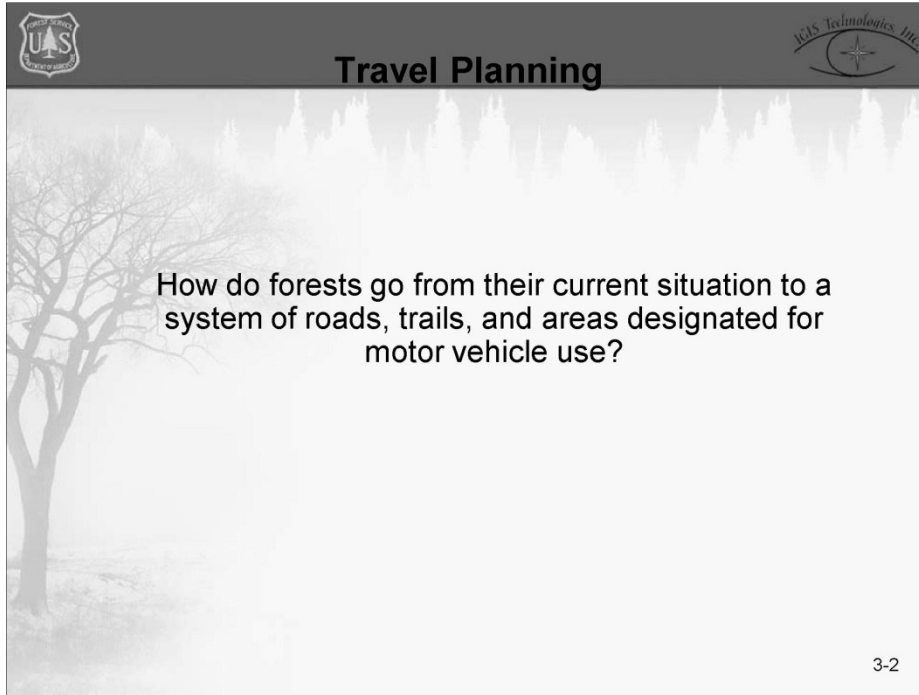




# **The Travel Planning Process: The Route Designation Process**

3-1



**Travel Planning**

How do forests go from their current situation to a system of roads, trails, and areas designated for motor vehicle use?

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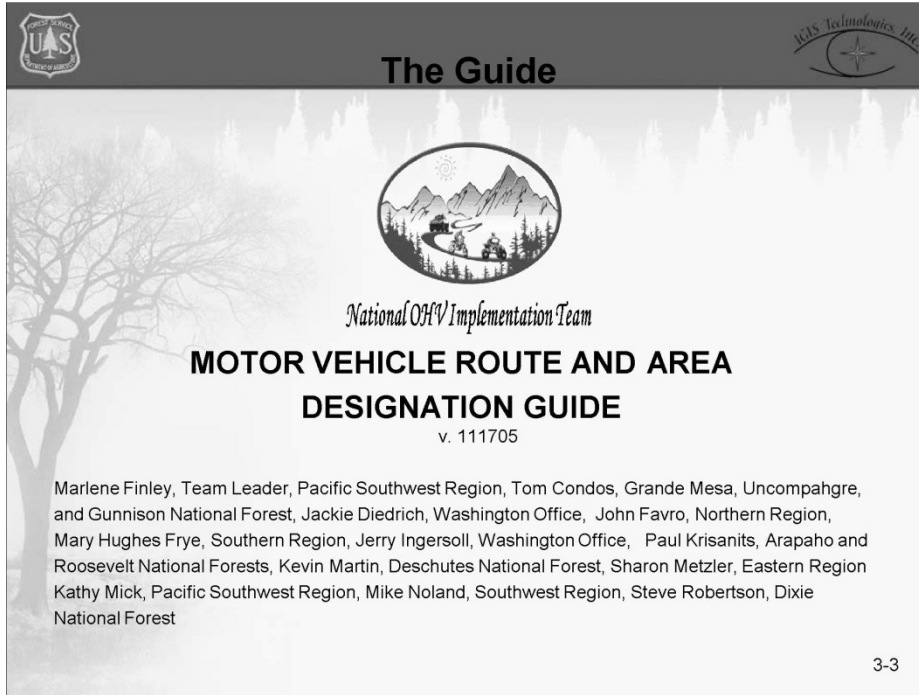
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The route that forests take to designate a system of roads, trails and areas, depends primarily on where Forests begin the process. Forests that have a designated system have no need for NEPA decisions, and instead their efforts will largely focus on cleaning up databases and running test plots on their Motor Vehicle Use Maps. Forests that have any other sort of travel plan or no travel plan have to begin with a process that engages the public to elicit from them dialogue on the possible designated system. This can be a long and difficult process if not managed well. The process's primary impact on the MVUM is that it will establish, following the NEPA decision, the system that will be mapped.

