

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/tonto/home/?cid=stelprdb5408642&width=full>

Tonto National Forest Preparing an Environmental Impact Statement to comply with the Travel Management Rule

After initiating compliance with the Travel Management Rule under an EA, the Tonto National Forest determined that the level of significance reached a point that environmental analysis for travel management under an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would be more appropriate. All comments provided throughout the process thus far, including those to the 2009 proposed action, the 2012 Environmental Assessment, and public meetings, will continue to be considered and may be incorporated into either the proposed action for the EIS or alternatives to that proposed action.

The proposed action for the EIS process has been modified based on comments received from the 2009 scoping period through the 2012 Environmental Assessment comment period. This proposed action would result in approximately 3,812 miles of designated NFS roads and trails (including approximately 280 miles of user-created routes) and 1,417 acres of designated areas open to motor vehicles on the Tonto National Forest.

A copy of the [scoping letter](#), detailing the proposed action can be downloaded for viewing. The following is a summary of the proposed action regarding roads and motorized trails:

- Approximately 2,567 miles of roads would be open to high clearance vehicles;
- Approximately 967 miles would be open to passenger vehicles;
- Approximately 251 miles of trails would be open to off-highway vehicle (OHV) travel;
- Approximately 1,187 miles of roads would be designated for Administrative Use (restricting use to federal employees and permitted uses); and
- Approximately 842 miles of existing roads would be closed to public travel.

In addition, four areas within the Tonto National Forest would be designated permitting cross-country motorized travel: Golf Course OHV Area within the Globe Ranger District (approximately 17 acres); Sycamore OHV Area within the Mesa Ranger District (approximately 1,391 acres); Sycamore Tot Lot OHV Area, intended for youth users, within the Mesa Ranger District (approximately 3 acres); and The Rolls Tot Lot, also intended for youth users, within the Mesa Ranger District (approximately 6 acres).

Motorized retrieval of big game, elk and bear only, would be limited to one mile off either side of NFS roads to retrieve a downed elk or bear by an individual who has legally taken the animal. This would occur on all open roads in Arizona Game Management Units 21, 22, 23, 24A, and 24B, but would not extend into wilderness areas or inventoried roadless areas.

Motorized travel for the purpose of dispersed camping would not be allowed off of designated roads and trails. Vehicles would be allowed to park one vehicle length, or up to 30 feet, from the edge of the designated road or trail.

Four permit zones would be designated within the forest: Bulldog Canyon Permit Zone within the Mesa Ranger District; St. Claire Permit Zone within the Cave Creek Ranger District; Sycamore Permit Zone within the Mesa Ranger District, and The Rolls Permit Zone within the Mesa Ranger District. Within a permit zone, vehicles would be required to stay on designated roads and trails. Motorized users would be required to obtain a permit and a gate combination code from the designated Tonto National Forest office before accessing these zones.

For a copy of the proposed action map and additional information, go to the [Tonto National Forest Motorized Travel Management Projects page](#).

What You Can Do

To aid in the identification of issues and the development of alternatives, comments need to be received by March 4, 2013. When submitting comments, please keep them specific to this proposal only. Comments which are not specific to the project and project area will be deemed outside the scope of the analysis and will not be considered. If you provide recommendations for changes to routes or areas, please include route numbers or location descriptions, as well as the reasons for your recommendations. If you are including references, citations, or additional information to be considered for this project, please specify exactly how the material relates to the project. Also, indicate exactly what part of the material you would like us to consider (such as page or figure number).

Send written comments to Neil Bosworth, Forest Supervisor, ATTN: Travel Management, 2324 E. McDowell Rd, Phoenix, AZ, 85006. Comments may also be sent via e-mail to comments-southwestern-TMRTonto@fs.fed.us, or via facsimile (602) 225-5302.

For further information, contact Anne Thomas, Tonto National Forest NEPA Coordinator, 2324 E. McDowell Rd, Phoenix, AZ, 85006, (602) 225-5213.

Travel Analysis Process (TAP) Report

The Travel Analysis Process (TAP) identified opportunities for the national forest transportation system to meet current and future management objectives, and provided information that allowed integration of ecological, social, and economic concerns into recommendations, which were used to assist in identifying issues related to the roads and motorized trails system. The TAP is tailored to address both

specific local situations and landscape/site conditions, as identified by forest personnel and public input.

The TAP report and all appendices can be viewed at the [Tonto National Forest Motorized Travel Management Projects page](#).

Additional Information about Travel Management

[Tonto National Forest OHV Use and Management](#)

[Arizona OHV Laws and Places to Ride \(pdf\)](#)

The Travel Management Rule

In 2005, the Forest Service published a new rule for providing motor vehicle access to national forests and grasslands after receiving more than 81,000 comments on a draft rule published in July 2004. Many user groups, environmental groups, and state and local governments endorsed the concept of a designated system of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use.

The final rule requires each national forest and grassland to designate those roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use. Designated routes and areas will be identified on a motor vehicle use map. Motor vehicle use outside of designated routes and areas will be provided for fire, military, emergency, and law enforcement purposes and for use under Forest Service permit. Valid existing rights are honored. The rule also maintains the status quo for snowmobile use, as determined in individual forest plans. The rule itself does not designate roads or areas for motor vehicles but provides a framework for making those decisions at the local level.

What will change?

Criteria	Now	Change
Off-highway use of motorized vehicles	Cross country travel permitted unless posted closed	Cross country travel only in designated areas* or with written permission
Roads open for public motorized use	All existing roads open unless posted closed or restricted	Only designated roads* open
Trails open for public motorized use	All existing trails open unless posted closed or restricted	Only designated trails* open
Areas open for public motorized use	None	Only designated areas* open

*Designated open roads, trails and areas as depicted on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM)

Designating Motorized Routes

- Travel Management Rule sets nationwide, consistent guidelines for the process
- Regional forester provides region-wide guidelines for the forests
- Forest supervisor provides forest-wide consistency in process
- District rangers are currently in the process of developing a proposal for designated system of roads, trails and areas

The Tonto National Forest, in coordination with the public and interested groups, state, county, and local governments, will designate the roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use. This is a public process, and you are encouraged to participate. If you are interested in which routes or areas should be open or closed to motor vehicles, please contact your local ranger district and get involved.

Designations will include class of vehicle and, if appropriate, time of year. Some single-track trails may be designated for motorcycle use only. Other trails will accommodate a wider range of vehicles. Some trails will be managed for nonmotorized use. The key to making these decisions, and ensuring they are sustainable over the long term, will be working together at the local level.

The national forests and grasslands are shared resources held by all Americans. Recreational visitors experience them in many different ways. Across the country, some of our most effective examples of OHV management involve state and local governments, motorized and nonmotorized users, and other affected citizens working together. Partnerships extend the agency's limited resources to accomplish trail maintenance, restore damage, educate users, and promote a spirit of cooperation among national forest visitors.

For further information please contact individual ranger districts,
or contact our Forest NEPA Coordinator

Anne Thomas

phone: 602-225-5213

email: mariannethomas@fs.fed.us