



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

FEB 18 2011

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed is the Forest Service report outlining Agency actions and a timeline for implementation to ensure compliance with requirements in 36 CFR 212.5(b) and 212.51, in response to Senate Report 111-38.

The status report addresses Subparts A and B of 36 CFR Part 212. Subpart A, Administration of the Forest Transportation System, requires each administrative unit of the National Forest System (NFS) to identify its minimum road system and unneeded roads. The report outlines a process, based on current budget levels, to complete travel analysis to implement Subpart A.

Subpart B, Designation of Roads, Trails, and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use, requires each administrative unit to designate those NFS roads, NFS trails, and areas on NFS lands that are open to motor vehicle use and identify those designations on a motor vehicle use map (MVUM). As of the end of fiscal year 2010, 68 percent of administrative units were covered by an MVUM. The administrative units that did not finish the designation process by December 31, 2010 will complete it on a schedule negotiated by the Chief's Office and the affected region.

In compliance with section 435 of Public Law 111-88, after 45 days this report will be posted on the Forest Service's Web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/aboutus/budget/congressional-directives.shtml>.

A similar letter and copy of the report are being sent to Senators Reed and Murkowski and Congressman Moran.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack".

Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary

Enclosure



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

FEB 18 2011

The Honorable James Moran  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House and Representatives  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Moran:

Enclosed is the Forest Service report outlining Agency actions and a timeline for implementation to ensure compliance with requirements in 36 CFR 212.5(b) and 212.51, in response to Senate Report 111-38.

The status report addresses Subparts A and B of 36 CFR Part 212. Subpart A, Administration of the Forest Transportation System, requires each administrative unit of the National Forest System (NFS) to identify its minimum road system and unneeded roads. The report outlines a process, based on current budget levels, to complete travel analysis to implement Subpart A.

Subpart B, Designation of Roads, Trails, and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use, requires each administrative unit to designate those NFS roads, NFS trails, and areas on NFS lands that are open to motor vehicle use and identify those designations on a motor vehicle use map (MVUM). As of the end of fiscal year 2010, 68 percent of administrative units were covered by an MVUM. The administrative units that did not finish the designation process by December 31, 2010 will complete it on a schedule negotiated by the Chief's Office and the affected region.

In compliance with section 435 of Public Law 111-88, after 45 days this report will be posted on the Forest Service's Web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/aboutus/budget/congressional-directives.shtml>.

A similar letter and copy of the report are being sent to Congressman Simpson and Senators Reed and Murkowski.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Tom Vilsack", is written over the printed name of the Secretary.

Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary

Enclosure



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

FEB 18 2011

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed is the Forest Service report outlining Agency actions and a timeline for implementation to ensure compliance with requirements in 36 CFR 212.5(b) and 212.51, in response to Senate Report 111-38.

The status report addresses Subparts A and B of 36 CFR Part 212. Subpart A, Administration of the Forest Transportation System, requires each administrative unit of the National Forest System (NFS) to identify its minimum road system and unneeded roads. The report outlines a process, based on current budget levels, to complete travel analysis to implement Subpart A.

Subpart B, Designation of Roads, Trails, and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use, requires each administrative unit to designate those NFS roads, NFS trails, and areas on NFS lands that are open to motor vehicle use and identify those designations on a motor vehicle use map (MVUM). As of the end of fiscal year 2010, 68 percent of administrative units were covered by an MVUM. The administrative units that did not finish the designation process by December 31, 2010 will complete it on a schedule negotiated by the Chief's Office and the affected region.

In compliance with section 435 of Public Law 111-88, after 45 days this report will be posted on the Forest Service's Web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/aboutus/budget/congressional-directives.shtml>.

A similar letter and copy of the report are being sent to Congressmen Simpson and Moran and Senator Murkowski.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Vilsack", is written over the typed name and title.

Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary

Enclosure



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

FEB 18 2011

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
125 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-4403

Dear Senator Murkowski:

Enclosed is the Forest Service report outlining Agency actions and a timeline for implementation to ensure compliance with requirements in 36 CFR 212.5(b) and 212.51, in response to Senate Report 111-38.

The status report addresses Subparts A and B of 36 CFR Part 212. Subpart A, Administration of the Forest Transportation System, requires each administrative unit of the National Forest System (NFS) to identify its minimum road system and unneeded roads. The report outlines a process, based on current budget levels, to complete travel analysis to implement Subpart A.

Subpart B, Designation of Roads, Trails, and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use, requires each administrative unit to designate those NFS roads, NFS trails, and areas on NFS lands that are open to motor vehicle use and identify those designations on a motor vehicle use map (MVUM). As of the end of fiscal year 2010, 68 percent of administrative units were covered by an MVUM. The administrative units that did not finish the designation process by December 31, 2010 will complete it on a schedule negotiated by the Chief's Office and the affected region.

