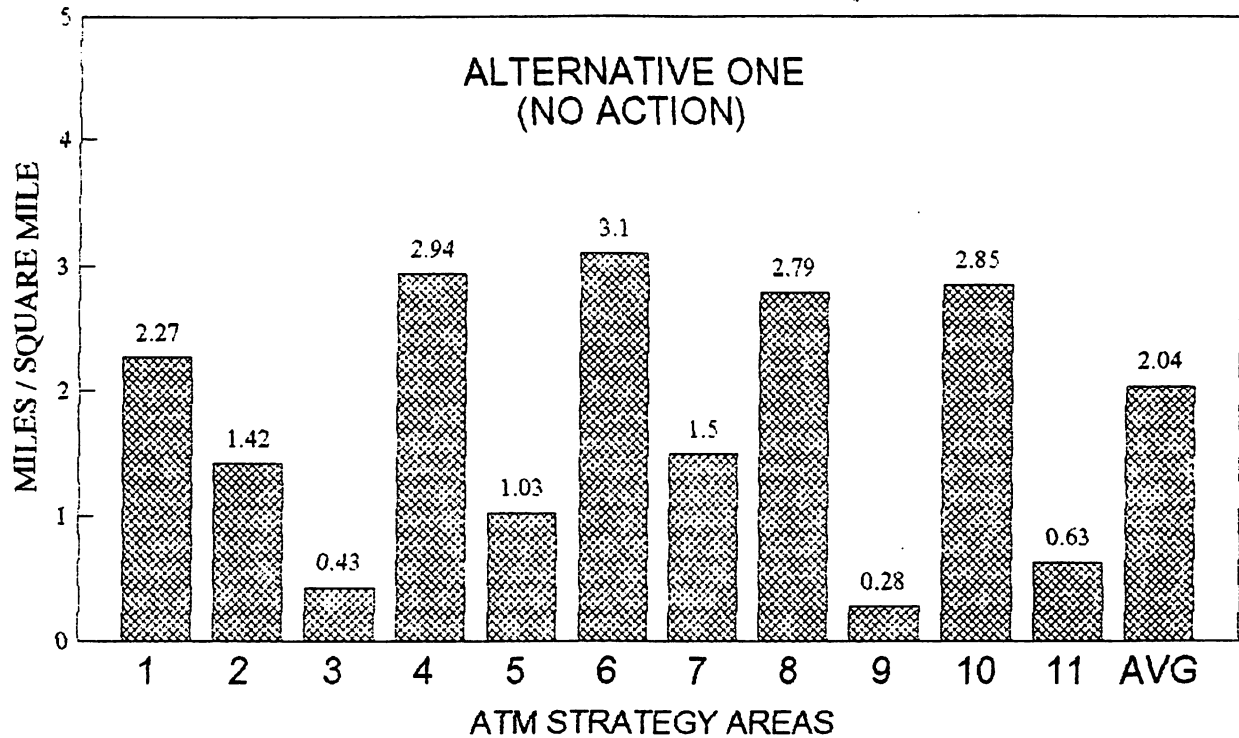
Direct/Indirect Effects:

The densities shown for all alternatives, including the No Action Alternative, meet or exceed elk security needs in winter range, although some individual winter ranges may have higher than desired open road densities in the No Action alternative. The No Action Alternative, however, does not meet the Forest Plan direction of an area closure policy on all winter range areas (Management Areas C3 and C3a). The three action alternatives meet all Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines in winter range areas.

Action Alternatives 3 and 4 meet all Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines in key summer range (those Strategy Areas driven by Forest Plan Management Area C4), and also meet the desired open road density of 1.5 mi./sq.mi. as stated in the Forest Plan Record of Decision. Alternative 2 offers an increase in elk security over the No Action Alternative through use of seasonal road and area closures during the important spring calving and fall mating/hunting seasons. The improvement under Alt. 2 is marginal, however, and it does not meet the 1.5 mi./sq.mi. density figure.

