

U.S. Forest Service - Pacific Southwest Region Dispersed Camping & Game Retrieval Guidance



V1.2
May 3, 2007

Introduction

For many National Forest visitors the use of motor vehicles on roads, trails and within small open areas is their form of recreation. For others, motor vehicles are used to access the National Forest for other activities.

The purpose of designating roads, trails, and areas by vehicle class and, if appropriate, by time of year, is to prohibit indiscriminate cross-country travel, and enhance public enjoyment of the National Forests while maintaining other important values and uses on NFS lands.

Step 4 of the USDA Forest Service (USFS), Pacific Southwest Regions (R5) five-step Travel Management/Route Designation process is to have an Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) conduct environmental analysis and prepare the appropriate NEPA document to determine what changes, if any, will be made to the current NFS transportation system.

Questions have arisen regarding the scope of the analysis, and whether motor vehicle parking, dispersed camping and game retrieval should be part of this analysis. This document provides guidance for field units in determining the scope of the environmental analysis, specifically related to parking, dispersed camping and big game retrieval.

Baseline Transportation System

A National Forest should consider their current NFS transportation system as their "Baseline Transportation System" and the starting point for travel management analysis. Travel analysis helps to identify proposals for changes in travel management direction and informs the environmental analysis associated with those proposed actions (Proposed Forest Service Manual (FSM) 7712).

Travel analysis is not a decision making process. Travel management decisions are considered and disclosed through appropriate site-specific environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (FSM 7712.3 (1) proposed).

To avoid duplication, site-specific environmental analysis for travel management decisions should incorporate by reference relevant information and analysis developed during the travel analysis process. Travel analysis identifies proposed changes in the forest transportation system, along with supporting rationale. The proposed changes should form the basis for the proposed actions and purpose and need statements in the subsequent NEPA process. Site-specific environmental analysis should build off travel analysis by evaluating in appropriate detail reasonable alternatives to the proposed changes identified through travel analysis (FSM 7712.3 (2)).

National Guidance

As stated in the National OHV Implementation Team, "Motor Vehicle Route and Area Designation Guide", there is no need to conduct an environmental analysis to designate those roads, trails, and areas on National Forest System lands that are already managed for motor vehicle use where:

- 1) Use will continue unchanged, or
- 2) Existing restrictions on motor vehicle use will be retained.

The Guide refers to the current forest transportation system as the "baseline transportation system," consisting of those National Forest System (NFS) roads, NFS trails, and on NFS lands currently managed for vehicle use, together with any orders or other prohibitions governing motor vehicle use. This baseline transportation system is deemed the "starting point" for environmental analysis. Proposed additions to this baseline transportation system, identified through the Travel Analysis Process, constitute the scope of the proposed action to be analyzed. Sample wording for the purpose and need can be found on pages 25 through 31 of the National OHV Implementation Team, "Motor Vehicle Route and Area Designation Guide", and in the NOI/Proposed Action template posted on the R5 Route Designation team room.

Road, Trail and Small Open Area Designations



Once Travel Management Decisions have been completed the designations include the following:

A designation for a road or trail includes all terminal facilities, trailheads, parking lots, and turnouts associated with the designated road or trail. The designation also includes parking a vehicle so that all parts of the vehicle are within one vehicle length from the edge of the road surface when it is safe to do so and without causing damage to NFS resources or facilities (FSM 7716.1 (1) Proposed).

A *Terminal Facility* as defined in proposed FSM 7705 as "A transfer point between the forest transportation system and forest resources served by the system or between different transportation modes, including parking areas, boat ramps and docks, trailheads, marine access facilities, airfields, and heliports."

Dispersed Camping and Big Game Retrieval

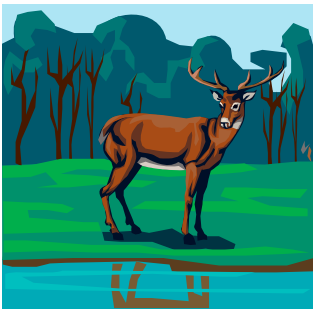
The travel management rule in *36 CFR 212.51 (b)* states "In designating routes, the responsible official may include in the designation the limited use of motor vehicles within a specified distance of certain designated routes, and if appropriate within

specified time periods, solely for the purposes of dispersed camping or retrieval of a downed big game animal by an individual who has legally taken that animal.”

In FSM 7715.64 (proposed) - Big Game Retrieval and Dispersed Camping

1. The responsible official may include in a designation the limited use of motor vehicles within a specified distance of a certain forest roads and trails, and if appropriate, within specified time periods, solely for the purposes of dispersed camping or retrieval of a downed big game animal by an individual who has legally taken that animal (big game retrieval).
2. The authority in FSM 7715.64, paragraph 1, should be used sparingly to avoid undermining the purposes of the travel management rule and to promote consistency in its implementation.
3. The Regional Forester should coordinate designations within States and among adjoining National Forests to promote consistency.
4. Responsible officials should consider providing designated routes to dispersed camping sites as an alternative to authorizing off-route use under FSM 7715.64, paragraph 1.

