

## Travel Management in Land Management Plan Revision



**Figure 1. North Fork Little Joe. USDA Forest Service photo by A. Romanko**

### Travel management under the 1986 Forest Plan

The 1986 plan was developed under the 1982 planning regulations, which included a requirement to identify where off-road vehicle use would be planned, implemented, and permitted.

The travel management regulations at 36 CFR 212.52(a) and 212.81(b) allow for publication of motor vehicle use maps with public notice if a unit has made previous administrative decisions under other authorities restricting motor vehicle use. Based on previous decision-making, the Lolo National Forest has been publishing motor vehicle and over-snow motor vehicle use maps since 2014.

The previous decision-making that informs these maps includes the 1986 plan decision and subsequent project-level decisions with travel management elements, and is supported by annual publications of travel management plan maps under the Forest Supervisor's signature beginning in 1987.

### Status of Travel Analysis on the Lolo

Subpart A of the Travel Management Rule is intended to address the need to better manage funds for road construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and decommissioning, and requires science-based transportation analysis when making road management decisions. The Lolo completed a forestwide travel analysis in 2015 addressing all National Forest System Roads in the transportation atlas at that time. The travel analysis report provides an assessment of the known roads and a set of findings and opportunities for change to the forest transportation system. Project-level travel analyses have been completed to inform project decisions related to the forest transportation system and implement some opportunities identified in the 2015 and subsequent travel analysis reports. To date, the Lolo has not completed the environmental review to identify the minimum road system. While it is a regulatory obligation to do this at some point, completion is not required for plan revision.

### How will travel management be addressed in plan revision?

The 2012 planning rule has replaced the 1982 planning rule. The 2012 regulations describe the nature of the two-tiered decision-making of approving a land management plan to guide project and activity decision making but does not authorize projects or activities, commit the Forest Service to take action, or regulate public uses (36 CFR 219.2(b)(1) and (2)). The plan decision is a programmatic action. This means unlike the 1986 Forest Plan, the programmatic decision to approve the revised plan will not regulate public use. If current motor vehicle use designations are not consistent with the revised plan components, modifications must be made as soon as practicable after plan approval.

The assessment will identify and evaluate information about the contribution of infrastructure to social and economic sustainability, trends that may affect the need

for access, impacts on ecological integrity and species diversity, and the Forest’s fiscal capability.

The development of plan components will consider appropriate placement and sustainable management of infrastructure, such as recreational facilities and transportation and utility corridors for the integrated resource management of multiple uses. As informed by the assessment, development of plan content may include:

1. Desired conditions for a sustainable transportation system that serve land management and public needs and purposes;
2. Objectives for road decommissioning, placing roads in intermittent stored service, road reconstruction and/or maintenance to address road-related resource effects; and
3. Standards and guidelines to minimize adverse effects of road management actions.

This suite of plan components would guide project and activity decision-making consistent with the Travel Management Rule to move the forest toward the minimum road system needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands.

## What about roads on newly acquired lands?

The Lolo National Forest has acquired over 100,000 acres of land since 2001, and these acquisitions have included road infrastructure. A portion of these roads have been evaluated in one or more project-specific travel analyses, with some roads subsequently added to the transportation atlas during project decision-making. However, the system for some roads remains “undetermined” and not all acquired roads have been addressed in a travel analysis. The assessment for plan revision will include a broad travel analysis for these areas, similar to the process used across the Forest in 2015.

## Summary and Key Points

The revised plan decision will not change site-specific travel management designations, but it will influence how future designations or prohibitions may be made over the life of the plan.

1. While plan revision will not identify the minimum road system, the plan will guide future decision-making aligned with the requirements at 36 CFR 212.
2. The 2015 Forestwide Travel Analysis Report and subsequent project-specific travel analyses will be used to inform the assessment, along with a similar analysis being conducted on recently acquired lands.
3. Assessment and public engagement will be critical to inform the need to maintain or change current motor vehicle use suitability conditions forestwide.
4. A range of alternatives related to motor vehicle use suitability to inform future travel management decision making may be appropriate to be responsive to public input.
5. Plan approval does not regulate public use. Site-specific NEPA decision-making would be required to modify the current motor vehicle use and over the snow vehicle use maps if needed after plan revision is complete.



Figure 2. Skookum Trail, Lolo National Forest. USDA Forest Service photo by Kate Jerman.