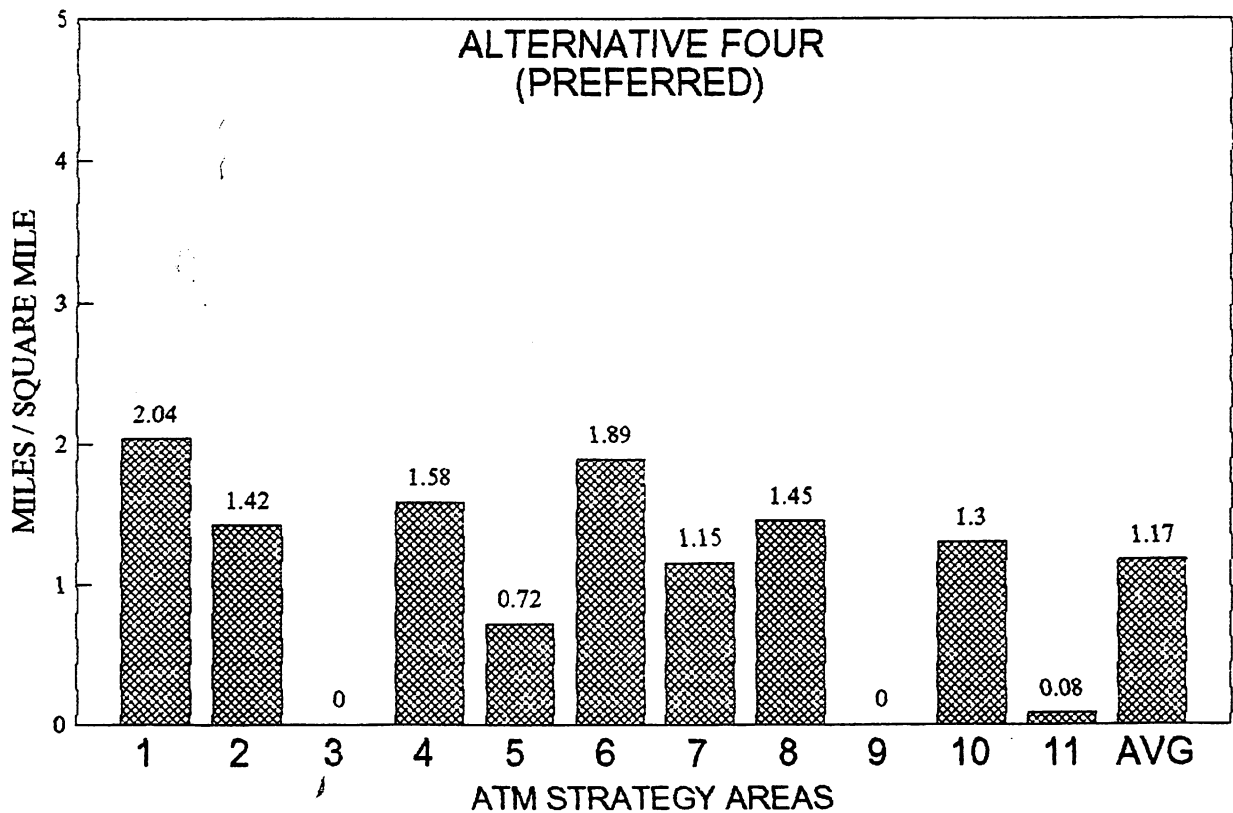
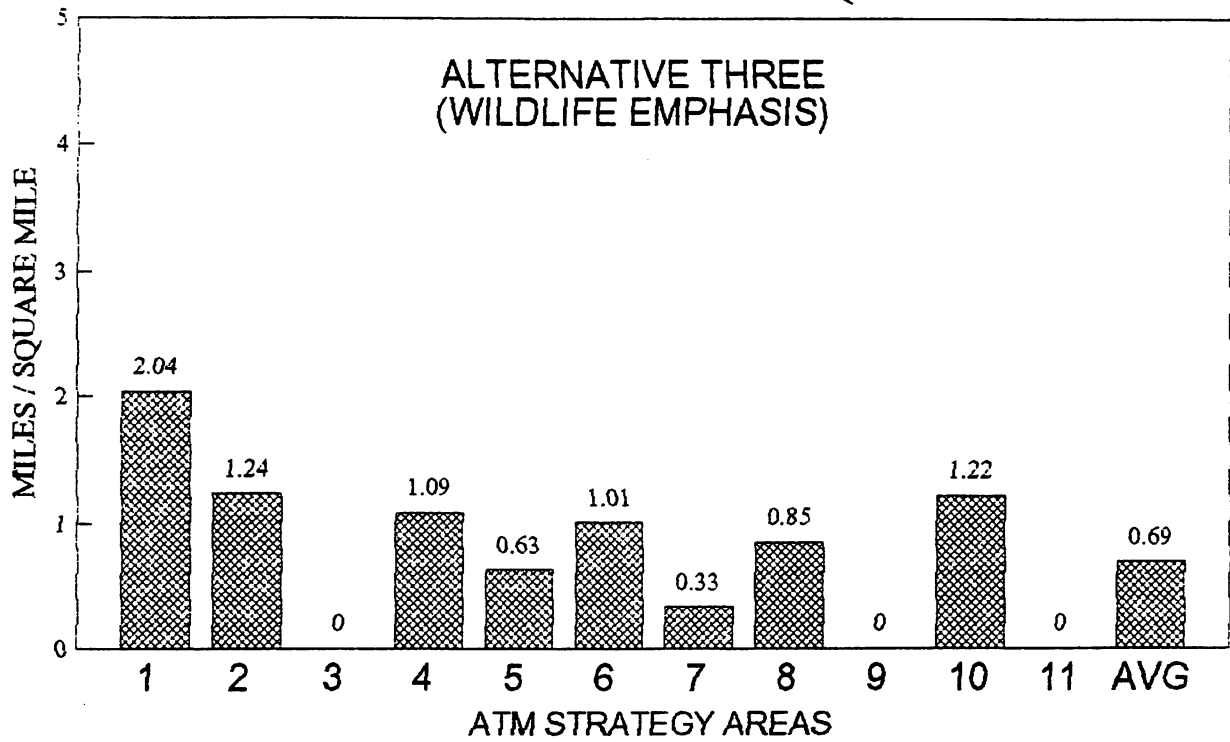
OPEN ROAD EQUIVALENT DENSITIES

