

South Rampart Travel Management Plan / Environmental Assessment

OCTOBER 2009 PUBLIC WORKSHOP II SUMMARY

I. Background

a. Project Area Description

The South Rampart Travel Management Plan project area consists of 121,168 acres of United States Forest Service (USFS) lands located approximately six miles northwest of the greater Colorado Springs metropolitan area in El Paso, Teller and Douglas counties. The project area comprises the northeastern portion of the Pikes Peak Ranger District on the Pike National Forest, including the Rainbow Falls Motorized Trail System and connections to the South Platte Ranger District.

Access to the project area is provided by four primary routes: Rampart Range Road #300 from northeast of Colorado Springs, Colorado State Highway 67 north out of Woodland Park, Forest Service Road #350 in the Rainbow Falls Motorized Trail System, and from Interstate 25 west of Monument on Mount Herman Road #320. However, given the project area's adjacency to private neighborhoods and subdivisions, municipal or county parks and open spaces, and other non-Federal land holdings, many users access the area via unauthorized, non-system routes. Over the past 30 years, numerous unauthorized travel routes have been created by various user groups. These unauthorized routes have contributed to the confusion of which roads and trails are designated NFS routes open to motorized travel. To further complicate this issue, the decomposed granite soils in the project area often appear as a road base surface and wayfinding signs are repeatedly vandalized and difficult to maintain.

Typical motorized and non-motorized uses of the project area include: four-wheeling (challenging four-wheel driving), trail motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, mountain biking, hiking, equestrian use, no-wake boating on Rampart Reservoir, U.S. Air Force Academy and Monument Fire Center helicopter over flights, and administrative access, including permitted uses, leases, or other commercial uses. The project area offers diverse opportunities for recreation ranging from the heavily used Rainbow Falls Motorized Trail system to the Rampart Reservoir Recreation Area. Motorized travel also defines areas where visitors can do a wide range of activities such as camping, fishing, hunting, sight seeing, and target shooting.

Unlike many NFS lands within Colorado, this project area generally remains accessible to motorized and non-motorized travel in all seasons due to relatively low elevations. The proximity to major metropolitan areas and the extended seasons of use make the South Rampart project area one of the most heavily traveled units on NFS lands in Colorado.

b. Travel Management Rule (2005)

In 2003, the Chief of the Forest Service identified unmanaged recreation as one of the four primary threats to National Forest System lands. One component of unmanaged recreation was the expanding use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs). Previous Forest Service regulations (36

CFR 295) addressed motor vehicle travel at a time when fewer OHVs were in use and were less capable of cross-country travel. The growing popularity and changing capabilities of OHVs are important factors contributing to the need for new motorized travel regulations to sustain the resource functions of federal lands and provide motorized recreational opportunities.

In 2005, the Forest Service published a new rule on motor vehicle access in all national forests, which requires all national forest units to designate roads, trails, or areas open for motorized travel by vehicle class and if appropriate by time of year. Travel is generally categorized and managed based on the mode of travel and/or vehicle class. The Forest Service characterizes land travel by the following modes: hiker, horseback, mountain bikes (i.e., mechanized), single-track motorized (i.e., motorcycles), off-highway vehicles (OHVs) 50 inches or less in width that are commonly referred to as ATVs, OHVs greater than 50 inches in width (e.g., UTVs, four-wheel drive trucks or sport utility vehicles), and full-sized passenger vehicles (e.g., two wheel-drive passenger cars and trucks or sport utility vehicles).

The 2005 Rule specifies that the general criteria for designation of roads, trails, and areas for motorized vehicle use shall consider effects on natural and cultural resources, public safety, recreational opportunities, access needs, and the maintenance of those travel routes (at 36 CFR 212.55). The rule expects that subsequent route designations would minimize harassment of wildlife and impacts to wildlife habitat, minimize damage to soil, watersheds, and vegetation, and reduce conflicts between different classes of motor vehicle users as well as conflicts between motorized and other recreational uses. The 2005 Travel Rule also requires roads, trails, and areas designated open for motorized uses on NFS lands to be illustrated on Motor Vehicle Use maps (MVUMs) and made available to the public free of charge. The Pikes Peak Ranger District published their MVUM in February of 2009.

