

OHV Route Designation Guidebook

**National Forests in California
USDA Forest Service**

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Introduction

This guidebook presents procedures for designating off-highway vehicle (OHV) routes for the National Forests in California, based upon existing laws, regulations, and policies. It was developed by an interdisciplinary team consisting of Regional and Forest level specialists in recreation, engineering, environmental analysis, law enforcement, heritage resources, and wildlife, as well as representatives from the Office of the General Counsel (see Appendix A for a list of preparers).

The purpose of route designation is to prevent resource damage and recreational use conflicts from indiscriminate, cross-country travel by wheeled OHVs. OHV use will be redirected to existing sustainable roads, trails, and specifically defined areas.

Designation of OHV routes has been broken down into 5 steps, starting with Global Positioning System (GPS) mapping of existing routes and areas currently used by OHVs and finishing with the issuance of Forest Orders that prohibit OHV use off roads, designated trails, and specifically defined areas. A key requirement throughout the procedures is collaboration with the public. Completion dates are indicated for all steps.

To aid guidebook users, interpretations of OHV policies and assumptions used in preparation of the guidebook are included, along with a glossary. These are followed by a list of the 5 steps and a timeline that shows the interrelationships among the steps. Detailed descriptions of all five steps make up the main portion of the guidebook. The appendices contain forms for OHV management direction and use evaluation, examples of how to record information and prepare Forest Orders, and reference information.

Background

Increasing attention is being focused on uncontrolled use of OHVs on National Forest System (NFS) lands and on the impacts from this use. The Chief of the Forest Service recently listed four key threats facing the National Forests. One of these is "unmanaged recreation" with OHV use off established roads and trails cited as the primary threat. In 2003, the Regional Foresters for Regions 4 and 5 signed a Memorandum of Intent (MOI) (Appendix B) with the State of California aimed at prohibiting wheeled OHV use off roads, designated trails, and specifically defined areas on NFS lands in California. The MOI describes the strategy, tasks, and timeline to complete designations of OHV trails and specifically defined areas by September 2008. This guidebook is one of the requirements in the MOI.

Executive Orders 11644 and 11989: All current direction and authority that allow, restrict, and prohibit vehicle use off roads on NFS lands are tiered from Executive Order (E.O.) 11644, signed by President Nixon in 1972, and modified by E.O. 11989 in 1977 (Appendix C). Executive Order 11644 states:

It is the purpose of this order to establish policies and provide procedures that will ensure that the use of off-road vehicles on public lands will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands, to promote the safety of all users of those lands, and to minimize conflicts among the various uses of those lands.

Section 3 of the E.O. further states that:

Each agency head shall develop and issue regulations and administrative instructions, within six months of the date of this order, to provide for administrative designation of the specific areas and trails on public lands on which the use of off-road vehicles may be permitted, and areas and trails in which the use of off-road vehicles may not be permitted, and set a date by which such designation of all public lands shall be completed.

"Open" areas: Initial designations of NFS lands for OHV use in Region 5 were completed by 1977, prior to completion of Forest Land and Resource Management Plans (FLRMPs). Several Forests designated large areas as "Open", which is defined in Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2355.13 as, "Areas and trails on which all types of motorized vehicles may be operated off roads without restriction." Subsequent to this 1977 designation, many FLRMPs changed their open designations to restricted.

"Restricted" areas: The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 2 requires that, "On National Forest System lands, the continuing land management planning process will be used to allow, restrict, or prohibit use by specific vehicle types off roads." FSM 2355.13 defines "Restricted" as:

Areas and trails on which motorized vehicle use is restricted by times or season of use, types of vehicles, vehicle equipment, designated areas or trails, or types of activities specified in orders issued under the authority of 36 CFR Part 261.

Of the 19 National Forests in California (including portions of the Humboldt-Toiyabe), 17 of the current FLRMPs contain management direction indicating that all or most of the Forest lands are "Restricted". The Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment affects 11 FLRMPs; Standard and Guide #69 "Wheeled Vehicles" prohibits wheeled vehicles off designated routes, trails, and limited OHV use areas. However, in the years following completion of these FLRMPs, designation of OHV routes has generally not been completed. The two remaining units with "open" designation are the Klamath National Forest and portions of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of this guidebook is to help Forest staffs designate trails and specifically defined areas for wheeled motor vehicles within existing management direction on

National Forests in California. A secondary goal is to assure compliance with relevant laws, regulations, policies, and existing direction in FLRMPs related to wheeled OHVs.

The planning of optimum trail and road networks and the **designation** of routes for use by snowmobiles, bicycles, off-road skateboards, inline skates, etc. are outside the scope of this guidebook. However, mountain bike use is included in steps 1 and 2 of this 5 step procedure to stop resource damage from this use, including damage from OHVs on trails and downhill runs (hillclimbs to OHVs) created by mountain bikes.

The guidebook has the following objectives:

1. Provide step-by-step procedures that comply with laws, regulations, and policies for designating trails and specifically defined areas for wheeled OHV use.
2. Help the National Forests in California fulfill the terms and agreements in the MOI between the Forest Service, California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Commission, and California Parks and Recreation Department, OHMVR Division (Appendix B).
3. Develop Regional consistency in designating trails and specifically defined areas for wheeled OHV use by specific vehicle types (e.g., motorcycles, all terrain vehicles (ATVs) and 4-wheel drives), and in bringing unclassified roads into the classified road system for OHV use.
4. Provide a “one-stop” location for information on OHV route designation.
5. Define terms used in this Guidebook for classifying roads, designating trails, and specifically defined areas that allow wheeled OHV use.
6. Provide flexibility in the guidelines to allow for varying circumstances on local units.

How to use this Guidebook

This guidebook is just that, a guide. All units must evaluate their situations and local issues and apply the procedures as appropriate to their needs. The guidebook suggests tasks to be completed at various stages of the classification and designation procedures. In some cases, existing levels of information may be sufficient; in others, new data may be required.

Interpretations of Policies and Assumptions

The guidebook team found a number of areas where additional guidance is needed as a foundation for route designation. Thirteen items are listed below. Most are interpretations of laws, regulations, and Forest Service policies. Where issues were not specifically addressed in laws, regulations, or policies, the team reached agreement about assumptions to be used. Interpretations that come from laws, regulations, or policies have original sources cited. Original source documents that are not normally available at Ranger Districts can be found in the Appendices of this guidebook. In addition, key references are in the appendices including: 36 CFR 295 “Use of Motor Vehicles off Forest Service Roads” (Appendix D), FSM 2355 “Off-Road Vehicle Use Management” (Appendix E), and FSM 7703.2, paragraph 3 “Adding New Roads” (Appendix F), and relevant laws, regulations, and policies (Appendix G). All other Forest Service Manual (FSM) and Forest Service Handbook (FSH) references are available on the Forest Service intranet. References from the Code of Federal Regulations are also available on the internet at www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html.

1. Forest Service policy applies the minimum restrictions required to protect resources and provide for user safety while continuing to provide recreation opportunities.

The Forest Service has a long history of balancing stewardship of the National Forests with providing goods and services to the people of the United States. The slogan “Caring for the Land and Serving People” represents the agency’s goal to maintain balance. This principle is codified into law in the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960. Forest Service policy regarding recreational trail use is: “Regulate users only to the extent necessary to provide for user safety; to protect the natural, cultural and historical resources; and to achieve the recreation experience objectives (FSM 2350.3 (5)).”

2. All roads, trails, and areas that are managed for wheeled OHV use must be: 1) NFS roads, NFS trails, or specifically defined areas, 2) listed as forest transportation facilities, and 3) included in the Forest Transportation Atlas.

Although OHV use on roads and trails is often lumped together, separate direction applies to each. Roads and, to some degree, trails are managed according to the regulations at 36 CFR Part 212 and the direction and policies found in FSM 7700 and associated Forest Service handbooks.

OHV use that occurs on trails and specifically defined areas (in other words, off roads) has additional direction in the regulations at 36 CFR Part 295 and the direction and policies found in FSM 2300 and associated Forest Service handbooks.