MILES OF OPEN ROAD & TRAIL PER SQUARE MILE



OPEN ROAD EQUIVALENT DENSITIES

MILES OF OPEN ROAD & TRAIL PER SQUARE MILE



In the timber/summer range area (SA 6, driven by Forest Plan Management Area E2) all alternatives have higher open road density figures than the key summer range areas in order to allow more access for firewood cutting and other motorized recreation. The comparatively high density shown for Alternative 2 results from the fact that a number of closed roads under this Alternative would be open for OHV traffic, which would classify them as open for HEI (habitat effectiveness index) calculations. The high open road equivalent density in Alt. 2 is higher than the No Action alternative. Alt. 3 meets all Standards and Guidelines and is well under the suggested density of 1.5 mi./sq.mi. for summer range. Alt. 4, although meeting all Standards and Guidelines, has a somewhat higher density figure than the 1.5 referred to above. This is due to the greater emphasis on commodity production in Management Area E2 than the key summer range areas which are guided by Management Area C4.

The Forest Plan FEIS (IV-71) makes the assumption that "...as the miles of open road and potential disturbance increase or decrease as a result of activities, potential elk population numbers correspondingly increase or decrease". The FEIS also cites research done in the Blue Mountains, and also the Rockies in Montana, that "...has demonstrated that the effectiveness of deer and elk habitat is adversely influenced by the number of forest roads open to vehicular traffic", and states that "...their use results in a reduction in the overall habitat effectiveness. Big game make less (or no) use of forage and cover near roads that are regularly used. The assumption is made in all alternatives that open road density is a key component of the HEI for big game and for potential elk population indices." Using these assumptions as a basis for comparison, all action alternatives (with the exception of SA 6 in Alt. 2) show an improvement in the open road density (and thus the security component of HEI) over the current situation. The over-all improvement under Alt. 2 would be negligible, while the increase in elk security under Alt. 3 would be quite significant. The improvement for Alt. 4 would be moderately significant.

