



An Introduction To The New Travel Plan for the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District

Hello!

I would like to bring you up to date on the Travel Plan for the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District. Over the past three years, individuals, groups and other agencies have put forth a tremendous amount of time and effort in helping to develop and refine a new Travel Plan. I believe that as a result, we now have a Travel Plan that clearly identifies public access opportunities, provides for safe travel, and protects our natural resources.

A map intended to display the new Travel Plan was prepared in July 2000. We began to distribute the map and associated documents, but discovered errors on the map that needed to be corrected. The errors have been corrected and the map has been reprinted. Enclosed are copies of the new Travel Plan map, the Forest Supervisor's order, and three decisions that will implement changes to public access on the district. Also included is information that may help answer some of your questions and assist you in interpreting the new Travel Plan Map. We have considered all of the concerns and recommendations offered by the public, and have made every effort to meet your needs while balancing the measures needed for protection of the very resources that bring people to the forest.

The next several months will be used as an orientation period, for both the public and our own employees, to become familiar with changes to the Travel Plan. It will take several years to fully implement the changes in road and trail access. By starting now and by making the necessary changes over time we will be able to meet the needs and desires of the public while providing safe road and trail systems, healthy stands of trees and vegetation, plentiful wildlife habitat, and clean water.

Please take some time to review the enclosed information and Travel Plan map. If you have questions or comments, please contact Don Garringer (Recreation Staff Officer), Steve Bateman (Ecosystems Staff Officer), or me by telephoning (208) 664-2318. We look forward to meeting with you or your organization to discuss the new Travel Plan. Thank you!

JOE STRINGER
District Ranger



Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we need a new Travel Plan?

We need a new Travel Plan because we have learned through analysis efforts such as the Interior Columbia Basin Management Project and the Coeur d'Alene River Basin Geographic Assessment that the high concentration of roads in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin contributes to watershed and wildlife habitat management problems.



The district maintains approximately 1,011 miles of road to provide the public with safe motorized and non-motorized access. In addition there are many more miles of road that exist that are impassable or have had barriers installed in the past to prevent motorized access.

Approximately 2,500 miles of road not maintained for public use are currently inventoried. These include roads that have had barriers and signs installed following their construction, or have been obliterated.

Until 1996, the area currently managed as the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District was managed as two separate districts (Fernan and Wallace), and access management was handled differently on each district. Both districts developed transportation plans for timber harvest and other projects using guidance of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF) Forest Plan, 1987. Both districts installed signs and physical barriers where project objectives and decisions identified the need to provide for wildlife security or manage for other resource concerns.

Both districts utilized barriers to discourage or prevent unauthorized use of motorized vehicles. But to legally enforce a closure or restriction an order must be issued by the Forest Supervisor. (Closure and restriction orders are covered under the Code of Federal Regulations, often referred to as a Forest Supervisor order). Under the Fernan policy, orders were issued and enforced for areas where special resource concerns exist. Examples include quality hunt areas, protection of government property, or recreation sites. The Wallace Ranger District issued and enforced orders for all roads where signs and physical barriers had been installed. Consequently, when the two districts were combined the Coeur d' Alene River Ranger District did not have a consistent access management policy. The use of two policies made it difficult for the public to understand what was permitted. The purpose of the new Travel Plan is to

provide consistent direction and minimize confusion over public access on the Coeur d' Alene River Ranger District.

How was the new Travel Plan developed?

This travel planning process had the help of many individuals, groups and other agencies. In addition to the traditional means of information sharing (the Forest's Quarterly Report, area newspapers and other media, open house meetings, and periodic mailings), meetings were held with interested organizations and other agencies. These included Backcountry Horsemen, Kootenai Environmental Alliance, Spokane Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Panhandle Trail Riders Association (PANTRA), Brush Bunch, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Idaho Fish and Game.

The scoping period lasted 10 months (from October 1997 to August 1998). In cooperation with the public and other agencies, we identified patterns of uses, resource conditions, and transportation needs.