Travel planning is not something you do once and forget about, or even something you do once every ten or fifteen years. The motor vehicle use map will need to be updated each year as routes are opened and closed in response to monitoring, construction, new NEPA and changing circumstances.

Typically forest will rely on the Route and Area Designation Guide.



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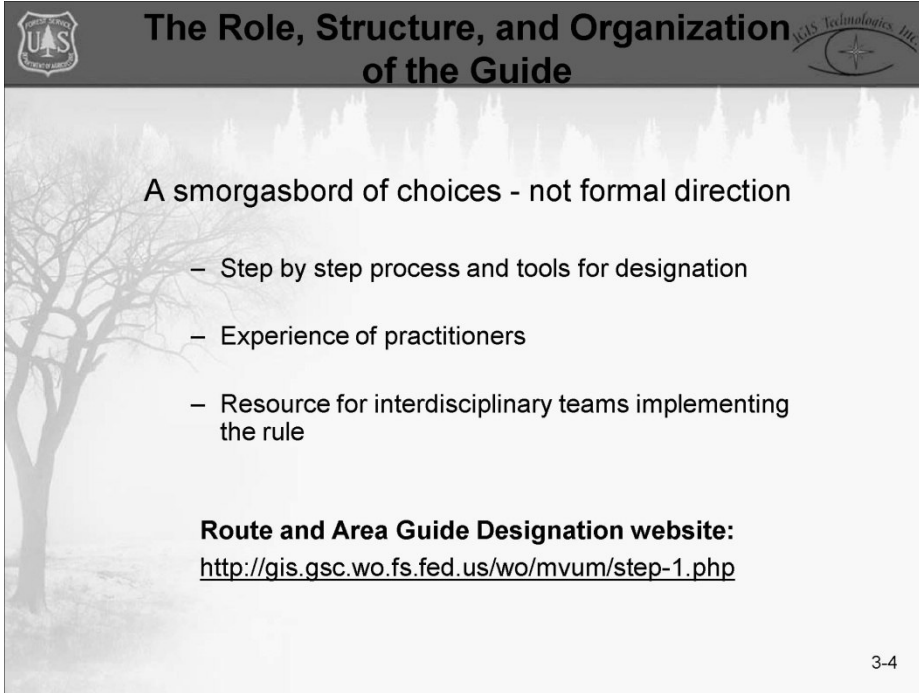
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The route and area designation guide is a useful tool that is worth becoming familiar with even if you don't have to be engaged in the NEPA decisions or the selection of routes for a forest transportation system. If you understand the guide you can understand what is probably going on, on your forest.