% decrease in open rd. equiv. density from Alt. 1: Alt. 2 = 0%
Alt. 3 = 66%
Alt. 4 = 43%

Cumulative Effects:

The Umatilla N.F. Forest Plan FEIS identifies implementing road and area closures as a mitigation measure for the cumulative effects on wildlife created by land management activities and associated road construction (IV-99). Thus the cumulative effects on elk habitat of the three action alternatives presented here will be positive, with no negative effects identified.

One of the cumulative effects identified in the FEIS of forest management activities on big game is that some of these animals may move off-Forest onto private land in response to human disturbance. Reducing disturbance through access management may alleviate these problems somewhat, particularly in winter range areas that are adjacent to private land.

Mitigation:

Since the Forest Plan identifies road and area closures as mitigation measures for wildlife, no further mitigation measures would be required under any Action Alternative, assuming all Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines are met.

ISSUE #2, ROAD ACCESS

Road access to Forest land varies considerably between alternatives, and within alternatives varies with seasonal road closures. Table 4 shows total road miles available to public travel for each Alternative by Strategy Area (SA).

Table 4
Miles of Road Open to Public Travel

<u>Strat. Area</u>	<u>No Action Alt. 1</u>	<u>Motor. Rec. Alt. 2</u>	<u>Wildlife Alt. 3</u>	<u>Preferred Alt. 4</u>
1	9.2	9.2	8.3	8.3
2	1.1	1.1	0.0	1.1
3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
4	68.3	86.8	27.1	42.1
5	25.0	22.6	17.8	20.4
6	131.1	148.3	45.0	78.8
7	52.1	60.6	13.8	40.8
8	160.7	152.1	51.7	88.0
9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
10	27.8	19.8	12.0	12.7
11	2.5	2.5	0.0	2.5
TOTAL	477.8	503.0	175.7	294.7

Some of the road miles shown in Table 4 are subject to seasonal closures. Table 5 illustrates miles of open road resulting from seasonal closures. The winter season is not shown because most of the District is unavailable to all except over-snow vehicles from 12/1 to 3/31 annually. The only area normally accessible to highway-type vehicles during winter is the Tucannon River Road.

Table 5
Miles Open Road By Season

<u>Alternative</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Summer</u>	<u>Fall</u>
1 (No Action)	452.2	477.8	450.0
2 (Mtr. Rec.)	431.1	503.0	449.3
3 (Wildlife)	163.1	175.5	165.5
4 (Preferred)	282.4	294.7	291.1

Direct/Indirect Effects:

The effect of implementing Alternative 2 (compared to the No Action Alternative) would be a slight increase in road access, at least during the high use summer months, with somewhat decreased access during spring (due to elk calving closures) and nearly identical access during the fall hunting season. Alternative 3 presents a significant reduction in road access with the main arterials and collectors being the only roads open. Implementation of Alt. 3 would impact many Forest users who use the road system for their recreation pursuits and would heavily restrict access to the Forest, though some users who seek solitude in the Forest would find this preferable. A reduction in road access would also occur under Alternative 4, though not to the extent of Alt. 3. Some of the roads shown as closed on the map of Alt. 4 are presently undriveable anyway (having been closed by an earth berm, water bars, or allowing to revegetate), the difference from Alt. 1 being that these roads would be closed by an official order signed by the Forest Supervisor, making the closures enforceable.

Cumulative Effects:

No cumulative effects have been identified.

Mitigation:

The District's Access Management Plan will be reviewed annually, not only to determine its effectiveness and any need for change, but also to identify opportunities to open some individual roads for dispersed activities such as woodcutting, for certain specified time periods. These proposals will be carefully reviewed to insure that the Strategy Area objectives for wildlife habitat and other resources are met, and that no special closures, such as elk calving areas, are compromised.

Road 4400140, Park Ridge Road

Under the Preferred Alternative this road would be closed most of the year, but opened to motorized vehicles during the Washington modern rifle deer and elk hunting seasons.

ISSUE #3, OHV (OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE) ACCESS

Table 6 displays the effects that managing motorized access under the four alternatives would have on this issue.