Eight areas across the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District were identified that had similar resources and potential to satisfy public uses. Based on comments received and the anticipated effects to recreation access, wildlife habitat, and aquatic resources, the project team developed options for proposed changes in each of the eight areas ("Changes by Analysis Areas", enclosed).

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared to track the proposed changes and to disclose the analyses of effects. The EA was provided to the public for review and comment. At the request of the public, the EA review period was twice extended, for a total of 90 days review. PANTRA, Brush Bunch, and Idaho Fish and Game provided specific suggestions for access management that warranted development of alternatives not previously considered in detail. This led to development of a supplement to the EA.

The supplement was distributed to the public for another 60-day comment period. A total of approximately 950 letters were received. These were considered along with the results of analysis of effects and the comments previously received to development the final Travel Plan Restrictions.

How will the new Travel Plan be implemented?

The Travel Plan will be implemented through two methods. The first is through **Travel Plan Restrictions** established in the Forest Supervisor Closure order (see Order No. D3-00-005 and the Travel Plan Map). This order identifies the district travel plan closures and restrictions. The changes associated with this order will be implemented over the next several years. As funding and resources become available, implementation will be initiated in different areas of the district each year. The objective will be to place the highest priority on areas where the greatest level of public use is occurring. Once the different areas on the district are identified and prioritized, the District Ranger will be able to schedule funding and resources to achieve the greatest efficiency.

The Forest Supervisor order permits motorized travel on designated roads and trails only. The order will be published in area newspapers, and signs will be posted on roads in area. Roads and trails identified as being available for motorized use will be placed on a rotating maintenance schedule commensurate with the designated use.

The second means of implementation is through **project decisions** that have been made in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). These decisions address changes in use or development of specific roads or trails where some ground-disturbing activities are anticipated. We are issuing three separate decisions at this time (copies of each are enclosed):

1. Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for Access Management, Roads 240, 205 and 903
2. Categorical Exclusion and Decision Memo for Canfield to Horse Haven Trail System Development
3. Categorical Exclusion and Decision Memo for Nettleton Road 1562

How does the new Travel Plan affect public access?

The Travel Plan identifies suitable routes for public access during the spring, summer and fall use period. Using an existing system of roads and trails, the plan focused on addressing the need for motorized access. The map displays roads and trails that are available for motorized and non-motorized public use.

In response to public comments and forest resource management goals, the district identified roads that will not be maintained for public access. These roads are not shown on the Travel Plan Map. These roads will be managed for limited administrative (official) use as long as there is a need. Administrative use includes access for fire and emergency response, Forest Service project

work, and uses approved by the District Ranger. These uses may include access to private land, timber sales, mining activities, special use permit operations, and gathering of firewood or Christmas trees.

*Note: **Non-motorized** public use is permitted on the roads not shown on the Travel Plan map.*

How will travel restrictions be enforced during the implementation period?

During implementation, the Forest Service will work to educate and inform the public about the changes to motorized use on the district. If a violation is discovered, issuing a citation remains within the discretion of the Law Enforcement Officer.

How will the Travel Plan affect motorized travel on roads?

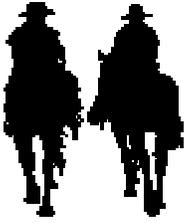


District-wide, there will be approximately 540 miles of road closed by order #D3-00-005. Many of these roads have had barriers installed in the past to discourage or prevent motorized use. Some of these roads were being used for full-sized vehicle access (even though many had been identified in the old Travel Plans as closed to motorized use). Of these roads approximately 38 miles will be changed to, and maintained as, motorized- use trails.

The amount of road maintained to a standard suitable for automobile use will increase over the previous travel plan. Following implementation there will be approximately 1,170 miles of maintained road across the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District. All roads identified in the Travel Plan for public motorized use will be placed on a rotating maintenance schedule based on the use of the road.

Approximately 98 miles of road will be made available to motorized use during the summer months only. This includes roads that may have not been accessible in the past. Nearly all of these roads are in the south-central portions of the district. Due to wildlife habitat needs these roads will be closed during the fall and winter months. Hunting season and winter weather are considered to be the most challenging time of the year to wildlife survival. By allowing motorized use only in the summer months (June, July and August), wildlife will see fewer disturbances during critical time periods. These roads will also provide full- sized vehicle access to areas for berry picking, ORV riding, and other recreational activities that may not have been available in the past.

