Middle Gila Canyons
Transportation and Travel Management Plan
October 2010

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Middle Gila Canyons transportation and travel management planning area is made up of approximately 96,320 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), generally located northeast of Florence, AZ and southwest of Superior, AZ as shown on Map 1 and Map 2. This area was identified by the Middle Gila Conservation Partnership (MGCP) as a Pilot Study Area in 2001 - 2003 and was evaluated to determine options for travel management. The MGCP is an ad hoc group that was initially organized through the efforts of the BLM Arizona Resource Advisory Council to help review public land recreation use issues and identify potential management solutions for the Middle Gila Canyons area. The partnership included representatives from the Arizona State Land Department, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Arizona National Guard, Tonto National Forest, BLM, land users, recreationists, conservationists and other interests. The group met numerous times since 2001 to discuss uses, issues, concerns and needs in the Pilot Study Area, and collaboratively developed a vision, goals and objectives for the area aimed at preserving recreation opportunities while protecting natural resource values and preventing conflicts.

A comprehensive physical access route inventory was completed for the area in 2003 under an interagency project involving the State of Arizona Off Highway Vehicle program, Arizona State Land Department, Tonto National Forest, BLM and user interest groups. The route inventory identified routes receiving motorized use and reclaiming routes, as well as numerous range improvements, primitive recreation activity areas and sites, mining-related sites, and a variety of other features encountered along the routes associated with multiple land use activities[1]. The route inventory procedures and findings are summarized in Appendix A.

A route evaluation based on the inventory was conducted by the MGCP and completed in 2005. The evaluation was conducted using the Route Evaluation Tree procedure adopted by the BLM, and was facilitated by an independent contractor[2] in a series of workshops. Participants involved in the route evaluation included representatives of the Tonto National Forest, Arizona National Guard, State Land Department, Arizona Game and Fish Department, BLM, off-highway vehicle (OHV) users and organizations, conservation groups, and other interested parties. The evaluation identified goals and objectives addressing multiple use and resource protection concerns related to recreational access and travel management in the area. The MGCP's route evaluation report was submitted in 2005 to the Bureau of Land Management, Tonto National Forest, and Arizona State Land Department for consideration in their land use planning and management programs and activities[3]. The route evaluation addressed physical access routes on BLM, National Forest and State Trust lands, and identified three different alternatives for accommodating motorized vehicle access, with different emphasis on access and resource protection for each alternative. The

[1] Middle Gila Interagency Travel Route Inventory, Recreation Solutions Enterprise Team; USFS, BLM, ASLD, 2003.

[2] ARS Route Evaluation Tree, Advanced Resource Solutions, Bureau of Land Management Contract, 2003.

[3] Motorized Travel Route Evaluation, Middle Gila Conservation Partnership, (USFS, BLM, AGFD, ASLD, users and interests), 2005

inventory and route evaluation resulted in a geographic and descriptive database for the travel routes and three alternative designations for each route, summarized in the route table in Appendix B.

In 2007, additional public input was gathered for selecting the proposed alternative through a series of collaborative meetings convened by the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution. Participants included a representation of the wide range of interests concerned with access, public lands and land use in the study area, but focused on the access routes located on BLM lands. Agreement was reached on the access objectives for the majority of the planning area, with the exception of a few locations such as Martinez Canyon and other rouets in the physical access inventory used for technical OHV trail activities. The procedures and results of the collaborative meetings are summarized in the report[4] in Appendix C.

The Middle Gila Canyons Transportation and Travel Management Plan is based on the physical access and travel route inventory completed in 2003, the alternatives developed during the 2005 MGCP route evaluation, the input received during the 2007 collaborative workshops, and new information from recent land use proposals, resource inventories/surveys, the existing land use plan allocations, recently issued BLM comprehensive transportation and travel management policy and guidance, and current public land regulations on recreation and off road vehicle use (43CFR8360 and 43CFR8340).

The proposed plan and environmental assessment were made available for public review and comment for a 60 day period from March 10 to May 8, 2009. Formal consultation with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the potential effects on threatened and endangered species resulted in the biological opinion and the conservation measures in Appendix I. The biological opinion concluded that there would be no effect on threatened and endangered species in the planning area, except for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. Information received during the public comment period was considered in finalizing the plan and environmental assessment.

The plan will be approved upon issuance of the Decision Record by the Tucson Field Manager. A visitor access guide will be published, followed by on-the-ground implementation work such as signing, erosion control or stabilization, maintenance, and route closures and restoration. Implementation activities will be conducted in a phased three to five year schedule, beginning in the winter 2010.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Most of the public land in the planning area is designated in the Phoenix Resource Management Plan as "limited to existing roads and trails" with the White Canyon Wilderness designated "Closed" and the White Canyon Area of Critical Environmental Concern designated "limited to designated roads and trails"[5]. Since the RMP was completed in 1989, the system of existing and designated roads and trails has not been officially identified. This plan officially identifies the network of motorized routes and related transportation and travel management designations.

[4] Summary Report, Travel Management Planning in the Middle Gila Canyons Area, Results of the Collaborative Workshops, Prepared for the Bureau of Land Management; U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, June 2007.

