



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Challis Field Office
801 Blue Mountain Road
Challis, Idaho 83226

Decision Record/Finding of No Significant Impact

Challis Travel Management and Transportation Plan Environmental Assessment

ID-330-2006-EA-2403

June 17, 2008

NOTICE OF FIELD MANAGER'S DECISION

This document contains the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) decision implementing comprehensive trails and travel management for the Challis Field Office (CFO). The Challis Resource Management Plan (RMP), signed in 1999, directed the field office to complete "*a transportation plan...to identify (a) roads or trails which are extraneous and could be closed; (b) roads needing improvement to meet public safety, recreation, resource and program management, public access, and commodity production needs; (c) guidance for maintenance; (d) miles of roads or trails which may need to be constructed; and (e) other transportation management guidance which may be necessary* (RMP, p. 62). At that time, the RMP's Record of Decision limited most travel in the CFO to existing roads and trails, with additional closures to protect natural and cultural resources.

In accordance with this direction, the CFO completed an inventory in 2005 of approximately 2,484 miles of roads and trails on BLM-managed public lands. As part of this inventory the Challis Field Office initiated Government to Government consultation with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes in 2004. A preliminary map of the roads and trails network was published in early 2006, followed by four public meetings hosted by BLM's Resource Advisory Committee and four public meetings hosted by BLM to gather public input. An interdisciplinary team met frequently to analyze comments, offer proposed changes, create and analyze alternative management strategies, and complete an environmental analysis as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). A pre-decisional Environmental Assessment (EA) was mailed in February of 2008. Comments were received from the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, the public, Idaho Fish and Game, US Forest Service and Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. The interdisciplinary team reviewed comments and made the appropriate changes to the EA. The EA was finalized on June 2, 2008.

This decision will implement the Challis Travel Management and Transportation Plan (TMP) to meet the Purpose and Need of the EA and provide a system of designated routes to ensure a wide variety of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities while protecting important resource values.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

I have reviewed the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the alternatives documented in the EA (ID-330-2006-EA-2403), dated June 2, 2008 for the Challis Field Office Travel Management and Transportation Plan. I have also reviewed the project record for this analysis and the effects of the proposed action and alternatives, as disclosed in the Alternatives and Environmental Impacts sections of the EA. I have determined that the travel management and transportation plan of the selected alternative is in conformance with the Challis Resource Management Plan (RMP, 1999) relating to: Air Quality, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern/Research Natural Areas, Biological Diversity, Cultural Resources, Fire Management, Fisheries, Floodplain/Wetland Areas, Forest Resources, Land Tenure and Access, Livestock Grazing, Minerals – Energy and Non-Energy Leasable, Saleable and Locatable, Noxious Weed Infestations, Off-Highway Vehicle Use, Paleontological Resources, Recreation Opportunities and Visitor Use, Riparian Areas, Special Status Species, Transportation, Tribal Treaty Rights, Upland Watershed, Visual Resources, Water Quality, Wilderness Study Areas – Management if Released from Wilderness Review, Wildhorse and Burros, Wildlife Habitat and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Implementing regulations for NEPA (40 CFR 1508.27) provide criteria for determining the significance of effects. Significant, as used in NEPA, requires consideration of both context and intensity.

(a) Context. This requirement means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of

a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant (40 CFR 1508.27):

The disclosure of effects in the EA found the actions limited in context. Effects are local in nature and are not likely to significantly affect regional or national resources.

(b) Intensity. This requirement refers to the severity of impact. Responsible officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action. The following are considered in evaluating intensity (40 CFR 1508.27).

(1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The analysis documented in ID-330-2006-EA-2403 did not identify any individually significant short- or long-term impacts.

(2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

No significant effects on public health and safety were identified in the EA.

(3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

No significant effects on unique characteristics of the geographic area, historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas were identified in the EA.

(4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

Public and tribal comments gathered through the process did not identify effects on the quality of the human environment that were likely to be highly controversial. The comments received were very helpful in identifying relevant issues, desired routes and desired future conditions of the natural resources. No significant individual or cumulative impacts are anticipated as a result of this action.