How will the Travel Plan affect motorized travel on trails?



With implementation of the Travel Plan approximately 167 miles of existing road will be added to the district motorized trail system. Many of these roads are grown in with vegetation or were not available for public motorized use in the past. These will be off-limits to standard size vehicles but available to ATV's and smaller vehicles.

Other routes where motorized use will be permitted include pack (single-track) trails. These are trails that were constructed in the past for foot and horse access. The travel plan permits two wheel-motorized bike use on many of these trails. For example, motorized use will continue to be permitted on the Independence Creek Trail system.

For safety reasons the travel plan prohibits the use of ATV's on pack trails. These trails are not maintained to a standard that ensures the safe operation of ATV's. To provide ATV enthusiasts with trail riding opportunities other than roads, the district has designated two areas to be developed and maintained for this use. The first is a trail system on the west side of the district. It will connect Road 1562A to the intersection of Roads 406 and 1511 via the Huckleberry and Spades Mountain ridgeline. The second is located in the southeast corner of the district. This area includes Trail 16 (St. Joe Divide) and many of the roads and trails that connect into it from the Silver Valley.



How will the Travel Plan affect winter recreation travel?

The Travel Plan was developed to address motorized use during the spring, summer and fall. Snowmobile use on groomed trails or cross-country will not be restricted in any area of the District through implementation of this plan. There will be no reduction in the miles of designated snowmobile routes. Snowmobile use will be managed at current levels and in areas of current use. Lookout Pass Ski area and existing cross-country ski trails will be unaffected.

How will the Travel Plan affect non-motorized travel on trails?

There are only two areas of the district in which motorized trail use will be reduced. In the northeast portion of the district (the eastern portion of Area One), about 44 miles of trail will change to non-motorized use only. This will help maintain the quality of wildlife habitat and provide a semi-primitive non-motorized recreation experience seldom found in the Coeur d'Alene Mountains. Back-packers and horse riders will have a

connected system of trails that allow the opportunity for longer duration trail experiences in a non-motorized setting.

The Fourth of July Cross-Country Ski trails will only be available for non-motorized uses. (In the past, the trails could be used for motorized recreation during the summer months.)

Approximately 34 miles (10 percent) of system trails on the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District are maintained for non-motorized users only. Of that, 17 miles are foot trails that access special sites.

Will the Travel Plan affect other recreation travel?

There will be minor effects to permitted outfitter-guide operations based on existing plans of operation. Access to some drop-off points will be changed, since Snowbird Meadows will no longer be accessible to outfitters by motorized vehicles.

There are over 420 inventoried dispersed sites located on the district. Of this about 15 may be affected during implementation of the Travel Plan. Access or use of these sites may be changed or eliminated during the installation of barriers on administrative use roads or where motorized uses have changed. The recreation value and resource management concerns will be reviewed for each site on a case-by-case basis to determine the best location to place barriers.



Water corridor activities such as boating access, launch ramps, and rafting will be unaffected by the new Travel Plan. Fishing will be largely unaffected across the District. Designated road systems will continue to provide general access to fishing areas.

There are many more roads out there than are shown on the map. What is going to happen to those roads?

Roads closed to motorized public access will continue to be available for administrative (official) use as long as there is a need. The need for retaining these roads as part of the district transportation system will be evaluated on a project-by-project basis. This retains the opportunity to analyze these road systems for more extensive watershed restoration in specific subbasins in the future.

Proposals to decommission (obliterate, pull culverts, or recontour, etc.) a road will be subject to public review and comment under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). These proposals are often part of larger projects, such as watershed restoration activities. In addition, the Forest Service will continue to manage the existing transportation system on an administrative basis.

In the meantime, these roads will be scheduled on a long-term rotation for maintenance (10-15 years).

Will there be changes to the Travel Plan in the future?

