



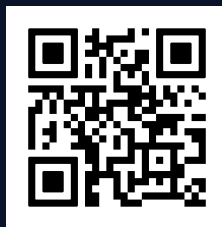
Rio Grande National Forest Over Snow Travel Management

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Public Comment Period: June 13 – July 29, 2026



Comparing the Four Alternatives



← Scan to view project page

Alternative 1

No Action (Baseline)

Designated Routes

~322 miles

Open Area Acres

Open Unless Closed

Keeps the current network with no snow depth limits. Allows cross-country OSV travel in all areas not explicitly closed by forest order. Not compliant with Travel Management Rule or Rio Grande National Forest Land Management Plan

Alternative 2

Conservation Alternative

Designated Routes

~340 miles

Open Area Acres

0 Acres (No Cross-Country OSV)

Limits all motorized over-snow travel strictly to designated routes to maximize protection of wildlife and non-motorized recreation. Snow depth is 18" min for grooming & 12" min for cross-country travel

Alternative 3

Forest Service Preferred Alternative

Designated Routes

~738 miles

Open Area Acres

1,205,411 Acres

Consolidates motorized use into larger open areas. Restricts cross-country travel within designated severe big game winter range mapped by CPW. Snow depth is 12" for cross-country travel, 6" roads/trails, and 18" for grooming

Alternative 4

Community Alternative

Designated Routes

~1,169 miles

Open Area Acres

665,716 Acres

Adds 392,178 acres of dedicated non-motorized zones while preserving motorized access in designated corridors. Most compliant with Travel Management Rule. Snow depth is 12" for cross-country travel, 6" roads/trails, and 18" for grooming & 24" for high use areas.

Balancing the Minimization Criteria

What is the Minimization Criteria?

Goal: *Minimize* environmental impacts and user conflicts – not just identify or consider them – and show how it did so to support responsible motorized recreation while protecting wildlife habitat, clean water, public safety, and other recreational uses.

How: Applies a transparent methodology for meaningful application of *each* minimization criterion to *each* proposed designated area by:

- Providing opportunities for public participation early in the process
- Incorporating site-specific data, the best available scientific information, and best management practices
- Accounting for site-specific and larger-scale impacts
- Accounting for projected climate change impacts, including reduced and less reliable snowpack and increased vulnerability of wildlife and resources to OSV impacts
- Accounting for available resources for monitoring and enforcement

We recommend adoption of a modified Alternative 4 as the agency preferred alternative

Alternative 4 represents the most balanced approach to winter travel management, aligning closely with public feedback and conservation priorities:

Protects Quiet Recreation

Adds 392,178 acres of dedicated non-motorized zones to support snowshoeing and Nordic skiing.

The Chama Basin and Chama Nordic Areas would be closed to motorized use.

Most of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain range would be closed to motorized use.

Reduces Conflicts

Minimizes overlap with Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized zones, particularly along key trail boundaries.

No riding off designated routes is permitted in severe winter range.

Protects Wildlife Habitat

Designates 780,693 acres of limited areas that map directly to critical big game winter ranges.

Recommended Modifications

To maximize resource protection and sustainable multi-use corridors, we advocate for the following modifications:

Buffer Sensitive Zones

- Conduct stronger noise impact analysis on recreation and wildlife.
- Cooperate with CPW to align wildlife closures.
- Clearly define how Alt 4 satisfies minimization criteria.

Establish Clear Corridors

- Demarcate and sign motorized corridors passing through restricted areas.
- Identify CDNST on OSVUM and limit motorized crossings.
- Does not currently include any clear implementation and monitoring strategy for adaptive management

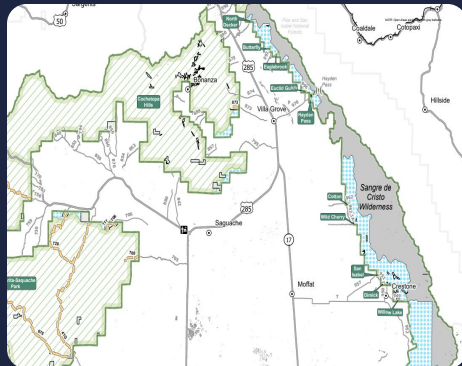
Enforce Snow Depths

- Mandate the 12" off-road and 24" high-use minimum snow depths to safeguard fragile soils.
- Clarify implementation and enforcement of snow depth standards and ensure they remain in the final decision.