Table 6
Miles of Roads and Trails Open to OHV Use
and
Acres Open to Off-Road Vehicles

SA	Alt. 1 No Action		Alt. 2 Motor. Rec.		Alt. 3 Wildlife		Alt. 4 Preferred	
	Mi.	Sq.Mi.	Mi.	Sq.Mi.	Mi.	Sq.Mi.	Mi.	Sq.Mi.
1	0.0	4.06	0.0	4.06	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2	7.9	6.35	7.9	6.35	7.9*	0.0	7.9	0.0
3	1.5	5.01	0.0	3.51*	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
4	21.8	30.66	6.2	30.66*	6.2*	0.0	6.2	0.0
5	4.2	28.37	4.2*	28.37*	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
6	6.9	44.53	24.1*	44.53	0.0	0.0	5.3	0.0
7	11.1*	42.07*	11.1*	42.07*	0.0	0.0	7.5*	0.0
8	8.1*	60.51	8.1*	60.51*	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
9	4.0	14.05	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
10	0.0	9.77	0.0	9.77*	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
11	16.5	30.20	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL:	82.0	275.58	61.6	229.83	14.1	0.0	26.9	0.0

* Includes miles or acres with some type of seasonal closure, but open to OHVs at least for a portion of the year. The reader is referred to the Alternative maps for specific roads, areas, and seasons.

Direct/Indirect Effects:

Implementation of either Alt. 3 or 4 will result in reduced OHV access. The numbers shown may be somewhat misleading since all acres open to OHV use are not necessarily useable because of steep, inaccessible terrain. Even implementation of Alt. 2, the Motorized Recreation Alternative, will result in some reduction in miles and acres open to OHVs due to the need to meet Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines.

Snowmobile access would not be significantly affected by implementation of any alternative, since no conflicts with this use have been identified, other than in winter range areas. Presently 71 miles of District roads are closed to all vehicles except snowmobiles from 12/16 to 3/31 annually, as posted, to protect groomed snowmobile trails from damage by other vehicles. The only proposed change to this would be reducing this mileage by approximately 11 miles (road 42) to allow winter 4X4 use on Iron Springs Ridge, under Alternatives 2 and 4.

Cumulative Effects:

Because of effects these vehicles often have to soils, vegetation, wildlife, watershed, and fisheries resources, more and more areas are being closed to the use of off highway vehicles, not only on Forest Service, but also on lands administered by other Federal, State, and local agencies. Many Forest Plan Management Areas require that these vehicles be limited to designated routes, thus restricting opportunities for cross country travel. Other management directions regarding open road densities in wildlife habitat further restrict the miles of routes which can be available to motorized vehicles. The cumulative effect on OHV use resulting from implementation of the Action Alternatives, as expressed in change from the No Action Alternative, is displayed in the following table.

Table 7						
% Change from "No Action"						
	Alt. 2		Alt. 3		Alt. 4	
	<u>Mi.</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Mi.</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Mi.</u>	<u>Acres</u>
% Change from						
Alternative 1:	-25%	-17%	-83%	-100%	-67%	-100%

Mitigation:

The following proposed projects would help to mitigate effects on OHV use:

Spangler Project

Implementation of the Spangler project will increase the miles of trail open to OHV use and help mitigate the loss of trail miles closed under the Action Alternatives.

Stevens Ridge

Most road closures in the Stevens Ridge area will, under the preferred Alternative, be open to vehicles under 50" in width. A system of interconnecting trails may be developed, using old skid trails and logging spurs, to make a network of loop routes available.

Mountain Road Groomed Trail

Converting the groomed snowmobile trail which parallels the Mountain Road (rd. 40) to a summertime OHV route has been discussed as a possible project. This would help to mitigate, not only the loss of trail miles closed to motorized traffic, but also safety restrictions on the use of off-road vehicles on main Forest access roads.

Other projects may be proposed in the future which may further increase OHV opportunities. Any project planning must take into account Strategy Area and Forest Plan Management Area objectives, and effects on wildlife and other resources. Any project which involves construction of any trail facilities will require and environmental analysis and cultural resource clearance before project implementation.