Changes are often needed in response to development of new roads or trails, decommissioning of roads, or changes in recreational use. These changes may be needed for

a variety of reasons. These could include new timber sales, natural disasters, or management of threatened, endangered or sensitive species habitat.

For Further Information

Please contact Recreation Staff Officer Don Garringer, Ecosystems Staff Officer Steve Bateman or District Ranger Joe Stringer, at (208) 664-2318 with questions or comments, or if you or your organization would like to meet to discuss the changes in access management under the new Travel Plan.

Using Your New Travel Plan

To begin using your new Travel Plan, you will need two documents:

1. Travel Plan 2001 Map
2. Forest Supervisor's Order No. D3-00-005 (Travel Plan Restrictions)

When using the Travel Plan map, keep the following in mind:

The Travel plan map and Forest Supervisor's Order identify roads and trails that are available to the public for motorized and non-motorized access during the spring, summer and fall.

Roads not shown on the travel plan map are available for Official (Administrative) Use and non-motorized use only.

The Coeur d' Alene River Ranger District groomed snowmobile trail system is not displayed on the travel plan map, or identified in Order No. D3-00-005. The roads officially (administratively) designated for use as snowmobile trails are displayed in the Coeur d' Alene River Ranger District Snowmobile Trail brochure (a separate map).

Under this Travel Plan, use of motorized vehicles on other than designated roads and trails is prohibited. The purpose for this is to discourage and prevent un-authorized development and use of trail systems that do not conform to Forest Service Safety standards.

There are roads on the map that appear to be coded so that part of the road is designated for a specific use while another part of the same road is not. Portions of roads that are not maintained by the Forest Service (i.e. state or county) were not given a use-designation code.

Due to the small scale of the map, roads or trails less than one (1) mile in length may not be visible. If there are no signs on the road, travelers will need to refer to the Forest Supervisor's order to determine if use is permitted.

To determine the designated-use status of roads and trails on the Coeur d' Alene River Ranger District, the following methods are recommended.

To determine the designated use of a road using the map...

Step 1 - Locate the road on the map.

Step 2 - Determine its color code.

Step 3 - Refer to the **LEGEND** in upper right corner of map.

Step 4 - Locate the colored line for "roads" that corresponds to the color used on the map and read the description to the right of the colored line.

To determine the designated use of a trail using the map...

Step 1 - Locate the trail on the map.

Step 2 - Determine its color code.

Step 3 – Refer to the **ON TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES** table locate on the right side of map.

Step 4 – At the left of the table locate the colored line that corresponds to the color code of the trail on the map. At the top of the table locate the desired Trail Symbol (i.e. ATV, 2-wheel; motorized bikes, bicycle, pack animals/horse, or hiker). Starting at the colored line on the left, follow an imaginary line to the right until it intersects an imaginary line from the top of the table that

began at the desired Trail Symbol. In the box where the lines intersect, read the trail use description.

To determine the designated use of a road or trail using the Forest Supervisor's Order...

Step 1 – Locate the road or trail number on the map.

Step 2 – Locate the corresponding road or trail number on the lists attached to the Order. Lists are displayed in numeric order beginning with the smallest numbers first, largest numbers last.

Step 3 – Go to the top of list and read the description of designated use.

If the road or trail you are interested is not on the map, it is not available for motorized travel by the public. Please refer to the Forest Supervisor's Order. Review the lists titled "Coeur d' Alene River Ranger District, Roads Closed to Motorized Travel, (Except for Administrative Use)".

Overview of Changes by Analysis Area

The changes in access management that will occur under this Travel Plan are described below for each of the eight areas analyzed (the attached map displays the general vicinity of the eight areas). For each of the areas, the primary objectives for management of the area and a description of changes that will occur are provided.

