

Chapter 1: Purpose and Need

Document Structure

The Forest Service has prepared this Environmental Impact Statement in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This Environmental Impact Statement discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts that would result from the Proposed Action and alternatives. The document is organized into four chapters and the Appendices:

1. **Chapter 1: Purpose and Need.** This chapter briefly describes the Proposed Action, the need for that action, and other purposes to be achieved by the proposal. This section also details how the Forest Service informed the public of the Proposed Action and how the public responded.
2. **Chapter 2: The Alternatives.** This chapter provides a detailed description of the agency's Proposed Action as well as alternative actions that were developed in response to comments raised by the public during scoping. The end of the chapter includes summary tables comparing the Proposed Action and alternatives with respect to their environmental effects.
3. **Chapter 3: Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences.** This chapter describes the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and alternatives.
4. **Chapter 4: Consultation and Coordination.** This chapter provides a list of preparers and agencies consulted during the development of the environmental impact statement.
5. **Appendices:** The appendices provide more detailed information to support the analyses presented in the environmental impact statement.

Additional documentation, including more detailed analyses of project area resources, may be found in the project planning record located at the Tahoe National Forest (TNF) Supervisors Office, 631 Coyote Street, Nevada City California 95959.

Background

Over the past few decades, the availability and capability of motorized vehicles, particularly off-highway vehicles (OHVs) and sport utility vehicles (SUVs) has increased tremendously. Nationally, the number of OHV users has climbed sevenfold in the past 30 years, from approximately 5 million in 1972 to 36 million in 2000. California is experiencing the highest level of OHV use of any state in the Nation. There were 786,914 ATVs and OHV motorcycles registered in California in 2004, up 330 percent since 1980. Annual sales of ATVs and OHV motorcycles in California were the highest in the U.S. for the last 5 years. Four-wheel drive vehicle sales in California also increased 1,500 percent to 3,046,866 from 1989 to 2002.

Unmanaged OHV use on National Forest System lands has resulted in unplanned roads and trails, erosion, watershed and habitat degradation, and impacts to cultural resource sites. Compaction and erosion are the primary effects of OHV use on soils. Riparian areas and aquatic dependent species are particularly vulnerable to adverse impacts from OHV use. Unmanaged recreation, including impacts from

OHVs, is one of “Four Key Threats Facing the Nation’s Forests and Grasslands.” (USDA Forest Service, June 2004).

On August 11, 2003, the Pacific Southwest Region of the Forest Service entered into a Memorandum of Intent (MOI) with the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission and the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division of the California Department of Parks and Recreation. The MOI set in motion a region-wide effort to “designate OHV roads, trails, and any specifically defined open areas for motorized wheeled vehicles on maps of the 19 National Forests in California by 2007.”

On November 9, 2005, the Forest Service published final travel management regulations in the Federal Register (FR Vol. 70, No. 216-Nov. 9, 2005, pp 68264-68291). This final Travel Management Rule requires designation of those roads, trails, and areas that are open to motor vehicle use on National Forest System lands. Roads and trails designated for motorized use must be included in the National Forest Transportation System (NFTS). Designations are made by class of vehicle and, where appropriate, by time of year. The final rule prohibits the use of motor vehicles off designated roads, trails, and areas, as well as use of motor vehicles on roads and trails and in areas that is not consistent with the designations.

On some National Forest System (NFS) lands, long managed as open to cross country motor vehicle travel, repeated use has resulted in unplanned, unauthorized roads and trails. These routes generally developed without environmental analysis or public involvement, and do not have the same status as NFS roads and NFS trails included in the NFTS. Nevertheless, some unauthorized routes are well-sited, provide excellent opportunities for outdoor recreation by motorized and non-motorized users, and would enhance the NFTS. Other unauthorized routes are poorly located and cause unacceptable impacts. Only NFS roads and NFS trails can be designated for motor vehicle use. In order for an unauthorized route to be designated, it must first be added to the Forest transportation system.

In 2005, the TNF completed an inventory of unauthorized routes on NFS lands and identified 897 miles of unauthorized routes. In addition, 513.7 miles of Maintenance Level 1 roads were identified, some of which were receiving motorized use by the public. Between the DEIS and Supplemental DEIS, corrections were made to the NFTS (see discussion below on Corrections to the NFTS). The corrections resulted in 868.7 miles of unauthorized routes and 829.6 miles of closed NFTS roads (spanning the range of Maintenance Levels), some of which were receiving motorized use by the public.

