

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Intermountain
Region

Targhee
National
Forest



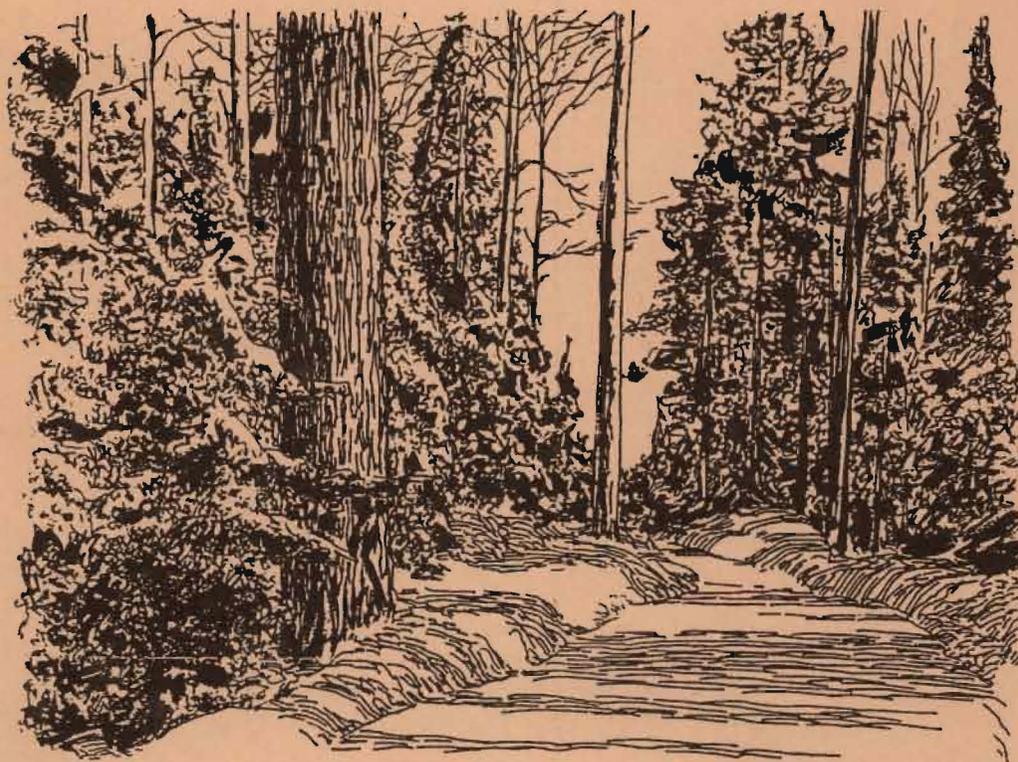
Record of Decision

Final Environmental Impact Statement

Open Road and Open Motorized Trail Analysis

(Motorized Road and Trail Travel Plan)

Targhee National Forest



RECORD OF DECISION
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
OPEN ROAD AND OPEN MOTORIZED TRAIL ANALYSIS
(Motorized Road and Trail Travel Plan)

TARGHEE NATIONAL FOREST

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 road and open, motorized trail analysis for the Targhee National Forest. It explains why I have selected the Travel Plan as described by alternative 3M+R, as analyzed in this Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

The purpose and need of this Travel Plan analysis is to offer a balanced network of motorized roads and trails that meet the Forest's Transportation Plan needs and is consistent with the management prescriptions adopted in the 1997 Revised Forest Plan (RFP). These management prescriptions include standards for the miles of open roads and motorized trails allowed per square mile in the areas where the prescription is applied in the RFP. The Travel Plan described in alternative 3M+R (the selected alternative) shows which roads and trails will remain open to motorized travel to meet these density standards. As stated in Chapter I of this EIS -- summer, cross-country travel and all direction for winter travel were determined in the RFP and were not reanalyzed in this EIS. These two previous decisions will be combined with decisions from this analysis to form the final Travel Plan Map.

The Travel Plan described by alternative 3M+R was created from the preferred alternative (3M+) in the DEIS. This new alternative responds to the route-specific public comments on the DEIS. Roads decommissioned in the Bear Management Units (BMU's) in 1998 were included in the evaluation in light of public comments and administrative needs. We made some changes to the BMU access, in response to public requests, but remain in compliance with the RFP standards and guidelines and requirements of the Biological Opinion (BO) for the RFP. This Travel Plan will meet the open road and open motorized trail route density (OROMTRD) standards in the RFP, as amended by this Record of Decision (ROD).