While direction exists for roads and trails to be included in the Forest Transportation Atlas (36 CFR Part 212 Sec. 2 and 36 CFR Part 212 Sec. 20), similar direction does not exist for specifically defined areas open to wheeled OHV use. This issue is being addressed at the Washington Office level and may result in new regulations or FSM direction to include information on specifically defined areas in the Forest Transportation Atlas.

3. NFS roads are intended for motor vehicle travel and do not need specific designation to allow OHV use.

At this time, there is no regulation requiring designation of roads for motor vehicle use similar to 36 CFR 295, which requires designation of trails and areas for such use. Analyzing roads to be included in OHV systems is a separate process from designating trails and specifically defined areas for OHV use. The roads Analysis Process is used if Forests want to convert unclassified roads to classified roads and include them in OHV systems.

Road Management Objectives (RMOs) establish operational criteria for roads and must be approved by Responsible Officials (usually District Rangers). Operational criteria include seasonal road use restrictions, restrictions on use by specific traffic (including OHVs), and traffic management strategies (FSH 7709.55, 33.1).

NFS roads may be closed or restricted by Forest Order using 36 CFR Part 261 Sec. 54. Use of some NFS roads by non-highway legal OHVs may be restricted by State law. In California, non-highway legal OHVs are prohibited on highways; however, Division 16.5 of the California Vehicle Code regarding OHVs exempts the following from the definition of highways, “fire trails, logging roads, service roads, regardless of surface composition, or other roughly graded trails and roads upon which vehicular travel by the public is permitted (CVC 38001).” Additional prohibitions on the operation of vehicles can be found at 36 CFR Part 261.12 and 261.13.

4. Unclassified roads should be converted to NFS roads, NFS trails, or decommissioned, depending on local objectives. Analyses should be documented in site-specific project decisions.

If unclassified roads are desirable as parts of transportation systems, they should be analyzed for conversion to NFS roads or NFS trails as appropriate. Site-specific analyses should be completed, pursuant to 36 CFR Part 212 Sec. 5(b)(2). If decisions are made not to convert unclassified roads to NFS roads or NFS trails for OHV use, then they remain unclassified until they are converted to some other use, such as non-motorized trails, or until they are decommissioned.

5. 4-wheel drive routes may be managed as either NFS roads or NFS trails, at the discretion of Forest Supervisors.

Recent Forest Service documents provide discretion on whether 4-wheel drive routes are managed as roads or trails. See the definition of “road” in the Glossary and Appendix H for more information.

6. If unclassified roads are to be managed as NFS roads, decisions to add them to "the system" must be informed by Forest-scale roads analysis. Additional analysis may be required at the discretion of Responsible Officials. Site-specific project decisions must be consistent with the FLRMP.

Unclassified roads that are converted to NFS roads are considered to be new road construction (36 CFR Part 212 Sec. 1). Decisions must be informed by Forest-scale roads analysis (36 CFR 212.5 (b)). Responsible Officials have the discretion and duty to determine whether or not roads analyses below the forest-scale are needed and the degrees of detail appropriate and practicable (FSM 7712.13). Resource management objectives, environmental effects, and benefits must be considered and documented (FSM 7703.2, paragraph 3).

7. All OHV trails and areas (i.e., motorized use off NFS roads) must be designated to allow, restrict or prohibit use by specific vehicle types.

To be designated for OHV use, trails and specifically defined areas must be analyzed using the criteria listed in FSM 2355.14 and 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 2. An example worksheet for OHV use evaluation is provided in Appendix I to simplify analysis and documentation prior to designation. Trails and areas must be designated to allow, restrict or prohibit use by specific motor vehicle types (motorcycles, ATVs, or 4-wheel drives). Trail Management Objectives must be established for each designated trail.

8. All decisions regarding OHV use on trails and in specifically defined areas are made either in the FLRMP or in site-specific project decisions that are consistent with the FLRMP, relevant laws, regulations, and policies.

Some Forests made OHV designations in FLRMPs in the past. However, current direction for land management planning is to provide only land allocations in FLRMPs and leave OHV route designations to site-specific project-level decisions. NFS lands available to be considered for OHV use are identified in Management Area direction and Standards and Guidelines in FLRMPs. OHV trails and specifically defined areas are then designated in site-specific project-level analyses consistent with the FLRMP (36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 2(a)).

9. “Designation” of trails and specifically defined areas for OHV use requires environmental analyses and decision documents signed by Forest Supervisors.

The regulations at 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 2 and Forest Service policy at FSM 2355.14 provide the criteria that must be considered when designating vehicle use off NFS roads (i.e., on trails and in specifically defined areas). Designation requires environmental analyses and decision documents signed by Forest Supervisors (OGC Opinion dated 4/29/04, Appendix J). Currently, there are no categorical exclusions that cover designation of trails and specifically defined areas for OHV use.

10. Trails designated or closed by direction in FLRMPs or subsequent site-specific decisions do not require additional NEPA analyses or decisions for this designation.

NFS trails that were being managed as OHV routes (signing, maps, etc.) when FLRMPs were approved are considered designated if documentation (Appendix I), is provided showing they are consistent with the following:

- 1) FLRMPs,
- 2) the criteria in 36 CFR Part 295 and FSM 2355.14, and
- 3) relevant laws and regulations (see Appendix G).

Trails approved for OHV use in current FLRMPs or later approved by site-specific decision documents are designated for OHV use unless subsequent site-specific decisions closed them to OHV use. Trails closed for OHV use in current FLRMPs or later closed by site specific decision documents remain closed to OHV use and do not need to be reconsidered in these designation procedures.

11. All designated OHV trails and specifically defined areas are subject to review.

Use of OHVs on trails and specifically defined areas must be monitored. If the results of monitoring indicate that considerable adverse effects are occurring or will occur on the factors and resource values referred to in 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 2, trails or areas must be closed to the vehicle types causing damage until adverse effects have been eliminated and measures have been implemented to prevent recurrence (36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 5). “Considerable adverse effect” is defined in the glossary. Forest Supervisors must review Forest OHV Management Direction (see #12 below) and any temporary designations annually (36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 6).

12. The collective information in FLRMPs and project-level decisions constitutes Forest OHV Management Direction.

Forest Service planning direction provides for two levels of planning on Forests: programmatic (FLRMP) and site-specific (project). As a result, most Forests do

not have stand-alone OHV plans. Forest OHV Management Direction consists of the FLRMP and applicable project-level decisions. This differs somewhat from the concept of an “off-road vehicle management plan” referred to in the regulations at 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 2 (b) and 36 CFR part 295 Sec. 6. This difference may be rectified in future changes to 36 CFR part 295.

13. Forest Orders must be issued to make prohibitions resulting from OHV designation enforceable.

To make designations and prohibitions enforceable, Forest Orders must be issued pursuant to 36 CFR Part 261 Sec. 50. An Example Forest Order is included in Appendix K. Forest Orders must be signed by Forest Supervisors. Deputy or Acting Forest Supervisors can only sign Forest Orders if they have Delegations of Authority specifically allowing the signing of Forest Orders on the dates the orders are signed.

Glossary

The following definitions are listed for the purpose of understanding the OHV Route Designation Guidebook. Their use outside of this context is **not** intended. Where definitions have been used from other sources, the source documents are cited. This Guidebook has incorporated previously created documents such as *“Motorized Trails: Data Collection Standards with Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) Integration”* (June 2003). Although the incorporated documents may also include definitions, those definitions should only be used in the context of the incorporated documents and **not** applied to this Guidebook. Note that, for the purposes of this Guidebook, OHV (off-highway vehicle) and ORV (off-road vehicle) are used interchangeably.

Adverse off-road vehicle effect

Any effect as a result of ORV use that does not meet the standards for the:

- a. Maintenance of the long-term productive capacity of the land;
- b. Maintenance of air and water quality;
- c. Maintenance of wildlife habitat and stable and balanced populations of wildlife;
- d. Maintenance of other existing and proposed uses of the Forest;
- e. Preservation of cultural and historical resource values (FSM 2355.05, paragraph 7).