[5] Phoenix Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, Record of Decision, 1989 as amended.

A. Planning Area Location

The Middle Gila Canyons transportation planning area is comprised of approximately 96,320 acres of public land administered by the BLM, generally situated in the following townships: T2S R12E, T3S R11E, T3S R12E, T3S R13E, T4S R10E, T4S R11E, T4S R12E, T4S R13E, T5S R10E, T5S R11E, T5S R12E of the Gila & Salt River Principal Meridian, Pinal County, Arizona. The transportation study area is bounded by US 60, State 79, State 177, and Pinal County's Florence-Kelvin Highway. The nearest towns are Florence and Superior, with Phoenix and Tucson both within 100 miles, and within one to two hours driving time. The planning area location, shown on Map 1 and Map 2, is in the direction of projected growth and development as the Phoenix metropolitan area expands south in the next 10 to 15 years towards Florence. The Superstition Vistas visioning and planning area abuts the planning area, and major changes are projected in the area's population, land use, and transportation affecting the planning area and adjacent lands. For example, county transportation studies project the need for widening of the area's highways to 6 lanes within the next 10 to 20 years [6].

B. Purpose and Need

The main purpose of the plan is to identify the official BLM transportation system and travel management designations to adequately provide motorized and non-motorized access to public lands in the planning area for administrative purposes and the public uses. The planned route system is designed to accommodate local travel needs, protect public safety, protect resources on the public lands, and to prevent or minimize conflict among users. The plan is needed in response to growing public demand for recreational and other uses in the area, and growing impacts resulting from public use. Management is needed to minimize impacts and conflicts from recreational use on other uses, and to address the deteriorating physical condition of existing routes. If growth and population projections in various local studies are realized, the demand for public use and associated impacts on the public lands in the planning area will dramatically increase over the next five to ten years.

C. Issues and Concerns

The official transportation system for the public lands in the planning area has not been previously established, and current OHV designations have not been fully implemented. The area's physical access route system provides motor vehicle access for administrative purposes and outdoor recreation, and other uses throughout the planning area. The existing routes are in poor and deteriorating condition, leading to practically impassable road conditions in places, and resource damage on adjacent lands. Important access routes lack legal public access, leading to trespass by public land visitors on private and other non-BLM lands. Use of some existing routes is causing damage to known cultural resources, and use on other routes is likely to cause damage to cultural resources. Access routes are unpaved, and some are on highly dust prone soils causing concerns with fugitive dust and air quality impacts. Some routes are within special management areas designated in the current RMP, presenting potential conflicts with the resource management purposes of these areas. Conflicts with other uses is occurring, including trespass onto adjacent non-BLM lands, grazing operations and range improvements, mineral development sites, existing utilities, and current land use allocations. The travel route network and associated use are causing impacts to wildlife habitat, and some disruption of movement

[6] Pinal County Small Area Transportation Study, Final Report; Pinal County Development Services, Department of Public Works, Kirkham Michael Consulting Engineers, KM#0504900, August 2006.

corridors and disturbance of wildlife. Public use in the area has been increasing for multiple uses, particularly for dispersed outdoor recreation, leading to growing demand and proliferation of motor vehicle routes, along with concerns about increasing impacts on cultural, wildlife habitat and other resource values and conflicts among the various users.

III. TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The transportation and travel management plan identifies the BLM system of roads, primitive roads and trails, and establishes related designations for their use and maintenance. Route specific designations are shown in Table 1 of Appendix B, listed by route inventory evaluation number. The routes will be assigned BLM transportation numbers after approval of the transportation plan. The planned transportation and travel management designations are shown on Map 3 and described below.

A. Transportation and Travel Management Designations:

The designations identify the BLM transportation asset types, functional classification, maintenance intensity, and access vehicle type for each route added to the BLM transportation plan. These designations do not apply to routes on non-BLM lands, unless provided for under cooperative agreements, easements, rights of way or other legal instrument.

1. Transportation Asset Types:

BLM Asset types consist of roads, primitive roads, and non-motorized trails[7] necessary for the use and administration of public lands. The asset type designation for each route is shown on Table 1 of Appendix B. Asset type designations are indicated on Map 3 for routes on non-federal lands only if they are considered essential for access to the BLM lands, or for travel within the intermingled public lands in the area. Descriptions of the three asset types are provided below, followed by a summary of asset type mileages in Table 1.

a. **Road: 28.8** miles:

These routes will be open to all motorized vehicle use year-round. Roads will generally accommodate low volume two way recreational and commercial rural traffic, and may be passable by passenger car and large vehicle types (motor homes, trailer combination vehicles, and haul trucks). Some roads may accommodate resource extraction traffic by heavy trucks. They will be maintained annually to allow safe passage and prevent damage to adjacent land, and spot repairs will be completed as needed. These include the main access roads from the public highways to the public lands. They presently carry most of the traffic into and out of the planning area generated by existing land uses (mining, grazing, public recreation, non-federal land in-holdings, other). Typically, these are routes with a BLM Collector or Local functional class, and Level 3 or Level 5 maintenance intensity, but may include roads with a Resource functional class for special land uses such as quarries that require access by large vehicle types. Typical travel way width is 22 ft. or wider depending on traffic type, alignment and topography, with or without shoulders and maintained drainage depending on terrain. The typical right of way is 30 ft. to 60 ft. wide depending actual travel way width, topography and need to maintain cut/fill slopes. Most of these routes are maintained by Pinal Co on courtesy basis under the County's Primitive Roads program, or under a County right of way. Right of ways or cooperative agreements