This decision provides for 1,756 miles of open motorized roads, 61 miles of seasonally restricted roads and 542 miles of open motorized trails. Prior to this decision, 2,077 miles of roads were open, 51 miles of road were seasonally restricted and 725 miles of trail were open for motorized use. Therefore, there will be a reduction of 321 miles of open road and 183 miles of open, motorized trail from the existing condition. This is necessary to meet the OROMTRD standards specified in the Revised Forest Plan. For more specific details of the differences in alternative consequences, see Table II-1 in the FEIS.

A new Travel Plan Map, as outlined on page II-4 of this EIS under the 3M+ alternative description, will be printed and implemented by a Closure Order (public notice of regulations). We will also implement a monitoring and evaluation strategy to assess the effectiveness of this motorized road and trail travel plan. This monitoring item is a priority one, mandatory action for the Forest (see RFP--Chapter V for further details).

BACKGROUND

One of the most controversial aspects of the 1997 RFP was the issue of motorized access, and what level is appropriate for the Forest. In addition, the 1997 Travel Plan ROD, was remanded to the Forest for further analysis on January 14, 1998 due to administrative appeals. The appeals concerned procedural requirements which caused a possible misunderstanding, and a lack of analysis of RS-2477 road and trail assertions by area Counties. The Regional Forester directed the Forest to "use the existing analysis and 1997 travel plan as a basis for supplemental disclosure to meet National Environmental Policy Act requirements."

The 1997 RFP contains numerous management prescriptions and included in most of these prescriptions is an access table that indicates the type of access (motorized or nonmotorized), and road and trail travel that is allowed year-round and seasonally. Included is an open motorized route density for most prescriptions. This ROD designates the roads and trails that will be open for motorized use to begin implementation of the RFP.

The FEIS for this analysis portrays both the cumulative effects and site specific considerations for the motorized road and trail network (see Chapter IV and Appendix C, which is also referred to as C(M), of the EIS for further information). The analysis for this FEIS tiers to the analysis for the 1997 Revised Forest Plan FEIS as stated throughout the EIS. During this FEIS analysis, each road and trail was carefully scrutinized by the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) and 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 documentation which is summarized below.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement for this analysis began with the analysis for the Revised Forest Plan. Travel management was a key issue during the Revision and the public provided much input on this issue. A complete description of the intensive RFP public involvement can be found in RFP-FEIS Process Paper A and Appendix A, Response to Public Comments Vol. I, page i-1. The Interdisciplinary (ID) Team for the Travel Plan analysis used the information from the RFP-FEIS analysis, in addition to new information, to complete this Travel Plan EIS. 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 proposal and analysis. The following outlines the major steps in the public involvement effort in developing this EIS:

- On February 6, and April 1, 1998, news releases were sent to area newspapers and media concerning the proposed action and analysis process
- An information letter was mailed March 24, 1998 to the approximately 1,200 appellants of the 1997 Travel Plan ROD.
- In response to these information efforts and the Notice of Intent published in the Federal Register on March 24, 1998, 40 comment letters were received concerning items for consideration in the DEIS. The DEIS was available for a 92 day review period.
- Four public meetings were held in the local area to explain the DEIS analysis. Detailed (1"/mile) maps of each alternative and RS-2477 assertions were available for review along with District Staff to explain the maps. Participants were asked to give comments on specific routes they felt should be open or closed and the reasons why, relative to the analysis in the DEIS.
- A Congressional Field Hearing was held in Rexburg, Idaho on February 13, 1999 to review the issue of road decommissioning on the Forest.

- Members of the Forest Staff and/or ID Team also attended numerous gatherings of user-groups to explain the DEIS analysis.
- In response to the DEIS and to four public meetings held throughout the area to discuss the DEIS, we received nearly 7,900 comments which included: 1,026 letters from individuals; one petition containing 44 signatures, and five form letters/postcard containing 6,800 signatures. Nearly 6,900 of the 7,900 comments were form letter/postcard or petition signatures. Petition and form letter/postcard signatures were counted as one substantive comment for each issue topic in the form letter or petition rather than separate, repetitious comments. From the letters, form letters/postcard and petitions, approximately 1,200 substantive comments were identified which are presented in Appendix E.

