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Bureau of Land Management

Steese Travel Management Area

Approved Travel Management Plan

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Eastern Interior

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It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CTTM	Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management
DFC	Desired Future Condition
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIFO	Eastern Interior Field Office
EO	Executive Order
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
GPS	Global Positioning System
IDT	Interdisciplinary Team
IMARS	Incident Management Analysis and Reporting System
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
OHV	Off-highway Vehicle
PRMP	Proposed Resource Management Plan
ROW	Right-of-Way
R.S.	Revised Statute
TMA	Travel Management Area
TMP	Travel Management Plan

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Eastern Interior Field Office (EIFO) Steese National Conservation Area (NCA) Travel Management Area (TMA) Travel Management Plan (TMP) has been prepared considering extensive public and agency input. The intent of the TMP is to establish a comprehensive travel network, meeting both current and future access needs to the public lands in this area while minimizing effects on sensitive resources. The TMP identifies a system of roads, primitive roads, and trails, and the terms for their use and maintenance. Management decisions have also been made for cross-country travel within the TMA. This travel network is different for summer and winter use. The TMP outlines the travel network to be developed for recreational use through creation of new routes and closure or limitation (to only a certain type of use, a certain type of vehicle, or based on season) of use of other routes. The travel network identified in the TMP is comprised of both motorized and non-motorized, summer and winter routes. The Travel and Transportation Handbook (BLM 2012a) provides definitions for route and use type that are provided in Chapter 2.

Federal agencies are directed to manage motorized vehicle use on public lands through Executive Orders (EO) 11644 and 11989, which have been incorporated into the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) under 43 CFR 8342.1. E-bikes are managed with consideration to Secretarial Order (SO) 3376 and are discussed in more detail in Section 2.4.8. The Steese Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/Approved RMP) (BLM 2016a) provides management guidance for the BLM-administered land located within the TMA. These land use planning decisions must be considered in any travel management planning decisions.

1.1 Overview of the TMA

The Steese Travel Management Area (TMA) is located north of Fairbanks, Alaska. It is situated both north and south of the Steese Highway. The TMA is adjacent to the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve, the White Mountains National Recreation Area, and State lands. The Steese NCA is a component of the BLM's National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). The mission of the NLCS is to conserve, protect and restore nationally significant landscapes recognized for their outstanding cultural, ecological and scientific values.

The Steese Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/Approved RMP) (BLM 2016a) provides management guidance for the 1,214,327 acres of BLM-administered land located within the TMA under the Interim Travel Management Plan. These land use planning decisions must be considered in the travel management planning process. Three area boundaries, shown on Figure 1 Overview Map were considered in defining the TMA.

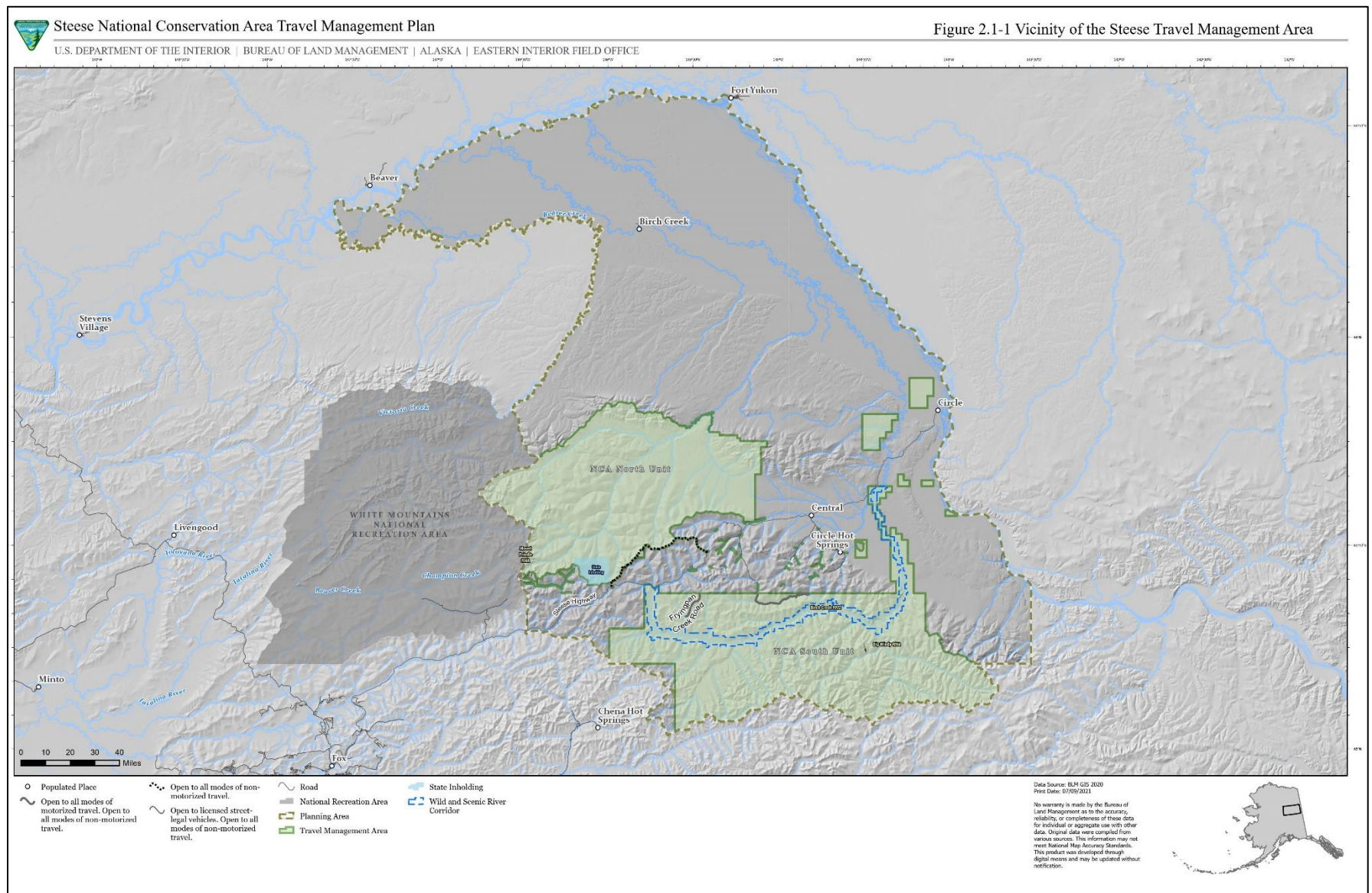
- **Planning Area:** The Planning Area includes the Steese NCA and surrounding BLM-administered lands, as well as lands managed by Bureau of Indian Affairs, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and State and private interests (4,200,664 acres).