(5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The analysis did not identify any effects on the human environment which are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. The use of off-highway vehicles on public lands has been well-established for decades, and has been documented on roads and trails throughout the field office.

(6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The analysis showed how the alternatives would implement direction in the Challis RMP and would not establish precedent for any future actions. Implementation of this decision anticipates future actions and provides criteria for addressing them under separate analyses required by NEPA. The various wilderness study inventories, EISs and reports predating the RMP concerning public lands managed by the Challis Field Office have numerous omissions and contrary information. Further discussion of this situation, believed to be unique to the Challis Field Office, is contained in the EA and the administrative record. The wilderness study inventories and EISs do not agree with each other or the Challis RMP. This situation, unique to the WSAs within the Challis Field Office, required use of aerial photo analysis and other documentation. This information clarified existing conditions at the time the WSAs were established. This action does not establish precedent for any future actions. It is not intended to establish precedent for travel planning in any other field office. It was the combination of factors encountered in the Challis Field Office that led BLM to approach the inventory of roads, trails and ways as it did. However, it should be noted that the use of aerial photos for inventory and monitoring is well established.

The BLM's National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands (January 2001), Issue 6 – Inventory and Monitoring, Management Goal I, Action 3: states “Identify and share successful techniques for data collection, including case studies of innovative projects. (For example, aerial or satellite photography or the use of contractors.....”

(7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The analysis did not identify any known significant cumulative effects (EA #ID-330-2006-EA-2403 Section - Environmental Impacts).

(8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

Consultation under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) has been conducted in accordance with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) National Programmatic Agreement and the implementing Protocol agreement between Idaho BLM and Idaho State Historic Preservation Office. The analysis showed that the alternatives would not result in adverse effects to cultural or historical resources.

(9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The implementation of this decision will have no adverse effects on threatened, endangered or sensitive terrestrial wildlife species. Maintenance and/or improvement to wildlife habitat is expected through the implementation of this decision, which seeks to improve species habitat by introducing specific limitations on travel. No effects on federally listed fish species were identified in the EA, and implementation of this decision will not prevent the attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives identified in PACFISH or INFISH. A “No Effect” Biological Assessment was completed as part of the analysis.

(10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The analysis in the EA shows that the alternatives are consistent with Federal, State, and local laws or requirements imposed for protection of the environment.

I have reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) and have determined the actions analyzed in the EA would not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

DECISION

My decision is to implement the following provisions of Alternative 2 and Alternative 3: as described in EA # ID-330-2006-EA-2403 (dated June 2, 2008), for the Challis Field Office Travel Management Plan and Transportation Plan:

- A Designated System of roads and trails
- Criteria and Actions Common to All Alternatives, and the General Principles and Criteria common to Alternatives 2 and 3, as described below.
- Reduce the miles of authorized roads from 2,484 miles to 2,217 miles, or a closure of 267 miles.

- Establishment of travel management areas for sage grouse priority areas and wilderness study areas.
- Motorized Seasonal Closure from October 1 – December 31 within the boundaries of all of the WSAs within the Challis Field Office except Borah and Little Boulder WSAs. Road Creek, Herd Creek, North Fork of Sage Creek and Burnt Creek Roads as well as roads with rights-of-way will remain open to motorized traffic during this time period. Administrative and permitted uses will not be subject to the seasonal closure.
- This decision is not intended to impact reserved treaty rights of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes; tribal members are exempt from seasonal closures imposed by this decision.
- Bear Creek Road will remain closed until such time as the Forest Service opens the beginning of the road.
- French Creek Trail will be realigned to avoid private land and include an associated parking area. The new alignment will be designated as a motorcycle trail and will be open from May 1 – October 31, inclusive.
- An ATV route will be designated and constructed which connects the Land of the Yankee Fork Interpretive Center to the Bayhorse Townsite.
- Blaze Canyon Road will be converted to an ATV/UTV/motorcycle trail.
- Challis Day Use Site will have an adjacent area with use limited to daylight hours and only ATVs, Motorcycles, UTVs or vehicles permitted for the extraction of sand and gravel will be allowed in this area.
- Pahsimeroi Hiking Trail and parking area will be approved for access to Idaho Fish and Game property in the Pahsimeroi River Valley.
- A non-motorized path will be constructed on public lands from the Challis golf course to the Land of the Yankee Fork Visitor Center.
- Mountain bike trails will be designated and constructed on public lands near the Challis golf course.

