

South Rampart Travel Management Plan / Environmental Assessment PUBLIC SCOPING REPORT

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 overflights, 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.

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.

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. Scoping Activities

a. Notification Letters

Three separate notification letters were sent to agencies, stakeholders and the Forest Service's public mailing list describing the South Rampart Travel Management plan and outlining the public scoping process on May 30, 2009.

Letters were sent to the following agencies:

- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- Colorado Springs Parks and Recreation
- Colorado Springs Utilities
- US Air Force Academy
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Douglas County Parks and Trails
- El Paso County Parks
- El Paso County Trustee
- United States Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station

Letters were sent to the following stakeholders:

- Balanced Rock Bike and Ski
- Big Horn 4X4 Club
- Cavalier Trail Riding Club
- Colorado 4 Wheelers
- Colorado Land Cruisers Club
- Colorado Motorcycle Trail Riders Association
- Colorado Motorized Trails
- Colorado Mountain Club
- Colorado Quad Runners ATV Club
- Colorado Springs Christian Four Wheelers
- Friends of the Monument Preserve
- Friends of the Peak
- Fun Treks Guidebooks
- IMBA- Medicine Wheel
- Pikes Peak Area Bikeways Coalition
- Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments
- Pikes Peak Enduro Club
- Pikes Peak Range Riders
- Predator 4WD LLC
- Rampart Range MMC

- Sierra Club, Rocky Mountain Chapter
- Southern Rockies Conservation Alliance
- The Wilderness Society
- Team Cycle
- Teller County Trails Committee
- The Quiet Use Coalition
- Toyota 4WD Club
- Trails and Open Space Coalition
- Wild Connections
- Quad Dusters
- Teller County 4H
- Bike Colorado
- Rocky Mountain Recreation Initiative

b. Interviews with Agencies and Stakeholders

The following stakeholders participated in brief interviews with the planning team.

- Tom Mowle, El Paso Public Trustee
- Colorado Motorcycle Trail Riders Association
- Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates (IMBA)
- Colorado Mountain Club
- Sierra Club – Pikes Peak Chapter
- Colorado OHV Coalition
- Wild Connections

c. Scoping Comment Period

The public scoping process included a 30-day public comment period, beginning when the Legal Notice for the plan was published in the paper of record on June 7, 2009. The paper of record for the South Rampart Travel Management Plan is the Colorado Springs Gazette.

d. Public Scoping Meetings

Two open-house format public scoping meetings were held to identify issues early in the project planning process. Representatives from the Forest Service and the project planning team were available to answer questions, offer more information about the project, discuss ideas and concerns regarding motorized and non-motorized travel in the project area. Written comment sheets were distributed as well.

The first meeting was held Wednesday, June 24 from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Coronado High School in Colorado Springs. The meeting was attended by 73 members of the public and 10 Forest Service and contractor staff. The second meeting was held Thursday, June 25, 2009 from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Woodland Park High School in Woodland Park. The meeting was attended by 46 members of the public and 10 Forest Service and contractor staff. All attendees were encouraged to sign up for the project mailing list to stay informed of the project's progress.

IV. Summary of Public Comment Received

a. Comment Forms, Letters and Emails

In addition to the comments received through stakeholder interviews and at the public scoping meetings, other comments were received in comment forms, letters and emails. The following is a general summary of the comments, organized by comment subject. All written comments are contained, in their entirety, in the project record.

Adjacent Community

- Request for a better boundary delineation between Forest Service land and private property
- Request for “No Trespassing” and “No Shooting” signs near private property boundaries
- Recommendation to limit overnight camping near private land
- Specific comments related to Farish Recreation Area, Saylor Park, and areas of the Pike National Forest adjacent to the U.S. Air Force Academy
- Request for a Memorandum of Understanding between the USFS, Air Force and private landowners on the maintenance and snow plowing of roads in Farish Recreation Area
- Concern about the impact of trail expansion on Air Force Academy training operations

Communications

- Request for maps that include all existing routes
- Recommendation that maps clearly designate motorized, non-motorized and equestrian trails, using both words and icons
- Request for better signage restricting shooting
- Concern that current signage in Manitou Experimental Forest is inadequate
- Request to leave unauthorized routes off of maps
- Request for better wayfinding signs on trails
- Recommendation to use synthetic sign boards to improve signage
- Concern that routes on the current map of the area are incorrect
- Request for better signage delineating public and private property boundaries