- Steese NCA: The Steese NCA is comprised of lands within the NCA only, including some State land, as described in the ROD/Approved RMP (2016) (1,213,937 acres).
- Steese TMA: The Steese TMA is comprised of lands within the Steese NCA plus the BLM-administered lands within the Planning Area (1,214,327 acres in the Steese RMP (2016) Interim Travel Management Plan; 1,273,166 acres in the Action Alternatives in this EA).

The TMA was delineated as the travel management planning unit for this EA and Travel Management Plan (TMP). Within the TMA, BLM limits OHV use by weight, width, seasonal closure, and/or to existing routes in the EIFO, as described in the Steese ROD/Approved RMP (BLM 2016a).

Special values in the Steese NCA include the Birch Creek WSR, caribou calving grounds and home range, and Dall sheep habitat. While various land uses are allowed in the NCA, the area is managed so that scenic, scientific, cultural, and other resources are protected. The Steese Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) encompasses the NCA and additional areas around Birch Creek WSR, and the Pinnell Trail. BLM uses the SRMA terminology to assign recreation management prescriptions for recreation management zones (RMZs) within the SRMA. The Birch Creek WSR was designated by ANILCA §603. Management objectives for the Birch Creek WSR include: protecting valid existing rights and future rights granted pursuant to appropriate Federal and State laws; preserving the river and its immediate environment in a natural, primitive condition; preserving its free-flowing condition; protecting water quality; providing a high quality primitive recreational opportunity; providing opportunities for interpretive, scientific, educational, and wildlands oriented uses; assuring protection of historic and ecological values; and maintaining and improving fish and wildlife habitats (BLM 2016a). Birch Creek WSR starts and ends outside the Steese NCA. It is a separate NLCS unit and is managed according to the WSR Act with limits to access and transportation due to classification as a “Wild” WSR.

Figure 1. Overview Map



1.2 Travel Management Zones

BLM has identified five Travel Management Zones (TMZs) that describe management decisions for summer use within the TMA. The following TMZs are addressed in this EA and are described in more detail in Section 2.1.1 of the EA.

TMZ 1

Summer: OHV Closed (i.e., no summer cross-country or managed routes).

Winter: OHV cross-country travel is allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 50 inches in width. All other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present.

TMZ 2

Summer: OHV use is limited to managed routes (no cross-country travel for any OHV).

Winter: OHV cross-country travel is allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 50 inches in width. All other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present.

TMZ 3

Summer: OHV cross-country travel is allowed for OHVs 1,000 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 50 inches in width (ATV or less). In summer, all other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present.

Winter: OHV cross-country travel is allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 50 inches in width. All other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present.

TMZ 4

Summer: Cross-country travel is allowed for OHVs 1,500 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 64 inches in width (UTV or less). This TMZ applies to areas outside the Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA).

Winter: OHV cross-country travel is allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 50 inches in width. All other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present.

TMZ 5

Summer: RNAs are closed to summer OHV use. OHV cross-country travel permitted for Federally qualified subsistence access (Alternative D only).

Winter: OHV cross country travel allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 50 inches in width. Snow depth must be at least 12 inches (Alternative C). No travel by snowmobiles (Alternatives B, C and D) over exposed soil and/or vegetation within RNAs.

1.3 Areas of Special Emphasis

The TMA includes the 27-mile-long Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail, Birch Creek Wild and Scenic River (WSR) corridor, Mount Prindle and Big Windy Hot Springs Research Natural Areas (RNAs), and crucial caribou and Dall sheep habitat

1.4 Background of Travel and Transportation Management

In the 1980s, in response to Presidential Executive Orders EO 11644 and EO 11989, the BLM began to address public concerns regarding the proliferation of unplanned roads and trails and their impact on public land resources and uses. As a result, all public lands are designated as either open, limited, or closed to OHV use in accordance with 43 CFR 8342.1.

National BLM policy requires State and Field Offices to develop Travel and Transportation Management Plans using a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to integrating travel and transportation management with land use planning and resource management programs. The process is called Travel and Transportation Management or Comprehensive Travel and Transportation Management (CTTM); see BLM Handbook 8342, Travel and Transportation Handbook (BLM 2012a) and BLM Manual 1626, Travel and Transportation Management Manual (BLM 2016b). This planning process addresses all resource values and uses (recreational, traditional, commercial, authorized, and other); and includes all modes of access (e.g., motorized, non-motorized, and mechanized) and conditions of travel on public lands.

CTTM goals are to:

- Provide and improve sustainable access for public needs and experiences;
- Protect natural and cultural resources and settings;
- Promote the safety of public land users; and
- Minimize conflicts among the various users of public lands.

2.0 TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS

2.1 Route Inventory Process

The EIFO used the 2018 version of the ground transportation linear feature (GTLF) database as the baseline inventory of the travel network in the TMA. The GTLF geospatial database is the comprehensive baseline inventory of all transportation related routes, both motorized and non-motorized, that exist on BLM-managed lands (BLM 2012a). This was the best available data provided by the BLM at the time of the evaluation. The GTLF database was analyzed and refined with input from the Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) and public comment. Additionally, select routes were inventoried as part of a 2019 cultural resources survey, which were incorporated into the evaluated route network.

2.2 Route Evaluation Process

The route evaluation process was customized for the TMA to ensure its relevance to local conditions, uses, and management. A comprehensive approach was used to evaluate both resource uses and resource concerns within the TMA. During the route evaluation process, each existing route segment was considered for management as OHV open, OHV limited (to only a certain type of user, a certain type of vehicle, or seasonally), or OHV closed based on 43 CFR 8342.1 and the evaluation criteria for the TMA. Route management decisions also specify the route type, mode of transportation, and management objective. The route evaluation process was based on direction from the BLM National standards related to travel and transportation management, the EIFO Proposed RMP/FEIS, the Steese ROD/Approved RMP, ID Team direction, and public input.

