

Hells Canyon Preservation Council
Natural Heritage Alternative
March 3, 2008

Introduction

Our conservation coalition is presenting this alternative to be analyzed with the other alternatives for the Travel Management Planning proposal. We believe this Natural Heritage alternative meets all the relevant standards of the present LRMP and satisfies all the needs as stated in the proposed action. This alternative provides for a “balance” of use across all recreation opportunity spectrums and better addresses the limitations of the capability of the WWNF to maintain open roads and enforce the restrictions than the proposed action. Current and anticipated funding levels for road and trail maintenance are not sufficient to fully maintain all level 2-5 roads. Roads not properly maintained will cause increased adverse impacts to natural resources. The trade-off between natural resource protection and motorized access needs to be wisely chosen.

Goal

The goal of this alternative is to meet the purpose and need of this proposal and address the objectives and standards as found in the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) while providing reasonable access for the public.

Theme

This alternative attempts to maximize wildlife, fisheries habitat protection and quiet recreation opportunities from motorized vehicles, protect cultural resources, minimize global climate change, minimize adverse impacts to natural functions and processes, while providing a transportation system that is necessary and that provides for the health and safety of all users.

Vision

1. We envision a day when our roadless lands and backyards are protected from the adverse and often significant impacts associated with motorized use.
2. We envision motorized recreation on roads where they cause virtually no damage to our streams and wildlife or disturb our fellow citizens.
3. We envision opportunities for quiet recreation that are close to home yet where the din of motors does not ruin the peace and solitude many of us seek.
4. We envision protecting critical wildlife habitat from OHV impacts for our hunting and fishing heritage and conserving biological diversity.
5. We envision an environmentally and fiscally sustainable motorized route network which is properly maintained, adequately monitored, and appropriately enforced.
6. We envision effective wildlife corridors with a minimum of motorized travel in these corridors.

7. We envision an access management plan that provides for a complete recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) while minimizing conflicts among recreation users.

In short, we support strict management of OHV and road use in a manner that protects forest resources, promotes safety, and minimizes conflict among the various multiple-uses on the WWNF and is inline with the WWNF's capability to maintain and enforce access management on roads and trails.

Standards and Guidelines in the LRMP

Watersheds

On page 4-22 a goal and standards and guidelines for watersheds are presented. It is important the WWNF travel plan complies with this direction. The LRMP states: "Conflicts With Other Uses. Give management and enhancement of water quality, protection of watercourses and streamside management units, and fish habitat **priority over uses described or implied in all other management standards or guidelines.**" (emphasis added)

The final travel management plan must meet this strong standard particularly when deciding on motorized use and its impacts on water quality. We strongly suggest the WWNF carefully review all level 1 and 2 roads that are within 300 feet of any permanent streams on the Forest to ensure they meet this standard.

Transportation

Starting on page 4-34, the transportation system goal and standards are presented. The goal is "To provide safe, efficient, environmentally sound access for the movement of people and materials involved in the use and management of the National Forest lands."

Of the 26 standards for the transportation system, three stand out as important to the WWNF travel plan:

- 4) Design, construct, operate and maintain roads and trails of the forest transportation system based on resource objectives and intended uses, considering safety, total cost of transportation, and impacts on the land.
- 6) Manage road and trail uses to protect resources, accommodate or restrict conflicting uses, provide reasonable safety, and prevent damage to the facilities. Roads and trails may be made available for different user groups at different times, or otherwise through the Forest Travel Management Plan. Closed roads may be converted to other uses such as special purpose trails.
- 17) Open-Road Density. Meet the specific open-road density guidelines found in the direction for individual management areas unless a specific exception is

determined, through the Forest Service NEPA process, to be needed to meet management objectives.

These standards direct the WWNF to maintain roads considering the “impacts to the land”, “prevent damage to the facilities” and meet specific open-road densities. In order to meet these standards, the WWNF must provide a travel plan that changes present management to comply with these standards.