[7] Transportation asset definitions are in accordance with Technical Note 422, Roads and Trails Terminology, USDI BLM, November 2006 (see definitions excerpt in Appendix D).

may be pursued to provide for maintenance of road sections on BLM land by Pinal County. State Department of Motor Vehicles vehicle laws generally will apply on use of these routes, requiring 'street legal' vehicles, insurance and a state Driver License. Identified roads include approximately 1 mile of road closed several years ago by the San Carlos Irrigation Project (SCIP) in the vicinity of the Ashurst-Hayden Dam on SCIP withdrawal lands.

b. **Primitive Road** (231.9 miles): These routes will be open to motorized vehicle use year-round. They include existing constructed and unimproved routes, typically single lane 8 to 10 ft. wide and accommodate full size four-wheel drive vehicles, unless otherwise specified. These routes will generally accommodate single lane travel in both directions, with passing turnouts or widening as needed for safety. Maintenance objectives will vary depending on functional class and maintenance intensity, and the type of access served by a given route. Maintenance work will be only as needed to repair or stabilize erosion, control drainage and provide adequate clearance. The typical right of way is 30 ft. total width. State vehicle ('street legal') laws will not generally apply to motor vehicle use on these routes, except those applicable to OHVs including the OHV sticker.

c. **Non-motorized Trail** (17.8 miles):
The identified trails include the Arizona Trail (designated a National Scenic Trail under the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009), two wilderness trails in the White Canyon Wilderness to be managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act), and segments of existing routes with potential for developing trails identified in the Pinal County Open Space and Trails Plan. Implementation of the Pinal County trails plan will require additional site specific project survey and planning to determine the exact alignment and related needs, and authorization from the BLM for any trail construction or improvements. The Arizona Trail is presently being developed under a project plan and environmental assessment completed in 2006, amended in 2010 to reflect realignments identified during the trail development process. The typical right of way for non-motorized trails is 15 ft. total width. Trail standards will typically accommodate hiking, equestrian and mountain bike (tread width, grades, and clearance) uses, except wilderness trails which will only accommodate hiking and equestrian use, with wilderness management constraints. Special use restrictions will be established for these routes to prohibit motorized travel, and to protect the desert bighorn sheep in the area. Non motorized travel will generally be allowed on all motorized routes as a shared use, and cross-country non-motorized travel (foot, horse) will be allowed in accordance with current public land regulations.

Table 1. Transportation asset type designation summary

ASSET TYPE	**MILES**
Road	25.2
Primitive Road	225.3
Non-motorized Trail	17.8
TOTAL	**264.4**

Approximately 139.3 miles of inventoried motor routes will be closed to motor vehicles to avoid impacts to sensitive resources on the public lands, and will not be designated into the

BLM transportation system. Approximately 7.6 miles of abandoned routes found to be reclaiming or reclaimed will be designated for restoration, and closed to motor vehicle use. Approximately 167.0 miles of linear features on BLM land that were not found to be serving a motorized access purpose and are largely reclaimed (old mining access ways, fence lines, pipelines and other disturbances) will be identified as closed to motor vehicles and the natural reclamation process allowed to continue; these features are not included in the physical access route motorized route inventory. Approximately 12.6 miles of inventoried motor routes providing OHV recreation opportunities related to rock crawling will be identified as specialized recreation sites, but not as transportation assets (see section B.2 below).

2. Functional Classifications:

Functional classes indicate the relative importance of a route's transportation and access functions, and are the basis for geometric design standards for improvements and maintenance guidelines. The functional classifications are determined according to guidance in BLM Manual 9113-Roads.

The planned functional class designations are shown for each route in Table 1 of Appendix B; a summary is provided in Table 2 below. Main access routes are typically identified as BLM Collector and Local roads, while most of the routes in the planning area are designated as Resource Roads, characterized as unpaved, single lane, with very low traffic volume (ADT <200) and very low traffic speeds.

Table 2. Functional classes summary

FUNCTIONAL CLASS	**MILES**
Collector	28
Local	38
Resource	221
TOTAL	**287**

3. Transportation Maintenance Intensity Classes:

The maintenance intensity classes provide the basis for BLM transportation maintenance, and help direct maintenance work to priority needs based on the importance of a route, route conditions, access objectives, or resource conditions on adjacent lands. Most of the BLM routes will be minimally maintained. No existing BLM transportation assets are presently identified in BLM's facility management system, and maintenance on roads and trails over the past 10 years has been minimal to none. Pinal County has several rights of ways in the project area and conducts annual road maintenance on Price Road, Diversion Dam Road, Cochran Road, and Battle Axe Road. Authorized users (mineral materials operators, grazing permitees, and utility companies) also perform intermittent road maintenance on routes needed for their permitted activities. Under BLM policy, transportation maintenance and repairs may be done on BLM routes on a case by case basis depending on need. The planned maintenance intensity classes for each route are shown in Table 1 of Appendix B; a summary is shown in Table 3 below. The definitions and objectives for the various maintenance intensity levels are in Appendix D.