The CFR, under 43 CFR 8342.1, states that all route designations shall be based on the protection of the resources of the public lands; the promotion of the safety of all users of public lands; the minimization of conflicts among various uses of public lands; and in accordance with the following criteria:

- Areas and trails shall be located to minimize damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, air, or other resources of the public lands, and to prevent impairment of wilderness suitability.
- Areas and trails shall be located to minimize harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitats. Special attention will be given to protect endangered or threatened species and their habitats.
- Areas and trails shall be located to minimize conflicts between OHV use and other existing or proposed recreational uses of the same or neighboring public lands and to ensure the compatibility of such uses with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors.
- Areas and trails shall not be located in officially designated wilderness areas or primitive areas. Areas and trails shall be located in natural areas only if the Authorized Officer determines that OHV use in such locations will not adversely affect their natural, aesthetic, scenic, or other values for which such areas were established.

3.0 TRAVEL MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

3.1 Route Management Decisions

The plan purpose and conformance with national goals, regulations and policies, as well as desired future conditions and the process for route management decisions are presented in the EA and incorporated by reference into this TMP.

Route network alternatives were considered in detail in the EA and supplemental analysis to consider weight limitations of up to 1,500 pounds for Alternatives B and D. Tables 2.11-1 through 2.11-5 in Appendix D of the EA and in section 2.2.4 of the supplemental analysis

present a comparison of the proposed route and OHV cross-country area management for each alternative, including summer and winter use seasons, for existing routes and proposed new routes within the Steese Travel Management Area. Route and cross-country area management are presented for each TMZ in Tables 2.11-6 through 2.11-15 and section 2.2.4 of the supplemental analysis.

Travel management decisions in the Approved Travel Management Plan for summer and winter seasons are presented in Table 1, below. Winter management is effective October 15 to April 30 each year unless otherwise approved by the Authorized Officer.

Decisions made in the Eastern Interior RMP prohibit domestic sheep, goats and camelids (including alpaca and llama) in Dall sheep habitat and adjacent lands. The boundary within which that restriction applies is decided in this TMP, and is shown on the maps included in Appendix B.

3.2 Publication of the Travel Network

Maps of the travel network will be available as traditional hard copy maps that are provided through BLM. Electronic media versions will include downloadable maps for use with an electronic device, web-downloadable maps, and interactive maps. BLM and non-BLM sites provide information on such features as specific destinations, trailheads, campsites, and other items of importance and interest to the public.

After assigning a route identification number, the BLM will publish maps (hard copy, online, interactive, etc.) that depict travel routes and their respective number labels. Travel routes that are managed as limited administrative and authorized use will not be shown on publicly available maps. A general information campaign will be conducted to announce the availability of maps. Part of this campaign will include contacting public mapping sources and agencies to request information updates that could improve the maps. Draft maps printed by the BLM will be provided to groups, agencies, or individuals upon request.

Table 1. Approved Management Framework for TMZs

Travel Management Zone	Management Prescriptions	OHV Summer Management	OHV Winter Management
TMZ 1: OHV Closed (Summer)	<p><u>Summer:</u> OHV Closed (i.e., no summer cross-country or managed routes).</p> <p><u>Winter:</u> OHV cross-country travel is allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 50 inches in width. All other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present.</p>	<p>No OHV cross-country travel allowed on 520,419 acres.</p> <p>31.5 miles of managed existing routes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.2 miles of routes open to all modes of motorized travel and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. • 30.5 miles of routes open to all modes of non-motorized travel. • 0.5 miles of routes open to licensed street-legal vehicles and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. • 0.3 miles of routes open to OHVs weighing 1,000 pounds or less curb weight and a maximum width of 50 inches and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. 	<p>Cross-country travel allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds or less curb weight and 50 inches or less width and all other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present anywhere within the TMA, except in RNAs as described for TMZ 5.</p>
TMZ 2: Limited to Managed Routes (Summer)	<p><u>Summer:</u> OHV use is limited to managed routes (no cross-country travel for any OHV).</p> <p><u>Winter:</u> OHV cross-country travel is allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 50 inches in width. All other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present.</p>	<p>No OHV cross-country travel is allowed and all OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present on 642,187 acres. On 76,941 of those acres that fall in the south Steese unit and north of the Birch Creek Wild and Scenic River Corridor, game retrieval as defined in the TMP is allowed using up to 3 OHVs up to 1,000 lbs curb weight OR 1 OHV up to 1,500 lbs curb weight.</p> <p>136 miles of managed existing routes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.2 miles of routes open to all modes of motorized travel and 	<p>Cross-country travel allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds or less curb weight and 50 inches or less width and all other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present anywhere within the TMA, except in RNAs as described for TMZ 5.</p>

Travel Management Zone	Management Prescriptions	OHV Summer Management	OHV Winter Management
		<p>open to all modes of non-motorized travel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.5 miles of routes open to all modes of non-motorized travel. • 44.9 miles of routes open to OHVs weighing 1,000 pounds or less curb weight and a maximum width of 50 inches and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. • 75.1 miles of routes open to OHVs weighing 1,500 pounds or less curb weight and a maximum width of 64 inches and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. • 6.3 miles of routes with OHV use intended but deferred until a sustainable route is identified and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. <p>3.3 miles of proposed new routes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.4 miles of proposed routes open to all modes of non-motorized travel. • 0.8 miles of proposed routes open to OHVs weighing 1,000 pounds or less curb weight and a maximum width of 50 inches and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. 	

Travel Management Zone	Management Prescriptions	OHV Summer Management	OHV Winter Management
TMZ 3: Limited Weight and Width Cross-Country (ATV)	<p><u>Summer:</u> OHV cross-country travel is allowed for OHVs 1,000 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 50 inches in width (ATV or less). In summer, all other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present.</p> <p><u>Winter:</u> OHV cross-country travel is allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 50 inches in width. All other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present.</p>	<p>Cross-country travel allowed for OHVs 1,000 pounds or less curb weight and 50 inches or less width (ATV or less) on 67,740 acres. On 37,388 of those acres that fall in the south Steese unit and north of the Birch Creek Wild and Scenic River Corridor, game retrieval as defined in the TMP is allowed using up to 3 OHVs up to 1,000 lbs curb weight OR 1 OHV up to 1,500 lbs curb weight.</p> <p>24.6 miles of managed existing routes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11.4 miles of routes open to all modes of motorized travel and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. • 0.1 miles of routes open to OHVs weighing 1,000 pounds or less curb weight and a maximum width of 50 inches and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. • 13.1 miles of routes open to OHVs weighing 1,500 pounds or less curb weight and a maximum width of 64 inches and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. <p>4.3 miles of proposed new routes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.3 miles of proposed routes open to OHVs weighing 1,000 pounds or less curb weight and a maximum width of 50 inches and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. 	<p>Cross-country travel allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds or less curb weight and 50 inches or less width and all other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present anywhere within the TMA, except in RNAs as described for TMZ 5.</p> <p>169.5 miles of managed existing routes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.2 miles of routes open to all modes of motorized travel and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. • 25.9 miles of routes open to all modes of non-motorized travel. • 143.4 miles of routes open to OHVs weighing 1,000 pounds or less curb weight and a maximum width of 50 inches and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. <p>107.1 miles of proposed new routes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 107.1 miles of proposed routes open to OHVs weighing 1,000 pounds or less curb weight and a maximum width of 50 inches and open to all modes of non-motorized travel.