TRACKING ISSUES:

ISSUE #4, ADMINISTRATION

Of the 3 Action Alternatives, Alternative 3 would be the most difficult (and costly) to implement, administer and enforce. The large number of closed roads, and the resulting number of closure devices (gates, barricades, earth berms) would be costly, though this could be mitigated somewhat by closing several roads behind a single device, and using the less expensive devices, such as the guardrail barricades and earth berms on year-round closures. Costs to other Forest Service programs, permittees and contractors would be significant as a result of being required to walk long distances to work sites. Many of the closures would be difficult to enforce, since the closure devices would need to be located near the main access roads on fairly level, open terrain, which, along with the fact that it would be very restrictive to Forest users, would tend to encourage violations. Opening individual roads for limited time periods to allow woodcutting or other uses would be more difficult under this Alternative since opening one closure device, in some cases, may open many roads.

Implementation of Alt. 2, while requiring fewer closure devices and thus lowering initial cost, would present a high continuing administrative cost because of the need to open and close gates seasonally. The fewer closures would lower costs to other programs, however, since walking distances behind closures would be shorter and fewer roads would be closed. Opening individual roads for woodcutting or administrative use would be easier than under Alt. 3, but the need to open roads would not be as great.

Effects on the Administration issue would lie somewhere between the above with implementation of Alternative 4. Initial cost would be above that of Alt. 2, but use of the lesser cost closure methods on year-round closures would reduce this somewhat. Closures would be more enforceable, and thus more effective, because most devices would be placed at more suitable locations. This would also allow Forest users to drive farther off of the main roads for camping or parking. Individual roads could be opened as needed for woodcutting or administrative access, depending on Strategy Area objectives and open road density requirements.

ISSUE #5, ANADROMOUS FISH

Implementation of Alt. 2 would have the most risk of having an effect on salmon habitat. The risk would be greatest in the Pataha Creek drainage, where many old roads would be converted to OHV routes, encouraging motorized access in riparian areas. Under Alternatives 3 and 4 most roads

which are determined to not be needed for land management purposes will be obliterated and removed from the road system. Obliteration techniques range from simply removing the road from the system (a little paper work) for old spur roads which have naturally revegetated, to physically returning the road prism to as near the natural appearing landscape as possible. Usually road obliteration involves removing bridges, culverts and other improvements, and adding whatever drainage work is required to make the road self-maintaining, then seeding grass and other vegetation to stabilize the soil and stop erosion. Under the No Action Alternative the roads not needed for management would continue to be potential sources of sediment, particularly those roads near streams. Those which have been closed to vehicular traffic would slowly revegetate over time, and their risk as a sediment source would slowly diminish, but the risk of a major drainage failure (such as a culvert plugging up, causing the road to wash out) would continue.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

The following page is a sample of the questionnaire which was distributed to Forest users, participants at public meeting, and visitors to the Pomeroy Ranger District Office from 9/91 through 12/91. The second page is a copy of the questionnaire with the number of responses shown in each catagory.

POMEROY RANGER DISTRICT
ACCESS MANAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The Pomeroy Ranger District welcomes you to the Umatilla National Forest. The District is in the process of preparing its access management plan, as required by the Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Your help, by completing the following questionnaire, would greatly help us to develop a workable plan which considers public desires, while protecting natural resources as required by law.

1. How do you use the National Forest? ☐ ATV Riding ☐ Berry Picking
(Choose all that apply.) ☐ Camping ☐ Fishing
 ☐ Hiking ☐ Horseback Riding
 ☐ Hunting ☐ Sightseeing
 ☐ Snowmobiling ☐ Wood Cutting
2. Do you feel the present number of road closures is adequate?
 ☐ About Right ☐ Too Many ☐ Too Few
3. Would you support additional road closures to benefit wildlife populations?
 ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Care
4. If there are additional closures, would you prefer:
 ☐ Seasonal, or ☐ Year-round closures?
5. Because of the open, fairly level nature of much of the ranger district, closures of individual roads and trails is sometimes not very effective. To make these closures more enforceable, it may be necessary to establish area closures, in which motorized access would be limited to using only certain designated routes. Would this be acceptable to you?
 ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Care
- 6a. Is the present level of snowmobile access acceptable? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- 6b. If not, do you want: ☐ More? ☐ Less?
7. Presently, ATVs (ie. motorcycles, 3- and 4-wheelers) are relatively unrestricted. Would you like to see more restrictions on ATV access?
 ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Care