TNF used an interdisciplinary process to conduct travel analysis that included working with the public to identify proposals for changes to the existing TNF transportation system. Roads and trails that are currently part of the TNF transportation system and open to motor vehicle travel would remain designated for such use, except as described below under the Proposed Action. This proposal makes needed changes (seasonal restrictions, vehicle class restrictions, etc.) to the Tahoe National Forest NFTS roads and NFTS trails on NFS lands in accordance with the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR Part 212, Subpart B).

In accordance with 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR §212.56), following a decision on this proposal, the TNF will publish a motor vehicle use map (MVUM) identifying all TNF NFTS roads, trails, and areas that are designated for motor vehicle use. The MVUM shall specify the classes of vehicles and, if appropriate, the time of year for which motor vehicle use is designated.

Upon publication of the MVUM, it is prohibited to possess or operate a motor vehicle on NFS lands other than in accordance with those designations. These maps will be made available to the public on the internet and at the headquarters of the corresponding administrative unit and Ranger Districts of the National Forest System. The unauthorized routes (roads and trails) not included in this proposal are not precluded from future consideration for either removal from the landscape and restoration to the natural condition or addition to the NFTS and inclusion on an MVUM. Future decisions associated with changes to the NFTS and MVUM would require additional environmental analysis, public involvement, and documentation.

Travel Management –Tahoe National Forest Transportation System

The TNF currently manages and maintains approximately 2,067.6 miles of NFTS roads, 328.2 miles of NFS motorized trails, and 1 established “Open Area.” This number has changed since the DEIS as explained below under **Corrections to the NFTS Data in the DEIS**. The Tahoe National Forest Transportation System (NFTS) was developed over many decades to meet a variety of needs, including timber management, fuel treatment, access to private inholdings, fire control, utility management, special-uses management, and recreation. Other roads were acquired with past land exchanges or acquisitions. Harvesting of special forest products such as greenery, firewood, mushrooms, and plants are among the many opportunities afforded by the NFTS. Management of the transportation system on the Tahoe National Forest is a dynamic process. Implementation of this proposal and the subsequent designation of motor vehicle routes through publication of the MVUM is just one project, among many, that affects the Forest’s transportation system. Over the last decade, the Forest has moved away from a commodity (timber) focus to one of ecosystem health and integrated vegetation management. In response to this shift, the Forest Supervisor initiated the following actions that reduced both road maintenance needs and deferred maintenance needs:

- Previous administrative decisions have reduced the number of miles of NFTS roads available for motorized use and restricted the season of use. These previous administrative decisions have resulted in 395 miles being closed to wheeled public motorized access, 672 miles being seasonally closed, and 125 miles decommissioned.
- The amount of NFTS trails available for motorized use has also been reduced by previous administrative decisions. More than 433 miles of existing system trails have been closed to all motorized use and more than 63 miles seasonally closed.
- Large geographic areas of the Forest in previous administrative decisions have been determined to be unsuitable for motorized use. 87,000 acres have been designated as unsuitable for any motorized use and 160,000 acres have been designated as suitable for seasonal use only.

Implementation of this proposal and the subsequent designation of motor vehicle routes through publication of the MVUM are only one step in the overall management of the TNF NFTS. Project-level planning efforts include reducing adverse environmental impacts associated with unauthorized motorized

routes. The Forest's road and trail maintenance program addresses impacts associated with the current NFTS.

The NFTS is managed and maintained to various road standards, depending on management objectives. The roads range from paved to roughly graded, high-clearance roads, depending on the type of access necessary. In some cases, where public and administrative access is not needed for extended periods of time, roads are "stored" for future management use. The entire NFTS ("stored", administrative-use and public-use roads) is displayed on the Forest Transportation Atlas. The Forest Transportation Atlas consists of the maps, inventories, and plans for Forest transportation facilities and associated information available as of January 12, 2001 (Forest Service Manual 7711.2). Details concerning the management of individual roads and trails are maintained in the Forest infrastructure database (INFRA).

