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## Record of Decision Open Road and Open Motorized Trail Travel Plan, Targhee National Forest

United States Forest Service

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United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service

Intermountain  
Region

Targhee  
National  
Forest



# Record of Decision for the Open Road and Open Motorized Trail Travel Plan



TARGHEE NATIONAL FOREST

OPEN ROAD AND OPEN MOTORIZED TRAIL TRAVEL PLAN

RECORD OF DECISION

Bonneville, Butte, Clark, Fremont, Jefferson, Lemhi, Madison  
and Teton Counties, Idaho

Lincoln and Teton Counties, Wyoming

## THE DECISION - AN OVERVIEW

This document presents my decision for the open motorized road and trail network for the Targhee National Forest. It explains why I have selected the Travel Plan Portion of Alternative 3M, as modified between the draft EIS and final EIS [displayed as Alternative 3M in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (final EIS) for the 1997 Revised Forest Plan].

The purpose and need of this Travel Plan is to offer a balanced range of motorized road and trail related recreation opportunities in the Forest that is consistent with the management prescriptions adopted in the Revised Forest Plan. These prescriptions include standards for the miles of open roads and motorized trails allowed per square mile. This Travel Plan shows which roads and trails will remain open to meet these road and trail density standards.

The Travel Plan in Alternative 3M, as modified from the Revised Forest Plan draft EIS, in response to site specific public comments, responds to the need for a reasonable network of motorized roads and trails that meet the open road and open motorized trail route density (OROMTRD) standards in the Revised Forest Plan. This decision provides for 1,577 miles of open motorized roads, 25 miles of seasonally restricted roads and 540 miles of open motorized trails. Prior to this decision 1,985 miles of roads were open, 73 miles of road were seasonally restricted and 773 miles of trail were open for motorized use. Therefore, there will be a reduction of approximately 408 open miles of road, 48 miles of seasonally restricted road, and 233 miles of open motorized trail from existing condition to meet the OROMTRD standards specified in the Revised Forest Plan. For more specifics, see Table IV-13 on page IV-45 in the final EIS.

Some signing of open motorized routes will begin this fall consistent with the Travel Plan maps.

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We will also implement a monitoring and evaluation strategy to assess the effectiveness of this motorized travel plan. This monitoring item is a priority one for the Forest (See Revised Forest Plan, Chapter V for further details), which means it is mandatory.

In the process of preparing this Record of Decision and its accompanying Travel Maps we identified numerous instances in which Appendix C of the Final EIS could be clarified and updated. This decision is based on that corrected Appendix C.

#### BACKGROUND

One of the most controversial aspects of the Revised Forest Plan is the key issue of access and what level of motorized access is appropriate for the Targhee National Forest. The Revised Plan has numerous management prescriptions and included in most of these prescriptions is an access table that indicates the type of access (motorized or nonmotorized), cross country travel and road and trail travel that is allowed year round and seasonally, including an open road and open motorized trail route density for most prescriptions. This Record of Decision designates the roads and trails that will be open for motorized use to begin implementation of the Revised Forest Plan.

The final EIS for the Revised Forest Plan portrays both the cumulative effects and site specific considerations for the motorized road and trail network (See Appendix C of the final EIS for further information).

During the Revision of the Forest Plan, each motorized road and trail was carefully scrutinized by the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) and field going personnel from the Ranger Districts. Resource concerns included elk security and elk habitat effectiveness, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species habitat, riparian areas, sensitive soils and steep slopes. The public was also involved in this analysis and disclosure which is summarized below.

#### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement has been extensive throughout the planning and analysis process leading to this decision. Key public comment and participation was obtained on numerous occasions. I feel confident that all interested publics have had ample opportunities to participate and share their concerns regarding this Travel Plan. The following outlines the major steps in the public involvement effort.

\* In October of 1994, meetings were held in Idaho Falls and Driggs to give the public an opportunity to identify which individual areas, roads and trails should be permanently open, permanently closed, obliterated or seasonally restricted.

