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**APPENDIX F**  
**ROUTE EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**



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# APPENDIX F

## ROUTE EVALUATION AND PLANNING METHODOLOGY

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### **F.1 ROUTE EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

The evaluation of routes for the Lower Sonoran Field Office is the sum of route and resource inventories, the BLM specialists' input, and the public's input. The process of developing recommended route designations is part of a larger effort to use the best management techniques in an ever-changing environment. The action of designating specific routes as open, closed or limited is an implementation level action which tiers from the RMP level decisions which would include OHV Area Allocations, which determine how travel is to be administered on an area-wide basis. As the population of Arizona grows, trends must be identified and anticipated in order to best achieve the goals of successful land management and the protection of sensitive resources. Designating and managing a route system is a key component of those goals.

#### **F.1.1 ROUTE INVENTORY**

The roads, primitive roads and trails in the field office area were mapped using GPS. Areas were systematically reviewed by an inventory team comprised of government employees or contract employees. The team was tasked with driving each route and recording its location, condition and uses. Public route submissions received by BLM were given to the inventory team to objectively verify and record to BLM standards using high quality GPS units meeting national mapping standards. The route inventory was displayed at public scoping meetings. All areas were complete at the time of public scoping with exception of the Gila Bend Mountains and outlying parcels east of Phoenix.

#### **F.1.2 ROUTE EVALUATION**

Evaluating routes on the merits of their uses, values, and impacts is a difficult task. The method used by Lower Sonoran Field Office for evaluating each route is the Route Evaluation Process. Using the route inventory collected by BLM, geographic areas were reviewed by applying the Route Evaluation Process. This methodology systematically guides the evaluator through a series of questions that helps to assess the relationship of routes to sensitive resources and as well as to commercial and public access needs, both individually route by route, as well as collectively or cumulatively as a route network. Background data from state and federal agency inventories and Agency resource specialists, as well as the public, provides the basis for evaluation. In accordance with 43 CFR 8342.1, this methodology of evaluating and making recommended route designations considers and addresses as part of its evaluation, the means by which to minimize potential and known impacts of motorized use to a number of sensitive resources including but not limited to threatened, endangered and sensitive species, and their habitat, as well as cultural and historic resources, wilderness characteristics, various other users and adjoining land uses. These potential and known impacts are jointly evaluated in the context of providing reasonable

commercial and recreational public access as provided for and/or required by several State and Federal acts. Each route is systematically evaluated by taking into account the best information available, as well as any other pertinent guidance (e.g. Monument and RMP objectives).

Ultimately, recommended route designations are recorded (Open, Closed, or Limited) to create a recommended route network.

As specified in 43 CFR 8342.1, four designation criteria are considered through the identification of standardized or specific mitigations at the time of evaluation. These criteria, listed as subparts a-d, direct BLM to:

- a. Minimize damage of off-road vehicles on sensitive resources such as soil, watershed, vegetation and air.
- b. Minimize disruption of wildlife habitats including threatened and endangered species.
- c. Minimize conflicts between off-road vehicle use and other recreational activities.
- d. Not locate off-road vehicle use areas and trails in designated wilderness or primitive areas.
- e. Locate trails in natural areas only if the use will not adversely affect the values for which these areas were established.

When the questions in the evaluation tree are answered by taking into account the best information available and RMP objectives, a route designation code is established and recorded. Routes are determined to be Open, Closed or Limited.

As the evaluation/designation process progresses, specific reasoning on each recommended route designation is documented. Additional management requirements (e.g. maintenance, mitigation, adaptive management monitoring) are incorporated into the recommended route designations and ultimately become a part of implementing the Travel Management Plan. Route designations are considered implementation decisions, which is in contrast to land use decisions (e.g. RMP decisions) and are therefore appealable.

The process for reviewing inventoried routes, proposing new routes, both motorized and non-motorized, and adding routes to the route inventory for consideration in the route designation process, is outlined below in six steps. Public participation will be requested during the scoping phase of the route designation process. Comments will be accepted on the draft plan.