All-terrain vehicle (ATV)

A motor vehicle subject to subdivision (a) of Section 38010 of the California Vehicle Code, which is all of the following:

- a) Designed for operation off of the highway by an operator with no more than one passenger;
- b) Fifty inches or less in width;
- c) Nine hundred pounds or less unladen weight;
- d) Suspended on three or more low-pressure tires;
- e) Has a single seat designed to be straddled by the operator, or a single seat designed to be straddled by the operator and a seat for no more than one passenger;
- f) Has handlebars for steering control (California Vehicle Code Section 111).

Classified road

A road wholly or partially within or adjacent to NFS lands that is determined to be needed for long-term motor vehicle access, including state roads, county roads, privately owned roads, NFS roads, and other roads authorized by the Forest Service (36 CFR Part 212 Sec. 1).

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| <i>Closed zone of use</i> | Areas and trails on which all motorized vehicle use is prohibited, except by permit, under authority of 36 CFR Part 261 or by law (FSM 2355.13). |
| <i>Considerable adverse effect</i> | Any adverse effect that: will not meet the designation criteria as identified in FSM 2355.14; and that is or may become irreparable because of the impossibility or impracticability of performing corrective or remedial measures (FSM 2355.05, paragraph 3 – Appendix E). |
| <i>Designated OHV trail</i> | A NFS trail where the use of one or more types of OHVs is allowed. The use was analyzed and a decision document was signed by the Forest Supervisor authorizing the use. In addition, any NFS trail that was being managed as an OHV route (signing, maps, etc.) when the FLRMP was approved may also be considered designated if it is consistent with the FLRMP, the criteria in 36 CFR Part 295 and FSM 2355.14, and relevant laws and regulations. |
| <i>Designated zones of use</i> | <p>NFS lands are “designated” to allow, restrict or prohibit specific types of off-road vehicle use as follows (FSM 2355.13):</p> <p>Open: Areas and trails on which all types of motorized vehicles may be operated off roads without restriction.</p> <p>Restricted: Areas and trails on which motorized vehicle use is restricted by times or season of use, types of vehicles, vehicle equipment, designated areas or trails, or types of activity specified in orders issued under the authority of 36 CFR Part 261.</p> <p>Closed: Areas and trails on which all motorized vehicle use is prohibited, except by permit, under authority of 36 CFR Part 261 or by law.</p> |
| <i>Forest Transportation Atlas</i> | An inventory, description, display, and other associated information for those roads, trails, and airfields that are important to the management and use of NFS lands or to the development and use of resources upon which communities within or adjacent to the National Forests depend (36 CFR Part 212 Sec. 1). |

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| <i>Forest transportation facility</i> | A classified road, designated trail, or designated airfield, including bridges, culverts, parking lots, log transfer facilities, safety devices and other transportation network appurtenances under Forest Service jurisdiction that is wholly or partially within or adjacent to NFS lands (36 CFR Part 212 Sec. 1 and FSM 7705). |
| <i>Highway</i> | Highway is a way or a place of whatever nature, publicly maintained and open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel (CA Vehicle Code Section 360). However, the 38000 Division of the California Vehicle Code (the Off Highway Motor Vehicle section) states that for purposes of this division (38000) the term “highway” does not include fire trails, logging roads, service roads regardless of surface composition, or other roughly graded trails and roads upon which vehicular travel by the public is permitted (CA Vehicle Code 38001). |
| <i>Minimize off-road vehicle effects</i> | To reduce off-road vehicle effects to the smallest degree feasible short of elimination, consistent with the specific management direction and practices established for the area as determined by economic, legal, environmental, and technological factors (FSM 2355.05, paragraph 6). |
| <i>National Forest System road</i> | A road wholly or partly within or adjacent to and serving a part of the NFS and which has been included in a Forest Transportation Atlas (36 CFR Part 261 Sec. 2). |
| <i>National Forest System trail (NFS trail)</i> | A trail wholly or partly within or adjacent to and serving a part of the NFS and which has been included in a Forest Transportation Atlas (36 CFR Part 261 Sec. 2). |
| <i>New road construction</i> | Activity that results in the addition of forest classified or temporary road miles (36 CFR Part 212 Sec. 1). |
| <i>Non-system trail</i> | Any route 50 inches or less in width which is not a NFS trail. |
| <i>Non-highway legal OHV</i> | Vehicles that do not meet the requirements to be operated on the public roads, streets and highways of California as specified in the California Vehicle Code Section 4000. These vehicles should be registered with “green stickers” or “red stickers.” |

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| <i>Off-highway vehicle (OHV)</i> | Any motorized vehicle designed for or capable of cross-country travel on or immediately over land, water, sand, snow, ice, marsh, swampland, or other natural terrain; except that such term excludes (A) any registered motorboat, (B) any fire, military, emergency or law enforcement vehicle when used for emergency purposes, and any combat or combat support vehicle when used for national defense purposes, and (C) any vehicle whose use is expressly authorized by the respective agency head under a permit, lease, license, or contract (E.O. 11644, Sec. 2). The terms off-highway vehicle (OHV) and off-road vehicle (ORV) are nearly synonymous. ORV implies use only off of roads and OHV does not. Since OHV is generally accepted among States and user groups, this term is preferred to better describe the situation on the National Forests (FSH 7709.55, 34). |
| <i>Off-highway vehicle system</i> | The roads, trails and areas that make up the authorized OHV use opportunities on a Forest. |
| <i>Off-road vehicle (ORV)</i> | See “Off-highway Vehicle” above. |
| <i>Off-road vehicle plan or Off-highway vehicle plan</i> | Information regarding OHV management and designation in the current FLRMP and any other current supplemental documents, including existing ORV/OHV plans are collectively to be considered the off-road vehicle management plan as called for in 36 CFR Part 295 and FSM references. |
| <i>Off-road vehicle use</i> | Vehicle use that occurs off of roads, (i.e., on areas and trails) on National Forest lands (FSM 2355). |
| <i>Open zone of use</i> | Areas and trails on which all types of motorized vehicles may be operated off of roads without restriction (FSM 2355.13). |
| <i>Restricted zone of use</i> | Areas and trails on which motorized vehicle use is restricted by times or season of use, types of vehicles, vehicle equipment, designated areas or trails, or types of activity specified in orders issued under the authority of 36 CFR Part 261 (FSM 2355.13). |
| <i>Road</i> | A motor vehicle travelway over 50 inches wide, unless identified and managed as a trail. A road may be classified, unclassified, or temporary (36 CFR Part 212 Sec. 1). |

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| <i>Roads Analysis</i> | See Appendix G. |
| <i>Road decommissioning</i> | Activities that result in the stabilization and restoration of unneeded roads to a more natural state (36 CFR Part 212 Sec. 1). |
| <i>Route</i> | A generic term for roads, trails, travelways and corridors, regardless of their classification or designation, that are being used for motorized or non-motorized travel. |
| <i>Specifically defined area</i> | An area clearly delineated with identifiable boundaries where OHVs may travel off NFS roads and designated NFS trails (i.e., cross-country). The area may be an Open Zone of Use or a Restricted Zone of Use. |
| <i>Temporary road</i> | Roads authorized by contract, permit, lease, other written authorization, or emergency operation not intended to be part of the forest transportation system and not necessary for long-term resource management (36 CFR Part 212 Sec. 1). |
| <i>Traffic service level</i> | Describes the significant characteristics and operating conditions of a road (FSM 7705). |
| <i>Trail</i> | A trail is a linear feature constructed for the purpose of allowing the free movement of people, stock, or OHVs (Recreation, Heritage & Wilderness Resources Integrated Business Systems Web Site – www.fs.fed.us/r3/measures). |
| <i>Trail vehicle</i> | Vehicles designed for trail use, such as bicycles, snowmobiles, trail bikes, trail scooters, and all terrain vehicles (ATVs) (FSM 2353.05). |
| <i>Unclassified road</i> | Roads on NFS lands that are not managed as part of the forest transportation system, such as unplanned roads, abandoned travelways, and off-road vehicle tracks that have not been designated and managed as a trail; and those roads that were once authorized under permit or other authorization and were not decommissioned upon the termination of the authorization (36 CFR Part 212 Sec. 1). |

