

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest



DECEMBER 2014

Motorized Travel Management

On behalf of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Staff, I want to offer my sincere thanks for your ongoing commitment as we have spent the last decade working with you on Travel Management.

In 2006, the Forest set forth with the goal of establishing a clearly defined system of roads trails and areas where motorized use could occur across a 4-million acre landscape. Toward that end, we hosted meetings and comment opportunities where we gathered extensive input from groups and individuals. Our resource specialists worked to analyze effects of several alternative motorized travel systems.

Fast forward nearly a decade and, while extensive effort has been made, our ambitious goal has not yet been accomplished. Given the size of the forest, the environmental issues, and extensive existing road and trail system the analysis is too complex to be covered in a single document. I've decided it's time to reconsider our approach, taking on the task in a smaller, more manageable, and ultimately more responsive way.

Our goal remains the same. To accomplish it, we will scale back and focus this initial effort on the components of the motorized system that can be applied consistently across the forest.

To that end, I am reconvening a forest-level interdisciplinary team to analyze the effects of maintaining the existing system of open motorized roads and trails for the uses currently authorized, and closing the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest to motorized cross-country travel.

As has always been intended, in subsequent years, each District will have the opportunity to consider changes to that motorized system in response to public and resource management needs. Site specific road access and management decisions will continue to be made at the district level; allowing for additional public involvement. The many comments already collected will be available to each ranger district so that information can help inform future travel management decisions.

The proposed action is to close the Forest to cross-country motorized travel off the existing National Forest System road network, and existing National Forest system motorized trails, consistent with current designations of vehicle type and seasonal closures.

All roads currently open for motorized use (maintenance levels 2-5) would remain open to highway legal vehicles.

All motorized trails would remain open to the current vehicle designation (4x4, ATV (<50 inches wide), or motorcycle).

All closed roads (maintenance level 1) would be closed to all motorized vehicles, unless part of a motorized system trail.

Motorized vehicles would be allowed to drive up to 30 feet from the edge of all open roads to park. As displayed on the proposed action maps, motorized access to dispersed camping within 300 feet of specifically designated roads would be permitted. Motorized travel would be restricted to existing routes within those corridors and not permitted closer than 100 feet from water. An exception to the 100 foot set-back from water would apply for identified Respect the River sites.

Motorized travel off the identified system of roads and trails, and off established routes to access dispersed camping within corridors, would be prohibited.

Additional information about the proposed action, including maps, is available online at:

www.fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/mtm

Please provide written comments on the proposed action by January 20, 2015.

<https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=28730>

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Website: fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/mtm

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