All routes, inventoried or proposed will be integrated and evaluated as follows:

- I. Locations submitted by the public will be mapped or located using accepted global positioning system devices and presented to the BLM office for consideration as both a gps file and hardcopy map. Locations of route proposals off existing motorized routes must be mapped by hiking or horseback to avoid cross country travel. The route proposal submitted to BLM will include a description of the route including its width, its proposed use(s) and a rationale for its need.

2. The route location will be analyzed for potential conflicts such as, but not limited to: wildlife habitats, cultural resources, visual resources, other recreation uses, mining claims or leases, grazing facilities, rights-of-way, and proximity to other jurisdictions such as private land. A structured process such as the one described above will be used to evaluate and document the known or foreseeable route conditions.
3. If the route has few conflicts identified during analysis, an on-the-ground review may be initiated. At this stage, the proposed route must be flagged and staked on the ground by the public for BLM review. If a route has irresolvable conflicts, it may be removed from further consideration.
4. Pending favorable on-the-ground review, a conflict assessment would lead to possible mitigation actions or alternative locations or design.
5. An environmental assessment (EA) would be prepared to determine the environmental effects of the proposal on the proposed route system and any alternatives and mitigation suggested. In the case of new route proposals brought forth during the initial route designation period, all routes will be analyzed together in the same EA.
6. A decision identifying the route system and mitigations will be issued by the authorized officer based on the Land Use Plan compliance, resource objectives and environmental impacts.

To assist the resource specialists in analyzing impacts related to designating route systems within the SDNM, the Monument was divided into 18 site specific sample areas. These sample areas were identified by the BLM travel specialist's as areas where there are known travel issues and public use concerns. Each resource specialist selected sample areas representative of the objects managed by their program and analyzed impacts from the designation of individual routes as opened, closed, and limited within selected sample areas. A more detailed description of each of these site specific sample areas is displayed below (refer to **Map 4-I**, SDNM Analysis Area in **Chapter 4**, Environment Consequences for area locations).

## **F.2 CHANGES TO ROUTE DESIGNATIONS**

Routes may be added to or deleted from the designated route network to address changing conditions and demands. The process for requesting the addition or deletion of routes from the designated route network, motorized or non-motorized, will include a structured analysis approach combined with the appropriate level of NEPA.