Five Steps to OHV Route Designation

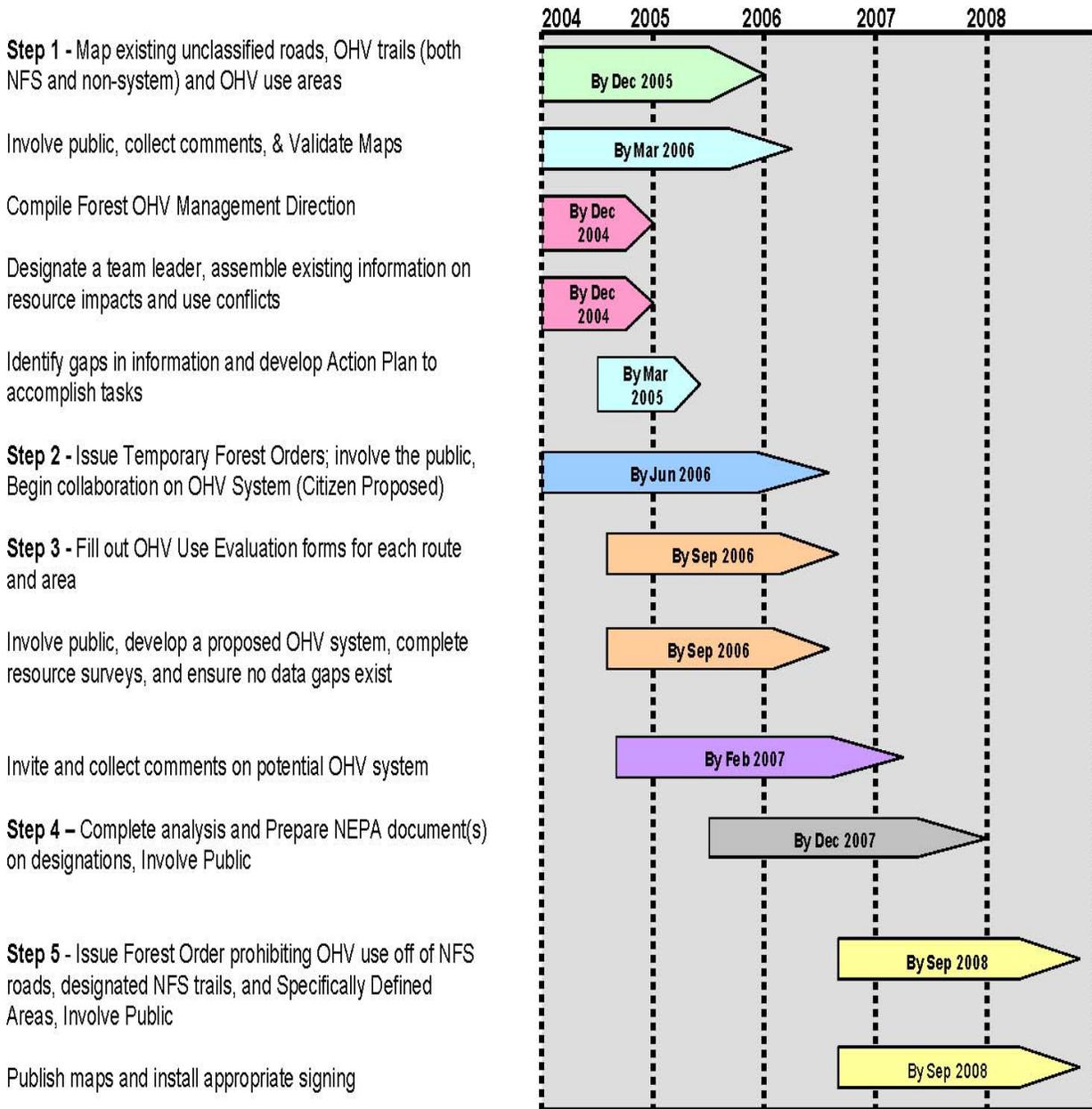
The following is a summary of the 5 steps that are designed to implement the Forest Service – State of California Memorandum of Intent (Appendix B) and designate OHV trails and areas for OHV use on all National Forest Lands in California (including some of R4). The steps are described in more detail in the following pages.

Public involvement throughout this process is crucial to the success of OHV route designation

1. Map (GPS) existing unclassified roads, OHV trails (both NFS and non-system), and off-route use areas, and enter the data in GIS (Geographic Information System) and INFRA (Infrastructure database). Designate team leaders, compile Forest OHV Management Direction, assemble needed information, identify gaps in data, prioritize, develop action plans, and begin field surveys. Share maps with the public **by December 2005** (earlier if possible). Collect comments **by March 2006**.
2. Issue temporary Forest Orders prohibiting wheeled vehicle use (including mountain bikes) off mapped roads, trails, and off-route use areas. Involve the public. Complete no later than **June 2006**.
3. Evaluate inventoried roads, trails, and areas; collaborate with the public in developing proposed systems of roads, trails, and specifically defined areas for use by wheeled OHVs; complete surveys of information and data gaps. Involve the public. Publish maps of proposals **by September 2006**. Collect public comments no later than **February 2007**.
4. Complete analyses and prepare NEPA documents designating **all** trails and specifically defined areas for wheeled OHV use. Involve the public. Complete no later than **December 2007**.
5. Issue Forest Orders to prohibit motor vehicle use off roads, designated trails, and specifically defined areas. Involve the public. Install appropriate signing, publish maps of approved OHV systems for public distribution, and implement any mitigation measures **by September 2008**.

The Klamath and Shasta-Trinity National Forests have one additional year from the dates above to complete the tasks. This additional time is allowed to review FLRMPs and provide direction to prohibit wheeled vehicles off roads, designated trails, and specifically defined areas.

OHV Route Designation Process



Step 1

Processes:

- Map existing unclassified roads, system and non-system motorized trails, and off-route use areas currently receiving wheeled vehicle use.
- Compile existing Forest OHV Management Direction.
- Designate team leaders, assemble needed information, identify gaps in data, prioritize, develop action plans, and begin field surveys.
- Involve the public.

Decision:

- None.

Products:

- Maps of roads, trails, and off-route use areas.
- Lists of current Forest OHV Management Direction.
- Action Plans for collection of priority data.
- Public Involvement and Communications Plans.

Due Dates:

- Share maps with the public no later than December 2005.
- Collect public comments on maps by March 2006.

Map existing unclassified roads, system and non-system motorized trails, and off-route use areas currently receiving wheeled vehicle use

Use GPS to map unclassified roads, trails (both NFS and non-system), and off-route use areas receiving wheeled vehicle use. Enter the GPS data into GIS and INFRA, and produce OHV inventory maps. Follow the direction and protocols identified in the Pacific Southwest Region unnumbered publication *Motorized Trails: Data Collection Standards with Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) Integration* (June 2003).

Ideally, interested members of the public should be involved early in the inventory process to help identify where wheeled vehicle use is occurring and assist inventory teams in finding little known or remote roads, trails, and off-route use areas. This will allow GPS crews to remap areas if roads and trails are missed before they leave Forests.

Compile existing Forest OHV Management Direction

Identify and consolidate all existing direction on management of wheeled OHVs on the Forest into a document entitled "**Forest OHV Management Direction**". This document should not create new information. Use the following guidance:

1. Review and identify any requirements from current FLRMPs, including all maps, forest-wide management direction, management area prescriptions, monitoring requirements, appendices and tables related to OHV designations, opportunities and restrictions, and Regional and National direction applicable to Forests. Be sure to review the resource sections as well as recreation and transportation direction. See Appendix L for types of Forest OHV management direction possibly found in FLRMPs and Appendix M for a format for recording the information.

2. Review and identify any requirements from stand-alone OHV plans, recreation or special management area plans, or species-specific plans that were incorporated into FLRMPs. Include any project-level decisions or regional plans (e.g., Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment) that amended FLRMPs.

3. Identify any requirements from laws, regulations, and policies that could influence proposed designations. Summaries of the relevant aspects of these laws, regulations, and policies can be found in Appendix G.

Information compiled from the above three sources comprises the "**Forest OHV Management Direction**". This document meets the requirements of 36 CFR Part 295 and provides the current direction on managing OHVs on the Forest. "White papers" and "strategy documents" that have not been incorporated into FLRMPs or included in applicable project NEPA decisions should **not** be included as part of the Forest OHV Management Direction.