In 2002, based on national direction the TNF populated the INFRA database by examining previous records (maintenance plans, maintenance expenditures, existing road and trail atlases, Forest maps, etc.) to capture the entire NFTS, transfer the necessary information into INFRA, and verify the Forest Transportation Atlas. Roads or trails that had no record of being mapped or maintained for a specific use were not included in the NFTS.

Since then, adjustments to the Transportation Atlas and INFRA database have been made to correct errors and account for NFTS roads that were either newly constructed or overlooked in the 2002 effort. The current Forest Transportation Atlas identifies the existing NFTS and the management objectives for each transportation facility. These objectives have changed since the DEIS as explained below under **Corrections to the NFTS Data in the DEIS**. Decisions regarding changes to the NFTS (new road construction, addition of unauthorized routes as NFTS facilities, realignment, decommissioning, etc.) are subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and require public involvement and disclosure. The NFTS is continually changing, depending on resource needs and management concerns.

Corrections to the NFTS Data in the DEIS – Preparation of a Supplemental DEIS

The TNF undertook a comprehensive review of its existing NFTS after the release of the Draft Travel Management EIS (DEIS). This review was done to respond to the following two concerns expressed by the public during the comment period on the DEIS.

- **Status of NFTS:** Letters from both the environmental and OHV communities questioned the inclusion or exclusion of roads/trails from the existing NFTS. The environmental community felt many of the NFTS roads/trails should be considered "unauthorized" while the OHV community felt that many of the "unauthorized" routes were actually part of the previously approved NFTS.
- **Valid Rights-of-Way (ROW):** Letters from private landowners, including Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Sierra Pacific Industries, and Nevada Irrigation District, stated that several of the NFTS roads/trails were shown in error on their land since the Forest Service did not have a valid existing ROW. They requested these roads/trails not be shown on their land in the Final EIS.

The Forest Service validated the status of every NFTS road and trail on the Forest by utilizing the following information:

- **INFRA Database:** Jurisdiction discrepancies between INFRA and the Project GIS database were corrected.
- **Previous NEPA Decisions:** Available NEPA decisions regarding road and trail management from last fifteen years were reviewed.
- **Rights-of-Way Atlas:** The rights-of-way (ROW) status of all NFTS roads and trails were validated based on the Forest ROW Atlas.

Based on this review, the following corrections were made to the NFTS motorized recreation opportunities. These corrections were incorporated into all of the alternatives. Refer to Tables 1-1 and 1-2.

Table 1-1. Summary of corrections to the motorized recreation opportunities

Category of correction	Reason for correction	Miles
Additional NFTS motorized recreation opportunities	State or County roads determined to be part of the NFTS	32.2
	Previous NEPA decision added road/trail to the NFTS	69.4
	Previous NEPA decision converted non-motorized trail to a motorized road or trail	2.7
	Subtotal	104.3
Changes in type of NFTS motorized recreation opportunities	Previous NEPA decision changed the class of vehicle allowed	76.8
	Previous NEPA decision changed season of use on NFTS road/trail	579.6
	Previous NEPA decision changed both season of use and class of vehicle allowed on NFTS road/trail	33.5
	Subtotal	689.9
Reductions in NFTS motorized recreation opportunities	Previous NEPA decision scheduled NFTS road/trail for decommissioning	20.7
	NFTS roads/trails on private land determined to not have a valid right of way	124.5
	NFTS roads determined to be under State or County Jurisdiction	8.8
	Previous NEPA decision converted motorized road/trail to a non-motorized trail	5.2
	Previous NEPA Decision closed the road/trail	349.7
	Subtotal	508.9

Table 1-2. Summary of NFTS Mileage Before and After Corrections

Class of Vehicle	DEIS Mileage	Supplemental DEIS Mileage	Change
Roads open to highway legal vehicles only	629.3	616.7	-12.6
Roads open to all vehicles	1,845.2	1,450.9	-394.3
Trails open to high clearance trail vehicles only	161.5	133.8	-27.7
Trails open to ATV's and motorcycles only	16.8	25.5	+8.7
Trails open to motorcycles only	147.6	168.8	+21.2
Total	2,800.4	2,395.7	-404.7

The Forest Supervisor reviewed this information and based on the interdisciplinary team's recommendation, determined the preparation of a Supplemental DEIS was warranted so that the public has an opportunity to review the proposed action and alternatives in light of the corrections that have been made since the DEIS was circulated.