Recreation

The goal for recreation on page 4-38 is to “provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities in an attractive setting, and make those opportunities available to all segments of society.” Considering the visitor use patterns as surveyed in 2004 for the WWNF, this goal is being met. In the WWNF 2004 report, the agency measured both the primary recreational use for visitors, and the combined use (this is where people reported more than one reason for being in the area). The top five combined recreational activities were viewing wildlife (64.12%), viewing natural features (60.05%), hiking/walking (44.95%), relaxing (44.03%), driving for pleasure (37.89%) ORV use came in near the bottom with only 10.45 percent participating, and 0.81 percent reporting that it was their primary activity. Hunting, hiking/hiking, fishing, relaxing and viewing wildlife were the top five primary activities.

Diversity

On page 4-30 the Diversity goal states, “Maintain native and desirable introduced or historic plant and animal species and communities. Provide for all seral stages of terrestrial and aquatic plant associations in a distribution and abundance to accomplish this goal. Maintain or enhance ecosystem function to provide for long term integrity and productivity of biological communities.” This goal is relevant to the impacts motorized travel has on plants and the introduction of invasive species.

The Natural Heritage Alternative

The Natural Heritage Alternative will help the WWNF meet the LRMP standards and the purpose and need by proposing to:

1. Close all level 1 roads in the project area to *all* motorized vehicles. This will decrease the roads inventory that will lessen the impacts on the land, restrict conflicts with water quality objectives, help meet the open-road density standards and lessen the need for maintenance throughout the forest. Level 1 roads are closed to full-size motor vehicles for various reasons but generally to protect natural resources. Decreasing motorized access will decrease the human impact on the land, water and wildlife, decrease poaching, illegal woodcutting and human caused wildfires.

2. Close the WWNF to cross-country motorized travel as directed by the Final Rule. This will lessen impacts to the land and water and help protect wildlife.
3. Leave all Level 3, 4 and 5 roads open and provide for proper annual maintenance of these open roads.
4. A total of approximately 125 miles of motorized trails are now available on the WWNF. This alternative would not increase nor decrease these trail miles.
5. All current motorized closure restrictions effected through NEPA decisions and/or CFR closures will stay in place.
6. All motorized vehicles will be allowed only on routes designated “open” under the TMP as depicted on the Forest map (MVUM).
7. No new trail construction or non-sanctioned user-created trails will be part of designated routes.
8. Mixed traffic use of roads will be restricted to roads where a safety and use analysis demonstrates mixed use is likely to have little or no effect on users.
9. Prohibit game retrieval off of roads or trails by motorized vehicle.
10. Allow motorized travel to dispersed established campsites only within 300 feet of open roads, except as noted below. No motorized vehicle dispersed camping off of trails.
11. Areas along all designated or proposed Wild and Scenic Rivers and along all 303(d)-listed stream segments will be excluded from off road travel to undesignated campsites.
12. Close selected Level 2 roads (see list below) to better meet the goals and standards of the LRMP and the stated needs of this proposal as identified in the proposed action. These road closures will lessen impacts to the land and water, provide more acres away from motorized roads and trails, provide higher quality wildlife corridors, reduce the open road density, lessen invasive weed spread, and shrink the open roads inventory that will reduce the need to maintain roads.
13. All designated motorized routes will be signed open. All routes unsigned will be closed to motorized use.
14. A clear and complete Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) will be provided to the public.

Maps

Included with this alternative are two maps and one table. One map shows conservation values. The other map displays distance from a road areas. The table lists acres certain distances from a road for 3 separate alternatives.

List of Level 2 Roads Recommended for Closure

Below is a list of Level 2 roads that we suggest to be closed for a variety of reasons. Most of these level 2 roads dead end and provide limited transportation use. Some of these roads are in anadromous fish riparian zones and contribute to sediment. Critical elk summer range, wildlife connectivity between core areas, lynx core habitat, Threatened and Endangered habitat for steelhead, salmon and bull trout are the main natural resources we are protecting by suggesting these roads be closed.

