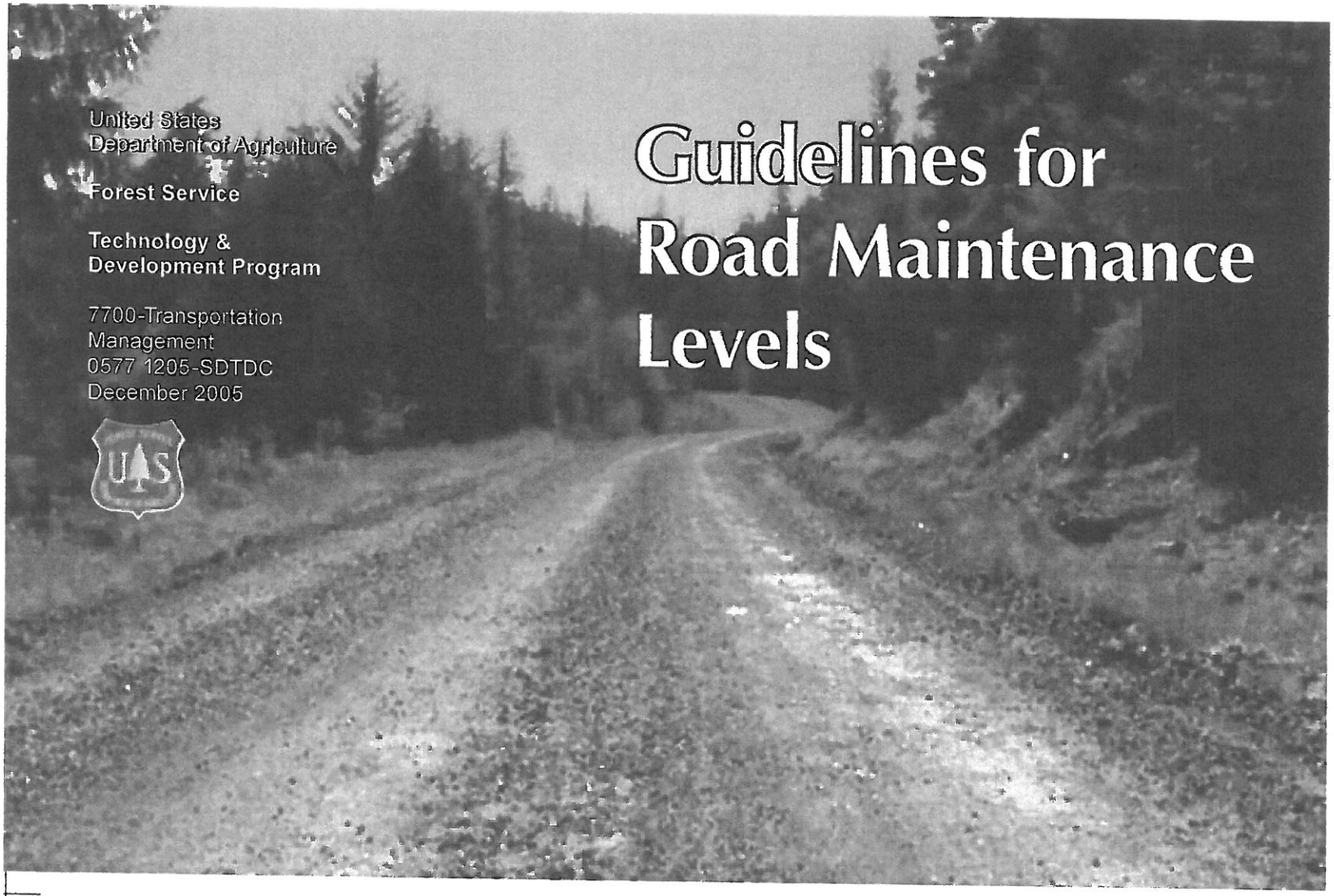

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Guidelines for Road Maintenance Levels

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by
Committee for Guidelines for Road Maintenance Levels

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INTRODUCTION

This concise guide defines and summarizes road maintenance levels and entrance management strategies, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service regulations. The explanations and photos can help agency road managers, transportation engineers, and particularly equipment operators and field personnel achieve consistent application of road management and maintenance standards.

The USDA Forest Service guidance provided serves as a primer for educating the public and other resource personnel within the USDA Forest Service about how the agency's transportation system is managed and maintained.

Maintenance Levels (FSH 7709.58,10,12.3)
Maintenance levels are defined by the USDA Forest Service Handbook (FSH) as the level of service provided by, and maintenance required for, a specific road. Maintenance levels must be consistent with road management objectives, and maintenance criteria.

Factors. Consider the following factors when selecting maintenance levels:

a. Resource program needs, environmental and resource protection requirements, visual quality objectives, and recreation opportunity spectrum classes.
b. Road investment protection requirements.
c. Service life and current operational status.
d. User safety.
e. Volume, type, class, and composition of traffic.
f. Surface type.
g. Travel speed.
h. User comfort and convenience.
i. Functional classification.
j. Traffic service level.

Roads may be currently maintained at one level and planned to be maintained at a different level at some future date. The operational maintenance level is the maintenance level currently assigned to a road considering today's needs, road condition, budget constraints, and environmental concerns; in other words, it defines the level to which the road is currently being maintained. The objective maintenance level is the maintenance level to be assigned at a future date considering future road management objectives, traffic needs, budget constraints, and environmental concerns. The objective maintenance level may be the same as, or higher or lower than, the operational maintenance level to objective maintenance level may depend on reconstruction or disinvestment.

Road Maintenance Level 3

Road maintenance level 3 is defined in the FSH 7709.58,10,12.3 as:

> Assigned to roads open and maintained for travel by prudent drivers in a standard passenger cars. User comfort and convenience are low priorities.
>
> Roads in this maintenance level are typically low speed, single lane with turnouts, and spot surfacing. Some roads may be fully surfaced with either native or processed material. Appropriate traffic management strategies are either "encourage" or "accept." "Discourage" or "prohibit" strategies may be employed for certain classes of vehicles or users.

These roads have the following attributes:

- Subject to the requirements of Highway Safety Act and MUTCD.
- Roads have low- to moderate-traffic volume.
- Typically connect to arterial and collectors roads.
- A combination of dips and culverts provide drainage.
- May include some dispersed recreation roads.
- Potholing or washboarding may occur.

ML3

Maintenance prescription guidelines from the FSH 7709.58,10,12.6, exhibit 01 include:

General. As needed.

Traveled way. Maintain surface to provide travel by prudent drivers in standard passenger cars. Some surface roughness is tolerated. User comfort and convenience is a low priority. Maintain a traveled way crown or cross slope to provide adequate drainage. Replace the base course and surfacing as needed.

Shoulder. Maintain existing shoulders commensurate with the traveled way.

Drainage. As necessary to keep drainage facilities functional and prevent unacceptable environmental damage.

Roadway. Maintain existing vegetative cover. Control the vegetation to provide sight distance. Repair and/or remove slides and slumps to provide passage by prudent drivers in standard passenger cars.

Roadside. Remove hazard trees and clean up litter.

Structure. Maintain all structures to provide for passage of planned traffic and to preserve structures for future use. Defer noncritical items and combine to provide for more economical project. For example, defective bridge rails, running planks, and bridge guideposts on a current basis. Defer the painting of bridge rails to a logical project cycle.

Traffic service. Install and maintain route markers; warning, regulatory, and guide signs; and other traffic devices to provide for planned traffic.