Alternative Comparison

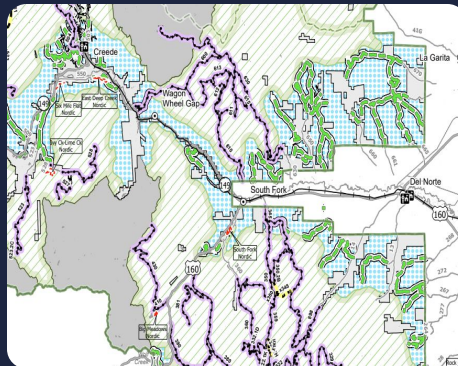
Topic	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Open Motorized Areas	1,205,411 acres open to cross-country OSV use	665,698 acres open to cross-country OSV use
Motorized Routes	~738 miles designated	~1,169 miles designated
Non-Motorized Recreation	No large dedicated non-motorized network	392,178 acres managed for non-motorized use
Wolf Creek Pass Area	Smaller closure footprint	Expanded non-motorized area around pass and around Big Meadows Reservoir and campground
Chama Basin	Closed to motorized use	Closed to motorized use
Nordic Ski Areas	Chama Nordic Area protected	Added protections: Chama, East Bench Bunkhouse, Ivy-Lime, Six-Mile, Rock Ck, Spring Ck,
Yurt Access Areas	Not specifically protected	Added closures: Flat Mtn, Grouse Ck, Neff Mtn, Spruce Hole. Preserves Pass Creek boundary.
Seepage Creek Route	Route included in Proposed Action	Route removed due to winter habitat concerns
Severe Winter Range	Restricted area with designated access routes	Same general approach
RNAs & Spec. Interest Areas	Similar treatment	Similar treatment
Snow Depth Standards	6" roads, 12" open areas, 18" grooming	Same, plus 24" requirement in high-use areas

All Alternatives Maps



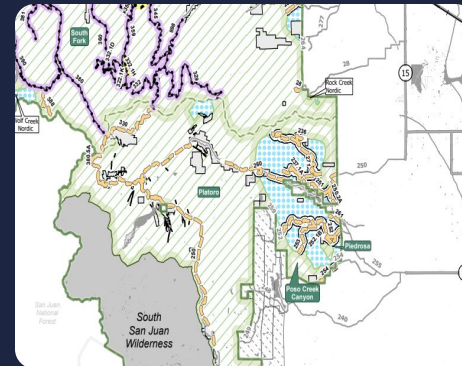
Saguache District

[View Saguache Map Folder →](#)



Divide Ranger District

[View Divide Map Folder →](#)



Conejos Peak District

[View Conejos Map Folder →](#)

How to Write a Substantive Comment

Agencies look for substantive, structured arguments. Use these core strategies to make your comment count and not be considered a duplicate comment. A single, well-constructed comment will carry more weight than copy and pasting a form letter!

1. Establish Connection

Clearly state your personal or professional connection to the Rio Grande National Forest. Explain exactly how the alternatives affect your specific recreational activities, experiences, or local values.

2. Provide Evidence

Support your statements with verifiable, site-specific data, maps, GPS coordinates, or personal observations. Reference scientific studies or document specific conflicts between motorized use and quiet recreation zones.

3. Propose Solutions

Do not just criticize; offer concrete remedies. Propose modifications to Alternative 4—such as specific winter wildlife closures, separation of uses or designated corridor crossings—to improve the plan.

Comments will be accepted through July 29th

Questions?

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