

SCOPING/INFORMATION PACKAGE
NORTH ZONE TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN
DOI-BLM-ID-C020-2014-0003-EA
COTTONWOOD FIELD OFFICE

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to complete the North Zone travel management plan (TMP) in accordance with Cottonwood Field Office Resource Management Plan, 2009 (RMP). The lands are located in Clearwater, Idaho, Nez Perce and Lewis counties on BLM managed lands (see the Zone Index Map). The TMP will identify a proposed system of roads, primitive roads and trails that best meets the full range of public, resource management, and administrative access needs while protecting resources found in the planning area. Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences.

The purpose of this report is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments to assist with the NEPA review of the proposal. Analysis of the proposal is ongoing, and will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA). Comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action and to identify alternatives to the proposed action that meet the purpose of and need for the project.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will also use this public participation opportunity under the NEPA to assist the agency in satisfying the public involvement requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) (16 U.S.C. 470(f)) pursuant to 36 CFR 800.2(d)(3). The information about historic and cultural resources within the area potentially affected by the proposed action will assist the BLM in identifying and evaluating impacts to such resources in the context of both NEPA and Section 106 of the NHPA.

The BLM will consult with Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis in accordance with Executive Order 13175 and other policies. Tribal concerns, including impacts on Indian trust assets and potential impacts to cultural resources, will be given due consideration. Federal, State, and local agencies, along with tribes and other stakeholders that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action that the BLM is evaluating, are invited to participate in the scoping process and, if eligible, may request or be requested by the BLM to participate in the development of the environmental analysis as a cooperating agency.

Purpose and Need for Action

Federal agencies are directed to manage motorized vehicle use on public lands through Executive Order 11644 and Executive Order 11989 (see Section 1.5), which have been incorporated into the regulations under 43 CFR 8342.1. A TMP is a comprehensive plan for future management of the route network for all public land access needs. Access needs are identified by the BLM, other agencies, authorized users (hunters, ranchers, mineral site users, commercial recreation users, etc.), local communities, and members of the public and are evaluated in conjunction with the BLM's legal mandate to protect natural and cultural resources. This travel network is therefore needed to provide a well-defined, properly

documented/authorized, and environmentally sound travel network for sufficient access and transportation on BLM-administered public land with opportunities for recreation while reducing conflicts between different users, as well as protecting sensitive and important resources (such as special status species, significant cultural resources, soils, etc.).

Existing Condition

A preliminary travel network encompassing the 130,480 acres CFO BLM managed lands, based upon existing known routes, was identified and designated in the Cottonwood RMP (BLM 2009). Route inventories identify all known existing transportation-related linear features, including potential roads, primitive roads, trails, and travel-associated linear disturbances within each unit. An inventory of the roads and trails in the planning area was completed in the fall of 2012 using GPS/GIS technology, aerial photos, and historic information combined with on-the-ground field verification and validation identified connectivity issues, undesignated routes and other incomplete data. Due to these identified data issues the CFO will be reevaluating its route network with new updated route information and developing a Travel Management Plan and associated NEPA documentation to reflect this new work.

Although the CFO does not have a large planning area in terms of total acreage administered by the BLM, 136,000 acres, that acreage is spread out across a large geographical and social area. To create manageable landscape units, CFO has divided the areas into units based on the known location of the user base, the complexity of the resource issues, the stability of land ownership and resource planning issues, and the location of cities and towns that form gateways to specific landscapes.

There are 6 units within the CFO (see Zone and Unit Index Maps): Clearwater, Craig Mountain, Joseph Plains, Lower Salmon, Lower Salmon (South), Little Salmon and Elk City. These six units have been divided into two Travel Management Zones the first of which is the North Zone. The North Zone consists of Clearwater, Craig Mountain and Joseph Plains units. The Joseph Plains unit ends just south of Slate Creek.