Travel Management Zone	Management Prescriptions	OHV Summer Management	OHV Winter Management
TMZ 4: Limited Weight and Width Cross-Country (UTV) – Areas Outside SRMA	<p><u>Summer:</u> Cross-country travel is allowed for OHVs 1,500 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 64 inches in width (UTV or less). This TMZ applies to areas outside the Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA).</p> <p><u>Winter:</u> OHV cross-country travel is allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 50 inches in width. All other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present.</p>	<p>Cross-country travel allowed for non-street legal OHVs less than 1,500 pounds curb weight (UTV or less) and all other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present on 39,756 acres.</p> <p>2.5 miles of managed existing routes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.4 miles of routes open to all modes of motorized travel and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. • 0.1 miles of routes open to all modes of non-motorized travel. • 2 miles of routes open to OHVs weighing 1,000 pounds or less curb weight and a maximum width of 50 inches and open to all modes of non-motorized travel. 	<p>Cross-country travel allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds or less curb weight and 50 inches or less width and all other OHVs are limited to managed routes, if present anywhere within the TMA, except in RNAs as described for TMZ 5.</p>
TMZ 5: Research Natural Areas	<p><u>Summer:</u> RNAs are closed to summer OHV use.</p> <p><u>Winter:</u> OHV cross country traveled allowed for snowmobiles 1,000 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 50 inches in width. No travel by snowmobiles over exposed soil and/or vegetation.</p>	<p>No OHV cross-country travel allowed on 3,065 acres</p>	<p>OHV cross-country travel is allowed for snowmobiles on 3,065 acres if they are 1,000 pounds curb weight or less and a maximum of 50 inches in width. No travel by snowmobiles over exposed soil and/or vegetation within RNAs</p>

Source: BLM 2016, BLM 2020

4.0 IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Implementation Decisions Made in the TMP

Routes will be maintained as funding allows in accordance with TMP guidance and BLM policy. The standards for design, construction, and maintenance of roads and trails within the route system are outlined in the following BLM manuals:

- BLM Manual 9113 Roads (BLM 2015a);
- H-9113-1 Road Design (BLM 2011);
- H 9113-2 Roads National Inventory and Condition Assessment Guidance and Instruction (BLM 2015b);
- H-9115-1 Primitive Roads Design (BLM 2012c); and
- H-9115-2 Primitive Roads Inventory and Condition Assessment Guidance and Instructions (BLM 2012d).

In accordance with the policies outlined above, routes have been assigned maintenance levels (BLM 2015b). Routes will be managed in accordance with assigned maintenance levels and in consideration of resource issues. The conditions and use levels of routes can determine what maintenance intensities they receive. Travel route conditions, design standards, and guidelines are based on average daily traffic, functional classifications, and terrain type. Physical characteristics of routes help determine the types of use they receive. The types of route use indicate which vehicles are capable of traveling on particular routes. Route use will be monitored throughout the life of this plan and subsequent adjustments could be made to the maintenance intensity of a given route, subject to site-specific analysis and consultation. Motorized use will remain within the footprint of the route with a reasonable use of the shoulder and immediate roadside for vehicle passage, parking, overnight camping, and in emergencies. Maintenance intensity levels will be determined for the proposed route network.

4.2 Table 1. Summer Route Special Designated Areas

BLM may construct or re-route transportation assets within special designated areas contained in the Proposed RMP/FEIS to control access and prevent damage to cultural and natural resources. These proposed transportation assets will be evaluated, designated, and incorporated into this TMP. Parking areas and trailhead facilities may be constructed within these special designated areas to accommodate this use.

4.3 Education Component of Implementation

An outreach and education program will be developed for use as a tool to facilitate the public education effort and enlist public support and assistance in maintaining the route network. The desired outcomes of the education component of implementation are:

- Increased understanding of travel management decisions;

- Widespread adoption of safe, responsible motorized use; and
- Promotion of citizen stewardship.

Benefits of these outcomes include:

- Increased compliance with route and area management;
- Decreased vandalism;
- Fewer inadvertent violations;
- Enhanced protection of natural and cultural resources;
- Improved etiquette among visitors; and
- Enhanced safe and responsible recreation experiences.

A strong education effort will result in the reduction in enforcement actions and in resources needed for long-term sustainability. The education and outreach program may be developed in collaboration with Federal, State, and Borough entities; established and emerging organizations; and the public; and may include area-specific elements.

Sustainable partnerships are essential to the successful implementation of the TMP. These partnerships require coordination and include organizations that contribute a variety of interests and resources. Potential partners include non-profit and other private groups, governmental jurisdictions and organizations, educational groups, users and user organizations, local law enforcement, utilities, and private businesses. Financial resources for programs could be identified and pooled with other partners. To ensure sustainability, programs must be prioritized, with assigned responsibilities. To the extent possible, the BLM will seek to create alliances with local and regional groups and various government entities.

Additionally, the BLM will utilize seven target messages/themes for this educational effort:

- Tread Lightly (www.treadlightly.org);
- Leave No Trace (www.lnt.org);
- Share the Trail (www.imba.com/resources/risk-management/shared-trails);
- Respect the rights of private landowners and other users of public land;
- Prevent the spread of invasive species;
- Prevent wildland fires; and
- Ensure OHV safety.

Key messages will be developed that reflect the sensitive resources and the recreation opportunities that the area offers. Also included are important land ethics relative to areas with special designations in the TMA.

