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Route To:

Date: September 6, 2016

Subject: Monitoring Travel Management NEPA Decisions for the Minimum Road System

To: Forest Supervisors and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Manager

In my October 27, 2015 letter regarding our next steps with travel analysis, I stated that I expect to see significant progress each year on every unit toward a sustainable transportation system and directed the Regional Travel Management Board to monitor and report each year on the progress made.

I applaud the recent and current efforts underway to address development of the minimum road system (MRS) in on-going projects. The Regional Travel Management Board will solicit proposals and decisions made on the MRS from each Forest on an annual basis to post on the Region's internet site. This will provide transparency that enables our interested publics to see the progress we are making towards implementing a MRS. Julie Knutson, Regional Environmental Coordinator, will coordinate with each Forest's Environmental Coordinator to gather this information, and will facilitate posting on the Regional website.

Washington Office (WO) guidance is forthcoming for Forests to post travel analysis reports (TARs), maps and other information on their website. In addition, the Infrastructure database (Infra) will be used to code TAR recommendations and MRS decisions.

Ensure that travel management proposals analyzed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are addressed in the purpose and need statement. When integrated into restoration projects, the need for travel management actions may vary – for example, to address site-specific water quality issues, or wildlife habitat needs – with an underlying objective (purpose) to develop an environmentally sustainable MRS. In addition to NEPA compliance, including these actions in the purpose and need highlights and demonstrates our commitment to travel management implementation.

Forests, Areas and Grasslands are strongly encouraged to assess all roads within a project area, when feasible since it may be many years before an opportunity arises again in a given watershed to address the MRS.

Proposals to develop the MRS may be incorporated into landscape level restoration projects or stand alone as a single purpose proposal. In all cases, the scale of analysis should be at the HUC-6 watershed area or larger. The TAR that each administrative unit completed in accordance with the Travel Management Rule (36 CFR part 212, Subpart A) will be used to inform the environmental analysis under the NEPA. Conversely, the NEPA analysis will identify relevant updates to be made to the TAR and tracked in Infra, consistent with the forthcoming guidance from the WO.

Travel management decisions related to the MRS that require NEPA include removing a route from the Forest transportation system, decommissioning a route or an unauthorized route, closing roads to vehicular travel, putting roads in storage (converting an open road to a Maintenance



Level 1 status) or changing the allowed classes of motor vehicles or time of year for motor vehicle use. Refer to FSH 7715 for more information on travel management decisions.

If you have engineering questions, please contact Joe Neer, Acting Regional Transportation Program Manager, 503-808-2512. For NEPA questions, please contact Julie Knutson at 503-808-2276.

/s/ Dianne C. Guidry (for)

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Regional Forester

cc: Jose Linares, Christy Darden, Paul Podesta, Jeff Mast, ML Smith, Julia Riber, Julie Knutson.
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