

**File Code:** 7700; 1950

**Date:** August 29, 2019

Dear Interested Party,

We have identified you as an individual, agency, or organization with potential interest in commenting on the **Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Revised DEIS) for the Public Motorized Travel Management Plan** in Apache, Coconino, Greenlee, and Navajo counties on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. The purpose of this project is to comply with the Travel Management Rule by providing a system of roads, trails, and areas designated for motor vehicle use (36 CFR 212) and for that system to reduce impacts to biological, physical, and cultural resources in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. The Revised DEIS and additional information can be found on the project website at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=22692>.

## Preferred Alternative

This Revised DEIS analyzed three alternatives Alternative 1 – No Action; Alternative 2 – Proposed Action; and Alternative 3. **The preferred alternative is Alternative 2 – The Proposed Action.** This was selected as the preferred alternative because it is consistent with the Travel Management Rule, meets the purpose and need for action, and balances the public input with protecting natural and cultural resources on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. The Revised DEIS describes all alternatives in detail and more information, including all project links, can be found in the [Travel Management Project Home Page](#).

The proposed action (alternative 2) would designate a system of roads, trails, and areas for motorized use as well as limited motorized access for dispersed camping and limited motorized access for big game retrieval. This proposed action would bring the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests into compliance with the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212, subpart B) to provide for a system of National Forest System roads, motorized trails, and motorized areas designed for motor vehicle use. The road system would have 15 percent fewer open roads and 68 percent more motorized trails than the current system. That would result in 2,889 miles of National Forest System roads open to public motorized travel, including 2,144 miles of roads that are open to both highway legal and off-highway vehicles. Also, this would result in 202 miles of motorized trails, with 20 miles open to all vehicles and 182 miles open to vehicles less than 50 inches wide.

The proposed action would designate 300 feet from one or both sides of 1,027 miles of designated roads (approximately 35 percent) for the sole purpose of accessing dispersed camping locations with motor vehicles. Where compliant with the Forest Plan, motorized big game retrieval would be allowed within a 1-mile distance off the designated road and motorized trail system (1.2 million acres) for elk. Due to restrictions in law, regulation, or policy, motorized access for big game retrieval is not designated in the following areas: designated and



recommended wilderness areas; Blue Range Primitive Area; areas closed to motorized use by Forest Order; and forest plan management areas unsuitable for motorized use (research natural areas, recommended research natural areas, natural landscapes, and wildlife quiet areas). Both the camping corridors and motorized big game retrieval corridors are measured from the centerline of the road. No other species could be retrieved using motor vehicles. There would be one motorized use area designated (17 acres). All other motorized cross-country travel would be prohibited.

## Public Participation Opportunities

We are conducting public meetings during the comment period to share information on the Revised DEIS, answer questions, and discuss how to comment on this project. Our open house meetings will provide a self-guided setting where the public can browse the information. Subject matter experts will also be on-hand to answer questions. Please feel free to join us at any time during the public participation opportunities listed below.

### *Public Meeting Schedule*

<b>Address</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
Clifton Train Depot 100 Coronado Blvd Clifton, AZ 85533	September 10, 2019	5:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Eagar Town Council Chambers 22 W 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street Eagar, AZ 85925	September 12, 2019	5:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Show Low Police Department Darrin Reed Community Room 411 E Deuce of Clubs Show Low, AZ 85901	September 19, 2019	5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

## How to Provide Comments

This solicitation serves as a designated opportunity for public comment. We encourage your review of the Revised DEIS. It is important that reviewers provide timely, specific written comments (36 CFR 218.2) within the scope of the proposed action, that have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and include supporting reasons for the responsible official (Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Supervisor) to consider in preparing the Final EIS. Therefore, comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns and contentions.

The Notice of Availability for the Revised DEIS is expected to be published in the Federal Register on **Friday, August 30, 2019**. Comments will be accepted for 60 days beginning on the first day after the date of publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. Comments will be accepted until the end of the next Federal working day if the comment period

ends on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday. The publication date in the Federal Register is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. It is the responsibility of the persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period.

Failing to submit timely and specific, written comments can affect a reviewer's ability to participate in subsequent administrative judicial review. Any written comments submitted outside this or another designated opportunity for public comment and all oral comments will be considered, but will not establish objection eligibility.

Other requirements to be eligible to submit an objection are defined by 36 CFR 218.25(a)(3) and 36 CFR 219.53 and include name, postal address, title of the project, and verification of identity of the individual or entity who authored the comments upon request. Individual members of an entity must submit their own individual comments to have eligibility to object as an individual. A timely submission will be determined as outlined in 36 CFR 218.25(a)(4). It is the responsibility of the sender to ensure timely receipt of any comments submitted.

### *Written Comments*

Electronic comments including attachments may be submitted electronically in word (.doc), rich text format (.rtf), text (.txt), hypertext markup language (.html), or portable document format (.pdf). Specific written comments may also be submitted via mail or hand delivered to Supervisor's Office between the hours of 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

Website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/TMPWrittenComments>. This link is located on the right side of the page at "Comment/Object on Project".

Mail: Travel Management Plan Comments, P.O. Box 640, Springerville, AZ 85938

Fax: 928-333-5966, please mark "Attention: Travel Management Plan Comments"

Hand delivery: 30 S. Chiricahua Dr. Springerville, AZ 85938

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will become part of the public record for this project and may be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Forest Service with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents nor will it provide the respondent with standing to participate in subsequent administrative judicial review.

Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the requester is denied; the agency will return the

submission and notify the requestor that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within seven days.

### *Geographic Based Comments*

Short, geographic-based comments can be submitted via the [Interactive Comment Map](#), as explained under tab 3 of the interactive map application. When submitting a comment, you will not have legal standing unless you fill out first name, last name, and mailing address, as explained above.

All comments that meet the terms of use guidelines will be made available for the public to view through the interactive map. Comments are not automatically made public and are screened according to the terms of use, which must be accepted before the comment application will open. The only information displayed to the public is the alternative you commented on and what is written in the "comment" field. Once a comment is made available it will be displayed as a blue push pin on the map or listed with the comments on the map. Clicking either on the list or on a circle on the map will show display the comment.

### **Next Steps**

All comments received from this solicitation will be fully considered in the preparation of the Final EIS and draft record of decision. The final EIS and draft record of decision are subject to the predecisional administrative review process (objection process) pursuant to 36 CFR 218, subparts A and B. Objections will only be accepted from those who have previously submitted substantive written comments regarding this proposed project during a designated opportunity for public comment in accordance with 36 CFR 218.25(a)(3) and 36 CFR 219.53(a). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted, timely, specifically written comments regarding this proposed project unless based on new information arising after the designated comment opportunities. The responsible official, will notify those that previously commented of the opportunity to object when the Final EIS and draft record of decision are prepared. The responsible official for this project is Stephen Best, Forest Supervisor, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

### **Additional Information**

For questions and requests regarding this action, including requests for a hard copy of the Revised DEIS, please contact the Travel Management hotline at 928-333-6267 or send an email to [asntravel@fs.fed.us](mailto:asntravel@fs.fed.us). We value public participation and hope you will share your comments on this project. Thank you for your interest in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Stephen Best". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" and "B".

**M. STEPHEN BEST**  
Forest Supervisor