\* Open houses were held in June 1995 in Idaho Falls, Ashton, and Rexburg at the Henry's Fork Watershed Council meeting to present the proposed action, (Alternative 3M in the draft EIS for the Revised Forest Plan) to interested people, gather information and exchange ideas.

The DEIS was available for a 90-day comment period from February 1996 to June 1996. The Travel Plan was displayed on maps 11 and 12. Other alternatives in the Draft EIS displayed different Travel Plans to meet the road and trail density standards for those alternatives (various maps 2-20).

During the comment period, numerous public information meetings were held throughout the local area. Detailed travel maps were on display for Alternative 3M and participants were asked at each meeting to provide input as to why individual roads and trails should be open or closed.

Substantive access comments and the responses are listed in Appendix A of the final EIS for the Revised Forest Plan (Pgs. I-1 through I-84).

Public involvement and discussions continue. We listened to all points of view and incorporated many suggestions. I am confident the staff listened, and that public involvement in this process has strengthened this decision.

#### PLANNING RECORDS

With the above collaboration with the public, other agencies and expertise from many Forest Service employees, an IDT completed the environmental analyses as summarized in the Final EIS (Chapter IV) & the updated Appendix C. The Team has provided detailed explanations of the analysis and results of the planning process in planning records. Detailed planning records can be reviewed at:

Forest Supervisor's Office  
Targhee National Forest  
420 N. Bridge Street  
St. Anthony, Idaho 83445

#### ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Based on available data, public involvement, and Final EIS Appendix C (as updated), three reasonable alternatives that address varying Travel Plans were considered. The three Alternatives analyzed in detail are briefly described below. For a more complete discussion of alternative development see the final EIS, Appendix C.

Alternative 1 "No Action" - This alternative would leave the 1996 Travel Plan in place. This alternative was displayed on travel maps for Alternative 1 in the draft EIS and final EIS (maps 2 and 3). Approximately 1,985 miles of road, 73 miles of seasonally restricted road, and 773 miles of motorized trail would remain open, as are currently available. No additional road closures would be implemented at this time.

Alternative 3M (draft EIS) - The alternative is the travel plan for Alternative 3M, as displayed in the draft EIS for the Revised Forest Plan (maps 2 and 3). It was also the proposed action. This alternative had 1,560 miles of open road, 120 miles of seasonally restricted road, and 438 miles of open motorized trail.

The selected alternative, Alternative 3M (final EIS), as modified between draft and final EIS - approximates the travel plan that was displayed in the final EIS for the Revised Forest Plan (maps 11 and 12). As displayed in the final EIS, this alternative had 1,577 miles of roads, 25 miles of seasonally restricted road, and 540 miles of motorized trails open for use.

#### OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

The draft EIS and final EIS also displayed open motorized road and trail travel plans for five other alternatives considered (2,3,4-6). Neither of these alternatives were selected by the Regional Forester to be the Revised Forest Plan and therefore were eliminated from detailed study in this travel plan analysis because they did not meet the densities decided upon in the Revised Forest Plan.

#### THE DECISION

My decision is to adopt the road and trail network as shown in Alternative 3M which was modified after reviewing site specific public comments made on the draft EIS for the Revised Plan (see attached map).

The system, as mapped, will offer a variety of motorized and nonmotorized use across the Forest in an environmentally acceptable way. The map clearly describes where people may go to either enjoy or avoid motorized activities.

The following illustrates the miles of roads and trails which will be open for motorized use by Ranger District:

	Miles of Road Open For Motorized Use	Miles of Seasonally Restricted Roads	Miles of Open Trail
Dubois District	359	11	98
Island Park	423	4	24
Ashton	356	0	18
Palisades	287	7	258
Teton Basin	152	3	142
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,577</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>540</b>

#### MONITORING COSTS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ROAD AND TRAIL CLOSURES

This project includes the commitment of the Forest to implement all the road and trail closures and to monitor the effectiveness of the closures as described in the Monitoring Plan for the Revised Forest Plan.

#### RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

Alternative 3M, as detailed in the accompanying Travel Maps and updated final EIS Appendix C, is the result of the alternative development and public involvement stages of the Forest Plan Revision process. Important considerations to protect the environment that have influenced my decision include:

Protection of the basic resources (air, soil, and water), as mandated by our agency's mission, vision and guiding principles, are provided for with the Travel Plan.

The local and national people who use the Targhee National Forest, the communities they live in, and the relationship of the Forest Service with people and local communities.

Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative 3M, as modified, will implement the open motorized road and trail density standards for the Forest. Reasonable access to the Forest is provided on a system of designated routes.

This decision is one that involved a balancing of compelling resource concerns and competing public interests with timely, responsible ecosystem recovery. I have reached my decision after careful consideration of the environmental analysis of the effects of the three alternatives, public comments received between draft and final EIS and associated planning records.

I selected the Travel Plan for Alternative 3M, as modified, because it best meets the most important objectives of the Regional Forester's decision in selecting Alternative 3M as the Revised Forest Plan: management of the Forest for sustainability of all components of the ecosystem, maintaining or improving habitat for all wildlife species, especially elk and grizzly bear, maintaining or improving riparian conditions, protecting long-term soil productivity and providing an array of recreational opportunities. Other important considerations were: roadless area resources, fish habitat, and elk and deer winter range.

#### FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

As the Forest Supervisor (Deciding Officer), I have considered the multitude of statutes governing management of the Targhee National Forest, and I believe that this decision represents the best possible approach relative to harmonizing and reconciling the current statutory duties of the Forest Service related to Travel Management.

This decision complies with the 1997 Revised Forest Plan for the Targhee National Forest. The open motorized road and trail network, as proposed in Alternative 3M, as modified, meets the open motorized road and trail route density standards for all prescription areas for the Forest.

This decision complies with the Clean Water Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Clean Air Standards Act as shown by the conclusions presented in Chapter IV of the Final EIS for the Revised Forest Plan and Appendix C of the Final EIS.

This Travel Plan complies with the Endangered Species Act and the US Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion as shown in the conclusions presented in Chapter IV, Wildlife section of the Final EIS.

#### THE ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

I am identifying the selected Alternative 3M, as modified, as environmentally preferable based on the following interpretation of the law and agency policy.

Regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) require agencies to specify the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). Forest Service policy further defines environmentally preferable as an alternative

that best meets the goals of section 101 of NEPA. Ordinarily this is the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources. In some cases there may be more than one environmentally preferable alternative (FSH 1909.15-05).

Section 101 of NEPA declares national environmental policy, calling on federal, state, and local governments and the public to create and maintain conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony. This broad policy is further defined in six goals:

- (1) fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
- (2) assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
- (3) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;
- (4) preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain wherever possible an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
- (5) achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and
- (6) enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

The goals of Section 101 are similar to the principles of ecosystem management and of the Revised Forest Plan, calling for sustainable and balanced use, and provision for future generations. Section 101 does not call for the exclusion of Americans from use of their natural resources, but does demand that such uses avoid degradation of the environment. Alternative 3M, as modified best meets the goals of Section 101 of NEPA. By this standard, the selected Alternative 3M, as modified is the environmentally preferable alternative for this Travel Plan.

#### MITIGATION AND MONITORING

All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the proposed designation of open motorized roads and trails in Selected Alternative 3M, as modified, have been adopted. Monitoring the effectiveness of road closures in priority one (per Chapter V, Revised Forest Plan) and will check the effectiveness of the closures and achievement of Total Motorized Access Route Density and Open Road and Open Motorized Trail Route Density (further information can be found on pages V-39 through V-41 of the Revised Forest Plan).


**APPEAL AND IMPLEMENTATION**

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 215. Any appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14, Content of Notice of Appeal, including the reasons for appeal and must be filed with:

Appeal Reviewing Officer  
USDA-Forest Service  
324 25th Street  
Ogden, Utah

Any appeal must be postmarked within 45 days from the date the legal notice of this decision is published in the Idaho Falls Post Register.

If no appeal is filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is filed, implementation may not occur for 15 days following the date of appeal disposition.

  
JERRY B. REESE  
Forest Supervisor

Date: AUG 15 1997

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