These provisions are explained in more detail below:

Designated System: The CFO will implement a designated system of roads and trails. Unless a route is either signed or mapped as open, it is closed to motorized use. Generally, the system of designated routes will be depicted as in Alternative 3, with some site-specific differences discussed below. All motorized vehicle travel will be limited to designated roads and trails. Cross-country use by non-motorized methods (i.e., pedestrian, equestrian, mountain bikes) is authorized unless site-specific monitoring determines that resource degradation is occurring, at which time the field office will consider and initiate mitigation measures. Mechanized travel (i.e., mountain bikes) in Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) will be limited to existing routes and ways, as per *BLM Handbook 8550-1, Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review (IMP)*.

This decision will construct 30 miles of new routes and reduce the total miles of authorized routes within the Challis Field Office from 2,484 miles to 2,217 miles, or a net reduction of 267 miles. Of these, 145 miles are closed in priority sage grouse areas and 23 miles are closed within WSAs. The remaining roads to be closed were parallel or redundant routes and short spur roads. The CFO will develop a new map that corrects errors identified by the public and staff members, as well as changes as indicated below. The

Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868 (15 Stat. 673) reserves the rights of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes to hunt, fish and gather on the “unoccupied lands of the United States”, which includes the public lands managed by the BLM Challis Field Office. BLM will continue to honor reserved treaty rights, and continue to meet its federal trust responsibilities; this decision is not intended to impact reserved treaty rights. Tribal members are exempt from the seasonal closures put into effect by this decision.

Existing RMP travel limitations: All transportation limitations and restrictions in the Challis RMP remain in effect.

Methods of route closure: A variety of closure methods will be available, depending on site-specific circumstances. In general, the minimum closure techniques that support resource needs will be used. Methods of closure might include one or more of the following: signing, with natural rehabilitation; obscuring the road entrance; blocking the road entrance; scarifying and seeding or planting the road surface.

Methods of route restriction: Where designation changes are proposed to restrict use to certain use types (such as ATV, motorcycle, pedestrian), minimum techniques required to achieve resource goals will be used. Methods of restriction might include one or more of the following: signage, engineered physical restrictions such as bollards or boulders, or natural reclamation down to the prescribed width, or other appropriate methods.

Methods of new route construction/route alteration: New routes will be constructed with minimum tool techniques appropriate to the scale of the project. Maintenance and construction efforts for all routes may result in disturbance footprints beyond the final tread width, but will be limited to the minimum disturbance necessary to reasonably carry out these actions. Appropriate and applicable project-related clearances and consultation processes (such as NHPA Section 106 cultural resources survey, and consultation with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes as appropriate) will be completed prior to any undertaking, including any ground-disturbing activities, such as re-routes, new routes or physical route closures.

Route Maintenance: As per the BLM Road and Trails Terminology Report (Salt, et al., 2006), all routes in the CFO will be classified as “roads,” “primitive roads,” or “trails.” In WSAs, “primitive roads” include “ways”. In addition, trails may be further divided to acknowledge a wide variety of uses, such as non-motorized, pedestrian, mountain bike, equestrian and ATV. Ground disturbance for construction and maintenance purposes is allowed within the route corridor measuring 30 feet from centerline of road and 15 feet from centerline of trails. Maintenance of routes within WSAs will meet the non-impairment standard.

Public access: BLM will seek easements as the need arises, or explore options to relocate a route around private property where these properties block access to public land. Where these methods fail to provide for public access, roads accessible only through private lands will be closed using the methods described above. Spur roads traveling across public lands, the sole purpose of which is to access private lands, will not be designated as part of the system unless a right-of-way (ROW) is sought by the private landowner and granted by BLM.