Designate team leaders, assemble needed information, identify gaps in data, prioritize, develop action plans, and begin field surveys

Designate team leaders to be responsible for coordinating unit 5-step processes from beginning to end. Collect and review existing resource issue and use conflict information for the evaluation of mapped roads, trails, and off-route use areas. Refer to the OHV Use Evaluation Form in Appendix I to document the required information in 36 CFR 295 and FSM 2355. This information will be used, along with user desires and OHV system design principles, to create proposed actions for environmental analyses.

Avoid collecting new field information except for that which is critical. The OHV route designation procedures are **not** new planning efforts. They are procedures that implement existing direction on (existing) mapped trails. Collected information will: (1) provide key screening information for assessing roads, trails, and specifically defined OHV areas; (2) provide the basis for environmental analysis and NEPA documentation in Step 4; and (3) facilitate public involvement, review, and communication.

Gaps in information should be identified and prioritized during this step, and should be scheduled for data gathering in Action Plans to meet timelines for environmental analyses (Step 4). Action Plans should list the tasks, dates for completion, responsible staff persons, and costs. Collection of new information would ideally be conducted only

on the trails, roads, and specifically defined areas likely to be in proposed actions (refer to Step 4).

The length of time or timing required for some field and data gathering protocols and consultation can delay the environmental analysis processes if these field surveys are not started until after proposed actions are defined. Such surveys may include **archaeology**; threatened, endangered, and sensitive **plant** and animal **species**; **watershed**; user needs and conflict assessments; and ethnography. Therefore, Forests should assess information gaps during Step 1, prioritize them and begin data gathering to collect missing information. Balance the timing needed for the protocols with the likelihood of particular trails, roads, and areas being included in proposed actions.

Prioritize resource surveys of data gaps for routes and specifically defined areas in the following order:

High priority for resource surveys:

- a. Trails, unclassified roads, or specifically defined areas needed to connect desirable routes or open areas to existing, approved motorized trails and roads.
- b. Trails, unclassified roads, or specifically defined areas identified by the Forest as high priority for possible inclusion within the OHV system.
- c. Trails, unclassified roads, or specifically defined areas with **heavy or high use** and high resource sensitivity being considered for inclusion in the system network.

Medium priority for resource surveys:

- a. Trails, unclassified roads, or specifically defined areas with few or no resource conflicts.
- b. Trails, unclassified roads, or specifically defined areas identified by the forest as system needs (i.e., connectors that make the system work).
- c. Trails, unclassified roads, or specifically defined areas having no connection to existing system roads and trails but being considered for inclusion in the system network.

Low priority for resource surveys:

- a. Routes with **low or light use**.
- b. Routes with critical resource or other management conflicts that are not likely to be included as part of the OHV system.
- c. Routes not likely to be considered for OHV trail designation or classification as roads.

OHV use definitions:

- Heavy: 1501 or more OHV operators per week;
- High: 501 - 1500 OHV operators per week;
- Medium: 101 - 500 OHV operators per week;
- Low: 25 - 100 OHV operators per week;
- Light: fewer than 25 operators per week.

High priority surveys should be started in **2004**. They have to be completed in time to allow for all necessary consultation with the public and governmental agencies prior to making NEPA decisions about trail or area designations or road classification.

Involve the public

Public participation and collaboration in inventories of roads, trails, and specifically defined areas will build understanding, confidence, and accuracy and completeness of final maps. It is critical to involve the public, including motorized and non-motorized recreationists, the environmental community, other forest users, and local and tribal government representatives. The public should be engaged early in the mapping stage to learn the overall route designation process and how and when it can be involved. The public needs to 1) understand the 5-step route designation process, and 2) see examples and validate maps of roads, trails, and areas used by wheeled vehicles, and 3) understand that unclassified roads, non-system trails, and areas that are **not** on GPS maps will be closed by Forest Orders required in Step 2 to prevent resource damage. For units where there are existing designated trail systems, new, unauthorized trails that are not part of the designated systems may not be added in this procedure. They may be considered in future projects. Collect public comments no later than March 2006.

Public Involvement and Communication Objectives:

1. Prepare Public Involvement and Communications **Plans**.
2. Increase awareness of the 5-step OHV route designation process with OHV user communities, mountain bike, environmental, and other non-OHV audiences, Native Americans, local and tribal governments, and other key contacts, and internal audiences. Clearly establish expectations and roles for the public, and set the stage for public involvement in subsequent steps of the process.
3. Initiate government-to-government consultation with federally recognized tribes.
4. Encourage collaboration in the process to ensure that all unclassified roads, OHV trails, and off-route use areas used by wheeled vehicles, including mountain bikes, are identified on the inventory maps.
5. Provide opportunities for interested parties to review and validate the completed Forest inventory maps.

6. Determine which roads and trails are important or are of concern to the public and why.

Possible Public Involvement activities:

- a) Field trips to look at trails and roads with potential for inclusion in the OHV system. Field trips or field meetings have been very productive in the past.
- b) Workshops to review existing Forest/District inventory maps, correct inventory information, and add additional routes and areas.
- c) Meetings to brief interested parties on final outcomes of inventories and the next steps in the process.
- d) Volunteers working with inventory teams to assist in locating routes and areas.
- e) Blank OHV Use Evaluation Forms (Appendix I) made available to the public for submitting information on roads, trails, and off-route use areas.

Possible Communication Activities:

- a) Provide special briefings to visitor information and field-going staffs so they are prepared to answer questions when making public contacts.
- b) Send letters to users and other interested parties advising them of the processes and upcoming public information opportunities.
- c) Send follow-up letters with OHV inventory maps to key audiences after inventories are complete.
- d) Create media releases at key points in the inventory process. Publish inexpensive maps in local papers and on Forest websites with thanks for help.
- e) Post information on Forest websites – post initial (before public information meetings) and final (after public information meeting) inventories.
- f) Make personal contacts to key opinion leaders from OHV, environmental, Native American, and other communities encouraging them to provide information they have.
- g) Make information contacts with OHV users in the field, using simple informational brochures or other one-page information tools.
- h) Make presentations at group/organization meetings, and other community meetings.
- i) **Brief key elected officials** (County Supervisor, Sheriff, etc.), individually at first, and then at public meetings (e.g., board of supervisor meetings).
- j) Brief tribes at agreed upon formats (e.g., tribal council meetings).
- k) Provide information at popular gathering places for OHV users (e.g., local dealers, etc.).
- l) Establish SO/District office displays with comment card opportunities. Include inventory map that visitors can draw on to indicate missing trails/areas.

Step 2

Processes:

- Prepare Forest Order maps.
- Issue temporary Forest Orders.
- Involve the public.

Decision:

- Prohibit wheeled vehicles, including bicycles, off roads, trails, and specifically defined areas.

Products:

- Temporary Forest Orders.
- Forest Orders posted at District and Forest Supervisor Offices, major trailheads, and on Forest websites.

Due Date:

- No later than June 2006.

The goal of Step 2 is to stop cross-country travel and associated resource damage by wheeled vehicles, motorized and non-motorized (see Note 2, page 22). This will be done through the issuance of temporary Forest Orders prohibiting wheeled vehicle use off mapped roads, trails, and off-route use areas. These Forest Orders will be effective for two years, but may be renewed as necessary until the completion of Step 5 (September 2008).

Step 2 does **not** designate roads, trails, or areas for OHV use, **nor does it close** existing trails, roads, and off-route use areas that are currently managed as open unless vehicle use is causing or will cause considerable adverse effects. Temporary Forest Orders are interim steps in moving to "restricted" zones of use and do not affect whether specific routes or areas will become parts of OHV systems. It is critical that the public be involved in this process to understand and hopefully support the interim actions being taken to protect resources from impacts, while the designation procedures, including environmental analyses, proceed.

Prepare Forest Order maps

Compare existing vehicle closures and restrictions against the inventory maps that were prepared in Step 1 of OHV routes and off-route use areas currently receiving wheeled vehicle use. Use this comparison to identify roads, trails, or off-route use areas that should be closed to wheeled vehicular travel during the interim period while designations of wheeled OHV routes and specifically defined areas are being analyzed.