The BLM will use emerging technology and current communication methods to convey information and to secure public participation and stewardship for route management and ongoing evaluation of the TMP. As time and funding permit, the BLM may establish websites that include downloadable items such as maps, land use ethics, rules, fire prevention restrictions,

and emergency announcements. Information will also be available at offices and high-use areas and BLM staff will have consistent talking points.

4.4 Sign Component

Travel management signage is an important way of communicating with public land users and is necessary for adequate management of public lands. Route users want to know what modes of travel are allowed on routes they intend to use. Directional and informational signs (and the placement of these signs) are critical for the safety of users and their enjoyment of public lands; for compliance with rules and regulations; and for resource protection. Proper signing can improve visitor experiences by providing the necessary information to ensure that they are aware of regulations, safety, and allowable uses.

Sign plans are the primary components in BLM signage efforts and are required components of TMPs. According to the BLM Sign Guidebook, a sign plan provides for the systematic and uniform development and maintenance of a sign system for a given area (BLM 2016c). A sign plan is necessary to ensure that signs are consistent with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including land use planning documents. Sign plans also ensure that signs will adhere to consistent themes. Signing is a key element for implementing comprehensive travel and transportation plans. The TMP strategy conforms to the policy that all open routes will be signed and additional user information will be provided.



4.4.1 Scope of Signing

Under this TMP, various types of signs and markers will be installed according to current BLM policies and guidance, such as the BLM National Sign Guidebook and Guidelines for a Quality Built Environment (BLM 2010). Signs will be placed along roads, primitive roads, and trails. A variety of signs will be placed within the TMA, including:

- Area and public land identification signs based on cadastral surveys;
- Entry kiosks and informational kiosks;
- Bulletin boards;
- Signs for route identification numbers and management statuses; and
- Area map boards.

Signing will be installed as necessary for visitor management and assistance. Signing will also be used as a tool for resource protection and regulatory and informational purposes. Initially, all

routes managed as open will be signed at intersections. In situations that require route clarification, signs will be placed at one-mile increments beyond intersections. Signing will also occur at other points where following a primitive road or trail might be difficult or confusing to visitors. If necessary, signing or barricades for closures will be placed at reasonable intervals to ensure that users understand where closures exist. Signage and/or barricading of closed routes may require additional site-specific resource surveys and subsequent agency consultation. Signing will be designed to provide the public with clear and correct information to avoid off-network travel; to prevent damage to sensitive resources and areas; to prevent use conflict; and to direct the public to popular destinations.

Through monitoring and ongoing public input, strategies will be developed to constantly improve signing effectiveness. Maintenance procedures and schedules will be developed for signs and markers. Such procedures and schedules will include anticipated replacement needs. A sign inventory and database will be created to facilitate tracking of sign locations and sign maintenance. It is expected that during the first few years following implementation of this TMP, a number of signs will be removed or destroyed and will need to be replaced or updated with a new communication or engineering technique.



Specific sign or communication will include:

- Open routes will be marked with route identification letters and numbers, arrow decals at intersections, and along the route as necessary to indicate routes that are open for vehicle travel.
- Limited use only routes will be marked with a specific limitation symbol and/or other appropriate information indicating the type of restriction for that route (e.g., if the route is available to specified vehicles or is only available for a limited season of use).

4.4.2 Managed Route Markers

Each travel route will have an identifying number. The route identification numbers will be maintained in the Eastern Interior District Office Facility Asset Management System database to allow tracking of routes from the inventory stage through the implementation stage. A consistent BLM numeric system will be applied to the route network. Long distance routes, touring loops, or routes to specific destinations may have a route name or symbol, in addition to a number. Local input will be requested when naming loops and trails. The numbering system will be

flexible, and numbers may not always follow in numeric order. Routes that travel between BLM field offices or TMAs will use the navigation number that was assigned in the jurisdiction or area that had the earliest designation date. The majority of primitive roads and trails will be marked with fiberglass markers. These markers could also be placed on metal U-channel posts with tamper-proof fasteners. Aluminum signage mounted on metal U-channel posts could also be utilized for route numbers where fiberglass markers may not easily be installed in the ground. **Error! Reference source not found.** presents signs and markers that could be used on routes.

Markers for travel routes that are open and/or limited to OHV travel will follow the basic layout depicted at the far left of **Error! Reference source not found.**. Each marker post will contain an arrow, route number, symbols of allowed uses (open to) and prohibited uses (closed to), and the BLM logo. Markers may also have a decal with GPS coordinates marked at strategic locations. Markers for travel routes where OHV travel is allowed but limited (with various restrictions) could use the sign depicted in the far right image of **Error! Reference source not found.**3.

Error! Reference source not found.4 presents examples of signs for travel routes where OHV travel is limited, travel routes that are closed to all forms of OHV travel (including administrative and authorized use), and travel routes that have seasonal limitations. Once a route has been decommissioned or has reclaimed naturally, these signs will be removed to prevent attracting attention to the fact that a travel route once existed in a particular location. In addition to portal/entry signs, Managed route marker signs, and closure/limitation signs, the signs depicted in **Error! Reference source not found.**4 may be used.

Figure 2. Identification, Navigation, and Regulatory Signs



Figure 3. Route Management, Restriction, and Closure Signs



Figure 4. Examples of Area and Route Signs



4.4.3 Proposed Sign Locations

Route markers will be placed (at a minimum) at each major intersection and as needed and noted in the BLM sign database. At each sign placement site care will be taken to visually ensure that the message conveyed by a particular sign is generally positive (where possible), simple, and easy to read.

To limit the overall number of markers at each intersection, two routes may be identified on one post with arrow symbols. When adding a route name or where more than one or two international symbols are needed to convey a restriction or use, the BLM may develop unique decals that clearly identify needed messages or trail names. If a volunteer group adopts a route, they may be allowed to develop a decal to place on the route markers. On sign marker posts, trail names or “Trail Adopters” may be identified and labeled above route numbers. Not all route markers need to include a route name and numeric route identifier. Thus, some marker information could be used interchangeably on different markers. One route can have more than one identifier (e.g., name, number), and all route markers on a particular route will not be exactly the same.