Big Game Retrieval



The California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G) define Big Game as Deer, Elk, Pronghorn Antelope, Wild Pig (feral pigs, European wild pigs and their hybrids), Black Bear and Nelson Bighorn Sheep. It is illegal to pursue, drive, herd, or take any bird or mammal from any type of motor-driven air or land vehicles, motorboat, airboat, sailboat, or snowmobile, except when the motor is off and/or the sails furled and it is drifting, beached, moored, resting at anchor, or is being propelled by paddle, oar or pole.

During informal consultation between the USFS and the CDF&G associated with the R5 Route Designation process the CDF&G understood the agencies intent and were in support of our strategy for planning and implementing a system of designated routes in California and did not support the limited use of cross-country travel.

On National Forest System Lands in California a **proposed designation** including the limited use of motor vehicles within a specified distance of a certain forest road or forest trail, and if appropriate within specified time periods, solely for the purpose of retrieval of a downed big game animal by an individual who has legally taken that animal **should be analyzed carefully by your IDT and Forest Supervisor**. These proposals should be submitted to the Director of Recreation, Wilderness and Heritage resources for consideration before being included in a decision.

Dispersed Camping



It is well recognized National Forests have historically provided camping opportunities outside of developed campgrounds. This type of dispersed use has historically occurred adjacent to, or at the end (terminus) of, NFS roads, along side bodies of water, and at the termini of a vast network of unauthorized roads and trails. The development of these unauthorized routes has created a proliferation of routes and/or environmental damage. In addition, concentrated use areas have developed many of which are now devoid of vegetation due to extensive use. Use of these areas may be affecting the soil resource, water quality and wildlife habitat.

The Travel Management Analysis and decision making process provides the opportunity for the responsible official to designate limited motor vehicle use within a specified distance of a designated route, and if appropriate within a specified time periods for the purpose of dispersed camping.

It is recommended on National Forest System Lands in California a proposed designation including the limited use of motor vehicles within a specified distance of a certain forest road or forest trail, and if appropriate, within specified time periods, solely for the purpose of dispersed camping be no more than 50 feet from the end of a designated road or trail. Allowing a specified distance from an entire length of a road or trail should be carefully considered as it may create a cross-country travel corridor and be inconsistent with the intent of the Travel Management Rule.

In addition, whether the limited distance is from the edge of an entire road or trail, or from the end, careful consideration should be given to vehicle class to avoid creating a "de facto" open area.

Any roads or trails including a distance for dispersed camping would be proposed additions to the baseline transportation system, and as such, would need to be identified in the proposed action and are subject to environmental analysis. This analysis should include the area from the edge of the road or trail to the edge of the specified distance potentially affected by the limited motor vehicle use.

Motor Vehicle Use Map

The limited distance for motor vehicle use must be reflected on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) in the Designation Tables (refer to National Motor Vehicle Use Map Production Guide) and through the use of the appropriate symbol on the map. It is recommended on National Forest System Lands in California these designations are illustrated on the MVUM as indicated in Figures 1 & 2.