Education

- Need for education about location of motorized and non-motorized areas
- Concern about a lack of courtesy among various recreation groups
- Suggestion to require a class for new riders about the rules of the trail
- Recommendation to increase patrolling and user education by the Forest Service
- Suggestion that the armed forces better educate military personnel that use the area

Enforcement

- Need for stricter enforcement of current regulations
- Recommendation for aggressive pursuit and prosecution of users who cause resource damage
- Desire for stronger enforcement of the correct use of both motorized and non-motorized areas
- Desire for enforcement of tree cutting restrictions
- Suggestion to give rangers power to enforce speed limits on OHVs
- Suggestion to contract out enforcement of regulations to a private party

- Desire for enforcement of speed limits on motorized trails
- Desire to improve enforcement of litter and trash dumping
- Suggestion to impound or fine vehicles that violate rules
- Recommendation for better enforcement of ORV use at parking areas, including better patrolling and fenced in areas
- Concern about unauthorized access across Colorado Springs Utilities watershed lands

Forestry / Timber

- Concern about the destruction of trees from shooting
- Concern about pine beetle and dwarf mistletoe damage to trees that results from unauthorized motorized use of trails
- Consideration for the forest's limited resources
- Request to maximize resource protection in all alternatives

Trail Closure

- Recommendation to close hillclimbs and illegal, social and non-system trails
- Request to not change or close any existing trails
- Request to close roads in roadless areas that are still in use
- Recommendation to prevent and enforce all motorized use in roadless areas
- Recommendation to close dead-end trails
- Suggestions to restrict use on trails in the East Rampart Roadless Area
- Suggestions to close specific sections of trails throughout project area (see comment forms and letters for specific information)
- Recommendation to restrict trail spurs to street-vehicle day use only

Motorized Recreation

- Need for maintenance on existing routes
- Concern that highly concentrated use is causing environmental impacts
- Suggestion that more motorized routes would reduce heavy use on existing routes
 - Single track motorcycle trails
 - ATV trails
- Concern about illegal use of motorized vehicles (off trail) damages area
- Suggestion to designate an area without a speed limit for ATV users
- Concern about noise and smell of motorized vehicle use
- Concern about vehicle emissions
- Concern about environmental impacts and high speeds at motorized competitions and events
- Desire to keep existing motorized routes open
- Desire to disallow motorized use in some areas
- Desire to restrict ATV use to roads only
- Desire not to add ATV routes or widen single track routes for ATVs
- Desire for more challenging all wheel drive roads
- Desire for more challenging motorcycle singletrack trails

- Desire to protect motorcycle singletrack trails from widening as a result of ATV use
- Suggestions for restricting motorized winter travel (snowmobiles)
- Suggestion to concentrate motorized use primarily in the Rainbow Falls Area
- Request to establish a baseline and monitoring process for biological impacts of OHVs
- Recommendation that Forest Service preemptively respond to innovations in the technology of motorized vehicles
- Request that motorized trails be clearly established, publicized and enforced
- Desire to restrict or prohibit ATV tours
- Desire to open all areas to motorized use
- Support for ATV access to hunting areas
- Request to forbid off-route travel for game retrieval
- Suggestion to permit periodic, temporary (not permanent) motorized access for gathering fuelwood in certain areas
- Request to restrict ORVs to day-use parking areas only
- Concern about social trails created as a result of the 300 foot rule

