

## Key Findings of the Analysis by Issue

The key findings related to the issues identified for analysis are:

### **1. Road maintenance funding appropriated by Congress is not adequate to maintain and sign roads to standard.**

This road analysis clearly shows that annual maintenance funding is inadequate to maintain the current road system on the Forest. Many roads will continue to build up additional deferred maintenance costs and degrade unless increases in road management funding become available.

Condition surveys indicate 86% of maintenance costs can be attributed to the 33 % of system roads on the Forest. The remaining 14% of the maintenance budget is allocated to high priority needs identified annually on a limited set of local roads.

Opportunities to implement management strategies that reduce road maintenance need to be assessed during subforest and project roads analysis. Possible actions include but are not limited to: (1) manage with restricted access and (2) removal of high maintenance cost structures and manage as intermittent storage roads available for future management activities and public access.

Condition surveys indicate the Forest has a \$46,650,000 deferred maintenance backlog. Major deferred maintenance work items include replacement of worn aggregate surface material, bituminous surface treatments, asphalt pavement overlays, replacement of worn and/or undersized culverts, and major repair or replacement of bridges. The deferred maintenance backlog will continue to increase if current funding levels remain constant or decrease more.

### **2. Road access may not be adequate for future management needs.**

Some arterial, collector and local roads are not being maintained to specified standards. In some areas the road system will continue to degrade and this will affect future access to areas served by these roads.

The arterial and collector road system outside of inventoried roadless is nearly complete to adequately manage vegetation resources. A few areas, for example on the Palouse Ranger District, will require additional local roads for vegetation and fire protection purposes. Depending on management allocations from the revision of the Forest plan, future management strategies may require road access for management activities.

Approximately 54 miles of road have been constructed in inventoried roadless areas, as authorized by the current Forest plan, since 1987. This impacted the roadless character of roughly 5650 acres or 0.6 % of the inventoried roadless acreage (972,000 acres) on the Clearwater National Forest. This is not a substantial change to the quantity or quality of recreation opportunities in inventoried roadless areas.

Decommissioning of roads has not caused a substantial change in the quantity or quality of roaded recreation opportunities. The majority of roads decommissioned since 1992 (approximately 500 miles) have been local system or unclassified non-system roads that threaten water quality and fish habitat.

Due to a lack of funds and resources, many roads haven't been maintained regularly. Decreasing maintenance due to funding shortfalls means the intended maintenance standard and desired road condition may not be achieved on many roads. Over time many of these roads have become unusable to passenger car traffic due to growth of trees and brush in the roadbed.

Approximately 55% (531,000 acres) of the Inventoried Roadless Areas on the Forest are allocated in the current Forest plan to management areas that allow road construction and reconstruction. Much of the suitable timber outside of inventoried roadless areas has been roaded and is under some form of vegetation management. There are still some areas outside of inventoried roadless areas that need roads for vegetation (timber, fuels reduction, prescribed fire) management. Some local publics do not support construction of these roads.

### **3. Management of the Forest road system can affect cultural and traditional uses (such as plant gathering, access to traditional & cultural sites) and American Indian treaty rights.**

The Nez Perce, Coeur D'Alene, and Salish-Kootenai tribes are all historic users of the lands that comprise the Clearwater National Forest. Most of the Clearwater National Forest is ceded territory of the Nez Perce Tribe, who retain strong traditional cultural ties to these lands. This tribe also retains rights to hunt, gather, and fish at usual and accustomed places on these ceded lands through the Treaty of 1855. Northern portions of the Palouse and North Fork districts are within the ceded territory of the Coeur D'Alene Tribe who also maintain traditional ties to these lands.

These tribes have several locations that are significant for traditional gathering, fishing, hunting, and religious purposes. Several locations on the Forest are held to be sacred by members of these tribes. Tribal members are active users of these traditional areas.

Maintaining access for traditional and cultural uses by American Indians is a very important function of the Forest road system. It is also important to evaluate the

need to decommission some roads in order to protect watersheds, fish habitat and fish populations for future use by American Indians. The Nez Perce, Coeur D'Alene and Salish-Kootenai tribes are routinely consulted on Forest and project analyses, and will be consulted on all road proposals on the Forest.

**4. Some roads are causing adverse impacts to Forest resources and should be prioritized for evaluation at the subforest level.**

Subforest watershed analysis will include an analysis of classified and unclassified roads. Potential projects to address adverse impacts from existing roads will be identified. This could include decommissioning, seasonal closures, or potential low risk locations for additional roads. Decisions that change public access and existing road systems will include public involvement to ensure that local concerns are evaluated and considered prior to final decisions.

## **Administrative Record**

The analysis file and records for this project are located at the Clearwater National Forest Supervisor's Office in Orofino, Idaho. Copies of the report can be requested by contacting the Clearwater National Forest at 208-476-4541. It is also available on the Clearwater National Forest website at [www.fs.fed.us/r1/clearwater](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/clearwater).

## **References**

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