In compliance with section 435 of Public Law 111-88, after 45 days this report will be posted on the Forest Service's Web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/aboutus/budget/congressional-directives.shtml>.

A similar letter and copy of the report are being sent to Congressmen Simpson and Moran and Senator Reed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack", written over a circular official seal.

Thomas J. Vilsack  
Secretary

Enclosure

# **Report to the United States Senate, Committee on Appropriations: Forest Service Compliance With the Travel Management Rule**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In 2001, the Forest Service promulgated revisions to regulations governing administration of the forest transportation system at 36 CFR Part 212. These revisions are now codified in Subpart A of Part 212. In 2005, the Forest Service again revised 36 CFR Part 212, to protect National Forest System (NFS) resources by addressing unrestricted cross-country travel by off-highway vehicles occurring in some administrative units of the NFS and to ensure consistent and proper management of motor vehicle use in the NFS. The second set of revisions is codified in Subpart B of Part 212. Collectively, 36 CFR Part 212 is known as the Travel Management Rule.

This report addresses implementation of Subparts A and B of the Travel Management Rule. Subpart A requires the responsible official to identify the minimum road system needed for each administrative unit for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of NFS lands, including identification and decommissioning of unneeded roads. Subpart B requires the responsible official to designate those NFS roads and NFS trails and areas on NFS lands that are open to motor vehicle use on administrative units or ranger districts.

The Travel Management Rule does not establish the order or a timeline for implementing Subparts A and B of 36 CFR Part 212. However, the Forest Service has prioritized designation of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use, as it is critical to stop uncontrolled cross-country motor vehicle use in the NFS to protect natural and cultural resources. Once routes and areas are reflected on a motor vehicle use map (MVUM) under Subpart B, motor vehicle use that is inconsistent with the designations is prohibited. MVUMs are available to the public at the headquarters of the corresponding administrative unit and on the Internet. As of the end of fiscal year (FY) 2010, approximately 68 percent of administrative units were covered by an MVUM. The units that did not finish the designation process by December 31, 2010, will complete it on a schedule negotiated by the Chief's Office and the affected region.

Designations under Subpart B will be considered when conducting travel analysis for Subpart A and decisions based on that analysis. The Agency has established the goal of completing travel analysis, including identification of a recommended minimum road system, for all administrative units by the end of FY 2015. This schedule is based on current budget levels and workforce capacity. The complexity of the issues identified may also impact the schedule. National guidance on completion of travel analysis for Subpart A was finalized and sent to all Forest Service regions on November 10, 2010.

## **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to identify the actions the Forest Service is taking to ensure compliance with Subparts A and B of the Travel Management Rule. These actions include identifying the minimum road system; designating roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use; and conducting travel analyses for these purposes. This report also provides a timeline for implementing these actions.

Subpart A of the Travel Management Rule requires the responsible official<sup>1</sup> to:

Identify the minimum road system needed for each administrative unit<sup>2</sup> for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of NFS lands, including identification and decommissioning of unneeded roads.

Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule requires the responsible official to:

Designate those NFS roads, NFS trails, and areas on NFS lands where motor vehicle use is allowed on administrative units or ranger districts and identify them on an MVUM.

The Travel Management Rule does not specify the order or a timeline for implementing Subparts A and B. The Forest Service has chosen to implement Subpart B first to stop motor vehicle use off designated routes and outside designated areas and proliferation of new unauthorized routes, thereby protecting NFS resources. Designations under Subpart B will be considered when conducting travel analysis for Subpart A and making decisions based on that analysis.

## **II. TRAVEL ANALYSIS**

Travel analysis informs travel management decisions by examining ecological, social, cultural, and economic concerns. Travel analysis neither produces decisions nor allocates NFS lands for specific purposes. Rather, travel analysis identifies management options and priorities and includes recommendations that inform future decisions pertaining to the forest transportation system. Travel analysis is science-based and identifies assumptions and limitations of the information on which it is based. Travel analysis for purposes of identification of the minimum road system is separate from travel analysis for purposes of designation of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use. Travel analysis for both purposes may be conducted concurrently or separately.

There are six steps in travel analysis:

1. Setting up the analysis.
2. Describing the situation.
3. Identifying issues.
4. Assessing benefits, problems, and risks.

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<sup>1</sup> In most instances the responsible official is the Forest or Grassland Supervisor or District Ranger.

<sup>2</sup> An administrative unit generally consists of one or more national forests and national grasslands.