Coordination with other agencies: The CFO recognizes the need to closely coordinate with other federal, state, and local agencies with land management or transportation mandates. The CFO will, now and in the future, attempt to match adjoining agency routes in both numbering system and designated use. This is for the ease of navigation and to reduce confusion for the public.

Future Revisions: The BLM recognizes that travel management is a continually evolving process that addresses recreation on a broader scale than just motorized recreation and also has effects on other resources, such as wildlife habitat. Concurrent with this understanding, the BLM will seek to reduce the number of redundant, parallel, and spur routes, without eliminating motorized access and opportunities for motorized recreation within the Challis Field Office, in order to protect wildlife habitat and provide for a variety of recreational uses. Furthermore, if resource degradation and/or if existing routes are extended or expanded due to the public's failure to comply with this decision, the BLM will have to address those situations through emergency closures and/or future planning decisions. The Challis Field Office will take steps to update, amend and/or revise the travel plan, as necessary, in order to provide appropriate access, higher quality recreation opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized recreationists, as well as to reduce habitat fragmentation and improve wildlife habitat.

The travel plan is a living document. Future additions and deletions to the designated system of roads and trails will require an associated NEPA analysis and subsequent decisions. The following objectives and criteria shall be used in future travel planning decisions:

Future route-specific changes: The following criteria will apply to future route proposals, in addition to any guidance identified elsewhere in this decision:

- For future route changes or proposals, the CFO will consider methods to reduce parallel and redundant routes, reduce impacts to riparian areas and wetlands, cultural resources and reduce fragmentation of wildlife habitat.
- Any future route-specific changes not specifically analyzed in ID-330-2006-EA-2403 would require a site-specific NEPA analysis.
- Future routes will be designed for sustainability and with respect for setting (Physical, Administrative, and Social), and should provide for quality recreation opportunities to a variety of users.
- New roads built on upland slopes will be designed to reduce the potential for increased upland soil movement. Proposed road construction and maintenance activities will be reviewed by appropriate staff specialists and be executed according to appropriate guidance. Such specifications include slope stability, grade, gradient, water bars, leaving and /or re-establishing vegetation, and following and fitting to the natural terrain as closely as possible. The CFO will design specifications for road maintenance with the intent to eliminate increased sedimentation.
- Additional Travel Management Areas (TMAs) may be established if a unique situation warrants the establishment.
- BLM will have the goal of maintaining existing motorized access, however, if resource damage is occurring, motorized access may be lost.

Establishment of Travel Management Areas (TMAs): TMAs will be established for sage grouse priority areas and wilderness study areas. TMAs established for sage grouse priority areas will have the goal of following conservation measures for OHV disturbance as identified in the Challis Sage Grouse Conservation Plan, developed by the Challis Local Working Group and other applicable species conservation guidance. Protection of sage grouse habitat will be of the utmost concern when considering routes in these TMAs. TMAs established for WSAs will have the goal of progressing towards a primitive physical setting. No TMAs will be established for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) at this time.

Route-Specific Decisions:

Selected WSAs – Seasonal Closure: The CFO will impose a seasonal closure to motorized vehicles from October 1 to December 31 in order to improve non-motorized big game hunting opportunities and reduce unauthorized off-road use in WSAs except for: Little Boulder WSA and Borah WSA. The seasonal closure will exclude the following roads: Road Creek, North Fork of Sage Creek, Herd Creek, Burnt Creek and those roads with a valid right-of-way (ROW). Administrative and permitted uses will not be subjected to the seasonal closure.

Bear Creek Road: Bear Creek Road will remain closed. However, if the USFS re-opens the entrance of the road, BLM will open the road where it travels on BLM managed public lands.

French Creek Trail: As described in Alternative 3, the French Creek Trail will be realigned to avoid private land, and an associated parking lot will be constructed across from the USFS Yankee Fork work camp. The newly aligned trail will be designated as a motorcycle trail, following the power line road to the extent possible, and will be open from May 1 to October 31, inclusive.