Key Changes in the Final EIS

- In addition to programmatic consultation at the Regional level, the TNF initiated forest-specific Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act, as amended, with the Fish and Wildlife Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior (USFWS) for the FEIS for the Lahontan cutthroat trout and California red-legged frog. The USFWS concurred with the determination that implementing the project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect these species. In addition, the Design Criteria were clarified for these species based on technical assistance from the USFWS, and the Biological Assessment (BA) and FEIS were modified accordingly.
- The FEIS and the Biological Assessment have been revised to address additional project design criteria for Lahontan cutthroat trout provided by USFWS. The USFWS concurred with the determination that the Tahoe National Forest Travel Management Project FEIS may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the Lahontan cutthroat trout.
- The FEIS and the Biological Evaluation/Assessment and the FEIS have been updated to include the new information regarding designation of revised critical habitat by the USFWS on March 17, 2010. No direct or indirect effects to designated critical habitat for the California red-legged frog would occur from implementing the Tahoe National Forest Travel Management Project FEIS. In addition, the Biological Evaluation/Assessment and the FEIS were updated to include direct, indirect, and cumulative effects on suitable California red-legged frog habitat. Suitable habitat is defined as the area within 300 feet of perennial and intermittent waterbodies below 5,000 feet elevation (USFWS, June 2010).

Project Location

This proposal includes the entire Tahoe National Forest. The Tahoe National Forest straddles the crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in northern California, and encompasses a vast territory, from the foothills on the western slope to the eastern slope of the Sierras (Figure 1-1). The Forest is bordered on the north by the Plumas National Forest, on the south by the Eldorado National Forest, and on the east by the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. On the Forest's western border are the foothills above the Sacramento Valley.



Figure 1-1. Vicinity Map

Purpose and Need

The following needs have been identified for this proposal:

- **There is a need for regulation of unmanaged cross country motor vehicle travel by the public.** The proliferation of unplanned, unauthorized, non-sustainable roads, trails, and areas created by cross country travel adversely impacts the environment. The 2005 Travel Management Rule, 36 CFR Section 212, Subpart B, provides for a system of NFS roads, NFS trails, and areas on NFS lands that are designated for motor vehicle use. After roads, trails, and areas are designated, motor vehicle use off designated roads and trails and outside designated areas is prohibited by 36 CFR 261.13. 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart B is intended to prevent resource damage caused by unmanaged motor vehicle use by the public. In accordance with national direction, implementation of 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart B of the travel management rule for the Tahoe National Forest is scheduled for completion in January 2010.
- **There is a need for limited changes to the TNF transportation system to:**
 - Provide motorized access to existing dispersed recreation opportunities (camping, hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, etc.). There is a need to maintain motor vehicle access to dispersed recreation activities that are known to have been historically accessed by motor

vehicles. A substantial portion of known dispersed recreation activities (camping, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, etc.) are not located directly adjacent to an existing NFTS road or motorized trail. Some dispersed recreation activities depend on foot or horseback access, and some depend on motor vehicle access. These dispersed non-motorized activities depend on motor vehicle access using short spurs created and maintained primarily by the passage of motor vehicles. Many such unauthorized ‘user-created’ routes are not currently part of the NFTS. Without adding them to the NFTS, the regulatory changes noted above would make continued use of such routes illegal through the prohibition of cross country travel, and would preclude access to many dispersed recreation activities.

- Provide a diversity of motorized recreation opportunities (4X4 vehicles, motorcycles, ATVs, SUVs, passenger vehicles, etc.). It is Forest Service policy to provide a diversity of road and trail opportunities for experiencing a variety of environments and modes of travel consistent with the National Forest recreation role and land capability (FSM 2353.03(2)). Implementation of 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule will reduce acres and miles of motorized recreation opportunities relative to current levels. As a result, there is a need to consider limited changes to the NFTS.

In making any limited changes to the NFTS, the TNF will be considering criteria contained in 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule, which include the following:

- Impacts to natural and cultural resources.
- Public safety.
- Access to public and private lands.
- Availability of resources for maintenance and administration.
- The need for maintenance and administration of roads trails and areas that would arise if the uses under consideration are designated.
- Minimizing damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, and other forest resources.
- Minimizing harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitat.
- Minimizing conflicts between motor vehicles and existing or proposed recreational uses of NFS lands or neighboring Federal lands.
- Minimizing conflicts among different classes of motor vehicle uses of NFS lands or neighboring Federal lands.
- Compatibility of motor vehicle use with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account sound, emissions, and other factors.