4.4.4 Maintenance and Monitoring of Travel Management Signs

Generally, maintenance of travel management markers will be completed according to Chapter 8 of the BLM’s National Sign Handbook (BLM 2016c). A sign inventory (stored in a database) will be maintained as time and funding permit. Current markers and signs will be inventoried as soon as possible after adoption of this TMP. The database of sign inventory details will include the following information for each sign:

- Location/GPS coordinates;
- Installation date: on larger signs, installation dates should be written on the back of signs;
- Inventory date;
- Name of individual(s) who conducted the installation/inventory;
- All language on the sign;
- Sign layout: height, length, color, and shape (truncated, rectangle, square, marker);
- Lettering: size, color, and font;
- Sign and post materials;
- Sign condition (good, fair, needs repair or replacement);
- Number of times sign has been replaced (via ongoing count); and
- Photographs of signs.

All photographs of signs will be linked to their GPS locations and maintained in the sign inventory database in subfolders labeled by year. All visitors will be encouraged to report missing or damaged signs. Volunteer efforts will be encouraged to help install, monitor, and

replace route markers and signs. The cost of replacement signs will be a line item in annual budget projections. These costs should be identified through the sign inventory database.

4.5 Enforcement Component

The EIFO manages the law enforcement operation and will monitor the 204.2-mile route network within the TMA. Typical BLM law enforcement concerns related to public use in the TMA include traffic accidents, driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, firearm violations, cross-country OHV use, illegal dumping, resource theft, and the creation of new travel routes by visitors. Law enforcement coverage in the TMA is provided by the BLM. Enforcement actions typically occur in response to complaints, and patrols are conducted on a periodic basis, depending on other priorities. Other agencies also patrol the area, including Alaska State Troopers and Alaska Wildlife Troopers, as well as the USFWS Law Enforcement Office.

In an effort to enforce the route network, interdisciplinary cooperation among staff is emphasized. As part of this IDT approach, law enforcement officers work closely with resource, recreation, and maintenance staff to capture information, statistics, and maintenance needs at specific locations. When trends or needs have been assessed, the Field Managers prioritize resources and direct additional patrols in appropriate regions.

Law enforcement issues are documented in the confidential Incident Management Analysis and Reporting System (IMARS). Numerical data is obtained through IMARS to determine which resource violations/public safety concerns are most prevalent in specific areas. Such reports allow BLM management and law enforcement to analyze the frequency of patrol and types of documented incidents in order to collaboratively monitor and conduct patrol and law enforcement activities.

To increase BLM presence, volunteers may be recruited to conduct patrols. These patrols would be focused on visitor services and travel management monitoring. Increased BLM presence and use of Trail Stewards would only occur if adequate funding is acquired. Additional funding would be requested through various BLM channels and through partnering to leverage grants or other available sources.

Goals for a successful enforcement plan include:

- Improve information on the nature, timing, and location of resource and safety concerns to improve preventive strategies and result in more effective and timely law enforcement response.
- Increase the presence of non-BLM law enforcement, including the Alaska State Troopers and Alaska Wildlife Troopers, as well as the USFWS Law Enforcement Office.
- Improve and expand interagency cooperation in the area.
- Increase law enforcement capacity, including the use of new technology, modelling, and specific strategies.

- Encourage educational and monitoring efforts by volunteer user groups and citizen-based education groups, which can increase law enforcement educational efforts.
- Staffing with personnel trained to answer the phones, speak to the public, and conduct on-site public outreach. Staff will be supplied with information regarding the TMP, implementation strategy, and implementation status. This information could include talking points regarding travel management decision-making so that visitors will receive consistent messages.

5.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

As required in 43 CFR §8342.3 (Designation changes): “The Authorized Officer shall monitor effects of the use of off-road vehicles. On the basis of information so obtained, and whenever the Authorized Officer deems it necessary to carry out the objectives of this part, designations may be amended, revised, revoked, or other actions taken pursuant to the regulations in this part.”

In the broadest sense, monitoring helps to determine if adequate progress is being made toward management objectives. Among other things, this means that the monitoring program can be used for the following:

- To determine if resource and resource use objectives are being met;
- To determine visitor satisfaction;
- To determine use patterns and volumes;
- To determine the condition of roads and trails, the condition of public use areas, and compliance with route designations and use restrictions; and
- To determine effectiveness of cross-jurisdictional enforcement.

If management objectives are not being met, management actions may be revised. This allows for the continual refinement and improvement of management prescriptions and practices. Resource management objectives for each route are provided in the route reports completed as part of the evaluation process.

5.1 Restoration and Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation of transportation-disturbed areas will be accomplished in phases and will focus primarily on passive restoration techniques. A key factor in restoration (or decommissioning) is to visually obliterate obvious routes or tracks. Techniques to accomplish this include hand-raking and cutting track edges or berms to break up straight lines. Additional techniques include placing rocks on routes and mulching of routes with local vegetation or dead plant materials. The goal will be to blend the disturbed area into the landscape. The work will be limited to areas of existing surface disturbance.

Rehabilitation could also require ground-disturbing actions, such as re-sloping, removal of culverts, or restoring drainage patterns using heavy equipment. Vegetation growing in the path of

new authorized primitive roads or trails could be salvaged and relocated to restored routes or to other disturbed land in the immediate area. Reclamation activities could require further environmental review on a case-by-case basis.

A travel route eligible or unevaluated to the National Register of Historic Places will not be disturbed. Restoration would typically be limited to that portion of a closed or unauthorized travel route that is within line-of-sight from an authorized route. Each decommissioned route would be specifically evaluated and the most appropriate method of restoration would be used based on geography, topography, soils, hydrology, and vegetation. Key techniques may include the following:

- Removal of foreign debris and trash or other off-route attractants. Cultural resources such as historic refuse would not be disturbed unless it has been determined ineligible to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Raking or otherwise disguising the closed routes with materials at hand;
- Placing native or dead vegetation on closed routes;
- Broadcasting site-approved seed mixes to encourage native vegetation growth; and
- Placing hardened barriers, fencing, or cables in the area to prevent impacts to the rehabilitation site.

5.2 Monitoring

Implementation monitoring determines whether the management decisions achieve the desired outcomes. If implementation of land use plans does not achieve desired outcomes, adaptive management may be necessary. Although proposed management actions are based on the best scientific and commercial information available, conditions may change over time. Implemented management actions can be improved as new technology and information become available. It is also possible that changes in land use will require a different management action to protect the resources.