After compiling the scoping comments, we mapped out each road and trail that had been specifically addressed by the public. These maps were sent to the Ranger Districts for review. At the Districts, the personnel documented why each road or trail had been closed, omitted, left open, etc. These route-specific decisions on road and trail status (open, closed, etc.) are documented in Appendix C of the FEIS. The District also made a recommendation to the team for how best to manage that road or trail. The ID Team used the District information and the public's concerns on specific roads and trails to formulate/modify the alternatives. Other concerns, such as the effectiveness of closures and closure methods; etc., were addressed as well. This information was used to modify the alternatives.

This same basic process was repeated when we received comments on the DEIS. The roads and/or trails specifically mentioned were mapped and those maps were reviewed by Ranger District personnel and ID Team members. Then, the ID Team reviewed the alternatives to see how or if they could be modified to better reflect the wishes of the public. Each comment on the DEIS was answered by a specialist or District staff member. The comments and responses are published as Appendix E of the EIS.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Based on the available data and public involvement, five reasonable alternatives that address the issues and describe varying levels of open motorized roads and trails were considered. For a complete discussion of alternative development and consequences, see the FEIS, Chapters II and IV. The five alternatives analyzed in detail are briefly described below:

- Alternative 1(M) - "No Action" - This alternative is based on the existing situation. This alternative would leave the open, motorized roads and trails of the 1994/96 Travel Plans (old brown maps) in place for all of the Forest outside the bear management units (BMUs). Inside the BMUs, (see Figure III-6 in RFP-FEIS, page III-55) travel would be according to the Revised Forest Plan (alternative 3M). Forest-wide, summer, cross-country travel would also be according to the Revised Forest Plan (alternative 3M). This alternative is displayed on the Summer Transportation Map #2. Approximately 2,077 miles of open, motorized road; 51 miles of seasonally restricted road; 436 miles of decommissioned roads; and 725 miles of open, motorized trail are included in this alternative. Appendix C(M) to this FEIS describes which roads and trails remain open to motorized use and the reasons why routes were selected as open or closed. This alternative would not be consistent with the Revised Forest Plan and would require a significant Forest Plan amendment to the open road and open motorized trail density standards to be implemented. Its purpose here is to provide a baseline to compare site-specific effects with the other alternatives being considered.
- Alternative 3M+R - PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE - This alternative includes most of the features of alternative 3M(+) along with some additional routes (approximately 45 miles) opened in response to public comment on the DEIS, and some administrative needs. The alternative also shows some routes closed (approximately 17 miles) to motorized use in response to public comments on the DEIS. This alternative remains within the open motorized road and trail (ORMTRD) density standards of the Revised Forest Plan with the exception of the same minor Forest Plan amendments needed as described for alternative 3M(+) below. Alternative 3M+R is displayed on

Summer Transportation Map #6(a-c). Roads and trails opened to motorized travel in addition to those in alternative 3M(+) are shown in bold green, and those changed to closed are shown in bold red on Map #6(a-c). This alternative has 1,756 miles of open, motorized road; 61 miles of seasonally restricted road; 830 miles of decommissioned roads; and 542 miles of open, motorized trail. Appendix C(M) to the FEIS describes which roads and trails remain open to motorized travel and the reasons why routes were selected as open or closed. The decommissioned roads are shown on map #6(a-c) as blue lines. These decommissioned roads are shown only on this alternative, but would be the same inside the BMU's for all alternatives, and would vary somewhat outside the BMU's for the other 3M alternatives. No RS-2477 assertion roads would be decommissioned. Summer, cross-country travel would be the same as alternative 3M from the Revised Forest Plan. This alternative has the same prescription areas as alternative 3M. A travel map would be implemented from this alternative in the same method as described for alternative 3M(+) below.