**The Role, Structure, and Organization of the Guide**

A smorgasbord of choices - not formal direction

- Step by step process and tools for designation
- Experience of practitioners
- Resource for interdisciplinary teams implementing the rule

**Route and Area Guide Designation website:**  
<http://gis.gsc.wo.fs.fed.us/wo/mvum/step-1.php>

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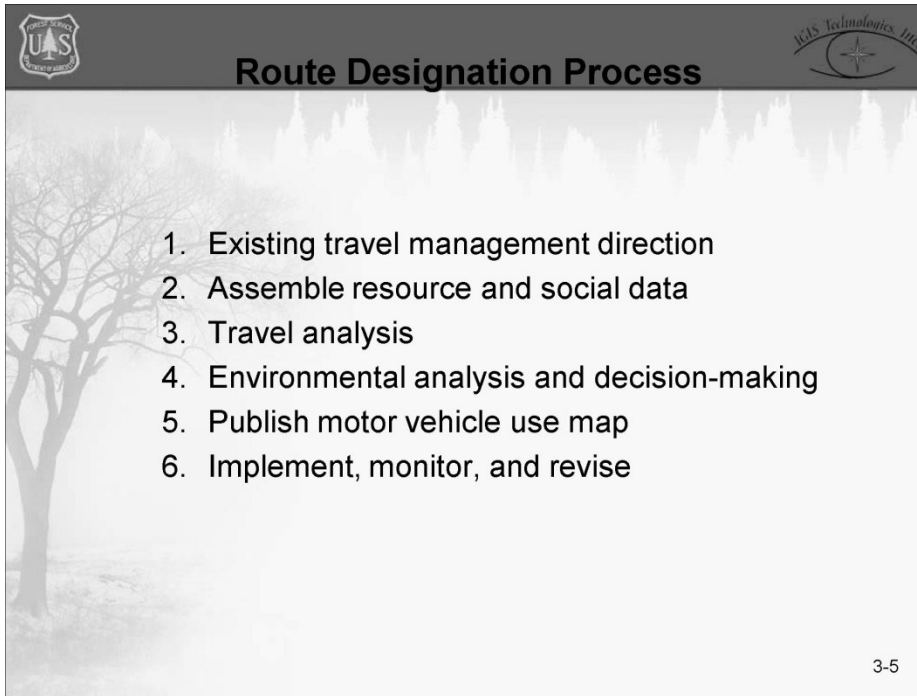
### Role, Structure, and Organization of the Guide

The Route and Area Designation Guide, prepared by the OHV Implementation Team, fulfills an important role. The Guide and other Implementation Team products provide advice on how to go about designating routes and areas for motor vehicle use, drawn from the experience of other field employees.

The Guide is a smorgasbord of choices, rather than formal policy. It is not binding on field units, but offers an overall structure and some tools drawn from the experience of travel management practitioners.

The Route and Area Designation Guide is intended as a resource for interdisciplinary teams as they go about implementing the rule. The framework and structure provided in the Guide are consistent with the proposed changes to the directive system.

### Route Designation Process

A presentation slide titled "Route Designation Process". The slide features a dark header with the UAS logo on the left and "UAS Technologies, Inc." on the right. The background is a light, misty forest scene with a large tree on the left. A numbered list of six steps is centered on the slide. The number "3-5" is in the bottom right corner.

**Route Designation Process**

1. Existing travel management direction
2. Assemble resource and social data
3. Travel analysis
4. Environmental analysis and decision-making
5. Publish motor vehicle use map
6. Implement, monitor, and revise

3-5

The Route and Area Designation Guide organizes the designation process into six steps. For each step, the Guide suggests a structure, discusses various choices, and presents an array of tools and resources that may be helpful to interdisciplinary teams. The appendices provide more detailed examples, references, and tools for each step. The Guide is consistent with the final regulation and the proposed directives, and following the six-step process will implement the rule. The structure of the Guide mirrors the organization of this training course, and stresses many of the same themes. Use the Guide as a continuing resource to organize the designation process. We'll go into each of these steps in more detail as we go through the course.

### **Step 1 – Compile Existing Travel Management Direction**

The designation process begins with a review of existing travel management direction, including mapped data. The baseline system consists of those NFS roads and NFS trails currently managed for motor vehicle use, together with any special orders or other prohibitions governing motor vehicle use. Identifying the baseline focuses our prior analysis so that we do not unnecessarily revisit past travel management decisions. If existing travel management direction provides an adequate system of designated routes and areas and restricts motor vehicle use to the designated system, the existing direction can be used to produce the motor vehicle use map and there is no need to proceed through subsequent steps.