Table 3: Maintenance intensity classes summary

MAINTENANCE INTENSITY	MILES
L1	208
L3	52
L5	25
TOTAL	**285**

4. Typical Access Vehicles and Route Maintenance Objectives/Guidelines:

The planned access objectives identify the typical vehicle considered in maintaining physical access conditions for BLM routes. The typical vehicle for a given route largely dictates the physical characteristics required for a route to be passable by that vehicle and others with similar or lesser requirements. The travelway width, surface, grade, curve radius, side and overhead clearance, and associated physical parameters vary depending on the type of access vehicle and the use desired for a route. Presently, nearly all the existing routes on public land are primitive roads that are unimproved, receive very low traffic volume, and use is at low speeds.

a. Typical vehicles:

Vehicles used on the travel routes in the planning area include mineral materials hauling trucks, livestock hauling trucks, motor homes, truck-trailer combinations, passenger cars, high clearance two-wheel drive vehicles, four-wheel drive vehicles, all-terrain vehicles under 50 inches, utility-terrain vehicles over 50 inches, trail motorcycles, extremely modified or custom fabricated four-wheel drive vehicles, mountain bikes, riding horses, pack livestock, and pedestrians on foot/hiking. River craft using the Gila River includes canoes and small inflatable boats, though use is infrequent and very light, and river access points are few. Informal staging areas are available at sites on non-BLM lands along the main access roads to the planning area, used by the public for loading and unloading OHVs, or for maintenance equipment. Some of the staging areas along Cottonwood Canyon Road and Mineral Mountain Road are very large and can accommodate large groups (200 to 300 vehicles or more) at one time. Unless specifically prohibited, a travel route capable of accommodating a vehicle to meet a specific requirement will be available for other modes of travel.

b. Road condition, design standards, and guidelines:

Standards exist for BLM roads based on average daily traffic, functional classification and terrain type[8]. Standards also exist for trails based on hiking and equestrian user needs[9]. No official geometric standards or guidelines exist for BLM primitive roads. Under the planned plan standards and guidelines will be defined for BLM road and primitive road maintenance, new construction or reconstruction. The standards and guidelines for primitive roads are based on the functional characteristics of a route and the various types of recreational motorized users. The planned primitive road maintenance guidelines are described in Appendix D.

[8] Road Standards, BLM Manual 9113 Roads, June 2005.

[9] Trail Standards, BLM Manual 9114 Trails, July 1987.

c. Speed limits/design speed:
The planned transportation system consists of existing routes traveled at variable low speeds depending on a route's physical conditions, the vehicles used and the operator using the routes. There are no posted speed limits on BLM roads or primitive roads. Driving speed on BLM lands is generally governed by 43 CFR 8340, which basically provides for reasonable and safe speed. Presently, users travel at low speeds, largely limited by travelway conditions: irregular vertical and horizontal alignment, short radius curves, blind curves, steep grades, rough travelway surface, abrupt changes in grade, ruts, gullies, washboards, narrow travel ways, narrow side clearance, and other conditions that present obstructions that influence driving speeds. Different users travel at different speeds on the same roads, resulting in passing on narrow roads and leading to widening of travelway sections. Evidence of errant vehicles is often encountered in the area, with speed a contributing factor. Under the plan, management of the route system will generally promote low travel speeds in the design and maintenance of individual routes, and speed will be considered in potential improvement or reconstruction projects. Under the plan, design speeds for the various asset types will be established to help promote safe driving speeds on the roads, and help protect resources and public safety. The speed limit of 25 miles per hour by the interagency Desert Tortoise Team will be adopted for routes in desert tortoise Class 2 habitat.

5. New road or trail construction and reconstruction:
New roads and trails may be developed, or existing roads may be reconstructed or improved on a case by case basis to meet emerging access needs related to allowable multiple uses of the public lands. Under the plan, the feasibility of developing a bypass route to avoid traversing the SCIP diversion dam facilities will be pursued to provide a road or trail connection to public lands south of the Gila River from Florence via Diversion Dam Rd. Relocation of a portion of the Battle Axe Road from SR177 to Walnut Canyon is anticipated as part of the initial stages of Asarco's Copper Butte Mine development in accordance with the Ray Land Exchange Agreement. Reconstruction and realignment of the Cottonwood Canyon Road from SR79 to the private land on Mineral Mountain is anticipated as part of the sanitary landfill development. New road construction or reconstruction is subject to case by case, site specific review for compliance with the transportation plan, environmental and other laws, and mitigation identified at the time the projects are carried out (cultural surveys, engineering, and construction, seasonal restrictions). Transportation improvements will be in accordance with appropriate standards depending on the route-specific designations and management objectives. Transportation improvements by other parties (county or other government agencies, or private sector entities) will be in accordance with public land right-of-way regulations or other authorizations. The following trail proposals or trail plans by others are accommodated by the transportation and travel management plan:

a. Arizona National Scenic Trail:
The Arizona National Scenic Trail White Canyon Passage is being cooperatively developed across the planning area according to a trail plan approved in 2006, and under an existing interagency agreement between the Arizona Trail Association, Arizona State Parks, the BLM and others. The transportation and travel management designations support development of the Arizona National Scenic.