A draft transportation analysis process (TAP) has been prepared for all the roads and motorized trails identified on the MVUM and are within the study area. Travel analysis is an integrated ecological, social, and economic science-based approach to transportation planning that addresses existing and future road and motorized trail management options. An appropriate balance between the benefits of access to the national forest and the risks of route-associated effects to ecosystems is necessary to develop an optimum transportation system. One of the Forest Services' top priorities is to provide road and motorized trail systems that are safe to the public, responsive to public needs, environmentally sound, affordable, and efficient to manage. Completing a TAP is a key step to meeting this objective. An inventory of existing resources (transportation, biological, cultural, etc.) was compiled and used as part of the TAP process. Each road in the study area was rated with respect to its benefit for recreational use, fire/fuels access, timber access, special use access and forest management access. Each road was also rated with respect to its potential to impact on watersheds, wildlife, botany and archaeological sites. The outcomes of these ratings identify potential actions that should be taken. The draft TAP report will be available on the project webpage in January, 2010.

II. Purpose and Need

Travel management is the integrated planning of, and providing for, movement of people and products to and through National Forest System (NFS) lands. A travel management plan provides clear, specific direction on the appropriate levels of land, water, and air access opportunities to be made available.

The purpose of the proposed project, a Travel Management Plan for the South Rampart project area, is to determine which motorized roads and trails and non-motorized trails on NFS lands in the planning area are necessary to provide a diverse, functional and sustainable transportation system that balances resource protection, public safety, current and anticipated future recreational use demands, and public and administrative access needs.

The proposed project is needed to address the following issues or concerns:

- Existing conditions are not conducive to providing the needed balance between resource protection, access, public safety, recreational opportunities, and recreational experiences
- Proactively manage public access to allow recreational experiences for motorized and non-motorized travelers while balancing resource management objectives, public safety, and current and anticipated future recreational use demands
- Designate a transportation system on federal lands that can remain functional and not cause unacceptable resource damage given the existing and expected maintenance funding, partnership support, and management capability
- Further refine the official travel system by specifying roads, trails, and areas open to motorized use and update the current Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM)
- Develop a transportation system to meet the increasing demand for recreational travel opportunities and to provide a diverse range of experiences for a wide variety of Forest users
- Eliminate adverse resource impacts caused by unauthorized travel to maintain and/or improve the condition of ecosystems and watersheds
- Identify high-use, potentially sustainable, non-system routes to be considered for formal designation as non-motorized system trails
- Educate the public and to increase awareness of how to enjoy and be good stewards of the Forest
- Comply with the 2005 Travel Management Plan Rule and other subsequent guidelines and regulations
- Address area-specific resource concerns and/or recreational opportunities and conflicts

III. Public Workshops

In order to involve the public in the travel management planning process and solicit feedback on preliminary concepts, the United States Forest Service (USFS) hosted two public workshops near the project area. These workshops were the second in a set of three workshops planned for the project. The third public workshop is anticipated to be held in February 2010 and will present the draft alternatives for the project. The objectives of the public workshops were to:

- Provide information about the project and study area

- Communicate outcomes of previous public scoping (outreach) efforts
- Discuss preliminary project objectives that will be used to develop solutions for the project purpose and need
- Review and discuss preliminary concepts that provide a solution for the project objectives
- Work in small groups to identify potential road and trail networks
- Record public opinion about the information and ideas discussed

The first public workshop has held on October 14, 2009 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at Woodland Park Middle School in Woodland Park, CO. The meeting was attended by 21 members of the public, five USFS staff, and three EDAW/AECOM staff. The second public workshop was held on October 15, 2009 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the CSU Leo Young Service Center in Colorado Springs, CO. The meeting was attended by 38 members of the public, seven USFS staff, and three EDAW/AECOM staff.

At the beginning of each workshop, participants were greeted and assigned to workgroups with project staff. Poster displays and handouts described the planning process, existing conditions in the project area, information about good stewardship, and a summary of public scoping to date for the project.

In each workgroup, project staff introduced the status of the project and explained three sets of preliminary travel management concepts, which were developed based on initial public and agency comments. These concepts were developed to compare and contrast issues and opportunities. None of them was developed as a preferred concept. Participants had the opportunity to discuss the concepts, ask questions, provide feedback, and make notes/additions on the poster-sized maps of each concept. Comment forms were distributed to participants to provide an opportunity for additional written feedback.

