



Fremont-Winema National Forest

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Roads Analysis: Fremont Background and Context

Roads Analysis Report Forest-Wide Assessment

Fremont Portion of the Fremont-Winema National Forests
December 2006

3. Background and Context

3.1 Historical Context

The Fremont National Forest includes more than 6787 miles of Forest Service Roads. There are an additional 89 miles of state, county, and private roads within the boundary of the National Forests.

Existing Road Miles

	Fremont National Forest
Forest Service Roads	6788
Other Roads	89
Total	6877

The road system has evolved over time, but the vast majority of roads were constructed from 1960 to 1990. The road system was developed primarily in response to the needs of timber management; very few roads

have been constructed solely for management of other resources. Some old skid trails have developed into roads through use by hunters and recreationists.

As transportation needs changed over time, the routes were reconstructed to higher standards.

In the early 1900s, road standards were developed calling for "truck trails" to be constructed nine feet wide. These roads were to exclude any excess width. The primary purpose for construction was to provide administrative access for fire protection. Although we don't have any records of these truck trails, they do not account for many of our current road miles.

In the 1920s the Regions of the Forest Service were directed to undertake a transportation planning effort to determine the road system required for effective fire protection. Few roads were constructed during that era, but when the CCC was established, planned road projects were available for construction. Again, we have no records of roads built, but the number of miles was quite low.

In the late 1940s demand for timber products increased significantly. Congress began to appropriate large road budgets. Many of the mainline roads were designed and constructed by the Bureau of Public Roads, now the Federal Highway Administration. These roads were normally constructed to highway standards. The Forest Service was responsible for the construction of lower use project roads, such as the roads within a timber sale area. Often, the road location and standards were left to the timber purchaser's discretion. In the urgency to provide timber access, "many miles of primary timber access roads were hastily surveyed and constructed with insufficient attention to possible watershed damage and future requirements" (SDA, 199c).

A portion of the Fremont National Forest is made up of lands purchased from the Klamath Tribes in 1963 and 1973. Those lands were roaded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in support of the Tribal timber program over the years. While this road system was purchased with the land, the majority of the roads now on the Fremont National Forests were constructed from 1960 through 1990.

During this period, road standards and political interest varied significantly. From 1960 to 1976 strict geometric standards were used. When constructing these roads, excavations, often resulting in large road cuts and fills, were required to establish alignment and grade. After 1976 non-geometric design methods were used. With these methods, the road alignment and grade was adjusted to follow the existing contour of the ground as closely as possible, resulting in significantly less ground disturbance. Non-geometric methods are still in use.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, road construction programs were quite large. To ensure that the Forest Service was receiving the quality of road paid for, an emphasis was placed on contract administration. A national training and certification program was developed to ensure that contract administrators were qualified and experienced.

The non-geometric design coupled with well-trained administrators significantly reduced problems associated with road instability. In the early 1980s, new road standards were implemented. These standards allowed the Forest to reduce ecological impacts by setting road standards based upon resource needs for roads. The standards allowed serviceability to be sacrificed in order to mitigate environmental impacts.

Reconstruction by timber purchasers was limited in the early 1980s due to the high cost of the road program. Although short lived, this limit on reconstruction significantly reduced the amount of funds for resurfacing roads. Loss of surfacing can lead to rutting, erosion, and ultimately sediment delivery to streams. The Fremont National Forest maintained a large reconstruction budget since the early 1970s. Through this program, many unstable areas associated with early road construction practices have been stabilized. Currently, the road reconstruction budget is very limited and not much funding is available to reconstruct roads.

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