To address potentially changing conditions and provide management flexibility, TMP implementation will be monitored to determine the effectiveness of management actions. The monitoring and evaluation program will identify and address ongoing and emerging issues that may adversely impact the resource and/or visitor experience. Monitoring will also evaluate implementation progress and the effectiveness of the TMP in achieving desired outcomes and conditions. It will identify adaptive measures if adverse impacts or changing conditions are discovered. The monitoring program will evaluate:

- Whether recreation objectives are being met;
- Use patterns and general volumes of visitors;
- Condition of routes and public use areas;
- Compliance with planned designations and use restrictions;
- Effectiveness of closure, signing, and rehabilitation efforts;

- Priority/special status species habitat conditions resulting from recreation or travel impacts;
- Cultural site condition and vandalism resulting from recreation or travel impacts or access;
- Riparian and soil condition trends resulting from recreation or travel impacts;
- Watershed condition trends resulting from recreation or travel impacts; and
- Visitor safety issues.

The existing TMA route evaluation data provides a baseline for monitoring and includes key data that can be evaluated in the future, including photographic documentation, damage, route width, and notes from observers. This data could be used as a baseline against future monitoring data and subsequently compared in order to detect changes and implement more effective management. Future tasks planned to be completed as part of the management of transportation facilities in the TMA are presented in **Error! Reference source not found.**3 in Section 5.8. Monitoring helps to determine whether management actions taken in accordance with this TMP were productive and, if so, how effective they were in achieving objectives. Monitoring can also help to quantify OHV user compliance and the effectiveness of implementation priorities.

5.3 Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is a system of management practices based on:

- Clearly identified outcomes;
- Monitoring to determine if management actions are meeting outcomes;
- If not, facilitating management changes that will best ensure that outcomes are met; or
- Re-evaluation of the outcomes.

The Department of Interior released an Adaptive Management Technical Guide that presents an operational definition of adaptive management, identifies the conditions in which adaptive management should be considered, and describes the process of using adaptive management for managing natural resources (DOI 2009). BLM will consider implementing adaptive management based on budget, personnel availability, and resource objectives. Monitoring reports, documents, and timelines associated with the adaptive management process will be subject to Field Office budget and staffing constraints.

Priority tasks for the TMA under this TMP are listed in **Error! Reference source not found.**3 (Section 5.8). Unless otherwise specified, timeframes for objectives are discussed in the form of phases: Phase I (1 to 2 years), Phase II (3 to 5 years), Phase III (5 to 10 years), and ongoing.

Monitoring is planned to determine whether adequate progress is being made toward achieving objectives. If progress is insufficient to achieve objectives in a realistic time period, management actions will be revised. In adaptive management, problems are assessed, solutions are formulated to address problems, and those solutions are implemented. Monitoring occurs during and after implementation. Data gathered during monitoring are evaluated, and management is adjusted

based on these findings. However, new problems could arise or new approaches may be tried after management is adjusted, which will start the cycle again.

Adaptive management focuses on changing conditions that could affect the route management proposed in this plan. Through adaptive management, the BLM might change its travel management practices or incorporate new proposals into the existing TMP to respond to a variety of factors that could arise. Some examples of factors that might alter management include:

- The need to adjust seasonal change-over dates between summer and winter management.
- The need to create new roads to access private property or public utilities;
- Natural disasters such as flood or wildfire that may lead to inaccessibility of a route;
- User-created route proliferation;
- Erosion, loss of vegetation, and soil disturbance;
- Listing of additional special status plant and wildlife species;
- Discovery of additional cultural or historic resources; and
- Availability of funding.

Applying the process of adaptive management is an essential component of travel management planning. Throughout the use of the TMP, the BLM will use adaptive management and rely on monitoring data to improve this plan. The route network identified in this TMP was developed through field inventories and an evaluation database that provides a useful baseline for analysis and implementation of the adopted strategies and network. A management determination was made on each segment in the inventory.

As additional information becomes available, the BLM will manage the routes for the protection of resources. As areas of resource conflicts are identified through monitoring and inventory activities, the BLM will continue to evaluate the managed road and trail network to ensure that it continues to meet the objectives of 43 CFR 8340, the applicable land use plan goals and objectives, and applicable laws and regulations. The network will be reviewed to assess its effectiveness at meeting current travel management objectives.

Adaptive management may include changes in the travel management system or measures to avoid direct and indirect effects on current and future land uses and important resources. Route management decisions or other actions in this plan could be modified based on monitoring results, or to accommodate land use proposals. All required clearances and analyses will precede necessary modifications to the TMP.

5.4 TMP Revision and Amendment

Modifications to this TMP will be considered if monitoring indicates that management objectives are not being met. When necessary, adaptive management thresholds will trigger a review of this TMP and management actions may be adjusted accordingly.

This TMP will be in effect until rescinded or amended by a future management action. Adaptive management measures may be undertaken with plan maintenance actions and implementation progress. Any person, organization, or governmental body may propose that any current route management decision be changed to another (open, limited, or closed). Requests to change route management should be submitted in writing to the Field Manager. In the context of this TMP, that Field Manager is the Authorized Officer. The Authorized Officer has the authority to make final decisions on route changes.

Under this TMP, routes that were not included in the inventory or documented during the travel management planning process would be considered on a case-by-case basis with written approval from the Authorized Officer. Travel management decisions would not affect valid existing rights for permitted uses, including ROWs, Borough or State roads, or current easements. Routes managed as administrative and authorized use only are also subject to seasonal closures, vehicle size class restrictions, and ongoing monitoring.

The BLM would continue to consider granting ROWs for, or including, vehicular use. Upon granting of ROWs, including roads or vehicular ways, these would automatically be incorporated into the TMP on a case-by-case basis.

BLM would consult with the State Historic Preservation Office to fulfill the process required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The exact nature and extent of this consultation is defined in the 2014 State Protocol for Managing Cultural Resources on Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Alaska. Management of travel routes is a discretionary action and the Field Manager may determine whether or not proposals have merit and whether or not they constitute significant or minor modifications. If an application proposing a route management change is rejected, a letter stating the reasons for refusal will be sent to the applicant. If accepted, the request will be forwarded to appropriate EIFO staff members. When accepting a proposal, the Authorized Officer should determine if the request will necessitate cost recovery based on applicable regulations pertinent to the request. A formal decision to accept or reject a specific request for a route change will only be issued after the completion of NEPA analysis and evaluation of a proposal's effect on the total travel network. Any proposed change to the travel network in this plan will be documented and appended to this plan.