Closing a total of 129.87 miles of level 2 roads would provide significant protection for wildlife in these areas. 129.87 miles of road closures amounts to less than 4 percent of the total level 2 roads on the WWNF. These road closures offer the best “bang for the buck” in terms of reducing resource impacts while having little impact on transportation access.

The Map numbers refer to the original set of 24 maps of TMP areas, as produced by the WWNF. Road miles are approximate. Maps not referenced have no level 2 roads we are proposing to close.

Map 2 – 14 miles total

- Road 4650 from road 46 to end – 6 miles
- 070 from 4650 to end 1 ½ miles
- 060 from 4650 to end 3 ½ mi
- 065 from 4650 to end ½ mi
- 080 from 4650 to end 2 miles
- 050 from 4650 to end 1 mi

Map 3 – 1 mile total

- 545 to end 1 mile

Map 4 – 33 miles total

- 080 from 46 to end 4 miles
- 4602 from FS boundary to end 3 ½ mi
- 040 from FS boundary to end 4 mi
- 090 from 46 to end 6 mi
- 035 from 46 to end 1 ½ mi
- All level 2 roads in T30N R45E in sections 4, 8, 9, 16, 21, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34 - 18 mi

Map 6 – 5 ¼ miles total

- Road 3107 from FS boundary to end 1 mi
- 130 from FS boundary to end 1 mi
- 137 from FS boundary to end ¼ mi
- 3112 from FS boundary to end 3 mi

Map 7 – 8 1/8 miles total

- 260 section off of the 62 road in section 5 T02S R41E parallels the 62 road and dead ends ¾ mile
- 070 off of the 62 road in sections 2 and 11 (T02SR40E) goes along the North Fork Indian Creek ¾ mile
- 020 off of the 6205 road (section 14 of T2SR40E) parallels the 6205 and dead ends 1 ½ miles
- 800 off of 6220 in section 14 T2SR41E dead ends length 1/8 mile
- 200 off the 8270 road in sections 1, 12, 7 is now basically closed and is unneeded as it parallels the 165 road 1 mile
- The 180 off of 6270 road section 1 dead ends, ½ mile
- O80 off of 6270 in sections 20, 29 dead ends and parallel to other roads 1 1/2 miles
- 075 off of 6270 in sections 17, 20 along Sage Creek from junction of 050 to in end 2 miles.

Map 8 – 4 ¼ miles total

- 3520 from FS boundary to end 3 ½ miles
- 600 from 3520 to end ¾ mi

Map 11 – 11 ½ miles total

- 2038 from 2036 to end 4 ½ mi
- 2036 from 2038 to end 7 mi

Map 14 – 11 miles total

- 5135 from 5125 to end 5 miles
- 050 from 5135 to end 2 miles
- 5178 from 51 to end 4 miles

Map 15 – 11 ½ miles total

- 7301 along the North Powder River from FS boundary to end 4 mi
- 7345 from the FS boundary to end 5 ½ mi
- 5138 along Upper Grande Ronde River from junction with 5135 to end 2 mi

Map 16 – 4 miles total

- 570 from 600 to end 2 mi
- 580 from 77 to end 2 mi

Map 17 – 14 ¼ miles total

- 025 from 77 to end 2 ½ mi
- 100 from 025 to end 3 mi
- 7750 from 100 to end 4 ½ mi
- 580 from 77 to end 2 mi
- 570 from 77 to end 2 mi
- 571 from 570 to end ¼ mi

Map 19 – 12 miles total

- 090 from 6610 to end 2 ½ mi
- 030 from 66 to end 2 mi
- 070 from 66 to end 2 ½ mi
- 6620 to end 3 mi
- 6623 from 66 to end 2 mi