- Alternative 3M(+) - This alternative includes additional (approximately 94 miles) open roads and trails to those in alternative 3M. Approximately 39 of these additional miles were shown on Map #4 in the DEIS, and were considered in the analysis, but were not included in the data tables. This alternative is still within the route density standards of alternative 3M as decided in the Revised Forest Plan. Alternative 3M(+) is displayed on Summer Transportation map #4. As noted in alternative 3M, which follows, it was discovered in this analysis that road density of 3M was below the level allowed for some of the prescription areas. Therefore, roads and trails were added in this alternative to respond to some of the specific requests in public scoping comments and appeal records as noted on the overlay maps and RS 2477 maps proposed for this analysis.

The roads and trails added are shown in green on Map #4 in the map packet. This alternative has 1,711 miles of open, motorized road; 62 miles of seasonally restricted road; 882 miles of decommissioned roads; and 536 miles of open, motorized trail. Appendix C(M) to this FEIS describes which roads and trails remain open to motorized use and the reasons why routes were selected as open or closed. The total miles of open, motorized roads and trails in this alternative are similar to alternative 3 in the Revised Forest Plan FEIS, but the open roads and trails are in different locations. Summer, cross-country travel would be the same as alternative 3M from the Revised Forest Plan.

This alternative has the same prescription areas as alternative 3M, and road densities are within the prescription density allowed, except as shown in Table ROD-1. Implementation of a new Travel Plan under this preferred alternative (3M+) would require a minor amendment to the 1997 Forest Plan revision to cover the specific road density changes (Table ROD-1) for individual prescription areas which would vary from the Forest Plan prescription Access Tables (OROMTRD allowed).

All of the densities and associated motorized routes in Table ROD-1 were shown and approved in the Revised Forest Plan (alternative 3M) Transportation Plan Map #11, except the Moody Creek road (80251). The Moody Creek change is in response to an RS 2477 assertion. Motorized use was approved by the RFP-FEIS in Indian Creek and was intended to be unrestricted as shown in the RFP-DEIS footnote, but when the footnote was prepared for the RFP-FEIS, an incorrect OROMTRD of 0.2 miles per square miles was put in the footnote to the Access Table. The working copy of the OROMTRD density map dated July, 1999 actually showed a density of 0.3 miles for the Indian Creek prescription area and all of the motorized routes in that density were displayed in the RFP-FEIS Transportation Plan for alternative 3M. This 0.3 density is a reduction from the 0.5 in the DEIS due to trail closures in Indian Creek.

Many of these prescription area density variances occur to accommodate roads running along or through small prescription areas (approximately 5 square miles or less) which are affected disproportionately by the presence of the road. The Lionhead prescription amendment shown in Table ROD-1 in the DEIS was determined to be unnecessary, and has been deleted. Another amendment for Italian Peaks was overlooked in the DEIS, and has been added to Table ROD-1.

Table ROD-1. Proposed Non-Significant Forest Plan Amendment for Prescription Route Densities

DISTRICT	AREA NAME	PRESCRIPTION (Rx)	RD DENSITY of Forest Plan	PROPOSED RD DENSITY	REASONS DENSITY EXCEEDED
Dubois	Kyle Canyon	3.1.1(a)	0.0	0.1	Road on RFP map
	Spring Mtn Cyn	3.2(g)	1.0	1.1	Road on RFP map
	Italian Peak	1.3	0.0	0.4	Trail on RFP map
Palisades	Palisades Cr	1.3	0.0	0.1	Indian Cr trails in RFP map
	Kelly Cyn	5.1.4(d)	1.5	2.4	Small Rx area
	Moody Cr	5.1.4(b)	1.5	1.7	RS 2477 assertion
	Indian Cr	1.2	0.2	0.3	Access Table error - RFP
	Sheep Cr	3.2(d)	1.0	1.8	Small Rx area
	Poker Peak	3.1.1(a)	0.0	0.1	Adjacent road

A Travel Plan (map and Closure Order) would be developed and implemented using the same format as the 1997 Travel Plan Map. The Travel Plan would include the details from the Transportation Plan (map #4 of map packet) for this alternative along with the Travel Plan Addendum (Appendix A), and road, trail, and cross-country matrices. This procedure would be followed using the appropriate data and maps for any alternative selected in the final EIS. Special features such as the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail would be added at that time.