IV. Summary of Public Comment Received

The following is a summary of comments collected at the public workshops, returned comment forms and emails after the workshops. Comments were assembled from comment forms and notes on the preliminary concept maps.

Concept A

- Support for the family OHV area
- Support for the OHV challenge area
- Support for the hiking and biking area
- Support for single-track motorcycle connections to the surrounding communities
- Suggestion to formalize existing trail links to the communities in the southern part of the project area
- Support long rides, hikes, equestrian trips, and loops
- Recommendation to close the shooting range in the southern part of the project area
- Support for concentration of motorized trails

- Support for concentration of non-motorized trails
- Support for separate areas for motorized and non-motorized recreation
- Suggestion to restrict motorized use to west of Rampart Range Road and large vehicle roads
- Suggestion to leave main routes open and close spur and non-system routes
- Concern there are too many non-motorized or hiking-only trails compared to motorized trails
- Question about whether there is enough non-motorized interest to justify the non-motorized network of trails presented
- Suggestion to move motorized use south to less sensitive areas, and non-motorized use north to more sensitive areas
- Desire to further expand motorized trails in the motorized use area
- Concern about protection of the watershed on the eastern side of the project area
- Support for opening Manitou Experimental Forest for public use
- Desire to connect trails to Air Force Academy through Blodgett Open Space
- Support for trail connections to North Rampart area
- Support for North-South connections for hiking
- Recommendation to add the single-track motorcycle loop in the north side of the project area from Concept B to Concept A

Concept B

- Comment that the expanded use for hiking, mountain biking and OHV presented in Concept B will minimize conflict and satisfy the greatest number of users
- Opinion that Concept B represents a better balance of motorized and non-motorized use than the other concepts
- Support for the amount of single-track motorcycle presented
- Suggestion to connect mountain biking area with single-track motorized area, and permit both uses (from Schubarth to Rainbow Falls)
- Suggestion to have certain single-track trails open on different days of the week for OHVs and mountain bikes
- Suggestion to open a designated shooting area in the southern part of the project area to reduce shooting impacts elsewhere
- Concern about potential impacts to Preble's Jumping Mouse habitat in the northern part of the project area
- Concern about unsafe access at the trailhead at 322
- Request to both reopen and close 322A
- Suggestion that motorized use be limited in the northeastern part of the project area for restoration
- Request to keep Hotel Gulch open as a loop for licensed use
- Request for a biking trail along Rampart Range Road
- Desire to expand roadless area
- Concern about access from private property

Concept C

- Comment that the expanded use for hiking, mountain biking and OHV use presented in Concept C will minimize conflict and satisfy the greatest number of users
- Support for the separation of motorized and non-motorized uses
- Desire for longer motorized loop trails
- Desire for more maintenance and facilities (such as bathrooms) in the motorized use area
- Support for loop single-track motorcycle trail
- Support for connection to N Rampart riding area and 717 (North Divide)
- Concern that the motorized area is too close to the non-motorized area, and concern that use might be difficult to enforce in this area
- Support for motorized trail parallel to Rampart Range Road
- Desire for more single-track motorcycle trails for all riding levels
- Desire for the closure and restoration of dead-end trails
- Support for connection between mountain bike and motorized use areas
- Support for a separate use area for mountain biking
- Desire for single-track motorcycle use in the mountain biking area
- Satisfaction with location of mountain biking area
- Desire to reopen shooting area in southern part of project area
- Concern about fire and shooting hazards on 950 and 951, recommendation to limit use to day-use or close completely
- Suggestion for an OHV trials area in the motorized use area
- Concern about impacts of motorized loops in municipal watershed area
- Note that Williams Canyon (in southern part of project area) should be recognized
- Desire for additional hiking trails in the roadless area
- Desire for trails out of Palmer Lake
- Would prefer family and challenge OHV areas included in this concept
- Support for areas of technical, narrow single-track motorcycle trails
- Would prefer that mountain biking area was open to other non-motorized uses as well

