



Chewuch Transportation Plan Scoping Newsletter September 30, 2011

Identifying a safe, reliable and affordable network of roads for the Chewuch drainage within the Methow Valley Ranger District.

Dear Interested Citizens,

The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest proposes to develop and implement a transportation plan for the Chewuch drainage (encompassing both the Upper and Lower Chewuch watersheds) within the Methow Valley Ranger District. The intent of this newsletter is to introduce the proposed transportation plan and to solicit your feedback on that proposal.

The purpose of the proposed Chewuch Transportation Plan (the Plan) is to identify an appropriate road network for the Chewuch that:

- Reduces road maintenance costs;
- Reduces environmental impacts of the road system; and
- Maintains an adequate level of access for safe administrative and recreational uses.

The Plan would also identify how to implement changes to the road system.

An outreach effort conducted this spring confirmed that the Chewuch drainage is very important for both ecological needs and recreation opportunities. Residents and visitors utilize the Chewuch for activities such as mountain biking, hiking, camping, hunting, firewood collecting and a myriad of other uses. At the same time, it provides habitat for several threatened, endangered, and sensitive aquatic, terrestrial, and botanic species, including bull trout, spring Chinook salmon, steelhead, pacific lamprey, grizzly bear, wolves, lynx, and spotted owls.

The Plan will be analyzed in an environmental assessment (EA), consistent with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public involvement is an important part of the NEPA process. Comments received during this scoping period will be used to develop alternatives to the proposed action and identify issues for analysis in the EA. Our intention is that after the environmental assessment is complete we would be ready to implement the Plan as funding becomes available, likely over a period of 10-15 years.

We are in the process of developing a color newsletter that will contain the project maps, which are currently available online at: www.fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/projects. However, given the complexity of this project I did not want to delay initiating the public scoping process. Please contact Victoria Wilkins, NEPA Team Lead, at (509) 996-4063 or vewilkins@fs.fed.us if you would like to receive a copy of the color newsletter or if you have any questions on this project.

I look forward to hearing from you about how the proposal could impact your use of the Chewuch so that we can improve the proposed Chewuch Transportation Plan.

Sincerely,

/s/ Michael C. Liu

Michael C. Liu
District Ranger

PROPOSED TIMELINE

Public Scoping

Ongoing

Develop Alternatives

Fall 2011

Complete Environmental Assessment

Winter/Spring 2012

Public Comment Period on Environmental Assessment

Summer 2012

Decision

Fall 2012

The Proposed Action

The proposed Chewuch Transportation Plan identifies the appropriate road network and maintenance levels for all Forest Service System Roads within the Chewuch drainage on the Methow Valley Ranger District. This proposal includes a mix of actions, such as:

- Changing road maintenance levels
- Closing roads
- Decommissioning roads
- Potentially re-routing roads to reduce environmental impacts or improve road reliability

A series of detailed maps showing the project area, each road and the proposed changes is located under the project on our website at:

www.fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/projects

NOTE: Once at the website you will need to select the Chewuch Transportation Plan from the list of Forest projects. You will then be taken to the project page where you will find the maps and scoping documents.

Frequently Asked Question: What do the various road maintenance levels mean?

Level 1	Intermittent service roads during the time they are closed to vehicular traffic. The closure period must exceed 1 year. Emphasis is normally given to maintaining drainage facilities and runoff patterns.
Level 2	Roads open for use by high-clearance vehicles. Passenger car traffic is not a consideration.
Level 3	Roads open and maintained for travel by prudent drivers in a standard passenger car. User comfort and convenience are low priorities.
Level 4	Roads that provide a moderate degree of user comfort and convenience at moderate travel speeds. Most roads are double-lane and aggregate surfaced. However, some roads may be single lane. Some roads may be paved and/or dust abated.
Level 5	Roads that have a high degree of user comfort and convenience. These roads are normally double-lane, paved facilities. Some may be aggregate surfaced and dust abated.

Frequently Asked Question: What is a closed versus a decommissioned road?

- Closed roads are Maintenance Level 1 roads.
- Roads that are decommissioned are removed from the road system permanently. Decommissioned roads are stabilized, restored and revegetated, consistent with Forest Service Manual 7734-Road Decommissioning. It is required that, within 10 years of decommissioning, vegetative cover be reestablished on the road by either artificial or natural means (16 U.S.C 1608).

How to Comment on the Proposed Chewuch Transportation Plan

We welcome your feedback on this project! Any information you provide us on how you use the Chewuch and how this proposal might affect that use will help us to improve the proposed action. Please send comments to the following locations:

By mail: Methow Valley Ranger District
Attention: Chewuch Transportation Plan Comments
24 West Chewuch Road
Winthrop, WA 98862

By e-mail: comments-pacificnorthwest-okanogan-methowvalley@fs.fed.us

Comments would be most helpful if received within 30 days from the date of this newsletter. Please note that comments received in response to this request, including names and addresses, will be considered part of the project record and may be released under the Freedom of Information Act.

If you have questions, please contact Victoria Wilkins, NEPA Team Lead, at (509) 996-4063.