The North Zone Quad maps represent all routes known to exist as of December 2013 within the Clearwater, Craig Mountain and Joseph Plains Units. For the purposes of the route inventory, roads, trails and vehicle ways will be referred to as routes. The inventory map represents the following route types:

- **State or Federal Highway**: A road *maintained* by the state, including nationally-numbered highways and un-numbered state highways.
- **Linear Disturbance**: Human-made linear features that are not part of the BLM's transportation system created solely by the passage of vehicles which has not been improved and/or maintained by mechanical means to ensure relatively regular and continuous use.
- **Primitive**: A linear route managed for use by four-wheel drive or high-clearance vehicles. These routes do not customarily meet any BLM road design standards. Unless specifically prohibited, primitive roads can also include other uses such as hiking, biking, and horseback riding.
- **Railroad**: active railroad or unused route with no or partial tracks present.

- **Road:** A linear route declared a road by the owner, managed for use by low-clearance vehicles having four or more wheels, and maintained for regular and continuous use.
- **Trail:** A linear route managed for human-powered, stock, or off-road vehicle forms of transportation or for historical or heritage values. Trails are not generally managed for use by four-wheel drive or high-clearance vehicles.
- **Unknown:** An route that has not been identified by type by the resource staff.
- **Exclusive Easements:** The easement granted for use of a road by the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, including public access to lands owned, administered, or controlled by the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
- **Inside Idaho:** GIS layer provide by the counties to Idaho Parks and Recreation which identifies routes as open to the public.

Proposed Action

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to complete a travel management plan (TMP) in accordance with Cottonwood Field Office Resource Management Plan, 2009 (RMP). The purpose of the proposed transportation network for the North Zone of the Cottonwood Field Office, is to develop a defined travel management network of designated routes within the Clearwater, Craig Mountain and Joseph Plains units. Through the Public Scoping Open House process, the public will have the opportunity to review and comment on the accuracy of the inventoried route in addition to commenting on inventoried routes in terms of several design criteria elements: type of route (spur, loop, two-track, connector); access needs; current uses, administrative users (range, timber, Fish and Game, Tribe, other); type of use: motorized (ATV, OHV, motorcycle, vehicle), non-motorized (horse, bike, hiking, other) and special resources affected (wildlife, riparian, cultural resources).

Preliminary Issues

The BLM identified preliminary issues for this assessment by considering the resources that could be affected by implementation of the proposed action. A summary of the preliminary issues and the rationale for analysis are given below. These issues will be refined based on public comments and may be addressed through the design criteria as part of the Evaluation Tree Process that will be one of the tools used to evaluate individual routes. The draft design criteria will be available at <http://blm.gov/jqld> prior to the public meetings.

- **ACEC/RNA-** Use of roads, primitive roads, and trails within or adjacent to Craig Mountain, Lower Lolo Creek, Upper Lolo Creek, Skookumchuck, Wapshilla Ridge, Long Gulch, Lucile Caves ACECS or RNA could potentially adversely impact the resource values of these specially designated areas.
- **Air Quality:** Vehicular travel on unpaved roads creates fugitive dust, with the amount of fugitive dust created depending on the type of soil, the amount of moisture in the soil, the amount of wind and humidity, and vehicle speed.
- **Cultural Resources:** Disturbances to, and management of, cultural resources are affected by access and route construction/maintenance. Any actions as a result of the proposed action could require additional cultural resource inventory, evaluation, and monitoring on a case-by-case basis. Intentional and unintentional disturbances to cultural resources are due to surface and subsurface impacts through the

proliferation of routes, route maintenance, vehicular traffic, the potential for increased concentration of use, erosion, illegal collecting, looting, and vandalism. Appropriately planned and managed access allows for the presence of law enforcement, cultural resource personnel, site stewards and researchers to assist in protecting, managing, monitoring and researching cultural resources. Historic trails include Nez Perce and Lewis and Clark National Historic Trails.