When making any limited changes to NTFS Roads, the TNF will also consider the following:

- Speed, volume, composition and distribution of traffic on roads.
- Compatibility of vehicle class with road geometry and road surfacing
- Maintaining valid existing rights-of-use and access (rights-of-way)

Table 1-3 provides a summary of the Purpose and Need details related to the five components of the Proposed Action.

Table 1-3. Relation of Purpose and Need to Proposed Actions

What	Where	Why	How
1. Prohibition of Cross Country Travel			
Travel and Parking	Forestwide outside of Wilderness	Implement 36 CFR 212, Subpart B limiting motorized use to the NFTS system; protect resources by preventing route proliferation; provide parking for dispersed recreation	Prohibit cross country travel; parking allowed one vehicle length off of NFTS routes
2. Additions to the NFTS			
Add existing unauthorized routes to the NFTS	Specific routes shown in Appendix A and on alternative maps	Provide a variety of motorized trail opportunities; enhance loop opportunities; access destinations; reduce conflicts between different uses	Add unauthorized routes to the trail system; show on MVUM pending completion of mitigations
3. Establishment of Motorized “Open Areas”:			
Establish “Open Areas”	Specific “Open Areas” shown in Appendix A and on alternative maps	Provide a diversity of motorized recreation opportunities; Provide motorized access to existing dispersed recreation opportunities.	Establish “Open Areas”; show on MVUM pending completion of mitigations
4a. Change Vehicle Classes through Mixed Use (Roads maintained for passenger cars available for use by non-highway legal vehicles):			
Change NFTS roads from Highway Legal Only to All Vehicles	Specific roads shown in Appendix J and on alternative maps	Provide a variety of motorized mixed use opportunities; enhance loop opportunities by connecting trails	Show on MVUM as open to all vehicles pending completion of mixed use mitigations
4b. Change Vehicle Classes through Maintenance Levels (Roads presently maintained for passenger cars to be maintained in the future for high clearance vehicles):			
Change NFTS roads from Highway Legal Only to All Vehicles	Specific routes shown in Appendix J and on alternative maps	Provide a variety of motorized mixed use opportunities; enhance loop opportunities by connecting trails; reduce maintenance needs	Show on MVUM as open to all vehicles pending completion of mixed use mitigations
4c. Changes in Seasonal Restrictions:			
Wet Weather Closures	Forestwide outside of Wilderness on all native surface roads and motorized trails	Protect resources including road and trail surfaces during wet periods	During the wet season of use all native surfaced routes are closed; show on MVUM
4d. Reopening Maintenance Level 1 Roads:			
Change NFTS roads from Closed to Open	Specific routes shown in Appendix A and on alternative maps	Existing NFTS roads; access destinations; enhance loop opportunities by connecting trails	Open any existing gates or remove barriers as needed; show on MVUM
5. Amendments to the Forest Plan:			
Non-significant amendments	Specific routes in Management Area 84; shown in Appendix A and on alternative maps	Remove deer winter range seasonal restrictions to improve motorized recreation opportunities	Forest Plan Amendment for native surface roads and trails in Management Area 84; show on MVUM

Proposed Action as Described in the Notice of Intent _____

1. **Prohibition of Cross Country Travel:** Public wheeled motor vehicle travel off designated NFTS roads, NFTS trails, and outside designated motorized use areas would be prohibited, except as allowed by permit or other authorization.
2. **Additions to the NFTS:**
 - a. No unauthorized routes would be added as roads to the NFTS.
 - b. 36.7 miles (36 routes) of unauthorized routes would be added as motorized trails to the NFTS.
3. **Establishment of Motorized “Open Areas”:** No additional motorized “Open Areas” would be established.
4. **Changes to the NFTS:**
 - a. **Change Vehicle Classes through Mixed Use:** No changes would be made to allow licensed operators of non-highway legal vehicles to operate on NFTS roads where such use is currently prohibited through approval of mixed use.
 - b. **Change Vehicle Classes through Maintenance Levels:** Change vehicle class on 3.4 miles to allow operators of non-highway legal vehicles to operate on NFTS roads where such use is currently prohibited through the conversion of ML 3 roads (maintained for passenger cars) to ML 2 (maintained for high clearance vehicles).
 - c. **Changes in Seasonal Restrictions:** No changes in seasonal restrictions would be made.
 - d. **Reopening Maintenance Level 1 Roads:** Two Maintenance Level 1 roads (1.1 miles) would be reopened to motorized use.
5. **Amendments to the Forest Plan:** No amendments would be made to the Forest Plan.