b. Great Western Trail:
The Great Western Trail Association has identified routes for the Great Western Trail through the transportation study area and planning area, following existing physical access routes. The primary route for this trail is accommodated by the transportation and travel management identified in the plan.

d. Pinal County Trails:
Several trails are identified in Pinal County's approved Open Space and Trails Plan, including a route following the Central Arizona Project canal trail, and another along the Gila River east of Florence. These trail corridors cross BLM lands in isolated sections, and non-motorized trail development will be considered subject to further project planning, surveys and clearances, and environmental review..

6. Public Land Access Routes:
The designated Public Land Access routes consist of existing roads or primitive roads that provide the principal access from the public highway system to public lands in the planning area (US 60, SR 79, SR177, and the Florence Kelvin Highway). These routes are the main connectors of the planning area's travel route network under current and foreseeable land use and traffic patterns. These routes function as BLM Local or Collector roads, although road condition and maintenance standards may vary depending on type of use or to meet specific management objectives. Physical route conditions may be up to road standards near access points, but generally will be up to primitive road standards in the most remote, back country areas. These routes will generally be the priorities for supporting legal access acquisition (or adjudicating existing access rights) across non-federal land, and for completing maintenance to ensure long term, legal public access to the public lands. These routes will also generally be the highest transportation maintenance priority, although the maintenance intensity and condition standard will vary depending on the route, the type of access served, and its location. Under the plan, the goal is to have the route segments from the public highways to the public land entrance under a Pinal County right-of-way or maintenance agreement. These routes will be posted with 'Public Land Access Route' signs (BLM Standard sign # S-045) or similar. A summary of public land access routes is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Land ownership crossed by designated public land access routes.

OWNERSHIP	**MILES**
BLM	64
Military	1
Private	20
State Trust	32
USFS	11
TOTAL	**127**

Some of the Public Land Access Routes are under a county road declaration, or under a right of way held by Pinal County; portion of the Battle Axe Rd. is under an existing right-of-way held by Pinal County, and is maintained by the Public Works Department. These public land access routes provide essential access to the public lands for administrative and public purposes in a

relatively efficient way, making no public land further than three miles to access by side roads, trails, or cross country.

B. Site Improvements/Developments

Under the plan, the planning area will remain with minimal improvements or developments for public recreational use. Minor site work and improvements will be completed to implement the plan at portal sites, trailhead sites, and interpretive sites. The site work will be generally aimed at correcting safety problems, preventing damage to resources and site degradation, or mitigating unacceptable impacts on resources. Project plans will be prepared for site improvements or developments prior to implementation, along with any necessary site surveys and clearances.

1. Site improvements:

Portal sites will be provided along the public land access routes at or near the public land entrance, with a small temporary parking area (no overnight camping), information kiosk, and site signing. The portal sites will be located at existing turnouts as much as possible, and will consist of small turnouts within 1 to 3 acres. Existing turnouts/spurs and dispersed campsites along the roads will remain unimproved, with baseline condition surveys and monitoring for corrective action (dumping/damage, erosion control, hazard abatement, traffic control barriers). Sites within sensitive areas may require corrective action such as rehabilitation or relocation. Recreation activity areas in highly dust prone soils will be capped with aggregate to reduce fugitive dust. Project plans will be prepared and cultural surveys and clearances will be completed before site improvements are carried out. The location of portal sites planned for the Cottonwood Canyon, Mineral Mountain, Price, Sandman, Battle Axe, Cochran, and Whitlow Ranch roads are shown on Map 3.

Traffic control barriers will be installed where needed to implement the travel management plan along with gates, fencing, or barricades. Typically, gates will be made of steel and designed to be vandal resistant, and will require minor excavation and site disturbance. Fencing may include barb wire, post and cable, steel tubing or other materials. Barriers or barricades may be temporary or permanent, and may consist of earth/rock berms, boulders, posts or bollards depending on site conditions. Appropriate site specific surveys will be conducted and clearances will be obtained prior to new surface disturbance related to installation of barriers and traffic control devices.

2. **Technical OHV sites:**

Several technical OHV sites are designated to provide opportunities for driving specialized motor vehicles for sport, challenge and skill, including four-wheel drive rock crawling and trials type activities. These are linear sites comprising approximately 12.6 miles of inventory motorized route which provide travelway conditions with extreme terrain and obstacles not generally useable by standard vehicle types. The planned OHV sites include several routes where this activity has occurred in the last ten years. Site plans for each site will be prepared in cooperation with users and interested parties to provide and maintain conditions suitable for specialized OHV activities with minimal impacts on resource values. Detailed site surveys will be completed to identify baseline conditions and sensitive resources or features. The site plans will identify on-the-ground actions to accommodate the use and protect resource values, including traffic control measures, erosion control and restoration. The site plans will also identify necessary use restrictions including special vehicle or equipment requirements. State vehicle laws generally will not apply to motor

vehicles using these routes, except for regulations applicable to OHVs. Physical barriers or restrictive devices and signing will be installed at access points. Studies will be conducted to identify baseline conditions, and monitoring will be carried out to detect change and take corrective action. Limits of acceptable change will also be identified in the site plans. Map 3 shows the location of the technical OHV sites.