COMMENTS:

POMEROY RANGER DISTRICT
RESULTS OF ACCESS MANAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire was distributed to Forest users and interested publics from 8/91 to 12/91. Copies were handed out to Forest users by field-going personnel; at public meetings held in Pomeroy, Clarkston, and Dayton; and were on display and available to the public at the Pomeroy Ranger District office. This is a summary of the responses received.

1. How do you use the National Forest? 81 ATV Riding 144 Berry Picking
(Choose all that apply.) 300 Camping 198 Fishing
208 Hiking 85 Horseback Riding
324 Hunting 230 Sightseeing
84 Snowmobiling 180 Wood Cutting
16 Misc. Uses (Wildflowering, 4-WD, etc.)
2. Do you feel the present number of road closures is adequate?
147 About Right 98 Too Many 128 Too Few
3. Would you support additional road closures to benefit wildlife populations?
242 Yes 128 No 8 Don't Care
4. If there are additional closures, would you prefer:
243 Seasonal, or 117 Year-round closures?
5 Both
5. Because of the open, fairly level nature of much of the ranger district, closures of individual roads and trails is sometimes not very effective. To make these closures more enforceable, it may be necessary to establish area closures, in which motorized access would be limited to using only certain designated routes. Would this be acceptable to you?
242 Yes 110 No 19 Don't Care
- 6a. Is the present level of snowmobile access acceptable? 212 Yes 71 No
- 6b. If not, do you want: 38 More? 86 Less?
7. Presently, ATVs (ie. motorcycles, 3- and 4-wheelers) are relatively unrestricted. Would you like to see more restrictions on ATV access?
218 Yes 126 No 24 Don't Care

Total number of questionnaires returned: 386

A number of questionnaires were returned with written comments. These are on file at the Pomeroy Ranger District office, and were used to help identify potential issues during the planning process.

APPENDIX B

List of Interdisciplinary Team Members

<u>Name</u>	<u>Team Positon</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
Joe Durnbaugh	Team Leader	Civil Engineer Tech./ Law Enforcement Officer
Don Gonzalez	Recreation/Resources	Resources Assistant
Del Groat	Wildlife/Fisheries	Fisheries Biologist
Robert Housley	Planning Advisor	District Planner
James Tardif	Silviculture/Timber	District Silviculturist

Advisory Team Members:

Dallas Berringer	Mapping	Dist. GIS Coordinator
James Frakes	Fire/Fuels	Dist. Fuels Assistant
Fred Higginbotham	Wildlife	Wildlife Biologist
Lonnie Ruchert	Alternate Team Leader	Civil Engineering Tech.
Lisa Young	Timber/Firewood	Forestry Technician

Other Advisors to Team:

Mark Grandstaff	Wildlife Biologist - Wash. Dept. of Wildlife
James Nelson	Enforcement Agent - Wash. Dept. of Wildlife

APPENDIX C

Monitoring

The Alternative selected by the deciding officer will be implemented over a period of three to five years, depending on budget considerations. The District will establish priorities for an orderly implementation schedule. Umatilla Forest policy calls for signing proposed road and area closures one year in advance of the closure date. This policy will be followed unless there is an overriding need to implement a closure immediately to prevent or mitigate resource damage, to help strengthen and enforce existing closures, and when roads are to be obliterated and removed from the road system. Roads and areas which have an established closure, but which may have a change in the type or season of closure will be implemented immediately, if possible.

An access management plan needs to be flexible to allow for varying field conditions, established use patterns, and other unforeseen problems. Closure locations may vary from those shown on the Alternative maps in order to make the closures more effective and enforceable. Some short spur roads, shown as closed on the maps, may be left open if they cannot be closed effectively, and to provide dispersed recreation opportunities, if doing so still meets the objectives of the Strategy Area.

