

FOREST SERVICE MANUAL  
WASHINGTON

TITLE 2300 - RECREATION, WILDERNESS,  
AND RELATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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This amendment supersedes Amendment 2300-91-1 to FSM 2350.2-2353.51.

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Chief

FSM 2300 - RECREATION, WILDERNESS,  
AND RELATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
WO AMENDMENT 2300-94-3  
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CHAPTER 2350 - TRAIL, RIVER, AND SIMILAR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Trail, river, and similar recreation experience opportunities are characterized by activities that involve relatively low-density use and that occur over broad expanses of land and/or water. These activities include hiking, caving, mountaineering, snowmobiling, horseback riding, off-road vehicle driving, driving for pleasure, boating, hunting, and fishing.

Two conditions make these types of recreation experience opportunities challenging to plan and manage for.

First, the manager must manage the recreation user's entire environment. The components of this environment are stated in the recreation opportunity spectrum settings--physical, social, and managerial. All resource management activities affect these settings.

The second condition is the pervasive nature of these recreation activities in the National Forest. The activities occur in varying degrees throughout the forest in all seasons.

The challenge, therefore, is to manage all resources on the entire forest with a sensitivity to their contribution to these recreation experiences and to skillfully combine settings in such a manner as to take maximum advantage of the forest's attributes and provide activities to meet public demands.

2350.2 - Objectives.

1. Provide recreation opportunities for users of the general forest, water, and cave resources.
2. Provide opportunities for a variety of recreation pursuits with emphasis on activities that are in harmony with the natural environment and consistent with the recreation role of the National Forest.
3. Mitigate adverse impacts of users on the natural resources, cultural and historical resources, and on other users.

2350.3 - Policy.

1. Manage the general forest, water, and underground areas with their recreational access and support facilities under the principles defined in FSM 2303.
2. Emphasize opportunities, in all ROS classes, that require minimal supporting facilities for the convenience of users, more self-reliance by the users, and less intrusion by constructed facilities upon the natural environment.
3. Coordinate management of trail, river, and similar recreation opportunities with recreation sites and facilities so as to provide adjunct opportunities for users of these sites. Such sites and facilities include campgrounds, picnic areas, ski areas, resorts, and, as appropriate, recreation developments on other ownerships.
4. Coordinate management of trail, river, and similar recreation opportunities with other resource management activities to take advantage of supportive relationships to the extent possible.
5. Regulate users only to the extent necessary to provide for user safety; to protect the natural, cultural, and historical resources; and to achieve the recreation experience objectives.
6. Emphasize user assistance (e.g., low-impact use) in management and provide user information accordingly.

2352 - ROAD RECREATION MANAGEMENT.

2352.1 - Four-Wheel Drive Ways. Manage four-wheel drive ways as part of the Forest Development Road System (FSM 7703).

1. Restriction of Use. Restrict use to specific vehicle types to achieve recreational objectives (FSM 7730).
2. Inventory. Inventory and identify these facilities as roads in the Forest Development Transportation Plan document (FSM 7711).
3. Access Coordination. Coordinate the development of four-wheel drive ways with access requirements for timber and other resources.
4. Four-Wheel Drive Way Guides. Utilize four-wheel drive way guides in FSH 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook, when developing these types of facilities.

2353 - FOREST DEVELOPMENT TRAILS.

2353.01 - Authority.

2353.01a - Laws. The principal laws for the administration of the Forest Development Trail System are:

1. National Trails System Act (82 Stat. 919, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1241 (Note), 1241-1249). The Act establishes a National Trail System containing national recreation, scenic, historic, and connecting or side trails for the purpose of providing trail recreation opportunities. It prescribes administrative and development matters and encourages the use of volunteers in the trail program. It also establishes provisions for agreements to carry out the purposes of the Act.

2. National Forest Roads and Trails Act (78 Stat. 1089, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 532-538). The Act recognizes that construction and maintenance of an adequate system of roads and trails within and near the National Forest is essential to meeting the increasing demands for timber, recreation, and other uses. It authorizes and establishes procedures related to right-of-ways, easements, construction, record keeping, and agreements.

3. Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1978, as amended (23 U.S.C. 101a, 201-204; P.L. 95-599). The Act establishes criteria for forest highways and defines forest roads and forest development roads and trails.

4. ERFO Funds. Funds authorized by the Federal Highway Administration under the Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) program (23 U.S.C. 125). These funds are available for repair of federally owned roads and trails damaged or destroyed by natural disasters or by catastrophic failures.

