

San Juan Plan Revision
Frequently Asked Question about
Travel Management and Suitability
Prepared for Public Meetings – May 2006

1. What Travel Management decisions will be made in the Plan Revision?

One of the Plan's key principles is to maintain the wild character of our large and undeveloped areas. Another guiding principle is to provide high quality recreation experiences. Travel management in the Plan Revision will identify areas suitable for designation of routes for both general motorized use and over-snow motorized use and will include the criteria for eventually selecting specific routes. Criteria will be based on the need for access, recreational experiences, resource protection, and wildlife habitat considerations. Travel suitability looks at not only restrictions to motorized travel, both regulatory (e.g. Wilderness) and resource (e.g. soils, slope, wildlife), but also includes areas where motorized recreation experiences (e.g. for Motorcycles, ATVs and Jeeps) can be achieved.

Two travel suitability maps will be created, one for motorized and one for over-snow. Both maps will have the same types of polygons showing areas suitable or not suitable for motorized use. The Travel Map is a "Suitability" map. Hence, impacts to travel opportunities will be analyzed by comparing the Travel Suitability map to the four alternatives that have been developed.

The route-by-route designation process, will be a separate process outside of the Plan Revision (*see question 9*).

2. How do the Travel Suitability Areas relate to the Management Themes?

The Draft Travel Suitability maps used the theme boundaries to initially define general motorized and over-snow Travel Suitability areas.

- The "Unsuitable" category aligns with Theme 1, and some Theme 2 and 3 areas.
- The "Suitable -- Designated FS/BLM roads and trails" category is often found in Theme 3 and 8 areas.
- The "Suitable – Opportunity Areas" category is often found in Theme 4, 5, and 7 areas.

3. What does the Draft General Motorized Travel Suitability map illustrate and what are the General Motorized Travel Suitability Categories?

Suitable Areas: In general, areas considered "suitable" for motorized use already contain a system of roads, routes, and trails. The polygons were delineated considering "enforceable boundaries," such as terrain breaks. This category has been further broken into two sub-categories to better describe the occurrence for which motorized opportunities can be expected and found within general areas on the San Juan Public Lands.

Suitable – Designated FS/BLM roads and trails: Being a plan revision we do not need to revise areas where we do not feel there are travel management concerns.

- **National Forest System and BLM System routes:** Motorized use that currently occurs in these areas is typically limited to designated NFS/BLM roads trails, rights of ways and subject to valid and existing right. This category is meant to show where travel is currently not causing resource or recreation issues and should be carried forward into the new revised plan.
- **Routes in Theme 3 areas:** Motorized roads and trails in Theme 3 areas typically consists of open NFS/BLM system roads and trails, or have one route passing through the Theme 3 area that connect to another area (e.g. to a Theme 5 area) and/or may dead end at a scenic overlook or a resource project such as a reservoir. Theme 3 areas often have challenging terrain and as a result do not easily lend themselves to additional route creation, aside from what already exists on the ground.

The desired future condition is no net gain of motorized routes in the Theme 3 areas. The Plan’s design criteria creation would consider additional motorized routes only if other Theme 3 routes were closed and replaced by new ones. However, new routes to valid existing rights will be allowed if existing routes are not adequate.

Suitable -- Opportunity Areas: These areas have been identified as being suitable to potentially create motorized recreation experiences/opportunities. Often these areas have existing infrastructure, such as old logging roads, that can be easily connected to create nested loops. Most of these areas are in Theme 5 or Theme 4.

Unsuitable: Areas that are “unsuitable for motorized use” include areas closed by law or mandate such as: designated Wilderness areas, the Piedra Area, and Wilderness Study Areas, or where the desired future condition is to not have any motorized routes. Other reasons an area may have been classified as “Unsuitable” include: it has a special designation, such as Research Natural Area (RNA); a need to protect wildlife, cultural, or other resources; terrain or soil stability concerns, or the need to provide a range of non-motorized recreation experiences.

4. What does the Draft Over-snow Travel Suitability map illustrate and what are the Over-snow Travel Suitability Categories?

Over-snow motorized use relates primarily to snowmobiling, which may occur both on and off routes. The amount of areas where snow can be compacted is limited by concerns over Lynx recovery, so the amount of groomed routes has already been established in Lynx habitat. However, there is not a limit for the amount of over-snow travel areas. Suitability considerations contain two categories that describe where motorized winter use opportunities can be expected the San Juan Public Lands.

Suitable: In general, areas suitable for winter motorized use have been delineated considering accessibility and demand (opportunities and access for both motorized and non-motorized recreation experiences). Enforceable boundaries, such as terrain breaks, were a factor in determining suitable area boundaries.

- **Over-snow Motorized Use on Routes only:** The Plan Revision will not address route-by- route designations for Over-snow travel; these decisions will be made at the project level. However, it should be noted that there are areas where motorized play areas are accessed by a route through a limited area, e.g., Junction Creek. The first few miles of an access road may restrict off-route motorized use but still provide motorized access along that designated route to a motorized play area farther along.

Unsuitable: Areas that are “unsuitable for motorized use” include areas closed by law or mandate such as: designated Wilderness areas, the Piedra Area, and Wilderness Study Areas, or where the desired future condition is to not have any motorized routes. Other reasons an area may have been classified as “Unsuitable” include: it has a special designation, such as Research Natural Area (RNA); a need to protect wildlife, cultural, or other resources; terrain or soil stability concerns, or the need to provide a range of non-motorized recreation experiences.

5. How are Special Permit Areas addressed by the DRAFT Travel Suitability maps?

Special-use permits issued to range permittees, utility permittees, developed ski areas, and some contractors may authorize motorized access for the permittee to access areas specified in their permits. These uses are in areas “closed” to motorized use by the general public and are identified as “Unsuitable” on the Draft Travel Suitability maps. The decision to permit motorized use in an unsuitable area or off designated routes is made at the project level.

6. Will there be motorized recreation opportunities in Inventoried Roadless Areas?

Roadless areas can include motorized trails. The Draft Motorized Travel Suitability maps for the Plan Revision has identified some Inventoried Roadless Areas as being suitable for limited motorized use including over-snow vehicles and others as being unsuitable for motorized use.

7. Will the Plan Revision and the DRAFT Travel Suitability Maps identify seasonal closures?

No. Seasonal closures and the route by route designations will be dealt with under the 2005 Travel Management Rule. Seasonal closures may be imposed for natural resource reasons, wildlife and habitat protection, or social reasons.

8. Will there be areas identified for cross-country motorized travel in summer?

The suitability maps do not identify any areas for off-route or cross-country motorized travel. The goal of the 2005 Travel Management Rule is to restrict travel to a system of designated roads and trails. As such, the current "A, B, C, D, E, and F Areas" identified on the Visitor Map will no longer exist following implementation of the New Travel Management Rule because all routes where motorized use is allowed will be designated.

9. When will the 'Route by Route' decisions be made?

We expect to begin public involvement in the route-by-route designation process during the summer of 2007. There may be an introductory meeting regarding the 2005 National Travel Management Rule in the fall of 2006.

Designation of routes will include public involvement; coordination with federal, state, local, and tribal governments; and proper environmental analysis and documentation.

10. What is the 2005 Travel Management Rule?

Simply stated, the 2005 Travel Management Rule accepts OHV use as a legitimate, long-standing use of public lands and balances OHV use with other recreation and resources uses through the designation of roads, trails and areas. The Rule requires that the designation process be a collaborative, public process. The outcome of the process will be a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) that will display a system of designated roads, trails, and areas where motor vehicle use is allowed, by vehicle class (or type).