The Access Management Plan will be reviewed annually, during and after implementation, to monitor its effectiveness and propose any needed changes. The plan may be revised biennially in order to implement changes which have been determined to be needed. This is in accordance with the Umatilla Forest Plan Forest Management Objectives (pg. 4-52). At the time of the annual review, any proposals for temporary openings of road closures (to allow access for woodcutting or other activities) and anticipated needs for administrative or commercial access for the coming year will also be reviewed and analyzed.

As future timber sales and other projects are planned the open road densities, as a component of the Habitat Effectiveness Index (HEI), will be analyzed on a sub-watershed basis. If minimum HEI (as established in the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines) is not met, the open road density will be examined and necessary adjustments made (through additional road closures) in order to meet HEI requirements. Existing open road density will also be compared to the projected density to determine consistency with this plan.

The District will initiate a permit system, as required by the Forest Plan (pg. 4-86), for administrative use of closed roads and areas. Those needing access to a closure will normally be required to enter via non-motorized means. Permits for motorized access may be issued based on an analysis of need, benefit and cost. For instance, if a Forest Service crew or contractor needs to bring in heavy equipment for a project, then a permit may be issued based on need. Permits must also be consistent with Strategy Area and road management objectives. Permits will usually not be issued for motorized entry to winter range, calving or hunting season closures. Requirements for permits will be somewhat less stringent in

general summer range closures, although the Strategy Area objectives for open road density still need to be met. Administrative motorized use permits will generally be denied for entry onto any closures during the big game modern rifle hunting seasons.

The Pomeroy Ranger District will keep a record of permits issued as part of its monitoring program. Permits will be the minimum necessary to accomplish Forest Service management objectives and those of cooperating agencies and permittees. As stated in the Forest Plan, pg. 4-86: "Limited single use permits will be rare; if a road is authorized for use, generally it will be open for all uses". The first response to a request for a permit will usually be that if the employee, crew, permittee or agency can perform their job on foot, horseback, or bicycle, and/or if the work can be performed at a different time of year (for seasonal closures), then the permit will not be issued.

A timber sale contract is considered to be a permit to use the roads specified in the contract. Seasonal restrictions may be placed on timber sale operations in sensitive areas, such as winter range or calving area closures. These limitations will be addressed during project planning, and implemented through the timber sale contract. New low use, local roads which are built for timber sale access in the future will be closed upon termination of timber sale activities, as per Forest Plan direction (pg. 4-86).

APPENDIX D

Strategy Area Objectives

- SA 1 Maintain integrity of Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness Area. Eliminate motorized violations of Wilderness boundary. Admin. permits: May be issued based on demonstrated need.
- SA 2 Provide OHV recreation opportunities. Admin. permits not needed for access.
- SA 3, 5, 7, 10 Provide security to wintering big game. Retain less than 1.0 mi./sq.mi. open road density during winter periods and under 1.5 mi./sq.mi. during spring calving season.
Admin. permits: Generally not issued during winter and spring periods. Seasonally-dependent activities, such as tree planting, may require motorized access and will normally be allowed. Permits may also be issued for wildlife benefitting activities such as tagging, winter feeding, spring burning, etc..
- SA 4, 8 Provide security for big game during spring, summer, and fall and opportunities for commodity and firewood production. Maintain open road density near 1.5 mi./sq.mi. during spring calving (4/1-6/30) and fall mating/hunting seasons (9/1-11/30). During summer (July - August) period may open some roads for firewood gathering, though open road density should still remain under 2.0 mi./sq.mi..
Admin. permits: Will not normally be issued during calving season in areas identified as important for calving. Otherwise may be issued based on Forest policy of demonstrated need, benefit, and cost.
- SA 6 Timber/commodity production and provide security for big game during spring, summer and fall. Maintain open road density at or under 2.0 mi./sq.mi.. Some closed roads may be opened for firewood cutting, though not in areas identified for elk calving during calving season. Admin. permits: Not normally issued in calving closures. Otherwise may be issued based on Forest policy of demonstrated need, benefit, and cost.
- SA 9, 11 Roadless and/or non-motorized management.
Admin. permits: Permits for motorized access not issued, except on emergency basis, in which case written permit will not be needed.

APPENDIX E

Literature Cited

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