Appendix A (Site Specific Road, Trail and Open Area Information) shows the specified vehicle class, season of use and any required mitigations associated with any facility added to the NFTS.

Including the additions and changes described above, the Proposed Action would result in a system of 2,068.5 miles of NFTS roads and 365.0 miles of NFTS motorized trails open to public motorized use. A more detailed description of the Proposed Action can be found in Chapter 2 (The Alternatives). Maps of the Proposed Action are available on compact disc.

Principle Laws and Regulations that influence the scope of this EIS ____

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires that all major federal actions significantly affecting the human environment be analyzed to determine the magnitude and intensity of those impacts and that the results be shared with the public and the public be given opportunity to comment. The regulations implementing NEPA further require that, to the fullest extent possible, agencies shall prepare environmental impact statements concurrently with, and integrated with, environmental analyses and related surveys and studies required by the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and other environmental review laws and executive orders. Principle among these are the Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act of 1960, the National Forest Management Act of 1976 as expressed through

the Tahoe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended, 2007), the Clean Air Act of 1955, the Clean Water Act of 1948, and the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974. In addition, the TNF Travel Management EIS is designed specifically to implement the requirements of 36 CFR 212, Subpart B, of the November 5, 2005 Rule for Travel Management (36 CFR 212.50-57). Other laws, regulation, and guidance specific to individual resources are found within the respective resource section in Chapter 3 (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) of this document.

Decision Framework

The Forest Supervisor for the TNF will be the responsible official. The responsible official will decide whether to adopt and implement the Proposed Action, an alternative to the Proposed Action, or take no action at this time. This proposal does not revisit previous administrative decisions that resulted in the current NFTS. This proposal is focused on implementing 36 CFR 212, Subpart B of the Travel Management Rule. Previous administrative decisions concerning road construction, road reconstruction, trail construction, and land suitability for motorized use on the existing NFTS are outside of the scope of this analysis.

Public Participation

The Interdisciplinary Team relied on public involvement to ensure that a full range of alternatives, representing a broad array of perspectives, would be analyzed in this DEIS. Public involvement occurred during three key periods: first, during the public collaboration process that began in 2006; second, during the 30-day public scoping period for the Notice of Intent (NOI); and third, during meetings with public groups to refine alternatives they proposed during scoping.

During the summer 2006, a variety of trail users, including motorized and non-motorized users, provided suggestions on designing a public involvement process that would be meaningful to participants to help identify a starting point from which to build the Proposed Action. Approximately twenty individuals assisted with this effort, which was open to the public. In the fall, 2006, using the suggestions from the public on how to structure the public involvement, a series of six workshops were initiated to recommend which routes and areas should become part of the Proposed Action, and the type of vehicle use that each would have. The concept of “mixed use” was also introduced during these meetings. At the first session of the two-part series, public workshops were held in Nevada City (Oct. 19), Truckee (Oct. 23) and Foresthill (Oct. 26). At these meetings, participants broke into three groups to review three different geographical areas and to discuss which of the routes they would or would not like to become part of the Proposed Action. Some of the groups continued to meet and/or to make field visits to review conditions on the ground. Later in the fall, at the second set of public workshops, these groups returned and presented their information back to the entire group at sessions in Grass Valley (Nov. 15), Truckee (Dec. 5) and Foresthill (Dec. 7). Public meeting participants shared their ideas and their various concerns with other group proposals. Roughly 300 people participated in these public workshops. In early 2007, an e-mail update was issued sharing information on the meetings and the outcome. The Forest Service

Interdisciplinary team took this information and used it in the development of the Proposed Action for the Notice of Intent.