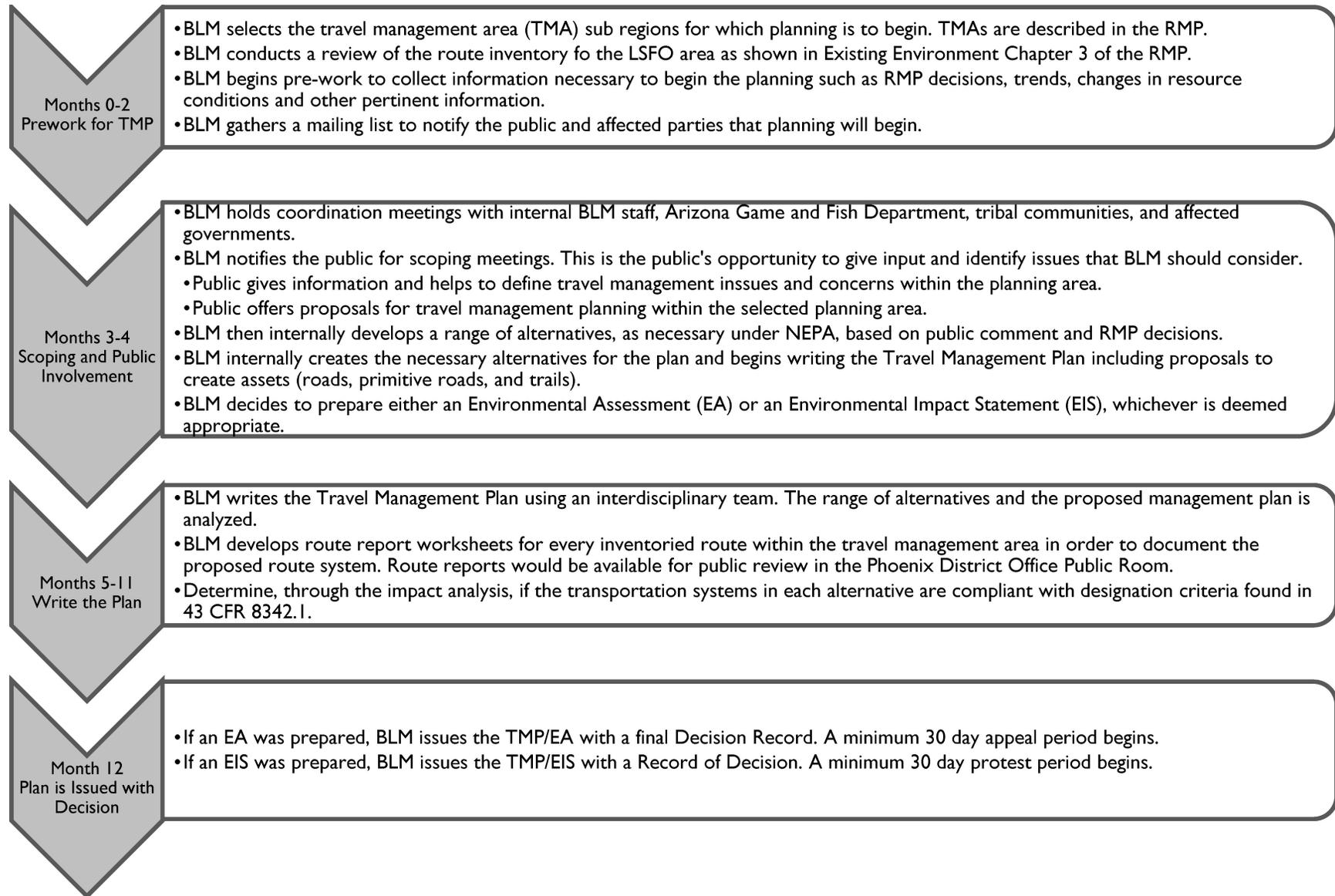
All requests will be processed when the following process is followed:

- I. Route locations will be mapped or located using accepted Global Positioning System (GPS) devices and presented to BLM for consideration. Locations for new route proposals that are off of designated motorized routes must be located and mapped on foot. No motorized cross-country travel is permitted.

2. The route proposal submitted to BLM will include a description of the route changes requested. For new routes, this would include the proposed width, proposed use(s) and a rationale for its need. For deletions or downgrading of designated routes, a well-documented rationale is required.
3. The route location will be staked and flagged by the proponent for on-the-ground review by BLM resource specialists.
4. The proposal will be quickly reviewed for potential conflicts such as, but not limited to, Resource Management Plan compliance, wildlife habitats, cultural resources, visual resources, other recreation uses, mining claims or leases, grazing use, ROWs and proximity to other jurisdictions such as private land. A structured process will be used to evaluate and document the review of the proposed action.
5. BLM will review the request for change and make a decision to either deny the request or move the request forward into the annual work plan. A plan for external funding will be discussed with the proponent as necessary.

Pending BLM's agreement to move the request forward:

1. A conflict and needs assessment may lead to alternatives including, but not limited to, development of mitigation actions or alternative locations or designs proposed by BLM.
2. An EA or possibly an EIS would be conducted.
3. A decision will be issued by the authorized officer. The Travel Management Plan will be updated according to the decision record.