2353.01b - Regulations. The principal regulations for the administration of the Forest Development Trail System are:

1. Administration of the Forest Development Transportation System (36 CFR 212). The regulation defines terms used in management of trails, establishes transportation plan direction, prescribes requirements for trail maps and signs, and regulates use on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail.

2. Prohibitions (36 CFR 261). The regulation establishes prohibitions necessary to manage and control use on National Forest Development trails. It includes general prohibitions and prohibitions in areas designated by order.

2353.02 - Objectives.

1. Provide trail-related recreation opportunities that serve public needs and meet land management and recreation policy objectives.
2. Provide trail recreation opportunities that emphasize the natural setting of the National Forest and are consistent with land capability.
3. Provide trail access for National Forest management and protection.

2353.03 - Policy.

1. Manage the Forest Development Trail System to carry out the objectives and direction established in the Forest Plans.
2. Provide a diversity of trail opportunities for experiencing a variety of environments and modes of travel consistent with the National Forest Recreation role (FSM 2302 and 2303) and land capability.
3. Designate the more outstanding and qualified trails or network of trails as components of the National Trail System.
4. Emphasize long-term cost effectiveness and need when developing or rehabilitating trail facilities.
5. Where needed, provide trail access for resource management and protection.
6. Inventory and include all forest development trails in the Forest Development Transportation System Plan.

2353.04 - Responsibility.

2353.04a - Secretary of Agriculture. The Secretary of Agriculture has delegated all actions prescribed by the National Trails System Act to the Chief in accordance with 1 AR 165, chapter 2, section 13--Forest Service, except:

1. Appointment of a chairperson and members to the advisory council for a particular National Scenic or National Historic Trail.
2. Designation of the Department's representative on the advisory council for a National Scenic or National Historic Trail administered by another agency.

2353.04b - Chief. The Chief shall:

1. Recommend to the Secretary National Scenic and National Historic Study Trails for inclusion in the National Trail System.
2. Approve and submit National Scenic and National Historic Trail management plans to Congress.
3. When in the public interest enter into agreement with the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to provisions in section 7 of the National Trails Act transferring management responsibilities for segments of National Scenic or Historic Trails.
4. Approve the rights-of-way for National Scenic and Historic Trails and sign notices for the Federal Register of the availability of maps and descriptions.
5. Recommend major National Scenic and Historic Trail relocations to Congress for action.

2353.04c - Deputy Chief, National Forest System. The Deputy Chief, National Forest System shall:

1. Assign Forest Service leadership for National Scenic or Historic Trail studies conducted by the Forest Service or the Secretary of the Interior.
2. Consult with the Secretary of the Interior on matters related to the National Trail System.

2353.04d - Director of Recreation Management Staff, Washington Office. The Director, Recreation Management Staff, WO shall:

1. Provide leadership for planning, development, and management of the Forest Development Trail System, which includes activities associated with National Trail System.
2. Recommend program and budget direction to include trail planning, construction/reconstruction, maintenance, and operation.
3. Coordinate with national representatives of user groups, other agencies, and Members of Congress, and prepare memorandums of understanding and cooperative agreements when necessary.
4. Provide leadership for development and management of a trail information system capable of providing data to managers and the public.
5. Prepare regulations relating to development and operation of forest development trails.
6. Keep the Secretary of the Interior informed of National Recreation, side, and connector trails designated on the National Forests.

2353.04e - Director of Engineering Staff, Washington Office. The Director, Engineering Staff, WO, shall:

1. Provide engineering technical expertise to the Director of Recreation on matters relating to recreation activities on the Forest Development Transportation System.
2. Provide leadership to Regions on engineering problems related to the Forest Development Trail System and road recreation management.
3. Provide leadership in developing equipment and methods for construction and maintenance of trails.

2353.04f - Regional Foresters.

1. Forest Development Trail Systems.
  - a. Approve Forest Development Trail systems as a component of the Forest Plan.
2. National Recreation Trails.
  - a. Designate National Recreation Trails occurring on National Forest lands.
  - b. As appropriate, designate National Recreation Trails on non-National Forest lands with the consent of cooperating Federal agencies, States, their political subdivisions, other administrating agencies, or private landowners.
3. National Scenic and Historic Trails.
  - a. Trails under administration of Secretary of the Interior:
    - (1) Participate in the study, development, and operation of National Scenic and Historic Trails administered by the Secretary of the Interior where such trails cross National Forest System land.
  - b. Trails under administration of the Secretary of Agriculture:
    - (1) Recommend organizations and individuals to be represented on the advisory council and provide administrative support to the council.
    - (2) Approve trail locations in consultation with the advisory council, State and Federal agencies, other Regions of the Forest Service, and other interested parties.
    - (3) Prepare a trail management plan in consultation with the advisory council and other interested parties. Submit the plan to the Chief for approval.