Non-Motorized Recreation

- Desire for more hiking only trails
- Desire for more equestrian trails closer to the Front Range
- Desire to open more routes to mountain bikers
- Desire to create more mountain bike routes
- Desire to limit mountain biking routes
- Request for handicap accessibility on trails
- Concern about misuse of campgrounds
- Concern about noise at campgrounds
- Concern about the quality of hunting and angling recreation in the Pike National Forest
- Suggestion to separate mountain biking and motorized use from equestrian trails for safety
- Suggestion that camping should occur only at designated sites
- Concerns about the adverse effects of dispersed camping
- Recommendation to model camping regulations after Uncompahgre Field Office's Dry Creek Travel Management Plan
- Suggestion for use of a different term ("quiet or traditional users") when referring to non-motorized recreation
- Recommendation to reinstitute 300 foot rule for camping
- Desire for dispersed, non-designated camping
- Desire to increase roadless and wilderness area access for non-motorized use
- Suggestion to restrict Rampart Reservoir to fishermen, boaters and urban campers
- Suggestion to restrict mountain bikes to motorized vehicle trails only
- Request to add more daytime use picnic areas
- Request to limit overnight camping by only allowing daytime use
 - By private property, in particular
- Suggestion to establish an equestrian trail similar to the one in North Rampart, near Sprucewood on County 67 (South Platte District)

- Recommendation to restrict off-leash dogs on trails
- Request to keep all users on designated trails to prevent environmental impacts

Planning Process

- Suggestion to modify “Purpose and Need” statement to address specific public concerns
- Recommendation to use “Best Management Practices for Off-Road Vehicle Use on Forestlands - A Guide for Designating and Managing Off-Road Vehicle Routes” in formulating the travel management planning alternatives
- Recommendation to use a landscape approach to planning
 - For planning recreation
 - For examining environmental impacts
- Recommendation to conduct a pre-NEPA travel analysis of the project area
- Recommendation for clarification of the routes recognized in the “No Action Alternative”
- Request to explain how the Travel Management process will interface with the Forest Plan Revision process
- Request to explain how the Travel Management Plan will comply with executive orders
- Request to explain how the Travel Management Plan will comply with Congress, Road System Management Regulations and the Travel Management Rule
- Request to explain how the Travel Management Plan will comply with National Environmental Laws
- Request to explain how the Travel Management Plan will incorporate the best available science
- Recommendation to identify the “minimum road system” in the area
- Recommendation for an environmental analysis of both the entire system and individual sections
- Suggested emphasis on limiting or managing existing problems before expanding the trail system
- Request for density mapping of the proposed trail and road network to display miles of road per square mile
- Request to conduct mapping to display and evaluate the impact corridor of ORV road network to both humans and wildlife within ¼ mile on either side of the proposed routes
- Request for a core area analysis to identify habitat and recreation opportunity that remains unaffected by the motorized route network.
- Request to clarify that MVUM trails can also be removed from the system

Public Safety

- Concern about unrestricted shooting near hiking trails and private property
- Concern about illegal and unattended fires in campgrounds
- Concern about unsafe fire pits
- Recommendation to keep routes open for fires, wildfire suppression, fuel mitigation, and medical emergencies
- Suggestion that public safety should be a priority over recreation
- Concern about traffic speed on both trails and major roads
- Concern about public safety on washed out roads
- Suggestion to close and rehabilitate some existing roads for public safety reasons

Recreation Conflicts

- Need for equal opportunities for use by all forms of recreation
- Concern that snowmobiles are affecting cattle
- Concern about conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreational uses
- Concern about conflicts between equestrian, hiking and mountain bike use
- Desire to spatially separate motorized and non-motorized uses
- Concern that conflicting uses lead to conflicts among individuals
- Concern about the impacts of motorized recreation on hunting and angling recreation

Shooting

- Concern about noise near private property
- Safety concerns
- Concern about bullet holes in signs
- Concern about unauthorized automatic weapons
- Suggestion to move shooting range to an area that does not interfere with other uses
- Suggestion to restrict the hours of the shooting range
- Suggestion to require shooters to clean up their waste through fees or fines
- Suggestion to redirect shooters to private shooting ranges in the area (such as Dragon Man)

Socioeconomics and Funding

- Suggestion that longer trails would allow for longer trips, which could bring in more revenue for community
- Need for funding for signage, barriers, postings and enforcement
- Question about how the Forest Service will afford to maintain old trails if new trails are built
- Concern that changes to the routes must fit within the Forest Service's budgetary and management capabilities
- Suggestion that a reduced number of motorized routes would be more affordable to manage
- Suggestion to add an extra fund to the OHV stickers that users purchase each year, designated to maintain high-use areas
 - Similar to "Habitat Stamp" program for hunters