30-day public scoping period for the Notice of Intent

In April 2007, the Forest Service published the “Proposed Action and Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement” (Federal Register Vol. 72/No. 69/Wednesday April 11, 2007) based on comments from the meetings held in the fall. The public comment period began on April 11, 2007, and ended May 14, 2007. Presentations to a variety of groups, phone calls, news releases, website postings and emails were used to alert the public of the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Action. Public meetings were held in Truckee (April 18), in Foresthill (April 24) and in Grass Valley (April 26) to explain the Proposed Action. Over 3,500 comments were received via e-mail and regular mail; with most being e-mail form letters.

Issues

Comments from the public, other agencies, and the Tribes were used to formulate issues concerning the Proposed Action (see Project Record). An issue is a matter of public concern regarding the Proposed Action and its environmental impacts. Scoping identified issues which are a point of discussion, dispute, or debate with the Proposed Action. An issue is an effect on a physical, biological, social, or economic resource. An issue is not an activity; instead, the predicted effects of the activity create the issue. The Forest Service separated the issues into two groups: significant and non-significant. Significant Issues are defined as those directly or indirectly caused by implementing the Proposed Action.

Significant Issues are used to formulate alternatives, prescribe mitigation measures, or analyze environmental effects. Issues are significant because of the extent of their geographic distribution, the duration of their effects, or the intensity of interest or resource conflicts. Non-Significant Issues were identified as those that were: 1) outside of the scope of the Proposed Action; 2) already determined through law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision; 3) irrelevant to the decision to be made; 4) conjectural and not supported by scientific fact; 5) a comment, opinion, or position statement; or, 6) a question for clarification or information. Although non-significant issues are not used to formulate alternatives or prescribe mitigation measures, the EIS will disclose significant environmental effects including any related to non-significant issues.

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations explain this delineation in Sec. 1501.7, “...identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (Sec. 1506.3)...” A list of non-significant issues and reasons why they were found non-significant may be found in the Project Record.

As described above, issues are significant because of the extent of their geographic distribution, the duration of their effects, or the intensity of interest or resource conflicts. The IDT used the following Significant-Issue Statements to formulate and compare alternatives, prescribe mitigation measures, or analyze and compare the environmental effects of each alternative. The Significant-Issue Statements identify elements (individual elements or groups of significant issue topics) along with a cause and effect

based on public comments. Based on public comment, the IDT identified the significant issues shown in Table 1-4.

Table 1-4. Significant Issues

Issue/Element	Cause and Effect
<p>Significant Issue Statement #1. The route inventory identified approximately 1,596.3 miles of existing unauthorized routes and the Proposed Action only adds 36.7 miles of these to the NFTS. Reducing the miles of routes available for public motorized use and prohibiting cross country travel as described in the Proposed Action will adversely affect the quality and quantity of motorized recreation experiences</p>	
<p>Motorized Recreation Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not provide adequate access to key destinations, including campsites, scenic overlooks, and hunting areas. • Reduces loops and connectors to provide longer riding time and spurs for exploration. • Reduces the diversity of opportunities for different vehicles (ATVs, motorcycles, 4WD). • Reduces semi-primitive riding opportunities and experiences.
<p>Significant Issue Statement #2. Public motorized use of roads and trails as described in the Proposed Action will adversely affect non-motorized recreation experiences.</p>	
<p>Non-Motorized Recreation Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases in engine noise will impact non-motorized recreation opportunities. • Increases in dust will impact non-motorized recreation opportunities. • Increases in motorized use will result in user conflicts between forest visitors. • Increases in motorized use will reduce aesthetic values.
<p>Significant Issue Statement #3. Public motorized use of roads and trails as described in the Proposed Action will adversely affect forest resources.</p>	
<p>Resource Impacts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased erosion, soil compaction, and reduction in water quality; • Degradation of habitat for fish, wildlife, and rare plants; • Damage to heritage resources; • Proliferation of weeds; and • Impacts to Inventoried Roadless Area character compromising future potential wilderness designation.
<p>Significant Issue Statement #4: The NFTS is already too large to provide adequate maintenance and administration.</p>	
<p>Affordability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current and future budgets may not provide adequate funding for maintenance, administration and enforcement of the proposed road and trail system. • Additions to the NFTS may require additional mitigation measures to prevent serious and adverse environmental impacts.