Land of the Yankee Fork Interpretive Center to Bayhorse ATV Trail: As per Alternative 2, an ATV route will be designated which connects the Land of the Yankee Fork Interpretive Center to the Bayhorse Townsite State Park, without the seasonal closure.

Blaze Canyon Trail: Blaze Canyon Road will be converted from a road open to all motor vehicles to a trail open only to ATV/UTV/motorcycle and non-motorized use.

Challis Day Use Site: As described in Alternative 3, an area adjacent to the Challis Day Use Site, located near the U.S. Highway 93 bridge south of the city of Challis, will be limited to the following:

1. Use is limited to daylight hours (1/2 hour before sunrise and 1/2 hour after sunset) for operation of vehicles.
2. ATVs, Motorcycles, and UTVs
3. Vehicles permitted for the extraction of sand and gravel.

Pahsimeroi Hiking Trail: A walking path and parking area will be approved for access to IDF&G property in the Pahsimeroi River valley.

Challis Non-motorized trails: As per Alternative 2, a non-motorized path from the Challis Golf Course to the Land of the Yankee Fork Visitor Center will be constructed on BLM public lands. BLM roads conflicting with the non-motorized paths in the vicinity of Challis will be closed to motorized vehicles. Mountain Bike trails will be constructed on BLM public lands and designated near the Challis Golf Course.

Future RMP Amendment: The Field Office will initiate the process of amending the Challis RMP within the next year to consider removing the ¼-mile game retrieval exception in the RMP. Consideration for disabled Americans will be included as part of the plan amendment process. The analysis in ID-330-2006-EA-2403 may be used as part of that process.

Details about each of these provisions, including specific locations and maps, are found in the EA.

RATIONALE

These provisions of Alternatives 2 and 3 were chosen because they best meet the purpose and need for the action – that is, to identify an appropriate system of roads and trails in the CFO area as per guidance in the Challis RMP, to establish criteria for considering future changes to the roads and trails system, and to develop a system of roads and trails that complies with the agency’s national direction in light of increasing Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use and demand. Development of this plan meets the RMP’s Transportation Goal to “provide an adequate road and trail system on the Challis Resource Area’s public lands to (a) satisfy the public need for recreation, commodity production, access, and safety, and (b) facilitate the management of BLM resources and programs” (RMP, pg. 62).

The No Action alternative was not selected. Although the no action alternative would have provided the broadest possible motorized access to public land, it would also have allowed the greatest number of impacts to natural resources. It would not have limited methods of motorized travel in areas where a reduced footprint is most needed to protect wildlife, cultural resources, fisheries, riparian areas, soils, vegetation, water quality and other resources. It also would have limited the CFO in its ability to provide useful on-the-ground navigation and it provided the least guidance for future travel planning decisions.

Alternatives 2 and 3 each propose route reductions and call for more active management of the roads and trails system, reducing the impact of off-highway vehicle travel when compared with the No Action alternative, while still providing motorized access.

Under Alternative 2, the proposal for an ATV trail at French Creek was not selected as to do so would not match the motorcycle-only limitation on USFS lands in the same drainage. The proposal for a trail at the top of the Birch Creek Drainage was not selected as it would have encouraged use in the existing Birch Creek ACEC, which was set aside for rare plants and for critical bighorn sheep winter range/lambing habitat. The proposal for a trail through Malm Gulch ACEC was not selected because it would require a plan amendment.

Those portions of Alternatives 2 and 3 that were selected, were because of the following reasons:

Seasonal Closures WSAs: The Challis RMP limits OHV use in WSAs to the following: “...OHV use in WSAs would be limited to roads, vehicle ways, and trails that were identified in the Idaho Intensive Wilderness Final Inventory (November 1980).” Although this direction applies to all of the WSAs, the Idaho Intensive Wilderness Final Inventory only specifically addresses two of the seven WSAs in the Challis Field Office. The narrative for these two WSAs (Borah and Burnt Creek) focus on size and physical characteristics, naturalness, solitude, primitive and unconfined recreation, supplemental values and rehabilitation, public comment summary, comment evaluation and a decision. The narratives are not as useful as would be desired for travel planning, in determining where and if roads and ways existed. For example, under Naturalness, the Burnt Creek description states the following: “Several range developments exist in the form of watering troughs and reservoirs, however, these developments are localized and do not have an impact on the unit as a whole. Most access routes to the developments are not heavily used and require 4-wheel drive vehicles.” The associated map is inadequate to determine where these 4-wheel drive routes exist. The maps have no legends and are of poor quality. The other five WSAs in the Challis Field Office were mentioned on page 2 of the Idaho Intensive Wilderness Final Inventory (November 1980) as being identified through accelerated inventories, and only general maps of the areas, with no supporting descriptions, are provided. Once again, these maps have no legends. For example, as near as I can tell, the WSA maps do not depict USFS right-of-ways that existed at the time of the inventory (November