C. Easements and Rights-of-way

Acquisition of road or trail easements or rights of way, or adjudication of existing or historic physical access, will be pursued on a case-by-case basis on routes across non-federal lands that presently lack legal public access. Legal access acquisition will be pursued as a last resort, and will be done cooperatively with the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Landowner Relations Program among other tools. Easements may be acquired through donation or purchase from willing sellers. Priority will be given to routes designated as Public Land Access Routes, and other routes with a BLM Collector or Local functional class. Priorities for road or trail easement acquisition will be those within the White Canyon Resource Conservation Area. Acquisition of trail easements is planned for approximately 8.5 miles of the Arizona National Scenic Trail White Canyon Passage across State Lands under the current trail plan. Legal access will be acquired on a section of Battle Axe Road as planned under the Ray Land Exchange agreement once implemented. Priorities for transportation easement acquisition will also consider changing land use, conflicts, or threats to public access. Grade crossing authorizations from the Copper Basin Railway (CBR) will be pursued at several locations (Diversion, Cochran and Kelvin), and BLM will work with the CBR to ensure they meet proper standards, prevent public use trespass for safety reasons, and prevent damage to the railroad bed, ballast or structures.

D. Route Closures

Approximately 138.9 miles of inventoried motorized routes designated closed to motor vehicle use. Most of these routes receive little traffic and serve limited access purposes, are in areas with sensitive resource values, are causing unacceptable impacts on resources, or present conflicts with other land uses including the Copper Basin Railway. These routes will be signed and physically closed by various means depending on site specific conditions, or obliterated and reclaimed to restore near natural contours and vegetation cover as deemed appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Project plans, surveys and clearances will be completed before new ground disturbance. Closure devices may include gates, fencing, barricades, posts and signs. Barricades may be made of steel or timber posts, concrete, stone, or boulders as determined during site specific project planning. Needs for administrative vehicle access on routes designated closed will be determined in collaboration with users (grazing permitees, wildlife waters, mining claim holders, utility holders, recreational, etc.). Locked, operable gates will be used where necessary to provide for administrative vehicle access. Typically, although not specifically identified as non-motorized trails, closed routes will be open to non-motorized travel and by-passes for hiking and equestrian access will be accommodated in the design of closure devices. Routes planned for closure will be inspected for drainage and erosion problems, and corrective measures will be taken as part of site specific plans for implementing the closure. Closed routes will typically be allowed to reclaim or re-vegetate naturally, but will not be maintained as non-motorized trails unless they are added to the transportation plan through updates or revision, which may occur on a case-by-case basis as needed (with appropriate project planning surveys, clearances and compliance with applicable regulations). Closures will be designed to leave a short spur or turnout to facilitate parking and maneuvering outside the closure without blocking the access road.

E. Restoration and Rehabilitation

Routes on BLM land not designated as transportation assets will typically be allowed to reclaim naturally. Most of these routes receive little traffic many are reclaiming already. The access points to restoration routes will be posted with signs and/or blocked with barriers to prevent vehicle entry as needed depending on site conditions. Some of these routes may be ripped, ditched, re-graded or re-contoured entirely or in part to aid reclamation using the least disturbance or smallest equipment possible, if indicated by site conditions. Natural revegetation will be allowed, or plantings may be conducted if indicated by site conditions on a case-by-case basis. Restoration project plans will be prepared and cultural surveys and clearances will be completed prior to ground disturbance. Work will be monitored and impacts to cultural resources or other resource values that may be discovered will be avoided.

F. Special Recreation Permits

A Special Recreation Permit (SRP) is required for use of public land in connection with commercial, competitive, and organized group activities in accordance with current public land regulations[10]. These uses comprise part of the demand for use of travel routes in the planning area.

Permits are not required for private, non-commercial recreational use. SRPs issued in the past eight years in the planning area include commercial guided hunting, commercial OHV sightseeing, organized group four-wheel drive trail riding, and competitive extreme four-wheel drive events. In the next ten years, demand for those types of motorized activities is expected to continue, and is likely to increase. Demand is also likely to increase for non-motorized guided activities such as equestrian trail riding, mountain bike riding, and hiking trips. Like general recreation demand, activities requiring a SRP is also influenced by winter seasonal residents and international travelers in the Phoenix-Tucson areas. Activities associated with operations under permit include temporary occupancy of sites for parking, camping, staging for trips into the area from access points, and traveling on BLM roads and trails. The permitted activities generally occur on previously disturbed areas, and impacts have been largely mitigated by permit stipulations. An exception is the increased public awareness of the recreation opportunities in the area among new visitors who are attracted by permitted activities or events, contributing to overall increasing visitation trends. Presently, large organized group camping and staging activities (those with one time use capacities of 200 to 400 or more vehicles) are accommodated off the public lands on State Trust land or private lands.