(4) Encourage States, counties, or private organizations to construct, maintain, and manage those portions of the trail located on non-Federal land and outside the exterior boundaries of National Forests.

(5) When in the public interest, enter into written cooperative agreements with States or their political subdivisions, landowners, private organizations, or individuals to operate, develop, and maintain any part of a National Scenic or Historic Trail.

(6) Approve minor relocations of National Scenic and Historic Trails and publish required notices in the Federal Register.

c. Studies.

(1) Conduct studies authorized by the National Trails System Act to determine the feasibility and desirability of designating trails as National Scenic or National Historic Trails. Where such studies involve more than one Region, the Region with the most mileage on National Forest will normally be designated the lead Region.

4. Connecting and Side Trails.

a. Designate connecting and side trails as components of National Recreation, National Scenic Trails, or Historic Trail as appropriate under Section 6 of the National Trails System Act.

5. Regional Foresters Designated Lead for National Scenic and Historic Trails.

a. Regional Foresters for the following Regions are designated as the lead Forest Service official for coordinating matters concerning the study, planning, and operation of the indicated multiregional trails:

(1) Southern Region R-8--Appalachian National Scenic Trail

(2) Rocky Mountain Region R-2--Continental Divide National Scenic Trail

(3) Pacific Southwest Region R-5--Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail

2353.04g - Forest Supervisors. Forest Supervisors shall:

1. Develop, operate, and maintain the Forest Development Trail System.
2. Maintain the Forest Development Transportation System plan (FSM 7710) with its trail component consisting of the RIM-TRAIL inventory data base (FSH 2309.11) and trail system map(s).
3. Ensure the availability of technical engineering support for management of the trail system by the recreation function.
4. Prepare National Recreation, Connector, and Side Trail Establishment Reports.

2353.05 - Definitions.

1. Difficulty Levels. The degree of challenge a trail presents to an average user's physical ability and skill. Difficulty is a function of trail condition and route location factors such as alignment, steepness of grades, gain and loss of elevation, and amount and kind of natural barriers that must be crossed. Difficulty levels may be applied to all the types of trails discussed in this manual and the Trails Management Handbook.

- a. Easiest. A trail requiring limited skill with little challenge to travel.
- b. More Difficult. A trail requiring some skill and challenge to travel.
- c. Most Difficult. A trail requiring a high degree of skill and challenge to travel.

Snow, ice, rain, and other weather conditions may increase the level of difficulty.

2. Forest Development Trails. As defined in 36 CFR 212.1 and 261.2, those trails wholly or partly within or adjacent to and serving, the National Forests and other areas administered by the Forest Service that have been included in the Forest Development Transportation Plan.

3. Four-Wheel Drive Way. A forest development road included in the Forest Development Transportation Plan and commonly used by four-wheel drive, high-clearance vehicles with a width greater than 50 inches.

4. Less Than Standard Maintenance. Maintenance under which some work items are not performed, resulting in a trail that does not fully serve its established objectives.

5. National Trails System Components. Components of the National Trails System are National Recreation Trails, National Scenic Trails, National Historic Trails, and Connecting and Side Trails (National Trail System Act, secs. 4 and 5).

6. Standard Maintenance. Maintenance that is adequate to permit the trail to serve its established objectives.

7. Trail. A commonly used term denoting a pathway for purposes of travel by foot, stock, or trail vehicles.

8. Trail Vehicle. Vehicles designed for trail use, such as bicycles, snowmobiles, trail bikes, trail scooters, and all terrain vehicles (ATV).

9. Trailhead. The transfer point between a trail and a road, lake, or airfield. The area may have developments that facilitate the transfer from one transportation mode to another.

2353.06 - References. Use FSH 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook, and the references cited in FSH 2309.18, section 06 to manage a trails program.

2353.1 - Forest Development Trail System Administration.

2353.11 - Relationship Between Forest Development Trail System and National Trail System. Manage designated National Trails as a component of the Forest Development Trail System.

2353.12 - Documentation. Document all forest development trails in the Forest Development Transportation plan (see FSM 7711).

Identify forest development trails on a map of suitable scale and make it available to the public at offices of the Forest Supervisor, District Ranger, and cooperators.

2353.13 - Marking. Mark Forest Development Trails with appropriate signs that reasonably bring the trail location to the attention of the public.