**Figure F-1.** LSFO Route Designation Process Flow Chart (1 year process)

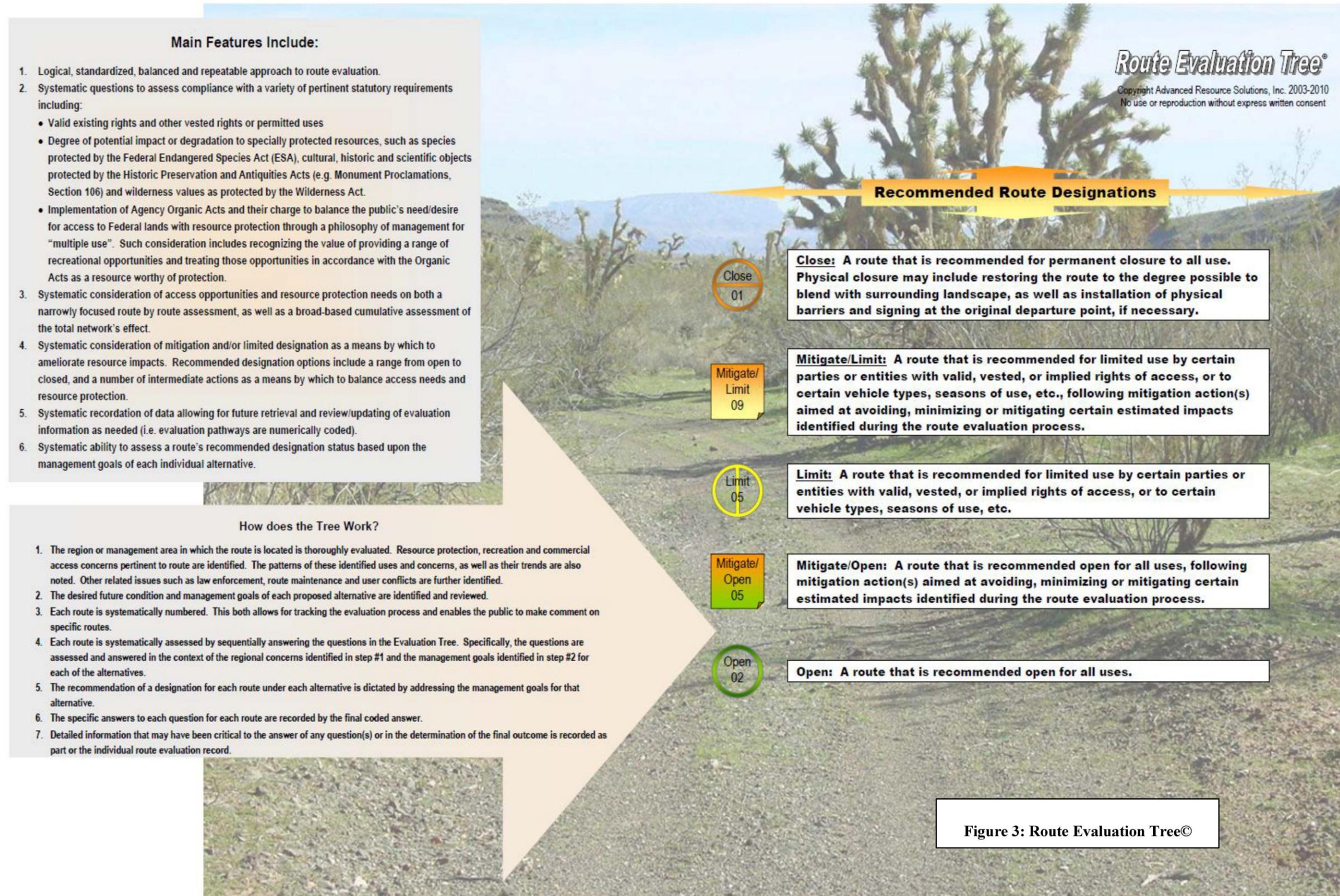