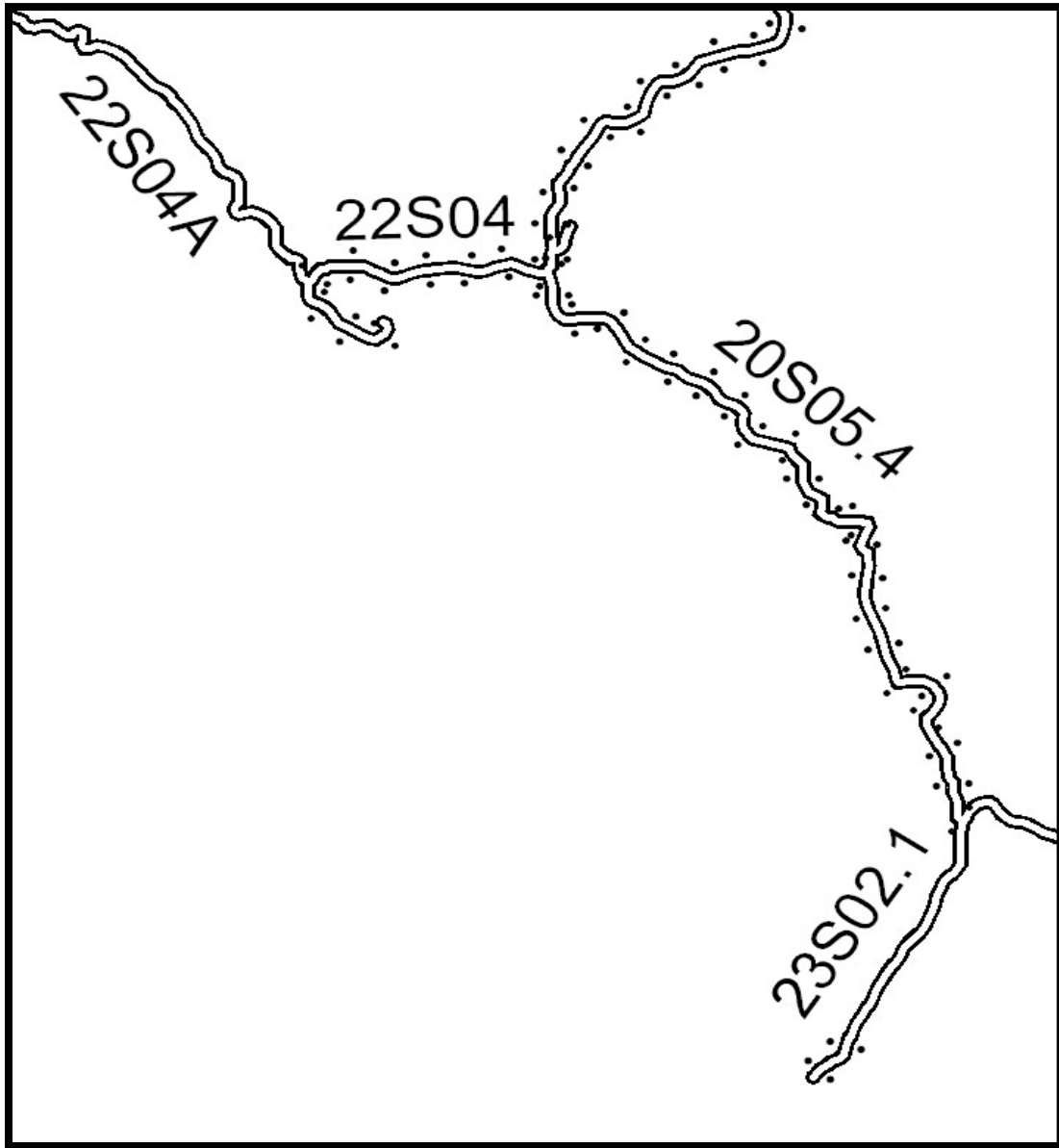


Figure 1: Example - Road Open to Highway Vehicles Only

In this example, a limited distance (R5=50 feet) for the purposes of dispersed camping is allowed along the entire road edge on road 20S05.4 and from the end (termini) of road 23S02.1.

