

USDA Forest Service National Assessment of Travel Management Planning

May 2008 – May 2009

Location: Nationwide

Background: Since the 2005 implementation of the Travel Management Rule, the U.S. Forest Service has been engaged in travel management planning for national forests and grasslands around the country. The rule requires each national forest or ranger district to designate those roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicles, which can be controversial among different user groups. The Forest Service has committed to using a collaborative planning process, emphasizing public involvement and coordination with state, local, and tribal governments. In 2008, the Forest Service engaged the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution to provide insight and guidance for improving ongoing and anticipated travel management planning. In addition to providing assistance with planning efforts on individual National Forests, the Institute contracted with the University of Virginia's Institute for Environmental Negotiation (IEN) to conduct a national assessment of Forest Service experience with travel management. The analysis for the assessment is based on extended individual discussions with a wide range of stakeholders as well as online surveys.

Results and Accomplishments

Drawing on lessons from selected travel management projects, the assessment identifies a number of key challenges associated with travel management planning, and includes recommendations on developing partnerships and meaningful collaborative processes, as well as improved communications regarding travel management planning.

The study also cites numerous examples where stakeholders report the Travel Management Rule is being successfully implemented in many respects – in the conception of the process, in engaging the public, and in issuing and implementing a final decision.



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Highlights/Innovations

- **Substantial Participation:** A total of 51 individuals who had participated in travel management planning conducted phone interviews with IEN. The participants represented a broad range of interests in National Forests and Grasslands. A total of 67 people also completed an online written survey.
- **National Perspective:** This was the first report of its kind to capture a broad, national perspective on the travel management planning process.
- **Diverse Stakeholders:** The assessment included input from a diverse range of stakeholders, including the third party neutral facilitators engaged in travel management.
- **Timely Feedback:** The report provided timely feedback to the Forest Service and its partners to implement recommendations into their current planning processes.

The assessment is available to the general public at:
<http://www.ecr.gov/AnnouncementsEvents/AnnouncementsEvents.aspx?Item=40>

Credits

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