1980). Because the information contained in the RMP and the Idaho Wilderness Final Inventory was of limited utility in addressing travel management issues and restrictions, I reviewed other WSA inventories and EISs dated from 1979 to the 1991 Idaho Wilderness Study Report. These documents did not always agree with each other or the Challis RMP. It became clear to me that best available information was aerial photography, used in conjunction with the various inventories, EISs and reports. This is in compliance with the Challis Resource Management Plan, as the Idaho Intensive Wilderness Final Inventory did not provide the required detail regarding historic status of roads needed to complete travel planning. Not only did the aerial photography identify routes in existence at the time of WSA designation, but they also identified routes that have been extended or created since designation.

The need to have explicit and specific knowledge of what existed at the time of WSA designation is explained by the Wilderness Interim Management Policy (IMP). The IMP explicitly allows for existing facilities to continue to remain in WSAs under Specific Policy Guidance, #7-Existing Facilities. This section states that, "Some lands under wilderness review may contain minor facilities that were found in the wilderness inventory process to be substantially un-noticeable. For example, these may include primitive vehicle routes ("ways") and livestock developments. There is nothing in this IMP that requires such facilities to be removed or discontinued. On the contrary, they may be used and maintained as before, as long as this does not cause new impacts that would impair the area's wilderness suitability". Therefore, BLM policy states that existing ways may remain and be used and maintained as they were prior to the designation of a WSA. With this policy in mind, I believe my responsibility as decision maker is to preserve historic access and use, have a manageable transportation system, provide for a variety of recreation experiences for a variety of users, all while protecting the WSAs from impairment. This requires that I know explicitly what existed at the time of WSA designation.

Route proliferation (additional routes and/or extension of pre-existing routes) is the only impairment identified by BLM in the WSAs. This impairment was identified using the aerial photography. Since those routes were identified, they have been posted as closed. Unauthorized routes in the WSAs grew by approximately 42 miles since designation as WSAs. Forty one miles of these are within the WSAs, affected by the seasonal closure.

By imposing a three month seasonal closure to motorized transportation the possibility of further route proliferation should be greatly curtailed if not stopped, as BLM wilderness study monitoring depicts the greatest use during the time of the seasonal closure. With the assistance of a new law enforcement ranger stationed in the Challis Field Office, BLM will meet the non-impairment standard and be able to rehabilitate those unauthorized routes and/or extensions of routes. The seasonal closure will provide further protection to big game, and was supported by comments from the Idaho Fish and Game. The seasonal closure will also provide a quality non-motorized hunting experience as requested in public scoping and comments. The quality of the hunting experience will be improved by larger blocks of non-motorized areas. The largest contiguous block of public lands with a seasonal closure to motorized use is approximately 49,630 acres in size. The total public lands acres that will be seasonally closed to motorized vehicles is approximately 135,813 acres. This is approximately 17.1% of the total acres of public lands in the Challis Field Office that are subject to this decision. The WSAs will remain open to administrative and permitted uses on designated routes. This will allow BLM to effectively manage the area and will not interfere with permitted uses. Finally, this is a seasonal closure. The motorized public will be able to enjoy the area on all designated routes during the majority of the year.