5. Describing opportunities and setting priorities.
6. Reporting.

**Step 1 – Setting Up the Analysis.** This step involves establishment of an interdisciplinary team (ID Team) of Forest Service specialists; developing a list of data needs and a schedule; identifying the appropriate scope and scale of the analysis; establishing an inventory of NFS roads and NFS trails managed for motor vehicle use in the portion of the forest transportation system under analysis; and identifying the appropriate depth for the analysis based on the skills and resources available and the complexity and scope of the issues prompting the analysis. The analysis may be integrated with any watershed analysis or landscape assessments, including the Watershed Condition Framework.

**Step 2 – Describing the Situation.** In this step, the ID Team summarizes current land management and travel management direction. In addition, the ID Team produces:

- A map of the analysis area;
- An inventory of NFS roads and NFS trails and areas on NFS lands managed for motor vehicle use;
- An assessment of existing motorized and non-motorized uses;
- A description of public and administrative access needs;
- An assessment of motorized recreation opportunities;
- Information about environmental, social, and other issues;
- A summary of existing travel management decisions;
- An assessment of available resources to maintain and operate the forest transportation system; and
- A summary of available accident and law enforcement data.

The ID Team also considers:

- Motor vehicle use in the portion of the forest transportation system under analysis and on adjacent or connecting authorized transportation systems.
- The effects of motor vehicle use on the portion of the forest transportation system under analysis, using the criteria for designating routes and areas in Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule.

**Step 3 – Identifying Issues.** These issues include public and agency management concerns related to travel management as well as legal constraints on travel management. The amount of resources and skills available to conduct the analysis are also determined.

**Step 4 – Assessing Benefits, Problems, and Risks.** In this step, the major uses and environmental, social, and economic effects of the portion of the forest transportation system under analysis are examined, as are the risks and benefits associated with the current situation. Consideration is also given to the general and specific criteria for designating roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use in accordance with Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule.

**Step 5 – Describing Opportunities and Setting Priorities.** Proposals are formulated that respond to the issues, risks, and benefits identified in the preceding steps. The proposals compare motor vehicle use of the portion of the forest transportation system under analysis with desired conditions established in the applicable land management plan and describe options for modifying the forest transportation system that would achieve desired conditions.

**Step 6 – Reporting.** This step documents travel analysis in a report that includes lists of key issues; risks and benefits associated with changing the part of the forest transportation system under analysis; opportunities for addressing those risks and benefits; and, if applicable, any actions to implement the minimum road system or designate roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use, as well as any other changes to current travel management direction. The report provides the basis for developing proposed actions to implement the minimum road system; designate roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use; or any other changes to existing travel management decisions. These proposals are subject to appropriate public involvement and environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Travel management decisions are made at the project level and must be consistent with the applicable land management plan. Site-specific environmental analyses build on and incorporate relevant information developed during travel analysis.

### **III. ADMINISTRATION OF THE FOREST TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM – SUBPART A**

#### **A. Travel Analysis for Subpart A**

Most administrative units are preparing to complete travel analysis for Subpart A. Further direction on implementing Subpart A was provided in a November 10, 2010, letter to Regional Foresters from Joel Holtrop, Deputy Chief of the National Forest System. This letter emphasizes the need to balance economic, social, cultural, and ecological considerations for the forest transportation system, using an integrated approach. This letter also includes the following direction:

- The national forest road system of the future must provide needed access for recreation and resource management and support watershed restoration and resource protection to sustain healthy ecosystems and ecological connectivity.
- Units should seek to integrate the steps contained in the Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) with the six TAP steps, to eliminate redundancy and ensure an iterative and adaptive approach for both processes.
- The WCF process, and especially the initial watershed condition assessment (Step A), are to be completed by March 31, 2011. This will provide important information for Subpart A, while the TAP process will likewise provide information for the WCF process. The intent is for each process to inform the other so that they can be integrated and updated with new information, or where conditions change.



- Units are to immediately use TAP reports to inform resource assessments, and project and forest plan NEPA decisions to achieve the TAP recommendations.

Progress has been made by most administrative units on Subpart A. Under directives implementing the road management rule, which was promulgated on January 12, 2001, and which became Subpart A of the Travel Management Rule, the majority of administrative units have completed an analysis for maintenance level 3-5 roads (passenger car NFS roads). In addition, a small percentage of administrative units also have completed an analysis of maintenance level 1-2 roads (maintenance level 1 roads are those which have been placed in storage between intermittent uses; maintenance level 2 roads are those designed for high-clearance vehicles). Very few units have completed their Recommended Minimum Road System Map and/or have been certified by the Regional Forester per direction in the November 10, 2010, letter.

Subpart A progress will be reported every 6 months by unit (Forest and/or Region). The report will provide the percentage of units completing the following important Subpart A milestones: 1) Completed TAPs or RAPs on road maintenance levels 3-5; 2) Completed TAPs or Roads Analysis Processes on road maintenance levels 1-5; 3) Completed Recommended Minimum Road System Map; and 4) Completed TAP Report certified by the Regional Forester.