Soil and Water

- Concern about siltification of streams during trail construction
- Concern about sedimentation of streams from recreational use
- Concern that erosion into municipal watershed threatens water quality
- Concern about erosion caused by motorized users on steep, off trail sections
- Concern about soil compaction off trail due to unauthorized motorized use
- Concern about impacts to watershed
- Concern about drainage and erosion on existing roads
- Concern about the integrity of the Homestake Pipeline
- Concern about water quality near the Rainbow Gulch Trail

Trail Design and Infrastructure

- Suggestion that more loop trails would reduce off trail use

- Concern about fragmented and dead end trails
- Suggestion to build more “stub” trails to undeveloped recreation sites
- Request for more interconnected trails and loops
- Suggestion that interconnected trails and loops would allow for longer trips
- Desire for loops that separate user groups
- Concern about high speeds and impacts on loop trails
- Need for more bathroom facilities at trailheads to reduce impacts on trail
- Suggestion that there is still space in the area for new trails
- Suggestion of seasonal use restrictions and closures to protect trails and habitat
- Concerns that the current density of routes is too high
 - Suggestion to close social trails
- Request/suggestion to eliminate braided or redundant trails
- Suggestion to provisionally designate routes for motorized use, and close them if too many abuses occur
- Suggestion to provide separate quiet areas from areas of motorized use
- Request to re-open old spur trails to campsites
- Suggestion to improve and maintain existing trails
- Suggestion to install gates at trailheads to restrict width of vehicles
- Request not to establish special play areas for motorized use
- Request to reconsider 300 foot rule
- Suggestion to increase trail maintenance on heavily used hiking trails accessed from Air Force Academy trailheads
- Suggestion to formally designate the heavily-used Goat Camp Creek Trail to reduce impacts and improve trail maintenance
- Specific connections (South Rampart to 717, e.g.) are desirable to motorized users (see comment forms for specific route information)
- Specific trails (near 307, e.g.) are undesirable for motorized use to non-motorized users (see comment forms for specific route information)
- Suggestions for specific existing (non-system) trails to be incorporated into trails system (see comment forms for specific suggestions and maps)
- Many comments were submitted that included maps or references to specific trails or trail sections in South Rampart (see comment forms for specific suggestions and maps).

Vegetation

- Concern about impacts to sensitive plant communities
- Desire for the protection of sensitive, threatened or endangered plant species
- Concern about vegetation loss in dispersed camping areas
- Concern about existing and future damage to riparian areas

Visual and Sound Resources

- Concern that the area offers scenic views that are impaired by some uses
- Concern for the protection of natural soundscapes
- Need to obey EPA noise limitations

- Concern for the protection of “quiet use” areas from noise intrusion

Volunteering

- Interest in volunteer opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized users and residents
 - trail maintenance

Waste Disposal

- Concern about litter and dumping of trash
- Concern about trash at the ends of dead end trails
- Concern about litter and dumping at campsites
- Suggestion/need for covered trash cans

Wildlife

- Concern about habitat fragmentation in sensitive areas
- Concern about increased pressure on predators
- Concern about displacement of wildlife from existing habitat
- Concern that wildlife and bird species are threatened
- Concern about habitat degradation
- Concern that overuse by motor vehicles and bicycles will pressure wildlife to relocate to less suitable areas
- Concern about the protection of the wildlife study area in the Manitou Experimental Forest
- Concern about damage to habitat by motorized users
- Concern about Mexican spotted owl habitat
- Recommendation to keep roads far enough apart to lesson wildlife impacts
- Concern about Preble's jumping mouse habitat
- Concern about habitat for black bear, deer, elk, wild turkey, and peregrine falcon habitat
- Concern about the protection of wetlands, riparian areas and wildlife corridors
- Need to protect and preserve natural resources
- Concern about the protection of fisheries
- Recommendation to minimize ecosystem damage and reclaim damaged land
- Suggestion to temporarily close trails during raptor nesting periods
- Suggestion to reduce route densities to reduce habitat fragmentation
- Concern about impacts to elk severe winter range and production areas

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

Frank Landis, USFS—Pikes Peak Ranger District
719-477-4203