- **Alternative 3M** - This alternative is the 1997 Travel Plan (summer - roads, trails and cross-country travel) as displayed by the summer Transportation Plan (map #3 - see map packet) for alternative 3M in the Revised Forest Plan FEIS. This alternative has 1,617 miles of open, motorized road; 62 miles of seasonally restricted road; 950 miles of decommissioned roads; and 511 miles of open, motorized trail.

The 1997 Appendix C Update to the RFP-FEIS and the roads and trails GIS data layer were corrected to delete duplicate segments, and to make other minor edits. These corrections resulted in approximately 40 miles of additional road inventory to that shown in the RFP. It was discovered during this analysis, that road density for this alternative was below densities allowed for some prescription areas and lower than calculated in the RFP-FEIS. This is mostly due to earlier GIS query data errors. It is also partially due to topography limitations and the design of prescription densities being just an initial goal to guide planning. During mapping of the alternative there was also a conscious effort to leave room for management flexibility, e.g. - by not pushing elk vulnerability to the limit. Appendix C(M) to this FEIS describes which roads and trails remain open to motorized use and the reasons why routes were selected as open or closed for each alternative.

- **Alternative 3M(-)** - This alternative has slightly fewer open roads/trails than alternative 3M. This alternative is essentially the same as alternative 3M, but with the reduction of specific open roads and trails as requested in public scoping comment and appeal records. Roads and trails were eliminated in response to some of the specific requests noted on the overlay maps described previously in the issues analysis. The roads and trails eliminated are shown in red on map #5 in the map packet. This alternative has the same prescription areas as alternative 3M and 3M(+), but road densities are lower in several prescription areas than in alternative 3M. This alternative is similar to alternative 4 in the Revised Forest Plan FEIS in total open motorized roads and trails, but the roads and trails are in different locations. Summer, cross-country travel is the same as alternative 3M from the Revised Forest Plan. The Transportation Plan for this alternative is enclosed in the map packet for this FEIS as map #5. This alternative has 1,613 miles of open, motorized road; 62 miles of seasonally restricted roads; 962 miles of decommissioned roads; and 454 miles of open, motorized trail.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

Other alternatives were considered that would address additional requests for opening road and trail segments beyond the maximum route density or closing them to a level significantly below the density allowed for prescriptions. The formal administrative appeal requests, DEIS scoping comments, and public comments on the DEIS were mapped and reviewed for alternative consideration and

development as described in the issues analysis and alternatives development process above. Our analysis of these options was found to match the same range of alternatives considered in the Revised Forest Plan FEIS. For example, an alternative with more open roads and trails than 3M is represented by alternatives 1, 2, and 3 of that FEIS. An alternative with fewer open roads and trails would be represented by alternatives 4, 5, and 6. Since an infinite array of alternatives could be constructed from issues indicated by the comments and appeals, and since that array has already been considered in the previous RFP-FEIS, it was not necessary to reconstruct those alternatives in this analysis.

Furthermore, any alternative with a higher road/trail density than allowed by the Revised Forest Plan management prescription direction would be outside the standards established in the Revised Forest Plan and contrary to the Purpose and Need for this decision. The scope of this analysis is limited to alternatives that meet the open road and open motorized trail density standards decided in the recently revised Forest Plan, as directed by the Regional Forester (remand letter of 1/14/98). Because these density standards have recently been decided and since no new issues concerning route density were identified, whether they should be adjusted is not ripe for decision at this time. Effectiveness monitoring is a requirement of the Revised Forest Plan. An evaluation of the effectiveness of these route density standards will be made at appropriate intervals in the annual Forest Plan monitoring report.

THE DECISION

My decision is to adopt the road and trail network as shown in alternative 3M+R which was created by revising alternative 3M+ from the DEIS as a result of route-specific public comments made on the DEIS. In addition, the wording and matrices from Appendix A of the FEIS will be adopted as part of the Travel Plan Map.

Key Actions

The following actions will occur as a result of this decision:

- A new Travel Plan Map, as outlined on page ROD-3 under the 3M+R alternative description, will be printed and implemented by a Closure Order.
- A non-significant Forest Plan amendment to address the exceptions to the management prescription area route densities as described on page ROD-4 and in Table ROD-1 will be implemented.
- All the road and trail closures, road decommissioning, and closure effectiveness monitoring, as described in the Monitoring Plan for the RFP, will be implemented.
- The Forest will implement a national policy (E.O. 11644 amended by 11989-sec. a-b and FSM 2355.03-4) to select a "closed unless designated open" approach to implementation. This was chosen since most of the Forest is closed to motorized use except on designated routes.