Area One: The emphasis in Area One is on the primitive recreation experience and protection of wildlife habitat. Roads 407 and 956 that access Snowbird Meadows will be closed and a portion of these roads used as a trail open to motorbikes. This will enhance and protect the semi-primitive character of Independence Creek and further the objective of retaining semi-primitive recreation experiences within the Independence Creek drainage. It will affect hunters and others that use this road with conventional vehicles and will eliminate "car " camping at Snowbird and two other small dispersed sites along Road 407. On the other hand, there will be enhanced opportunity for hunting in an area less impacted by vehicle travel. Road 407, from Road 436 to the private property boundary, will need to be placed on a special-use permit to allow continued access for the private landowner.

Road 306 will remain open for travel as presently managed and provide continued conventional vehicle access to the dispersed camping opportunities along the road.

Several trails in Area One will be open to non-motorized uses only, including the Coeur d'Alene River Trail 20 and connected Trails 52, 309, and 448; the Halsey Creek Trail 451; Fern Ridge Trail 407; Bigfoot Ridge Trail 700; and the Little Elk Creek Trail 32. Motorized trail use will continue on the western side of Area One and on the Independence Creek Trail system.

Area Two: The emphasis of management in Area Two is on motorized recreation. There will be approximately 14 fewer miles of roads available for motorized use year-round than before, but the amount of trail available for motorized use will increase by about 11 miles. Full-sized vehicle access up Nettleton Gulch on Road 1562 will end at the parking area, as described in the Categorical Exclusion/Decision Memo for Nettleton Gulch Road 1562 (enclosed). This decision also authorized the use ATV's on the closed portion of this road, and stipulated that an ATV path will be built around the gate at the parking area. Also, as described in the Record of Decision for the Douglas Fir Beetle Project, 1999; there is a portion of Road 1562, located in Dry Gulch that will be replaced by road 1593P. Road 1593P will provide motorized (motorcycles and ATV's) access from Fernan Creek to Road 1562. Two-wheel motorized and non-motorized use of the Canfield Mountain Trail System will remain as it is today. Access to Fernan Hill shooting areas and snowmobile parking will be unchanged.

Area Three: Emphasis in Area Three is on motorized recreation. Roads 1550, 1560, and 2346 in the Solitaire Mountain-Horse Heaven-Colt Mountain vicinity are currently closed with a barrier. These will be opened to ATV's as part of the District's management of the transportation system. Additional roads currently inaccessible because of the barrier on Road 1560 will also be opened for ATV use. This will create recreation opportunities and possibly loop routes for ATV's where limited opportunities now exist. This will also contribute to providing a trail system to meet the growing demand for ATV routes in a popular motorized recreation center. Recreators will have the opportunity to explore additional trail possibilities in this area that are offered by the extensive system of old logging roads. Or work with the Forest Service to develop a trail system where practical. It is hoped that developing an ATV trail systems to meet this demand will discourage uncontrolled trail pioneering.

Road 2377 will be closed to motorized use from Road 1511 to Spades Mountain. Roads 625 and 1528 will not be open to motorized use.

As described in the Categorical Exclusion/Decision Memo for the Canfield to Horse Haven Trail System Development, approximately 9.1 miles of new trail will be developed to connect the trailheads of the Huckleberry Mountain trail with Hells Canyon and Nicholas Ridge trails. This

trail (trail 28) will be available for motorcycle and ATV motorized access. There will be no change in the miles of trail identified for non-motorized use only (English Point Trail #80).

Area Four: The emphasis of management in Area Four is protection of wildlife habitat during hunting season. The amount of roads available for motorized use and scheduled for routine maintenance will increase by about 15 miles (these roads may currently be navigable but do not receive regular maintenance). In summer months (June, July and August), approximately 66 miles of additional road will be available for motorized use for sightseeing, berry picking, firewood gathering and other recreational activities, but will be unavailable for motorized use during hunting season. Another 27 miles of roads (which were not available before) will be added to the trails for ATV's and smaller vehicles.

Specific systems of old logging roads will be designated as an ATV trail system. These ATV trails will be available for use during the summer months. The designated ATV trails have been removed north of the West Fork of Steamboat Creek to Road 409A and Road 900 and in the Yellowdog, Downey and North Grizzly Creek drainages to provide a summer big-game security area. Although more roads will be open to motorized use in the summer, they will be closed during hunting season, which will provide better security for big-game.