Further information on travel analysis that is being conducted for Subpart A is available upon request. Travel analysis for all administrative units is expected to be completed by the end of FY 2015.

## **B. Minimum Road System**

The minimum road system is the road system needed:

1. To meet resource and other management objectives adopted in the relevant land management plan;
2. To meet applicable statutory and regulatory requirements;
3. To reflect long-term funding expectations; and
4. To ensure that the identified system minimizes adverse environmental impacts associated with road construction, reconstruction, decommissioning, and maintenance.

In identifying the minimum road system, responsible officials must identify the NFS roads on lands under Forest Service jurisdiction that are no longer needed to meet forest resource management objectives and that therefore should be decommissioned or considered for other uses, such as for trails.

Further information on identification of the minimum road system is available upon request. For all administrative units, completion of travel analysis, including identification of a recommended minimum road system, is expected by the end of FY 2015.

#### **IV. DESIGNATION OF ROADS, TRAILS, AND AREAS FOR MOTOR VEHICLE USE – SUBPART B**

In 2005, the Forest Service revised 36 CFR Part 212 to require that motor vehicle use on NFS roads, NFS trails, and areas on NFS lands be designated by vehicle class and, if appropriate, by time of year. These revisions protect NFS resources by addressing unrestricted cross-country motor vehicle use occurring in some administrative units and to ensure consistent and proper management of motor vehicle use in the NFS. These revisions are codified in Subpart B of Part 212.

Designation of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use involves six steps:

1. Compiling existing travel management direction.
2. Assembling resource and social data.
3. Using travel analysis to identify proposals for change.
4. Conducting appropriate environmental analysis and decisionmaking.
5. Identifying designated routes and areas on an MVUM.
6. Implementing, monitoring, and revising.

Travel analysis under step 3 informs designations of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use that were proposed after January 8, 2009, when the directives on travel analysis went into effect. In travel analysis for Subpart B, general criteria, specific criteria for trails and areas, and specific criteria for roads are considered in designating roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use.

**General Criteria.** General criteria include consideration of effects on NFS natural and cultural resources, public safety, provision of recreation opportunities, access needs, conflicts among uses of NFS lands, as well as the need for and availability of resources for maintenance and administration of NFS roads, trails, and areas that would arise if the uses under consideration are designated.

**Specific Criteria.** In addition to the general criteria, there are specific criteria for trails and areas. These include consideration of effects on the following, with the objective of minimizing:

- Damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, and other forest resources;
- Harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats;
- Conflicts between motor vehicle use and existing or proposed recreational uses of NFS land or neighboring Federal lands; and
- Conflicts among different classes of motor vehicle uses of NFS lands or neighboring Federal lands.

The responsible official also considers compatibility of motor vehicle use with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account sound, emissions, and other factors.

There are specific criteria for roads, as well. These include consideration of speed, volume, composition, and distribution of traffic on roads, as well as compatibility of vehicle class with road geometry and road surfacing.

In addition to the general and specific criteria, there are other considerations in Subpart B, including recognition of valid existing rights and the rights of use of NFS roads and NFS trails under 36 CFR 212.6(b).

Designation of roads, trails, and areas becomes effective when they are identified on an MVUM. As of the end of FY 2010, 77 units, or 68 percent of all 114 administrative units, have completed an MVUM. The following table shows the number and percentage of administrative units by region that have completed an MVUM. The administrative units that did not finish the designation process by December 31, 2010, will complete it on a schedule negotiated by the Chief's Office and the affected region.

#### **MVUMs Completed as of the End of FY 2010**

| <b>Region</b> | <b>Total Administrative Units</b> | <b>Number of Administrative Units With Completed MVUM</b> | <b>Percentage of Administrative Units With Completed MVUM</b> |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| 1             | 13                                | 6   | 46  |
| 2             | 11                                | 8   | 73  |
| 3             | 11                                | 2   | 18  |
| 4             | 12                                | 11  | 92  |
| 5             | 18                                | 11  | 61  |
| 6             | 17                                | 8   | 47  |
| 8             | 15                                | 15  | 100   |
| 9             | 15                                | 14  | 93  |
| 10            | 2                                 | 2   | 100   |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>114</b>                        | <b>77</b>   | <b>68</b>   |

#### **V. CONCLUSION**

On June 8, 2006, Chief Dale Bosworth issued a memorandum identifying completion of an MVUM for each administrative unit as a "major step forward in addressing unmanaged recreational use. . . ." He also noted that this step "is one of our highest priorities as an Agency." The Forest Service is well on its way to meeting this expectation. In addition, the Agency has established a schedule for completing travel analysis, including identification of a recommended minimum road system. The Agency anticipates that this work will be accomplished by the end of FY 2015.