As per Alternative 2 the following roads are to remain open, and will not be subject to a seasonal closure. Road Creek and Herd Creek Roads are “cherry stemmed” (cherry stemmed, means the road is outside of the WSA boundary, though it is surrounded by WSA) and not included in the WSA boundaries and are main roads in the area. North Fork of Sage Creek Road is being kept open as the southern end of the road has a ROW, and a portion of the road is “cherry stemmed” as well, with the remaining portion of the road identified as a “way” in the wilderness inventories. The road will enhance access into the WSA during hunting season, which the Peck Canyon Road does not due to topography. The BLM Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) expressed concerns about closing North Fork of Sage Creek Road. Subsequently, after personally driving the road, I agree that it makes more sense to keep the entire road open as opposed to restricting travel at a mid-point. This will enable the public to continue driving on a designated way within the WSA as opposed to risking impairment by having to create a turn-around or parking area at the end of the “cherry stem”. Burnt Creek road is also “cherry stemmed” into the WSA, but not all the way to the United States Forest Service (USFS) boundary, though the remaining portion of the Burnt Creek road was identified in the wilderness inventories as a “way”. Public comments were received asking that BLM not restrict access into adjoining USFS administered lands. By keeping Burnt Creek open through the seasonal closure, access is maintained to the Forest. In addition, stopping motorized travel at the end of the “cherry stem” could risk impairment of wilderness values as the public would require a turn-around or a parking area created in this area where no new roads are allowed.

As per Alternative 2, the Borah WSA is not included in the seasonal closure as the road on the south end is the boundary, and two primary roads, Elkhorn and the power line road, have valid ROWs. Further, the close proximity to the power lines and Highway 93 does not provide a quality big game hunting opportunity when compared to the five WSAs included in the seasonal closure. There has been no documented increase in the number of “ways” in the Borah WSA, therefore, by excluding the Borah WSA from the seasonal closure, enforcement efforts can be focused on the five WSAs where the closure will be in effect.

As per alternative 2, Little Boulder WSA is not included in the seasonal closure as all the authorized routes within the WSA have valid ROWs.

My rationale for not including the Donkey Hills Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in the Seasonal Closure is the following: The Donkey Hills ACEC is currently under a seasonal closure, established in the RMP, to motorized vehicles between December 15 and May 1 of each year, and this will continue to be the case. The Burnt Creek and Goldburg WSAs will provide nearby non-motorized hunting opportunities. The Donkey Hills area has several miles of roads (approximately 48) and access points (23) into the ACEC which would make enforcement difficult. By excluding the Donkey Hills ACEC from a hunting seasonal closure, enforcement can be focused on the five WSAs where the closure will be in effect, during that time period.

Establishment of Travel Management Areas (TMAs): Travel management areas were established in WSAs and sage grouse areas to provide specific guidance for future travel management decisions. TMAs were not created for ACECs as the established guidance in the Challis RMP is sufficient for those areas. TMAs established for sage grouse priority areas will have the goal of following conservation measures for OHV disturbance as identified in the Challis Sage Grouse Conservation Plan (October 2007), developed by the Challis Local Working Group, and other applicable species conservation guidance. This will provide the utmost protection of sage grouse habitat when considering routes in these TMAs. TMAs established for WSAs will have the goal of progressing towards a primitive physical setting. This will help guide transportation decisions and ensure BLM meets the non-impairment standard now and into the future.

Bear Creek Road: Bear Creek Road was mistakenly left off the 2006 travel map, and as a result the road was rehabilitated after the Shower-Bath Fire of 2007. It doesn't make sense to open the BLM managed portion of the road at this time as the entrance to the road remains closed on USFS administered lands.

French Creek Trail: The Alternative 3 proposal aligns the BLM portion of the trail with the USFS trail – both with motorized use limited to motorcycle use. The trail avoids private lands and will allow access for all the public, as was intended when originally constructed. Opening this trail to motorized use seasonally (May 1-October 31) responds to public comments and will protect the area for plants and wintering wildlife. The trail will follow, to the extent possible, the existing power line maintenance road, reducing impacts to surrounding vegetation. The construction of a new trailhead along Highway 75 will allow a safe location for loading/unloading, and space for public education/interpretation. Maintaining the partnership with the local Cooperative Weed Management Area will help keep noxious and invasive weeds controlled.