5.5 Reroutes and New Disturbance

Minor realignments of the route network will be considered to be plan maintenance actions, and will not require additional NEPA analysis, consistent with the BLM NEPA Handbook (BLM 2008). It could also include the opening of a separate existing route that serves the same access need as the route that is to be realigned. Plan maintenance will not include the construction of a new route involving new ground disturbance, except where minor realignments are needed. The opening of an existing but previously closed route that serves the same access need as the open route is said to be “realigned”. In all cases any necessary environmental analyses (e.g., NEPA; NHPA Section 106; ESA section 7) will be conducted, and concerns addressed or mitigated, prior to construction.



Most reroutes focus on situations where new construction is necessary to avoid a cultural resource site, sensitive species, or other sensitive resources. Minor realignments include the following:

- Minor realignments of a route where necessary to minimize impacts on cultural resources;
- Minor realignments of a route necessary to reduce impacts on sensitive species or their habitats;
- Minor realignments of a route that will substantially increase the quality of a recreational experience, while not affecting sensitive species or their habitats, or any other sensitive resource value; and
- Opening or limited opening of a route where valid ROWs or easements of record were not accurately identified in the route management decision process.

Minor realignments must be documented in the official record. The reason for the alignment change will be recorded and kept on file in the EIFO.

All new routes constructed by the BLM in the TMA, will meet the standards for design, construction, and maintenance found in the BLM Roads Design Handbook (BLM 2011) and Primitive Roads Design Handbook (BLM 2012c), except for roads not constructed or maintained by the BLM or on BLM’s behalf. Upgrading a road surface, width, or permanently raising the maintenance intensity level on a specific route are considered to be changes to the network. Such changes will trigger the need to undergo the same evaluation process (e.g., NEPA, Section 106, section 7) that occurs when new routes are added. New routes may be constructed on BLM-managed lands in association with a written authorization (e.g., permit, ROW, lease, contract).

These routes will be constructed and maintained in accordance with the associated permit requirements and be subsequently incorporated into the TMP.

5.6 Necessary Access on Private and State Lands

This TMP does not make management decisions for existing routes over State property. Route management decisions only apply on BLM-administered land. The BLM may seek agency and public easement agreements to maintain current access for popular routes, and seek additional site-specific opportunities to gain agency and public access to BLM-administered lands. As the travel network is developed, signs will be placed within the vicinity of non-BLM-administered lands.

Landowners with property adjacent to BLM-administered lands are entitled to the same access as any other user and must follow the managed travel network. If a private landowner or permitted user desires to change the type or amount of access on a network route, BLM procedures must be followed to gain that authority. If such use is authorized under a ROW, the holder will be required to seek an amendment if there is a substantial change in location or use per 43 CFR 2807.20. The lands and realty staff in the BLM EIFO are available to clarify the legal access needs and appropriate procedures.

For routes accessed through Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) ROW, coordination will be initiated to determine safe ingress and egress points. Some ingress and egress points on ADOT&PF ROWs may not be available for use due to safety concerns.

5.7 Emergency Closures

Emergencies are unforeseen events of such severity that they require immediate action to avoid dire consequences and would not require NEPA analysis. In the event of an emergency situation as defined in the BLM NEPA Handbook (BLM 2008), immediate actions (e.g., openings, closures, or public land use restrictions) could be taken to prevent or reduce risks to public health or safety, property, or important resources.

5.8 Prioritization

Past agency experience provides insight into effective implementation priorities. The successful implementation of this TMP is based on prioritization hierarchies and implementation should proceed as presented in **Error! Reference source not found.1**. Monitoring, adaptive management, and budget limitations could change priorities and the timeline over the life of this TMP. The timeline in **Error! Reference source not found.1** starts one month after the Decision Record for this plan will be issued. The timeframes for these priorities can be considered in the form of phases: Phase I (1 to 2 years), Phase II (3 to 5 years), and Phase III (5 to 10 years). Ongoing tasks will apply to all phases and will be conducted for the duration of the plan.

Table 1. Management of Transportation Facilities

Timeline	Task	Description
Phase I	Assign a unique route number to all roads, primitive roads, and trails managed as open or limited for identification and navigation purposes.	Formal route numbers will be used for all mapping, signing, and wayfinding purposes. Having a logical route numbering system supports management, public, and commercial uses.
Phase I	Publish a georeferenced online map of the TMA route network. Provide hard copy maps at the EIFO.	Provides the public with an easy way to navigate the area and follow route management restrictions prior to signing. It can be printed or used as a mobile application.
Phase I	Work with staff, cooperating agencies, and volunteer organizations to develop an outreach and education program that informs the public of the new route management, regulations, and the importance of staying on managed routes.	Utilizing the public mailing list, local newspapers, social media, and local events are good avenues to present this information. This provides an early opportunity prior to signing and enforcing the route network.
Phase II	Secure funding for signing, monitoring, and rehabilitating the route network. Develop priorities for signing if it is anticipated to take multiple fiscal years. Seek partnerships with other organizations.	See Section 4.5 Enforcement Component.
Phase II	Install signs in the travel network and monitor the condition and use of routes managed as closed to prioritize barriers or other means of prevention, if needed.	Signage allows users an easy means of navigation and is the first step to enforcing the route management decisions. See Section 4.4.4 for guidance on recording data for installed signs.
Phase II	Take actions to restore closed/decommissioned routes that continue to have evidence of travel.	Restoration of the closed/decommissioned routes will be achieved passively to avoid further disturbance and the introduction of non-native species. However, if monitoring shows that certain route segments are continuing to be used actions can be taken to prevent further travel and facilitate rehabilitation (e.g., rocks/barriers in extreme circumstances or “entering restoration area” signage).
Phase II	Monitor and maintain the route sign network.	Replacement may be needed for signs that have been removed or destroyed.
Phase III	Restoration and rehabilitation of transportation linear disturbances and disturbed areas and any minor reroutes or realignments (on a case-by-case basis).	See Section 5.1 Restoration and Rehabilitation.

Timeline	Task	Description
Ongoing	Enforce the route management decisions and travel network restrictions through BLM law enforcement patrol and public outreach.	See Section 4.5 Enforcement Component.
Ongoing	Monitor resource conditions on and near open, limited, and closed routes to ensure that public land health standards are met and adequate resource protection is accomplished. Site, survey, and implement minor realignments or re-routes around sensitive resources that are being significantly degraded by increased OHV use.	See Section 5.2 Monitoring.
Ongoing	Utilize adaptive management practices.	See Section 5.3 Adaptive Management.

Source: BLM 2020

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