### **Step 2 – Assemble Resource and Social Data**

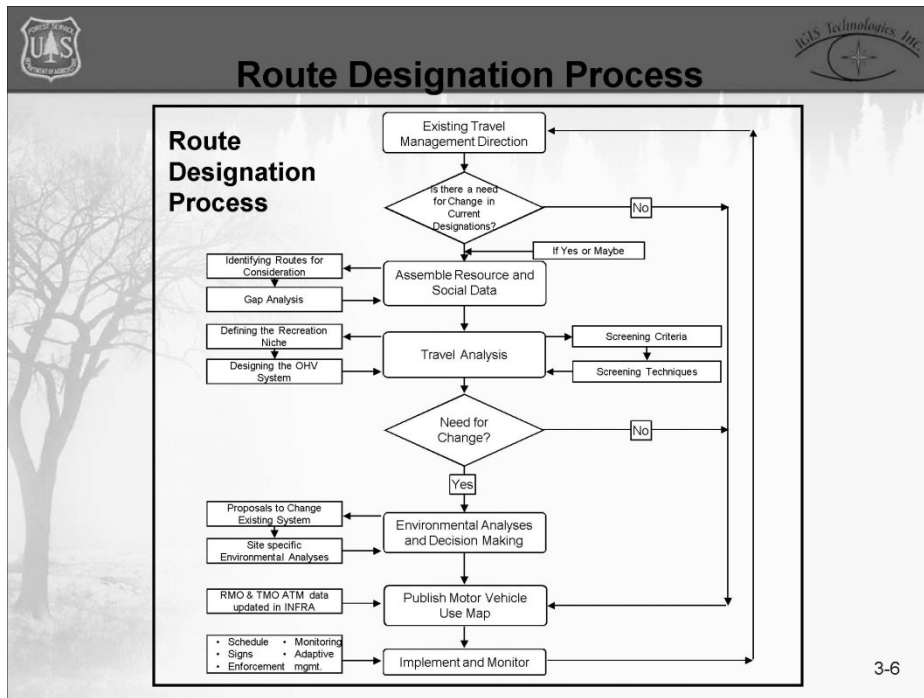
Travel analysis and travel management decisions depend on information about existing use patterns, natural resource conditions, user demand, and social and economic interactions. Most national forests also need some process to identify any existing user-created roads and trails which should be considered for addition to the forest transportation system. A complete inventory of user-created routes is not required. However, users deserve some assurance that their favorite routes are given appropriate consideration, and we must have enough information about these routes to evaluate social and environmental impacts of designation. This section in the Guide describes three basic approaches for addressing user-created routes.

Many members of the public can only relate to maps so they are vital at this point.

### **Step 3 – Use Travel Analysis to Identify Proposals for Change**

Travel analysis provides a comprehensive look at the road and trail network across a broad landscape. The end result of this step should be a set of proposals for changes to the forest transportation system, to be evaluated through the NEPA process. By analyzing and evaluating the network as a whole, travel analysis provides the basis for cumulative effects analysis in subsequent NEPA documents. This section discusses considerations in recreation niche and system design, and includes tools and screening criteria for assessing demand and supply and for evaluating user-created routes.


Do these first three steps *before* beginning the NEPA process. A common mistake is to launch a broad, comprehensive, and open-ended NEPA effort as the first (and only) step in travel planning. This is not illegal, but will lead to much broader and more complex NEPA work than necessary.