The designated route system will be available for use in connection with operations under SRPs, subject to the standard terms, conditions and stipulations, and any special stipulations or requirements identified on a case-by-case basis through the permit application review process. Permits for use of public lands in the planning area will be subject to the travel management designations and use restrictions established in the plan. Restrictions on use of motor vehicles in the plan will apply to all recreational activities, including commercially guided and permitted hunting operations, who will not be allowed to drive a motor vehicle cross country to retrieve game on the public lands. Anticipated management practices include compliance inspections

[10] Code of Federal Regulations (43CFR2930).

for permitted activities, monitoring impacts, enforcement of permit requirements, and coordination with other land management agencies and users in the area.

G. **Visitor Services and Enforcement**

1. **Signs and markers:** Presently, very little signing is found throughout the planning area. Some standard Bureau signing is found at gates and several locations for special purposes. Some signing by the National Forest Service, State Land Department, Arizona Game and Fish Department, National Guard, Pinal County, and private land owners is found on adjacent lands.

   After approval of the TTMP, signing will be installed to identify designated roads, primitive roads and trails, and provide information on their location and applicable limitations. Various types of signs and markers will be installed according to current BLM policy[11] and guidance for travel management signing[12]. Signs will placed along roads and trails, at recreation and other activity areas, closure points and other locations where signing is necessary, and may include: area and public land identification, information kiosks, bulletin boards, interpretive signs and waysides, route numbers/route names, or special signs. The location of portal signs and kiosks is shown on Map 3. Signing will be kept to the minimum necessary for visitor management, interpretation, and safety, regulatory and informational purposes. A list of initial signing under the plan is included in Appendix E. Appropriate surveys and clearances will be conducted prior to causing new disturbance for sign installation.

2. **Visitor information/education/interpretation:** An official access guide including maps will be produced for public distribution showing access routes and related visitor information and use restrictions. Outreach efforts including on-the-ground presence will be increased with BLM personnel and volunteers, such as State Park's OHV Ambassador Program, adopt-a-road, trail or site programs, site stewards, adopt-a-ranch, or similar efforts. Interpretive efforts will be increased to promote a greater appreciation and respect for historic, cultural, and natural resource values in the area, and promote stewardship and involvement of visitors in taking care of sensitive areas (wildlife, habitat, cultural sites and properties, riparian areas, aquatic habitat, etc).

3. **Permittee access:** Permitees and authorization holders (grazing, utilities, minerals, recreation permits, wildlife waters, others) will be subject to the travel route designations and use restrictions. Cross country travel by motorized vehicles for working livestock or other activities will not be allowed. Administrative access for use, maintenance and operation of authorized facilities and improvements will be accommodated by the designations. Exceptions may be authorized on a case by case basis, and approved under the appropriate land use authorization and subject to stipulations that may be deemed necessary.

4. **Public hunting access:** Motorized travel on closed routes or cross country for hunting or to retrieve game will continue to be prohibited. Exceptions may be authorized on a

[11] Instruction Memorandum No. 2008-091, 1 – BLM Travel Management Signage, March 2008.

[12] BLM Sign Guidebook, USDI Bureau of Land Management, Denver, Colorado, December 2004.

case-by-case basis by written permission of the Field Manager. Non-motorized travel on closed routes for hunting and other activities will be allowed except where specifically restricted due to reclamation or restoration. Use of non-motorized mechanized or wheeled game carriers, hand carts or cargo haulers will be permitted on public lands in accordance with current policy, except in the designated Wilderness Area.

5. **Camping:** Per State law, camping within a ¼ mile of a natural water source containing water, or man-made watering facility containing water, in such a place that wildlife or domestic stock would be denied access to water, is currently prohibited. Camping within 200 ft. of any point water source (stock tank, well, trough, pond, spring) will be prohibited under the plan.

   In accordance with BLM policy for dispersed camping in public lands outside National Landscape Conservation System units, , motorized vehicles will be allowed to pull off a designated route up to 100 feet on either side of the centerline provided such use will not cause damage to vegetation, soils, habitat or other resources. Impacts from this use will be monitored on a continuing basis, and if monitoring results show it is causing resource damage, physical closure and restoration will be implemented on a case by case basis.

6. **Enforcement:** Law enforcement coverage on public lands in the planning area is provided by BLM Gila District Rangers. Enforcement actions are typically in response to complaints, and patrols are conducted on a periodic basis depending on priorities throughout the Gila District. Law enforcement cases in the planning area related to public use in the past eight years have included resource violations regarding damage to cultural resources, destruction of vegetation, illegal trail clearing, trash dumping, and occupancy trespass, hunting, and OHV and motor vehicle laws. The Pinal County Sheriff also provides law enforcement on public lands in the area under county programs, and under a BLM funded law enforcement agreement. The Arizona Game and Fish Department provides enforcement related to hunting and OHV laws. Law enforcement concerns related to public use in the area include speeding, drinking and driving, cross country motorized vehicle use, creation of new OHV trails without authorization, vandalism and property damage, and damage to cultural resources.