The following list provides guidance on identifying routes and areas that may have been mapped, but will be closed by temporary Forest Order during the analysis process:

1. All roads, trails, or off-route use areas within congressionally designated Wildernesses or other areas closed by Forest Order.

2. NFS trails located within “Restricted” zones of use that currently prohibit motorized use.
3. Unclassified roads, non-NFS trails, and off-route use areas that are parts of closure or restoration projects.
4. Unclassified roads, trails, and off-route use areas where existing site-specific information is available showing OHV use is causing or will cause considerable adverse effects on the factors and resource values referred to in 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 2. The factors and resource values listed are: soil, water, vegetation, fish and wildlife, forest visitors, cultural and historic resources, and other recreation uses. These roads, trails, and areas should remain closed until the adverse effects have been eliminated and measures have been implemented to prevent future recurrence.

Note 1: Non-highway legal OHVs may use NFS roads where the use is not prohibited by State law (i.e., roads not classified as highways – see glossary) or by Forest Orders as provided in 36 CFR Part 261 Sec. 54. In the case of State highways or county roads within National Forests, State laws and regulations or county ordinances apply.

Note 2: Non-motorized wheeled vehicles (e.g., bicycles and scooters) can use all routes and areas open to OHVs, all NFS trails outside Wilderness, and all NFS roads where the use is not otherwise prohibited. Under the direction in the MOI (Appendix B, clause B.2.d), non-motorized wheeled vehicles are to be prohibited off roads, trails, and specifically defined areas.

Prepare maps for temporary Forest Orders. Include maps with Forest Orders.

Issue temporary Forest Orders

A sample temporary Forest Order that prohibits wheeled vehicle use (including mountain bikes) off mapped roads, trails, and specifically defined areas is in Appendix K. Prohibitions may be contained in a single Forest Order or in several orders covering multiple geographic areas of Forests. The goal is to write simple orders that are easy for the public to understand and follow.

Existing orders that restrict or prohibit vehicle types or use on roads, trails, and specifically defined areas may remain in effect unless there are conflicts with new orders. The existing orders should be noted on the maps for the new temporary orders that prohibit use off roads, trails, and areas. Issuing new temporary orders is better than trying to supplement existing orders. If old Forest Orders are superceded by or are in conflict with new temporary Forest Orders, the old orders need to be rescinded. Superceded orders should be listed by number and date of issue at the end of the new temporary orders. Forest Orders must be signed by Forest Supervisors. Deputy or Acting Forest Supervisors can only sign Forest Orders if they have current Delegations

of Authority specifically allowing the signing of Forest Orders on the dates the orders are signed.

Motorized vehicle use off mapped roads, trails, and off-route use areas can be prohibited under 36 CFR Part 261 Sec. 56, referencing 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 5. The regulations at 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 5 give Forest Supervisors the authority to temporarily close areas or trails to one or more vehicle types if the vehicles are causing or will cause considerable adverse effects on the factors and resource values identified in 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 2, which are listed in #4 above. Non-motorized vehicle use should also be prohibited under 36 CFR Part 261 Sec. 56. Decisions to prevent resource damage by prohibiting cross-country wheeled vehicle travel can be documented using Categorical Exclusion 31.1b paragraph 1, unless there are extraordinary circumstances (FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30).

Involvement of the public

1. The regulations at 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 3 require that the public shall be provided opportunities to participate in the processes of allowing, restricting, or prohibiting use of areas and trails by motor vehicles off NFS roads. Sixty day scoping periods are required for public review of proposals to prohibit cross-country wheeled motor vehicle travel (36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 3). Public notification and comment are also required prior to closures of system roads (Annual FS Appropriation Direction, e.g., Public Law 108-108).
2. Make clear to all interested parties that temporary Forest Orders prohibiting wheeled vehicles off mapped roads, trails, and specifically defined areas are interim steps in moving from "Open" zones of use (cross-country use okay) to "Restricted" zones of use (OHV use only on roads, trails, and specifically defined areas). These orders do not affect whether specific routes or areas will become parts of designated OHV systems.
3. Continue government-to-government consultation with federally recognized tribes; focus on preparation of OHV route maps and issuance of temporary Forest Orders.
3. Once the maps for Forest Orders are validated, begin collaboration with the public to develop citizen's proposals for OHV systems, identifying the most important to least important trails and roads. These can be helpful in guiding resource surveys.
4. In addition to contacting OHV, mountain bike, environmental, and other non-motorized interests, communications should include contacts with the Private Organizations listed in the National MOU for Sportsmen's Access to Federal Public Lands (Appendix N).

Possible Communication Activities:

- a) Use methods similar to those described under Step 1.

- b) Publish tabloid (i.e., inexpensive newsprint type) version maps of open routes and areas and make them available at local off-route use areas and to local user groups.
- c) Post Forest Orders and associated maps at Forest offices, public contact stations, major trailheads, and on Forest websites.
- d) Provide maps and information packets to Forest Service law enforcement and other public contact field staffs.

Step 3

Processes:

- Fill out OHV Use Evaluation Forms (Appendix I) for all routes and areas.
- Develop proposed OHV systems.
- Determine 4-wheel drive trails vs. roads.
- Complete surveys of information and data gaps.
- Involve the public.

Decision:

- Proposed Actions.

Products:

- Completed OHV Use Evaluation Forms.
- Completed surveys of data gaps.
- Maps of proposed OHV system.

Due Dates:

- Complete surveys by September 2006.
- Complete maps of proposed OHV system by September 2006.
- Collect public comments on maps by February 2007.

The purpose of Step 3 is to make “plan to project” (pre-NEPA) evaluations of roads, trails, and specifically defined areas to develop proposed OHV systems. These should be interdisciplinary efforts. Utilizing information gathered in Steps 1 and 2, these evaluations are intended to identify resource issues, use conflicts, and recreation opportunities regarding the use of OHVs for all roads, trails, or specifically defined areas. The purposes are to evaluate and screen potential routes and collaborate with the public. Proposed OHV systems that are developed through this step will be carried forward into Step 4.

All information should be documented, even if routes or areas are not being carried into Step 4, because the information generated by these evaluations may be used in future NEPA analyses. For example, proposals may be initiated in the future to decommission unclassified roads, and the information may be needed for those NEPA analyses.

Involve the public in these evaluations. They allow the Forest Service to collaborate with the public in developing the proposed OHV system. These are the best opportunities to resolve conflicts that have been the biggest challenges to OHV management on some Forests.

Fill out OHV Use Evaluation Forms (Appendix I) for all routes and areas

Trails and specifically defined areas proposed for OHV designation must be evaluated using the criteria in 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 2 and FSM 2355.14. The OHV Use Evaluation Form in Appendix I provides a format to guide and document the results of these evaluations. These criteria involve reviews of resource issues, use conflicts, and

recreation opportunities for all roads, trails, or specifically defined areas that are potential additions to OHV systems.

There will be two results from the completed evaluation forms. The first is groups of roads, trails, and specifically defined areas ranging from little or no resource impacts or use conflicts, to high resource impacts or use conflicts, and all the necessary combinations in between. The second is ratings of recreation opportunities provided by the roads or trails ranging from low to high. The differences among various types of OHVs should be recognized and the different impacts they may have on various resources, public safety, and use conflicts should be considered when designating trails and areas (FSM 2355.14.2(c)).

Unclassified roads that are proposed for conversion to classified roads should be reviewed using concepts in FSM 7703.2 paragraph 3 (Appendix F), and be guided by the Forest-level roads analysis process (see Appendix G, "Roads Analysis") and local issues. Unclassified roads may instead be added to trails systems and be managed as trails.

Answering the questions on the OHV Use Evaluation Form (Appendix I): If the answer to either of the first two questions on the evaluation form regarding Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) and Management Area Direction is [no], amendment of the FLRMP would probably be required to be able to consider those roads, trails, or specifically defined areas any further. Only those portions of roads, trails, or specifically defined areas that are in compliance with current direction would normally be considered at this time, since this designation process should be limited to implementing existing direction in order to meet the timeline in the MOI.

Units may have additional "go/no go" direction in their FLRMPs that should also be considered here. The FLRMP and OHV Management Direction (prepared in Step 1) for Forests tend to be unique. Evaluation teams will need to recommend what constitutes "go/no go" direction and what will be considered in the resource portions of the evaluations.