- **Lands and Realty:** Travel planning requires the determination of valid existing or the need for Rights-of-Way or Easements in addition to determining the location of trespass issues.
- **Recreation:** A wide variety of recreation activities take place within the Clearwater, Craig Mountain and Joseph Plains units. The primary activities include off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, hunting, hiking, camping, harvesting, target shooting, and fishing. These activities require the use of roads, primitive roads, and trails.
- **Special Status Species: Existence and use of** roads may affect special status species (both plants and animals) by fragmenting habitat; reducing available habitat for breeding and foraging activities; causing injury to individual plants from crushing or removal and loss or modification of habitat; and increasing opportunities for vehicle collisions and a variety of other disturbances that change wildlife movement and habitat use. These species include McFarlanes Four-o'clock, Spaulding Catchfly, Chinook, Bullhead.
- **Soils:** Motorized use of unsurfaced and poorly constructed routes could result in soil compaction, creation of new flow paths and channels, and increased runoff.
- **Vegetation:** Disturbance to vegetation could occur during route realignment or construction, including the potential loss of shrubs, grasses, and forbs. Disturbance to vegetation also occurs indirectly by dust accumulation immediately adjacent to roads. Noxious weeds and invasive species may also be spread by vehicular travel along roads.
- **Wetlands/ Riparian Zones:** Impacts to riparian resources, including reduced biological and hydrological function, could occur from vehicles traveling on routes within riparian areas. Closure and rehabilitation of routes could also affect riparian resources in both the short-term (from the rehabilitation process) and long-term as vegetation becomes reestablished.
- **Wilderness Study Area-** Snowhole Rapid Wilderness Study Area is within the Craig Mountain unit.
- **Wildlife:** Wildlife species, including big game and migratory birds, could be impacted by roads in a variety of ways including habitat alteration, behavioral changes, and disturbance from vehicles.
- **Wildlife Management Area-**The Craig Mountain unit is within the Craig Mountain Wildlife Management Area.
- **Wilderness Characteristics:** Motorized vehicle use within areas managed to maintain wilderness characteristics could affect the wilderness characteristics of naturalness, solitude, and opportunities for primitive types of recreation.

Preliminary Alternative Development

Individual route evaluations and route designation alternatives will be completed by the BLM utilizing comments from the Open Houses, previous RMP and EA/EIS route decisions and Advance Resource Solutions (ARS) Evaluation Tree Process. The public will then have the opportunity to comment on the

preliminary route designation alternatives in the spring of 2015 although this date is staff and funding dependant.

Public Input Needed

Only routes on BLM-administered lands will be evaluated and designated. The BLM would like to verify our route inventory, and identify access needs, current uses, administrative users (range, timber, mining, agency) and types of use: motorized (ATV, OHV, motorcycle, etc.), or non-motorized (horse, bike, hiking, other). The BLM would also like to identify special resources affected such as wildlife, riparian, cultural resources that have not been captured in the issues above.

If you are aware of a route that accesses or crosses BLM land, but is missing from the maps, submit the route information by:

- Drawing the route on one of the maps during the public meetings and labeling it with your name and the date.
- Submitting your own map to the BLM during the public meetings, via email, or postal mail (see below).
- Submitting Google Earth files in KML format (email preferred).
- Submitting GIS data in ESRI shapefile format (email preferred). Please include projection information with your GIS data.

If you have additional information that might affect a potential route designation, please fill out the Public Comment Form (available at public meetings or on the project website: <http://blm.gov/jqld>) or include this information with your comments along with the specific route numbers (black 5-digit numbers located on unit quad maps).

We are also asking for detailed comments on potential alternatives for route designations. Please use the online comment form and include the unique route numbers with these types of specific comments.

Comments made on this proposal will be most helpful if they are received by **March 14, 2014** and are directly relevant to the proposal and project area. The BLM will not reject public feedback outside established public involvement timeframes; however, these comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions, proposal, design, or analysis presented in the EA. Please use the Comment Form on the Project Website (<http://blm.gov/jqld>) and send your comments to:

Email: blm_id_nztravelmgmtplan@blm.gov

Postal Mail: BLM Cottonwood Field Office
ATTN: North Zone TMP
1 Butte Drive
Cottonwood, Idaho 83522

Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. Issues that are outside the scope of the proposal will not be addressed at this planning level.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The primary contact for questions and comments for this analysis is Judy Culver, Outdoor Recreation Planner, 1 Butte Drive, Cottonwood, Idaho 83522 or at (208) 962-3796.