2353.14 - Inventory Record. Inventory all trail facilities. Use a data management system that allows for the storage, manipulation, and upward reporting of the data. (FSH 2309.11).

2353.15 - Establishment of Management Priorities. See FSH 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook, chapter 1.

2353.16 - Cooperation and Volunteers. Consult with and develop cooperative working relationships with other Federal, State, and local political subdivisions, organizations, and private individuals on matters concerning the Forest Development Trail System. Wherever appropriate, assist volunteers and volunteer organizations in planning, developing, and maintaining trails (National Trails System Act, sec. 11).

2353.17 - Planning. Consider the planning process described in FSH 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook, chapter 1, when developing new trails, reconstructing existing trails, or maintaining trails.

2353.18 - Development. Use FSH 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook, chapter 2.

2353.19 - Trail Objective. Manage each trail to meet the objective(s) developed for that trail or network of trails.

2353.2 - Types of Trails. Develop trails that are suited to a variety of modes of travel such as hiking, horseback riding, motor biking, and so forth. Use the appropriate trail guide(s) found in FSH 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook, chapter 2.3.

Where the trail facility objective accommodates a variety of users, design the trail for the mode of travel requiring the most demanding construction specifications.

2353.21 - Difficulty Levels. Use the difficulty level concept to communicate to trail users what to expect when using a trail and as a means to broaden the available recreation experience by introducing various degrees of challenge. Consider displaying difficulty symbols on maps, brochures, and signs (FSH 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook, chapter 2).

2353.22 - Recreation Opportunity Spectrum. Use the recreation opportunity spectrum in trail development and operation (FSM 2310 and FSH 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook, chapter 1).

2353.23 - Right-of-Way Protection. Use cooperative agreements or acquisition authorities to provide reasonable protection to designated trails and their corridor (The National Trails System Act, Section 7, and FSM 5400).

2353.24 - Preconstruction and Construction. Use Standard Specifications for Construction of Trails, EM-7720-102, where needed.

2353.25 - Management of Trail Use. See FSH 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook, Chapter 4.

2353.26 - Maintenance Management Process. Consider the maintenance management process described in chapter 4 of the FSH 2309.18, Trail Management Handbook, when developing trail maintenance procedures.

2353.3 - National Recreation Trail Administration.

2353.31 - Policy.

1. New designations should emphasize a trail network concept where possible. Designate interconnecting trails as a National Recreation Trail System where a number of interconnecting trails meet the designation criteria.

2. Motorized trails and four-wheel drive ways may be designated as National Recreation Trails.

3. Do not consider trails within the National Wilderness Preservation System for designation. Trails with only a short segment in a wilderness may be designated as a National Recreation Trail.

4. The Regional Forester may establish National Recreation Trails on National Forest lands or on other ownerships with the written consent of other Federal agencies,

the States, their political subdivisions, other appropriate administering agencies, or private owners.

2353.32 - National Recreation Trails. Regional Foresters shall designate National Recreation Trails (FSM 2353.04) as provided in sections 4 and 6 of the National Trails System Act. These trails must:

1. Represent the more outstanding trail opportunities of the Forest Development Trail System.
2. Provide a day-use or extended trail experience for a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities reasonably accessible to population centers.
3. Emphasize designation of an interconnecting network of National Trails.

2353.33 - National Recreation Trail Designation Process.

2353.33a - Reports. Prepare and submit an establishment report to the Regional Forester.

The report must include the following information:

1. Approval page.
2. Name and location of proposed trail, including map indicating trail and vicinity, when appropriate.
3. History of the trail.
4. Description of the trail, trail objective, and associated environments, including cultural features.
5. Management direction covering such items as protection, safety, maintenance, rules and regulations, signing, and associated recreation facilities.
6. Assessment of impacts on the trail and associated resources as a result of designation.
7. A statement that the trail or trail system will be available for public use and enjoyment for at least 10 consecutive years.

2353.33b - National Recreation Trail Designation Criteria. A trail or a network of trails must meet the following criteria to be designated for the National Recreation Trail System.

1. Readiness. Designate a trail only if it is in place and available for public use.
2. Use and Availability. The trail must provide a variety of trail-related recreation opportunities within approximately 2 hours of automobile travel time from the population centers of the Region under consideration.

3. Length. The length of a proposed National Recreation Trail or Trail System may vary, depending upon its use and purpose, but it must be continuous.

4. Location. The trail incorporates the significant natural and cultural features of the area through which it passes. The trail may utilize a variety of locations if the location is in accordance with planned trail use and reasonably provides for public safety.