General Comments

- Support for the planning process
- Recommendation to use a “shared use” approach to trails planning
- Concern about management and implementation of major changes to trail system
- Concern that strict enforcement will be needed to ensure that the concerns of all parties are met and to prevent unauthorized use
- Support for expanding loop and connecting trails for motorized single-track, and non-motorized use (e.g. 717 and Rampart Range Riding Area for OHV use, and Saylor Park for ATV use). Desire for trail connections to the North and West.
- Support for trails that connect to the surrounding community
- Concern about mixing OHV uses on trails (i.e.: single-track, ATV and UTV)

- Suggestion to co-locate mountain bike and single-track motorized use in one area, and provide more single-track for both uses
- Demand for more ATV use areas
- Recommendation to base designated uses on how the areas are currently used
- Concern about shooting near hiking trails, roads and private property
- Need for designated shooting areas
- Support for all trails being open to prevent overgrowth of vegetation and protect public safety
- Concern about wildfire on trails, and support for using system routes for fire control
- Concern that concentrated use in some areas is causing more environmental impacts than use on a more dispersed system of trails
- Concern that the number of roads that require licenses in the concepts presented will limit OHV use and make it hard to loop between trails by OHV
- Concern that motorized users will travel off trail, and suggestion to restrict motorized use in any areas where motorized users travel off trail
- Request to allow seasonal use
- Request to re-open 322A as a single track or 4WD road with cables to protect sensitive areas. Suggestion to connect this with the road to the North
- Suggestion that trailhead for Rainbow Falls access should be near the gate to the private Rainbow Falls Road and not at HWY 67 at RD 332. Note that area at HWY 67 is flat, offers little challenge, and is also used for equestrian use
- Support for more ATV trails in the Rainbow Falls area, and for the single-track motorcycle loop in Rainbow Falls
- Request for a map of proposed changes (additions and removals of existing trails)
- Support for 300 foot rule for dispersed camping
- Support for expanded mountain biking opportunities
- Preference for longer OHV routes
- Support for single-track motorcycle loops
- Support for co-locating motorcycle and mountain biking opportunities
- Support for single direction (one-way) single-track motorcycle loops
- Support for limiting multiple uses on trails by day or time of day for both motorized and non-motorized uses
- Desire for enforcement of noise level limits
- Desire for trails for rock crawling separate from motorcycle and bike use
- Support for fewer trails in Saylor Park
- Desire for a mudding area (pit)
- Note that mountain bike volunteers are willing to help maintain trails
- Support for separating motorcycle, ATV, hiking and biking use
- Support for lower noise standards
- Suggestion that trails could be used by electric vehicles

- Support for restricting use from the boundary to Columbine Canyon to prevent unauthorized firearms, trash dumping, trespassing on private property, and general abuse of the area
- Updates to 322A and 371 on the MVUM
- Request for closure of illegal ATV and mountain biking routes
- Support for wildlife habitat and conservation as top priorities
- Support for restoring restore trails 634, 633 and 631 as motorized single-track
- Support for allowing full use to mountain bikes
- Support for further restrictions at the short roads #950 and 951 and the nearby campground, including noise, fire, and shooting restrictions
- Support for equal funding for motorized and non-motorized uses
- Concern about congestion and trail safety for users when motorized use is concentrated in a small area
- Support for restricting motorized use east of FR300 and 322 near the Rampart East Roadless Area
- Support for a multi-day motorized riding experience
- Recommendation to plan for both current and future use
- Note that grant money is available to improve and realign motorized routes to ensure sustainability
- Request for an alternative that reduces overall recreational use for all activities and restoration of trails
- Concern about adding motorized use to new areas without additional Forest Service resources
- Concern about unauthorized use of FS352A, and concern about public safety on this road
- Support for limiting motorized use to current Rainbow Falls area
- Support for motorized links between recreation areas, the adjacent community, Waldo Canyon, and Rampart Reservoir
- Proposal (including map) of trails that need mitigation, are closed but could be opened, could be closed, and new trails that could be added (trails proposed by Dave Kemper)
- Support for motorcycle trials area, and argument that trials riding causes minimal impacts
- Proposal for three trails riding areas at Illinois Gulch, Saylor Park, and Plum Creek

V. Additional Information

For more information or to provide comments, please contact:

South Rampart Travel Management Plan

Project email: comment@southrampart.net

Project webpage: www.fs.fed.us/r2/psicc/pp

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