Land of the Yankee Fork Interpretive Center to Bayhorse ATV Trail: ATV trails discussed in the alternatives for the North Fork of Birch Creek and Keystone Road provide needed and requested connections between Land of the Yankee Fork Interpretive Center and Bayhorse State Park. The trail would provide an important link between State Park facilities. Such a route would provide economic benefits to the local community, in addition to high-quality recreation opportunities. The trail will also provide an opportunity for educating riders in proper trail etiquette, natural resource values along the trail, and Idaho's mining history. As this route does not enter the Birch Creek ACEC, there will be no seasonal closure.

Blaze Canyon Trail: Converting the existing three and a half miles of Blaze Canyon Road to a trail for ATV, UTV and motorcycle use, as analyzed, will expand opportunities for trail riding from the Mackay Mine Hill trail system. The road is also rugged and steep, and subject to damage from full-sized vehicles. Transitioning from a mixed use trail to limiting use to ATVs, UTVs and motorcycles will reduce conflicts between these and larger vehicles.

Challis Day Use Site: Limiting the existing site to daylight hours and types of vehicles will provide an opportunity, in conjunction with the nearby Land of the Yankee Fork Visitor Center, to teach riding skills, proper trail etiquette, and resource stewardship. Allowing continued extraction of sand and gravel from the site will provide benefits to the local community.

Pahsimeroi Hiking Trail: Inclusion of a hiking path and parking area will reduce user conflict by removing doubt as to land ownership along the trail. The improved, maintained trail will also provide a safer experience for anglers. This will improve access to the Pahsimeroi River for anglers and other recreationists.

Challis Non-motorized trails: The addition of non-motorized trails (pedestrian, equestrian and mountain bike) near Challis is expected to yield both economic benefits to the community and health benefits to users. The new trails will also provide a transportation route via means other than those adjacent to U.S. Highway 93, which increases public safety by diverting pedestrian and bike traffic away from the highway. Though initial construction may result in short term impacts, the long term benefits of eliminating conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users will provide a more diverse and enjoyable experience to all users.

AUTHORITY

The authority under which this decision is made is found within the following 43 CFR 8340 citations:

Subpart 8340 — Conditions of Use

8340.0-3 Authority: The provisions of this part are issued under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.); the Taylor Grazing Act (43 U.S.C. 315a); the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.); the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1281c); the Act of September 15, 1960, as amended (16 U.S.C. 670 et seq.); the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (16 U.S.C. 460 I-6a); the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1241 et seq.) and E.O. 11644 (Use of Off-Road Vehicles on the Public Lands), 37 FR 2877, 3 CFR part 74, 332, as amended by E.O. 11989 42 FR 26959 (May 25, 1977).

Sec. 8340.0-7 Penalties: Any person who violates or fails to comply with the regulations of subparts 8341 and 8343 is subject to arrest, conviction, and punishment pursuant to appropriate laws and regulations. Such punishment may be a fine of not more than \$1,000 or imprisonment for not longer than 12 months, or both.

Sec. 8340.0-8 Applicability: The regulations in this part apply to all public lands, roads, and trails under administration of the Bureau.

Subpart 8341 — Conditions of Use (entire section)

Subpart 8342 — Designation of Areas and Trails (entire section)

Subpart 8343 — Vehicle Operations (entire section)

APPEAL PROCEDURES

This travel plan decision is subject to a 30-day public appeal. You have the right to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations of 43 CFR Part 4. In order for your appeal to be considered timely, it must be received by within 30 days of receipt. If an appeal is taken, you must follow the procedures outlined in the attached Form 1842-1, Information on Taking Appeals to the Board of Land Appeals. The appellant has the burden of showing that the Decision appealed is in error.

This Decision will become effective at the expiration of the time for filing a Notice of Appeal, unless a petition for a stay of the Decision is filed together with a Notice of Appeal (see 43 CFR 4.21(a)). The provisions of 43 CFR 4.21(b) define the standards and procedures for filing a petition to obtain a stay pending appeal.

/s/ David P Rosenkrance

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