The other questions on the evaluation form are more open-ended. They require judgment as to the magnitudes of impacts and the difficulties of possible mitigations. It is best to have the forms filled out by ID Teams. Evaluators should be familiar with these phrases in the Glossary: "minimize off-road vehicle effect", "adverse off-road vehicle effect", and "considerable adverse off-road vehicle effect".

After answering questions 4 through 11, rank the levels of resource impacts and use conflicts as minimal, moderate, high, very high, or unacceptable. For each of the issues, identify possible mitigations. Also, identify probable successes of mitigation measures and relative costs and difficulties to implement them.

Recreation Opportunities

Methods to identify recreation opportunities that various routes provide can include user needs assessments, satisfaction surveys, or comparisons to OHV system guidelines, such as providing long distance touring trails, loop trails, trails of varying difficulty, and trails that access desirable destinations such as scenic or historical locations. However, since OHV user desires range widely, it is often desirable to conduct user workshops designed to allow users to describe the types of OHV experiences they enjoy or would enjoy if the opportunities were available.

Answer questions 12 through 20 on the OHV Use Evaluation Form to determine how the routes promote user enjoyment, provide ranges of opportunities consistent with Forest settings, National recreation policy, and Forest maintenance capabilities. After answering these questions, rank OHV recreation opportunity as high, moderate, or low on the form.

Develop proposed OHV systems

ID Teams should use the OHV Use Evaluation Forms and apply OHV system design principles to create proposed systems of roads, trails, and specifically defined areas (i.e., OHV systems) that meet local unit direction for OHV management. Use the existing OHV opportunities, mapped unclassified roads, undesignated system trails, non-system trails, off-route use areas, and the information on the OHV Use Evaluation Form (Appendix I). Loops and features that enhance and provide high quality trail experiences are important elements of good OHV systems, and are needed to help keep people and their vehicles on roads and trails. The Forest Service Trails Handbook (FSH 2309.18) and Joe Wernex's *Off-Highway Motorcycle & ATV Trails Guidelines for Design, Construction, Maintenance and User Satisfaction* (available online at www.ama-cycle.org) are good references.

When designing OHV systems, weigh the benefits of providing high quality OHV opportunities against resource and use conflicts, as well as unit budgets and costs of maintaining systems. Ideally, OHV systems should consist primarily of roads, trails, and specifically defined areas with little or no need for mitigation of conflicts or resource impacts. However, they may include some segments that require higher levels of mitigation or conflict resolution. Proposed actions for NEPA will be based upon OHV systems as described in Step 4.

Priorities for designation in this 5-step procedure should be on existing, open, OHV routes rather than new routes. Minor route relocation or new construction may be necessary to make workable OHV systems or reduce resource impacts. However, new routes and routes with major resource issues or use conflicts should be considered in separate analyses unless they are integral to OHV system proposals.

Remember, the intent of designation is to stop resource damage from cross-country wheeled vehicle use and redirect OHV use to existing, sustainable roads, trails, and specifically defined areas. Proposals that require changes in FLRMP direction should be deferred for consideration in future planning activities. Remember to document information for future analyses.

Determine 4-wheel drive trails vs. roads

When developing proposed OHV systems, address whether 4-wheel drive routes will be managed as roads or trails in proposed actions. These OHV routes are defined as roads, since they are over 50 inches wide, unless they are designated as trails. See Appendix H for additional background on this subject. Roads are designed and normally expected to accommodate full-sized vehicles such as 4-wheel drives. However, 4-wheel drive routes can be managed as either roads or trails. When deciding whether to manage 4-wheel drive routes as roads or trails, consider:

1. Will routes be used, either now or in the foreseeable future, by full-sized vehicles for resource management activities (e.g., access to wildlife water improvements, access for range or timber management activities, and/or access for controlled burning or other fire pre-suppression activity) or to achieve other Forest objectives (e.g., recreation access or gathering forest products)? If so, managing routes as roads may be most appropriate.
2. What are the planned difficulty levels of the routes? If routes are planned as “More Difficult” or “Most Difficult”, then desired OHV experiences are unlikely to be maintained while also accommodating other full-sized vehicle access, so designation as trails may be appropriate.
3. Will routes provide special use or administrative access for full-sized vehicles, but recreational access is planned to be limited to ATVs and/or motorcycles? In this case, designation as roads with access by the public restricted to ATVs and/or motorcycles is probably most appropriate.

Complete surveys of information and data gaps

Assessments of currently available resource information and data gaps needed to conduct environmental analyses (Step 4) should have begun in Step 1 and be completed by the end of Step 3. Once unclassified roads, trails, and areas that are likely to be proposed for OHV systems are identified, surveys for resource effects should be completed for unclassified roads being considered for classification, and for trails and specifically defined areas being considered for designation. Resource surveys should also include existing designated routes and specifically defined areas that have not previously been surveyed for the effects of motorized wheeled vehicle use.

The primary focus of resource surveys should be on cultural resources; threatened, endangered, and sensitive plant and animal species; and watershed. These surveys must be started as early as possible. They should be completed several months prior to September 2006 to comply with the MOI signed by the Regional Forester. They have to be completed in time to allow for all necessary consultation with interested parties, including tribes and other governmental agencies, prior to making NEPA decisions about trail or area designations or road classification in Step 4.

Involvement of the public

Public Participation: It is extremely important to have public participation in this identification process. This is an opportunity to identify, clarify, and validate use conflicts as well as to identify and prioritize roads, trails, and areas that are important to OHV users. Encourage a broad spectrum of the public (OHV, Native American, environmental, and non-motorized interests) to participate in workshops to identify issues, prioritize evaluation criteria, and recommend proposed OHV systems. These opportunities will increase public understanding and support for proposed actions. Set the sideboards and try to position the Forest Service as a coach in the public process. Provide opportunities for the public to identify unclassified roads and OHV trails to be included in and excluded from proposed actions. Trade-offs may be necessary. Field trips/meetings provide a forum for good communications and are recommended to aide this process. While the Forest Service is ultimately responsible for formulating proposed actions for analyses, the public should play meaningful parts in their development.

The regulation at 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 3 requires that the public shall be provided opportunities to participate in the processes of allowing, restricting, or prohibiting the use of areas and trails by motor vehicles off NFS roads. Advanced notice of 60 days is required for public review of proposed or revised designations (36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 3). Public notification and comment are also required prior to closures of system roads (Annual FS Appropriation Direction, e.g., Public Law 108-108). Having resource and use conflict issues identified should help to keep public discussions focused on where opportunities for OHV use exist, and what possible mitigations may be necessary, particularly if the public has been involved with the earlier steps of the process and understands the constraints.

1. Provide interested parties the opportunity to:
 - help frame the OHV use evaluation criteria that will be used to select proposed designated routes;
 - participate in applying the OHV use evaluation criteria;
 - recommend and comment on proposed designations and Trail Management Objectives (TMOs) (see Appendix O, and refer to <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/measures/Inventory/trails%20files/TRACS/TMO/> for the information needed for TMOs);
 - share concerns and thoughts with other interested parties.

2. Clearly communicate Forest Service expectations of the public's role in the process.
3. Increase awareness of factors considered in managing OHV routes/areas.
4. Provide information on proposed designations.
5. Insure interested parties are aware of the next steps in the procedure.

Possible Public Involvement Activities:

- a) Hold field trips to look at trails, roads, and off-route use areas. These have been very productive in the past.
- b) Provide public workshops either in the field or in the office (or combinations of both) focused on validating criteria used to evaluate routes/areas for selection.
- c) Provide public workshops where interested members of the public can apply information compiled during resource/use conflict evaluations and route inventories to help develop possible alternatives for proposed routes/areas.
- d) Provide a series of public workshops where small groups work together to provide comments.
- e) During public workshops, whenever possible, use groups with mixed forest interests to generate the widest possible discussions of alternatives.
- f) Provide a series of more traditional public meetings to gather comments on proposals and analyses.
- g) Provide information on Forest websites and, if practical, provide opportunities to comment electronically through websites or e-mail.