The travel system, as mapped, will offer a variety of motorized and nonmotorized uses across the Forest in an environmentally acceptable way. The Travel Map will clearly describe where visitors may go to either enjoy or avoid motorized activities.

Mitigation And Monitoring

All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the proposed designation of open motorized roads and trails in the selected alternative (3M+R) have been adopted. These mitigation measures are to be found in the Revised Forest Plan standards and guidelines and in Appendix B of this FEIS. Monitoring effectiveness of road closures is a priority one of the Revised Forest Plan (see Chapter V of the RFP). This monitoring will check the effectiveness of the closures and achievement of the open motorized route densities prescribed by the Revised Forest Plan management prescription access tables and this Transportation Plan decision.

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

Alternative 3M+R as detailed in the accompanying Transportation Plan Map #6(a-c) and Appendix C(M) is the result of the public involvement and alternative development process as documented in the FEIS. Important considerations that have influenced my decision include:

- Habitat needs of wildlife and fish species, particularly the grizzly bear, elk, and Yellowstone cutthroat trout.
- Maintaining an appropriate mix of motorized and nonmotorized recreation opportunities
- Public comments in response to the DEIS with requests for route-specific changes
- RS-2477 input from Counties that have caused slight adjustments
- Potential to reduce road maintenance costs by decommissioning unneeded roads

This current decision implements the recent direction of the 1997 RFP on large areas of the Forest. For the Forest as a whole, this involves balancing 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 five alternatives, public comments received between the Draft and Final EIS and associated planning records, as well as input I received during the preparation of the RFP.

I selected alternative 3M+R as the basis for a new Travel Plan because it best meets the most important objectives of the Revised Forest Plan. The key objectives of the Revised Forest Plan include: 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 analysis considerations were: roadless area resources; fisheries habitat; and big game winter range.

The analysis indicates that the preferred alternative 3M+R, has only slightly higher impact potential than alternative 3M as described in the Revised Forest Plan. The effects of this alternative on natural resources would be significantly less than the existing situation (alternative 1M). Alternative 3M+R addresses the RS-2477 assertions and other specific road and trail concerns. The analysis indicates this alternative will not have significant effects on soil, vegetation, water quality, wildlife or fish habitat except in minor, localized areas. In addition, the analysis indicates that overall, public safety will be improved by better maintenance on remaining, open roads and trails. Also, decommissioning of roads is not expected to pose unreasonable safety risks to prudent summer or winter travellers.

ADVERSE EFFECTS THAT CANNOT BE AVOIDED

Implementation of the selected alternative, 3M+R, would result in some adverse effects to the human and biological environment when compared to existing travel management (alternative 1M) consequences. Despite efforts to mitigate any negative impacts to the resources, some adverse effects on soil, vegetation, water quality, and fish habitat cannot be avoided in minor, localized areas. Since the selected alternative reduces the number of open roads and trails, the adverse effects on the biological and physical environment will be less than with the current situation. The adverse effects which would result from implementing alternative 3M+R, as described in the FEIS for the Open Road and Open Motorized Trail Analysis (FEIS IV-38) are listed below.

- Although the selected alternative would reduce the open road miles, the remaining road system would leave 7,806 acres of road surface as unproductive soils.
- Localized, adverse effects to water quality and fisheries where roads are inside the aquatic influence zone; including a loss of hydrologic function and soil productivity.

- Temporary disturbance to wildlife and its habitat from continued or increased human activity along roads.
- Approximately 394 miles of roads rendered unusable, and 230 miles of trails restricted for summer motorized recreational activities.
- Localized decreases in air quality due to dust from road use and fires from recreational campfires.
- Areas with soil compaction, erosion, vegetation degradation, and stream sedimentation.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AMENDMENT

I have determined that the Targhee Forest Plan Amendment included in my decision is non-significant when evaluated against the criteria in CFR 219.10(f), the Forest Service Manual (FSM 1922.5), and the Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909.12, Chapter 5.32). The following points helped me reach this conclusion.