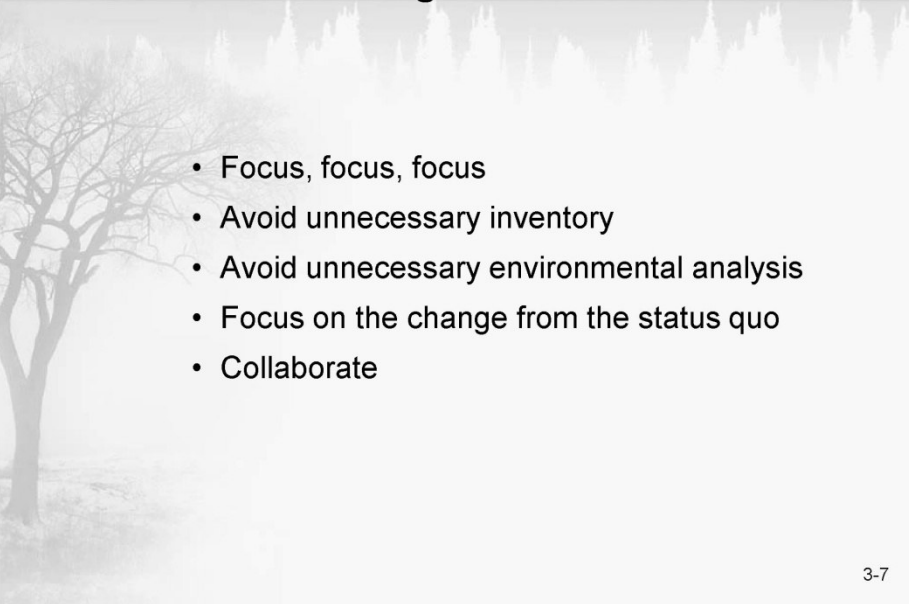

### Process Overview - Flowchart

1. Compile Existing Travel Management Direction
2. Assemble Resource and Social Data
3. Use Travel Analysis to Identify Proposals for Change
4. Environmental Analysis and Decision-Making
5. Publish Motor Vehicle Use Map
6. Implement, Monitor, and Revise

Notice that the flowchart forms a loop. We've been doing travel planning for a long time, and we've made decisions about roads, trails, areas, and motor vehicle use in forest plans, travel plans, and site-specific decisions. As we implement and monitor travel management decisions (including those from the past), we identify needs for change. So the first step, at the top of the flowchart, is to compile existing travel management direction, and the first question we ask is "Is there a need for change in current designations?". A lesson learned so far in this process is that the public likes to see the inventory of existing routes and possible alternatives (possible MVUMs) as they go through the collaborative process to develop a decision. Keep the data clean all the way through the process.



### Advice from the Route and Area Designation Guide:



- Focus, focus, focus
- Avoid unnecessary inventory
- Avoid unnecessary environmental analysis
- Focus on the change from the status quo
- Collaborate

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Here is some advice from the Route and Area Designation Guide:

*Focus, focus, focus* – Tightly focused processes, analyses, and decisions will minimize gridlock. Decisions should be focused on motor vehicles. Don't try to solve all travel management issues at once in one document.

*Avoid unnecessary inventory* – A complete inventory of user-created routes is not necessary. Gather only the information needed to evaluate proposed changes in travel management direction.

*Avoid unnecessary environmental analysis* – An environmental impact statement (EIS), environmental assessment (EA), or land management plan amendment is not necessarily needed to designate a route system. There is no need to reconsider decisions made prior to the new travel management rule. Use travel analysis to identify narrowly tailored proposals to change travel management direction, and conduct environmental analysis only when necessary. This will mean that you can begin cleaning up the data sets on these routes right away.

*Focus on the change from the status quo* – For many national forests, the result of designation will be to change from open cross-country motor vehicle use to a designated route system. For other national forests, route designation will simply confirm travel management decisions that have already been made. Analysis should focus on the change from the current situation.



### Summary

What you learned:

- ☒ MVUM production is a subset of Travel Management Decision
- ☒ Need accurate map data
- ☒ Map data produces the MVUM
- ☒ Interrelationship between Travel Management Decision process and the MVUM

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The process of making an MVUM follows a much longer process of developing a travel management decision. The use of accurate map data is critical to the process to display information to the Public. The same map data will be used to make the MVUM. Understanding the process of developing the travel management decision will be important to the final MVUM product for a forest or district.