   Goals under the plan related to law enforcement are to increase the presence of BLM personnel in the area, continue and expand cooperative interagency operations, and increase public education efforts promoting awareness and compliance with use restrictions, regulations and public safety. Patrols will be increased at times of high public use, including interagency field operations. Staffing will be pursued for one full time Ranger with the primary patrol area in the Middle Gila Canyons and adjacent lands.

H. Monitoring/Adaptive management

The effects of off road vehicle use will be monitored. On the basis of monitoring information, and whenever deemed necessary to carry out the objectives of 43CFR8340, designations may be amended, revised, revoked, or other actions taken. Ongoing monitoring activities will address the condition of roads, primitive roads and trails, traffic and use type, volume and distribution, condition of public use areas and sites, compliance with designations and use restrictions, impacts on soils, vegetation, wildlife habitat, and

cultural resource properties. Baseline condition surveys and studies will be completed as appropriate, and monitoring indicators will be defined. Wildlife habitat condition and use, and trend studies will be conducted in xeroriparian areas open to motorized use, in areas designated closed to motorized use, and in areas that have not received motorize use. The results of monitoring and studies will be used to evaluate implementation progress and the effectiveness of the plan in achieving outcomes and desired conditions, identify adaptive measures, and respond to changing conditions, access and management needs. Land use proposals will be reviewed for access needs or potential impacts on access and transportation, and special requirements may be implemented on transportation rights of way. Route designations or other actions in this plan could be modified based on monitoring results, or to accommodate land use proposals. All required clearances and analyses would precede needed modifications to the transportation and travel management plan.

I. Implementation schedule

Following approval of this plan with issuance of a Record of Decision, an official transportation map will be published with visitor information on the route designations and use restrictions. The designated transportation routes will be entered in the BLM Facility Asset Management System, with priority on the Public Land Access Routes.

Generally, the initial implementation phase (1 to 3 years) will focus on developing public outreach, producing a public access guide and map, other visitor information, signing, installing barriers, and providing on-site visitor services and enforcement presence.

Condition surveys will be completed annually to identify road and trail maintenance, erosion control and stabilization projects. Road and trail maintenance will be scheduled to correct drainage and erosion problems, with priority given to the main access routes. Wildlife habitat surveys and studies will be pursued with priority on riparian, xeric desert washes, and desert tortoise and desert bighorn sheep habitat.

Necessary easements will be pursued as opportunities arise, with priority given to main access routes. Easements will be pursued in partnership with the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Landowner Relations Program, and Arizona State Park's Trails and OHV Program.

1. **Funding strategy:** Funds for labor, supplies and equipment will be pursued through the BLM's normal budget process, and will be subject to availability of agency funds in annual appropriations. Needed work will be implemented through the BLM Challenge Cost Share program, assistance agreements or cooperative management agreements to leverage external contributions to the greatest extent possible.

   Funding will be needed for labor to provide increased law enforcement and recreation visitor services, and cover maintenance and operational costs (supplies, materials, tools, equipment, vehicles, communications, etc). For the initial implementation phase, approximately ten work months (WM) are needed annually for Law Enforcement Rangers, seven WM for Park Ranger staff, six WM for other resource specialists, and one work month for engineering crew and equipment. Staffing costs and other funding needs for cultural surveys, transportation maintenance and related costs will be determined on an ongoing project basis, and planned annually.

Grants from various sources will be pursued, including Arizona OHV Program, Arizona Trails Heritage Program, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and others as opportunities arise to implement elements of the travel management plan. Existing and new site specific project plans and agreements will be maintained or established for development and maintenance of the Arizona Trail, the Great Western Trail, and other suitable routes through Adopt-a-Trail agreements for project plans developed with other agencies/parties.

2. **Estimated implementation costs:** Implementation cost elements include labor and operations related to visitor outreach and education, use and resource monitoring, signing, visitor informational and interpretive materials, road, trial and facility maintenance, coordination and enforcement activities. A five year program will be carried out to complete drainage, erosion control and stabilization work on the designated travel route network, with approximately 30 to 40 miles completed each year depending on available funding. Work will be planned for approximately three to four weeks of maintenance crew time. Labor costs will include a recreation technician for seven work months during the fall to spring season, periodic Law Enforcement Ranger coverage throughout the year based on the equivalent of five work months, and project administration equivalent to two work months. Other incidental costs include vehicles and equipment. The estimated annual implementation cost is approximately $120,000 to $150,000. Costs for supplies, materials and installation of initial signing and traffic control are estimated at $40,000, with recurring maintenance and replacement costs estimated at $4,000 annually.

J. Plan revision and amendment

The transportation and travel management plan will be in effect until rescinded or amended by future management action, revision, or update. Revision of the current RMP is expected within the next 5 to 10 years and could result in changes to the resource management allocations in the area, and may result in changes to transportation and travel management plan. Adaptive management measures may be undertaken with travel management plan maintenance actions and implementation progress tracking.