Figure 3: Route Evaluation Tree©

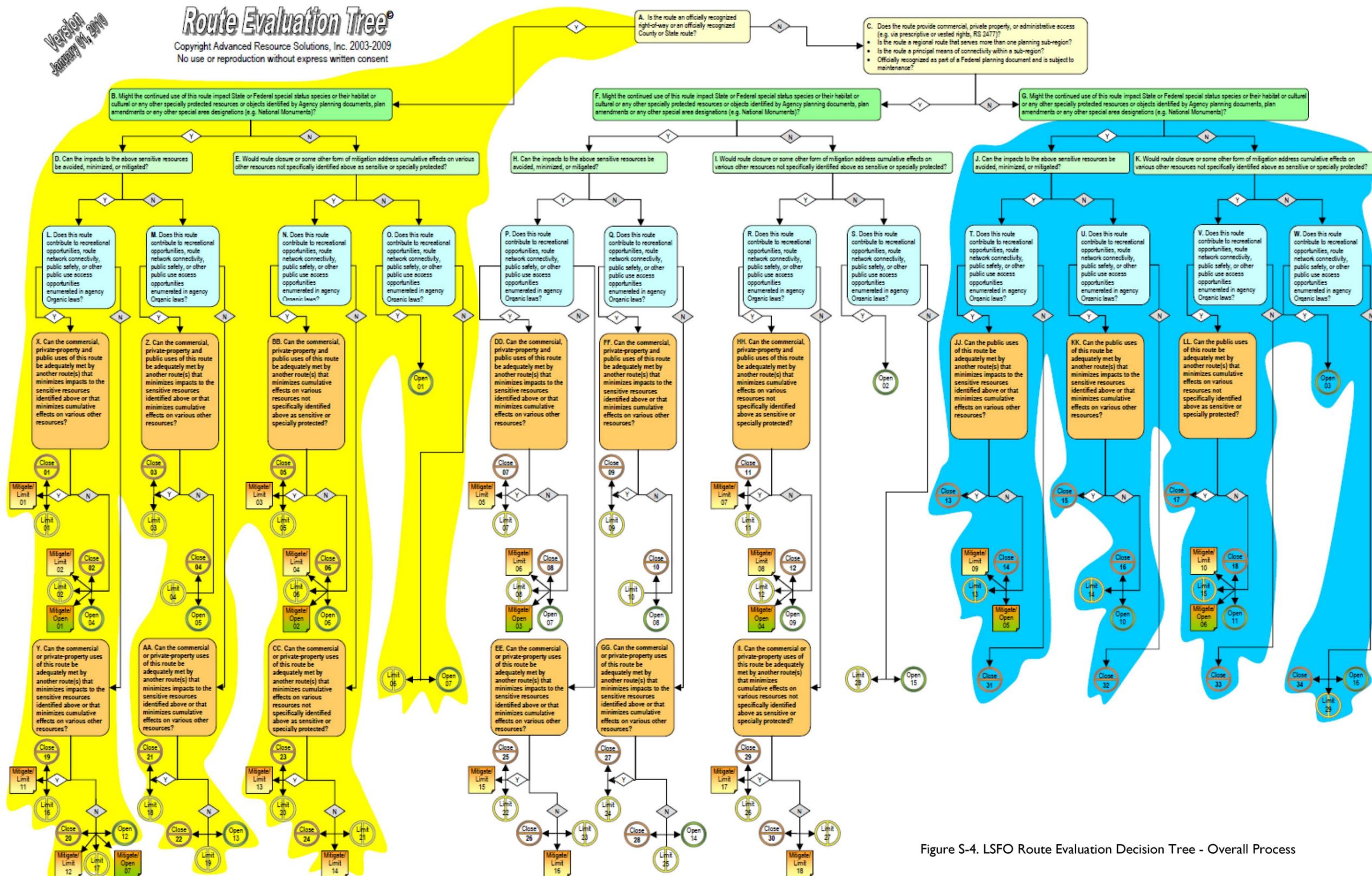


Figure S-4. LSF0 Route Evaluation Decision Tree - Overall Process