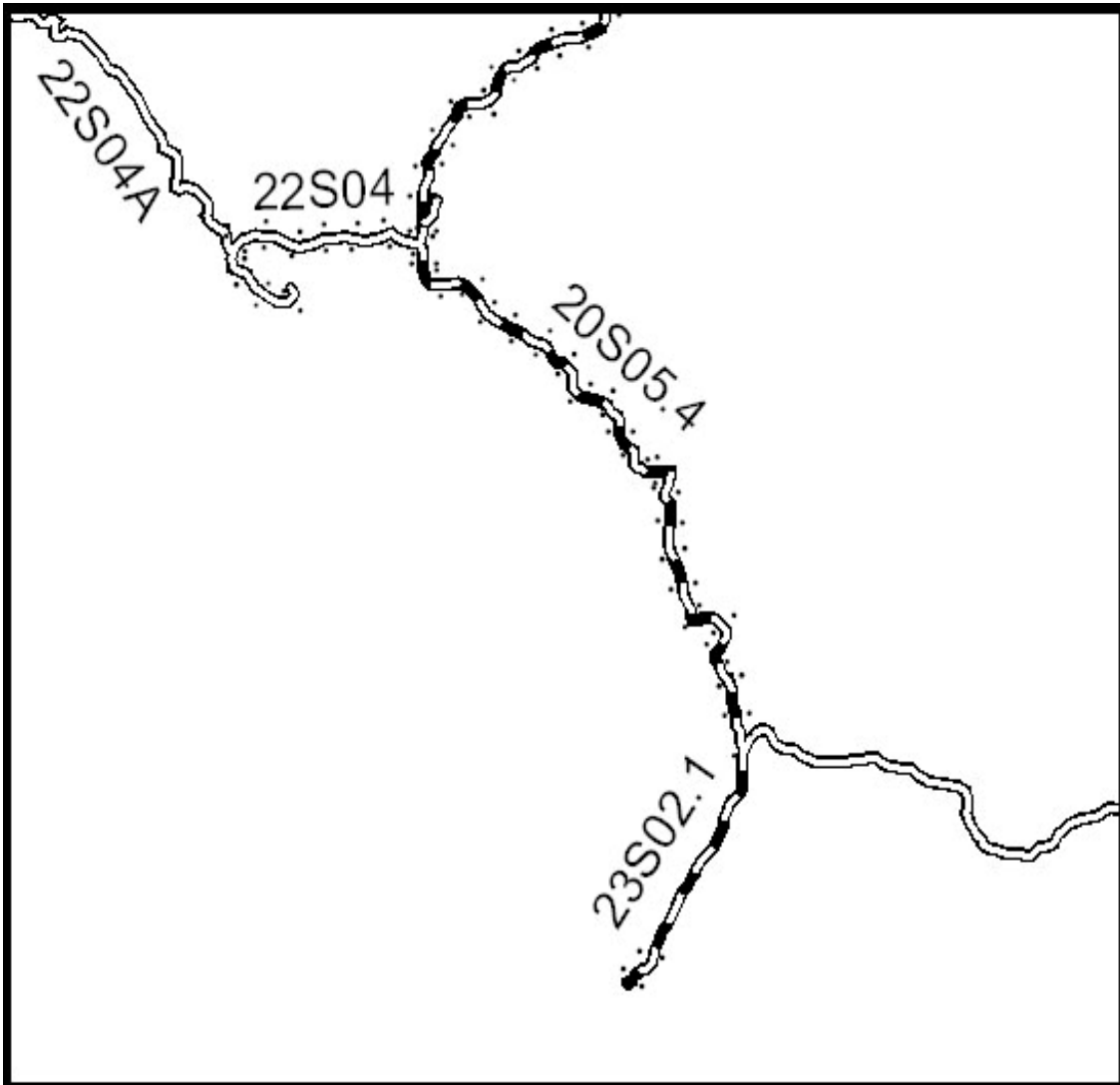
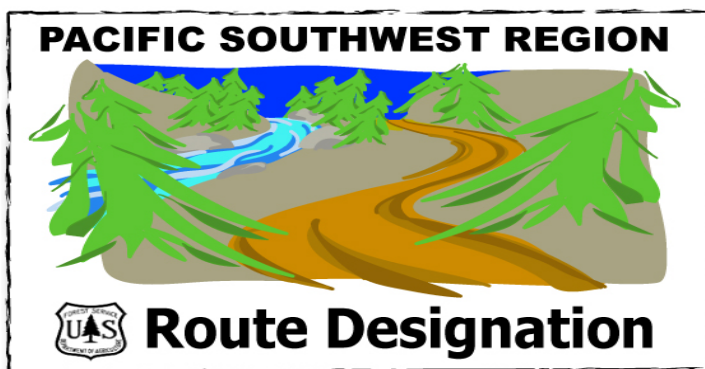


Figure 2: Example - Road Open to All Vehicles

In this example, a limited distance (R5=50 feet) for the purposes of dispersed camping is allowed along the entire road edge on road 20S05.4 and from the end (termini) of road 23S02.1.

Depending on the travel management direction a unit pursues there could be a variety of combinations required to be analyzed and then displayed on the MVUM. The table below provides an example of the required dispersed camping table that must be included on the MVUM. Refer to the National Motor Vehicle Use Map Production Guide for more information.

Dispersed Camping				
Route Number	Distance/Side of Road	Vehicle Type	Dates Allowed	Situation (Don't show this column on map)
23S02.1	50' From end	Highway Licensed Only	June 1 - Nov 1	
23S02.1	50' From end	Same as permitted on road	Same as permitted on road	



The following is the R5 Regional Office Route Designation Contact list.

Contacts

Regional Route Designation Lead	Kathleen Mick
Step 1 – Inventory Issues	GPS-Kathy Mick GIS-Mimi Cheng/Nora Hubbard
Step 2 – Forest Orders	Approval –OGC via Kathy Mick/Colleen O’Brien Policy/Process – Kathy Mick Admin Record – Colleen O’Brien Forest Order Maps Technical Advice-Daniel Spring Forest Order Map Printing-Daniel Spring
Step ³ / ₄ -Hybrid Steps 3 & 4 should now be combined and Forests should be making every effort to publish NOI/Proposed Action to stay in line with the MOI timeline	Policy/Process – Kathleen Mick NEPA Advice –Craig Snider/Chaz O’Brien Mixed Use Analysis-Bill Fodge & Kathleen Mick ROW/Easements-Bill Fodge
Step 5 – MVUM	Policy/Process – Kathleen Mick Roads/Trails Infra-Gary Lybrand & Mike Shannon(LPNTF) Map Technical Advice – Eric Schachtell GIS-Eric Schachtell/Nora Hubbard MVU Map Printing-Daniel Spring
Action Plans, Budget, Targets, Timelines	Kathleen Mick
Fiscal Records/Audit Preparation	Kathleen Mick/Beverly Smith