Within Area Four, a group of trails will be dedicated to ATV and motorcycle trail systems in five areas: Fourth of July Pass and Mason Saddle (accessible from the parking area at Fourth of July Pass); Upper Copper Creek-Curran (accessible on a main road a few miles north of Fourth of July Pass); Bumblebee Peak-Hemlock (accessed from Forest Highway 9 and will serving campsites in the Bumblebee area), West Fork Steamboat (forming a complete loop easily accessed from Black Canyon Saddle on Road 965) and Uranus Peak (serving the Kit Price and Devils Elbow Campgrounds and nearby dispersed camping sites).

There will be no change in the miles of trails identified for non-motorized use only in Area Four (Marie Creek Trail #241, Montford Natural Area Trail #703, and Mullan Tree Trail #936).

Area Five: Emphasis in Area Five is on protection of wildlife habitat and backcountry recreation opportunities, with a combination of both motorized and non-motorized recreation. Cross-country snowmobile use will still occur; however, management of the area will strive to maintain the existing level of snowmobile use to avoid further potential impacts to lynx habitat in the area.

Roads 799, 800 and 948 will be closed to motorized use. Trail 81 will remain motorized from Road 602 to Pond Peak. A selection of road groupings will be designated as ATV routes in four areas: John's Draw (accessed from Shoshone Creek Road 412); Haystack Mountain (accessed from Forest Highway 9 or Shoshone Creek Road 412); Prichard Peak and Avery Saddle (accessed from Forest Highway 9); and Kings Pass-Idaho Gulch (accessed from the community of Murray or from Road 456 in the Beaver Creek drainage).

Collectively these roads, when converted to ATV trails, add approximately 30 miles of motorized trail opportunities in Area Five. Converting these roads to trails will create recreation opportunities and possibly loop routes for ATV's where limited opportunity now exists, providing a trail system to meet the growing demand for ATV routes. ATV users will have the opportunity to explore additional trail possibilities in this area, and work with us to develop the trail system where practical. It is hoped that developing an ATV trail system to meet this demand will discourage uncontrolled trail pioneering.

There will be no change in the miles of trails identified for non-motorized use only in Area Five (Revette Lake Trail #9, Upper Glidden Trail #135, and West Fork Eagle Creek Trail #162).

Area Six: The emphasis in Area Six is on motorized recreation, while minimizing adverse effects to area resources. Road 957 will be added to the designated road system and maintenance schedule. Although Road 930 was on the previous Travel Plan, it was not passable. It has been dropped from the designated road system.

Area Seven: Emphasis in Area Seven is on motorized recreation on designated roads and trails only, to protect wildlife habitat. Cross-country snowmobile use will still occur; however, management of the area will strive to maintain the existing level of snowmobile use to avoid further potential impacts to lynx habitat in the area.

The annual Jeep Jamboree will continue to occur under a special use permit. There will be an additional 17.4 miles of designated road available for motorized use year-round in Area Seven over the current Travel Plan. Three existing ATV trails will be added to the system. One of the trails connects Road 456 to Trail 16 beginning at Red Oak Gulch (Trail #16a). The other two connect Road 2354 to Trail 16 via the ridge to the west of Lake Elsie (Trail #226) and from the Lake Elsie trailhead (Trail #106). These roads are currently open. The existing trail to Lost Lake from the Galena Mine and Road 330 (Trail 115) will also be added to the double-track trail system. This will add approximately 2.8 miles to the ATV trail system. There will be no change in the miles of trail identified for non-motorized use only (West Willow Trail #138 and East Fork Willow Creek Trail #165).

Area Eight: Emphasis in Area Eight is on motorized recreation, except in the Fourth of July Ski Area. Roads 1539, 1540, 1541, 1545 and a portion of Road 543 (from the intersection of Road 439 at the head of Pleasant Creek to the intersection of Road 439 at the head of Turner Creek) will not be open for motorized use. Trails 227 and 257 will be closed to motorized traffic from approximately September 20 to December 3 each year.