- Since the proposal deals with existing roads and trails, there will be no disturbance to pristine areas.
- The amendment would not alter the level of goods and services projected by the Targhee RFP.
- The road density changes are small and localized and will not alter long term wildlife goals.
- As specified previously, this decision is consistent with the overall direction from the RFP.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

In order for the Targhee National Forest to implement the Travel Plan associated with alternative 3M+R, we must comply with several laws, Executive Orders, regulations and policies. Some of these are discussed below.

- **National Forest Management Act (NFMA)** This Act prescribes how land and resource management planning is conducted on National Forest System lands. The Forest Service is to use multiple-use and sustained-yield management of renewable resources without impairing the productivity of the land. The action alternatives are consistent with the planning guidance contained in NFMA. In particular, the alternatives address management direction in Sections 36 CFR 219.10 (amendment), 219.19 (fish and wildlife resource), 219.21 (recreation resource), and 219.23 (water and soil resource) and 219.27 (management requirements). The analysis supporting this is contained in Chapter IV of the Travel Plan FEIS, Chapter IV of the RFP FEIS, and the Analysis File.
- **Targhee National Forest Land Management Plan** My decision is mostly in compliance with the Revised Forest Plan (RFP) for the Targhee, except that road density would exceed the RFP Access Tables in the areas previously described in Table ROD-1. I am amending the Targhee RFP to change the RFP Access Tables and corresponding allowable road densities to reflect those described in alternative 3M+R.
- **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** The Targhee National Forest followed the direction for preparing an environmental analysis and document according to NEPA. My decision is based on the analysis contained in the FEIS for the Open Road and Open Motorized Trail Analysis (Motorized Road and Trail Travel Plan) and the FEIS for the Revised Forest Plan.
- **Endangered Species Act (ESA)** ESA provides for conservation of endangered, threatened and proposed species of fish, wildlife, and plants. Forest Service biologists have prepared a Biological Assessment (BA) of the effects on those species. In the BA, they determined that the project was not likely to adversely affect or not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any listed or proposed species (FEIS, App. D; RFP-FEIS, Process Paper D). US Fish and Wildlife Service

(USFWS) has concurred by issuing a Biological Opinion (B.O.) with a "non-jeopardy" determination (FEIS, App. D). The Forest will comply with B.O. terms and conditions.

- **Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (FWCA)** This Act encourages federal agencies to conserve and promote non-game fish and wildlife species and their habitats. It also requires that we consult with USFWS and the appropriate state agency when undertaking projects which could affect water resources. Mitigations were developed as a result of this consultation. Both this FEIS and the RFP-FEIS considered the effects of travel management on fish and wildlife species in Chapter IV.
- **Heritage Resource Conservation** Several laws apply to preservation of heritage resources on federal land. The RFP identified known heritage resource sites and we consulted with several tribes using the area for cultural/religious activities. This consultation has indicated that there will be no significant impacts on cultural properties (FEIS III-18).
- **Other Requirements** The Targhee National Forest has complied with other applicable legislation including, but not limited to, the Wyoming Wilderness Act, Revised Statute 2477, Clean Water Act, Noise Control Act, Clean Air Act, relevant pollution control acts, and the Executive Order on Environmental Justice. This analysis is in Chapter IV of the FEIS for the Travel Plan, Chapter IV of the RFP FEIS, or the analysis file for both.

THE ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) require agencies to specify the alternative(s) considered to be environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). Forest Service policy further defines this as the alternative that best meets the goals of section 101 of NEPA. This calls on federal, state, and local governments and the public to create and maintain conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony. In determining the environmentally preferred alternative, I referred to the goals of Section 101:

- (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 and 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.

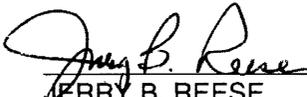
Section 101 of NEPA clearly states that we should provide for human uses of the environment and not exclude Americans from using their environment. We should, however, avoid degradation of the environment. These goals are similar to the ecosystem management principles adopted by the Targhee for the Revised Forest Plan. This selected alternative, alternative 3M+R, implements the RFP and best meets the goals above and is therefor the environmentally preferred alternative.

APPEALS 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 215.4, 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 84401

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

October 15, 1999
Date

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