Possible Communications Activities:

- a) Continue ongoing communications strategies. Provide information on factors that will influence selection of designated routes/areas, and on proposed designations. When providing information on proposed designations, include rationales for not selecting routes/areas (i.e., areas not being proposed for designation).
- b) Develop one-page handouts outlining where Forests are in the designation procedures, what criteria will be used in shaping proposals (or were used to shape proposals), and summaries of next steps. Make handouts available at audience contact points.
- c) Provide a series of public field trips to discuss factors influencing selection of designated routes/areas and how they would be applied in determining whether or not existing routes/areas would be proposed for designation.
- d) Continue government-to-government consultation with federally recognized tribes; focus on criteria and factors influencing proposed designation.

Step 4

Processes:

- Complete analyses and prepare NEPA documents.
- Involve the public.

Decision:

- Designate OHV trails and specifically defined areas.

Products:

- NEPA documents.
- Decisions by Responsible Officials.

Due Date:

- Signed NEPA Decisions no later than December 2007.

The purpose of this step is to conduct the environmental analyses and prepare NEPA documents to determine which additional roads, trails, and specifically defined areas will be included in OHV systems. Interdisciplinary teams should conduct the analyses. Currently, there are no Categorical Exclusions that cover designation of OHV trails and specifically defined areas. Forest Supervisors must sign designation documents (OGC Opinion dated 4/29/04, Appendix J).

Complete analyses and prepare NEPA documents

Proposed actions will include only the unclassified roads, undesignated trails, and specifically defined areas in the OHV systems developed in Step 3. Existing classified roads, previously designated trails, and designated specifically defined areas do not need to be included. Address specific vehicle types that would be permitted on trails and areas. Consult TMOs in formulating proposals for trails, particularly “Designed Use”, “Managed Use”, and “Prohibitions” (see Appendix O). Descriptions of proposed actions should include issuance of Forest Orders to prohibit OHV use off roads, designated trails, and areas. It is important that clear purpose and need statements be articulated with proposed actions. A sample statement of purpose and need can be found in Appendix P.

Although proposed actions will not include existing classified roads and previously designated trails, cumulative effects analyses need to consider entire OHV systems. NFS trails that were being managed as OHV routes (signing, maps, etc.) when FLRMPs were approved are considered designated if documentation is provided (Appendix I) showing they are consistent with the following:

- 1) FLRMPs;
- 2) the criteria in 36 CFR Part 295 and FSM 2355.14; and
- 3) relevant laws and regulations (see Appendix G).

The mandatory direction in 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 2 and FSM 2355.14 provides the criteria that must be considered when designating vehicle use off NFS roads (i.e., on

trails and in specifically defined areas). The OHV Use Evaluation Form in Appendix I is designed to address this direction. If there are resource impacts or use conflicts on existing NFS roads or NFS trails, changes to resolve those impacts or conflicts may be included as parts of proposed actions.

The numbers of routes and the sizes of areas in proposed actions need to be carefully considered. Factors to consider include:

- complexity of issues;
- numbers of issues;
- use conflicts;
- ability to do site-specific analyses;
- large enough areas to make trade-offs where trail or road closures are needed.

Care should be taken to analyze logical parts of OHV systems (such as contiguous geographic areas). Be careful not to split decisions involving connected actions. Consult with Forest environmental coordinators before determining the sizes of OHV systems.

Information gathered in previous steps and evaluations of current and potential impacts from OHV use should provide the bases for any additional needed route/area analyses. Consider FLRMP direction, relevant laws, regulations, and policies, and significant issues identified during scoping in environmental analyses.

Unclassified roads proposed for inclusion in OHV systems should be evaluated for the effects of becoming classified roads or for conversion to NFS trails with motorized designations. Adding miles to classified roads systems is considered to be new road construction (36 CFR Part 212 Sec. 1) and must be informed by roads analyses (Appendix G). All Forests are required to have (and should have previously completed) Forest-Scale Roads Analyses. Responsible Officials must determine whether additional Roads Analysis below the Forest-scale is needed and, if needed, what additional information is required to be able to make informed decisions (FSM 7712.13).

Some questions and answers regarding OHV designations and NEPA are presented in Appendix Q. The Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment and mountain bikes are also discussed.

Involvement of the public

1. The regulations at 36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 3 require that the public shall be provided opportunities **to participate** in the processes of allowing, restricting, or prohibiting the use of areas and trails by motor vehicles off NFS roads. **Sixty day scoping** periods for environmental analyses are required for public review of proposed or revised designations (36 CFR Part 295 Sec. 3). Posting **legal notices** announcing the **start** of scoping in newspapers of record is recommended. Public notification and comment are

also required prior to closures of system roads (Annual FS Appropriation Direction, e.g., Public Law 108-108).

2. **Thirty day** comment periods, required under the new appeal rule (36 CFR 215), should be provided for **draft** Environmental Assessments that designate OHV routes.
3. Solicit comments on proposed actions during required scoping periods (36 CFR 215.3).
4. Inform interested parties of route and area designation decisions, rationales for them, and appeal opportunities (36 CFR 215.7).
5. Continue government-to-government consultation with federally recognized tribes.
6. Provide timelines for issuing Forest Orders for designations of OHV systems.

Possible Communications Activities:

- a) Initiate normal communications associated with environmental analysis processes.
- b) Continue ongoing communications activities. Focus these activities on providing notifications to interested parties of NEPA decisions and the analyses that support them.
- c) Provide information on NEPA decisions to publications that focus on OHV users.

Step 5

Processes:

- Issue Forest Orders.
- Implement NEPA decisions.
- Involve the public.

Decision:

- None.

Products:

- Forest Orders.
- User maps of designated OHV Systems.
- Installed signs and kiosks at trailheads and Forest road and trail entry points.
- Posted Forest Orders at District and Forest Supervisor Offices, major trailheads, and Forest websites.
- Implemented mitigation/design measures.

Due Date:

- September 2008.

Issue Forest Orders

Issue Forest Orders that prohibit wheeled OHV use off classified roads, designated OHV trails, and specifically defined areas. To make OHV use decisions enforceable, revoke existing temporary Forest Orders issued under Step 2, and issue new Forest Orders pursuant to the authority at 36 CFR Part 261 Sec. 50 that reflect current OHV prohibitions. Forest Orders should list common names and Forest Service numbers of all designated routes and specifically defined areas. Orders should also contain any restrictions on types of vehicles, seasons of use, or other restrictions, and the routes and areas they affect. Old Forest Orders that are superseded by or in conflict with new orders need to be rescinded. These rescinded orders should be listed by numbers and dates of issue at the end of the new Forest Orders. Forest Supervisors must sign Forest Orders. Deputy or Acting Forest Supervisors can only sign Forest Orders if they have current Delegations of Authority specifically allowing signing of Forest Orders on the dates the orders are signed.

Implement NEPA decisions

Prepare new or revised Road Management Objectives and Trail Management Objectives (for TMOs, see Appendix O, and refer to <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/measures/Inventory/trails%20files/TRACS/TMO/>). Add new classified roads, designated trails, and specifically defined areas to the Forest Transportation Atlas and record as transportation facilities. Assign NFS road and NFS trail numbers and enter them into the INFRA database. Specifically defined areas open for OHV use should be named, have boundary descriptions, and be entered into the

INFRA database. Display designated OHV systems on Forest recreation and OHV maps.

Install signing and kiosks that are appropriate for allowed uses at trailheads and road and trail entry points into the Forest. Implement any required mitigation or design measures identified in decision documents. Take actions, including user education, facility engineering, and law enforcement, to prevent OHV use off OHV systems.

Involvement the public

Insure OHV users are aware that Forest Orders have been issued and what those orders mean.

Possible Public Involvement Activities:

- a) Seek partnership opportunities to post and maintain routes.
- b) Organize volunteer OHV Host Patrols to provide user-to-user contact regarding designated OHV Systems.

Possible Communications Activities:

- a) Provide high-quality maps of designated OHV routes/areas to interested parties.
- b) Post Forest Orders and associated maps at Forest offices, public contact stations, major trailheads, and Forest websites.
- c) Make final Forest Orders and associated maps available for display at local businesses.
- d) Provide maps and information packets for law enforcement and other public contact field staffs.
- e) Install signs and kiosks at trailheads and Forest road and trail entry points.