2353.33c - Establishment Reports for National Recreation, Connecting, and Side Trails. Submit one copy of the designation report to the Washington Office and appropriate copies to cooperators.

2353.34 - National Recreation Trail System Development.

2353.34a - Design. Use chapter 2 of FSH 2309.18, Trails Management Handbook.

2353.35 - Management of National Recreation Trails.

1. Other Uses for National Recreation Trails. The primary purpose of a National Recreation Trail is for outdoor recreation use. Permit other uses such as power transmission, livestock drives, and logging-road operations, that do not conflict with the nature and long-term purpose of the trail. Ensure that special visual management considerations are incorporated into the execution of such uses.

2. Management Objectives. Manage use in keeping with the objectives established for the trail and lands associated with the trail. Where a short segment of trail goes through a wilderness, manage the entire trail to be compatible with the wilderness objectives.

3. Removal of a National Recreation Trail Designation. Occasionally the need to remove a National Recreation Trail designation may arise. When it is not possible to relocate the trail and otherwise preserve the designated status, the Regional Forester may approve the removal of the designation from the trail. Submit copies of the report removing the designation to the Washington Office, Recreation Management Staff, and cooperators involved in the initial designation (FSM 2353.33c).

Existing designated trails that predate the establishment of a Wilderness Area may remain but should be considered for removal from the National Recreation trail classification at the expiration of their tenth year of existence. (See Establishment Report Statement concerning 10 years of availability at FSM 2353.33a.)

2353.4 - National Scenic and Historic Trail Administration.

2353.41 - Objective. Develop and administer National Scenic or National Historic Trails to ensure retention of the outdoor recreation experience for which the trail was established and continued production of maximum benefits from the land.

2353.42 - Policy.

1. Design each segment of a trail to harmonize with and complement any established land management plans for that specific area.
2. Trail design decisions and management practices should reflect a philosophy of perpetuating the spectrum of recreation objectives envisioned for trail use.
3. National Scenic Trails normally shall not be designed for motorized use, except where routed on Forest development roads or public roads. On National Historic Trails, motorized or other uses shall be permitted if the use is established at the time of designation and it will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail.

2353.43 - National Scenic and Historic Trail System Development. National Scenic or Historic Study Trails and Trails are established by an act of Congress.

2353.43a - Designation.

1. Conduct studies of congressionally authorized study trails in the manner prescribed by section 5(b) of the National Trails System Act. Trail studies by the Forest Service must also comply with National Environmental Policy Act (FSM 1950) and the principles of land and resource management planning (FSM 1920).
2. Transmit studies to the President for consideration and submission to Congress.

2353.43b - Administration.

1. Establish an advisory council within 1 year of the designation of any National Scenic or Historic Trail, and in the manner prescribed by section 5(d) of the National Trails System Act.

2. Where it is in the public interest, transfer management responsibilities between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior by a joint memorandum of agreement containing appropriate terms and conditions. Develop, operate, and maintain the transferred trail segment subject to the laws, rules, and regulations of the receiving department (National Trails System Act, sec. 7).

3. Within 2 fiscal years of establishment of a National Scenic or Historic Trail, and after consulting with affected Federal agencies, States, and that trail's advisory council, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a comprehensive trail management plan. The plan shall comply with section 5(f) of the National Trails System Act.

2353.43c - National Scenic or Historic Trail Relocation. Relocation of a segment of a National Scenic or Historic Trail is permissible for reasons of preserving the purposes for which the trail was established or to promote sound multiple use management. Such relocation requires the consent of the agency head having jurisdiction over the land. Specific relocation criteria and procedures are found in the management plan for the trail. Publish notice of relocation in the Federal Register. Significant relocations require an act of Congress.

2353.44 - Management of National Scenic and Historic Trails. Motorized use on a scenic trail generally shall be prohibited (National Trails Systems Act, sec. 7). However, regulation may be established that permits motorized use as necessary to meet emergencies or enable access by adjacent landowners (National Trails System Act, sec. 7).

Manage a National Scenic or National Historic Trail within wilderness so the trail and its associated use are compatible with the wilderness management.

2353.5 - Connecting and Side Trail Administration.

2353.51 - Development of Connecting and Side Trails. Designate connecting or side trails as provided in Section 6 of the National Trails System Act. Follow the process for designation of National Recreation Trails. These trails complement National Recreation, Scenic, or Historic Trails by providing additional public access or additional trails-related recreational opportunities. Manage these trails in accordance with the direction for the trail they complement.