Oregon Central Coast Forest Collaborative
Roads Zones of Agreement
June 9, 2023

Status: A quorum of Oregon Central Coast Forest Collaborative voting members reached consensus to support the following Zones of Agreement (ZOAs) on June 9, 2023.

Background:

Roads are an essential part of federal forest land management. However, roads come with impacts to soil, water, fish, wildlife and vegetation. An assessment of the Siuslaw National Forest's (SNF) road system, including a risk analysis, was completed in 2014 (SNF Travel Analysis Report; Analysis: Forest - Scale[1]). That report is not a decision document, but provides valuable information on forest road needs, impacts, and risk analysis. Decisions about road treatments are made during the forest management processes with public input.

This report outlines that, in 2013, the SNF had 609 miles of Key Roads (all open) and 1534 miles of Non-key roads (1072 miles open, 462 closed). Additionally, the forest road network includes about 700 miles of state and county public roads within the SNF boundaries; most of the valley bottom roads are either county roads or private roads (p. 49).

Some of the resource issues presented in that 2014 report:

> "The Forest Road system affects the basic resources of soil, water, fish, wildlife, and vegetation. Access to prime habitat areas can increase the vulnerability of animals and cause a re-distribution into less desirable area… These same travel ways also provide access for recreation and resource management projects. Roads can affect streams in a variety of ways. The potential for landslides can be increased, both fine and course sediment input may be increased, subsurface flow can be intercepted and rerouted through ditches and culverts, low gradient streams may be constricted in valley bottoms by the presence of roads, the movement of large woody debris from the upper hillslopes to valley bottoms can be interrupted by mid-slope roads and riparian vegetation can be affected."

Similarly, this report outlines how decisions about maintaining, closing or decommissioning roads are made based on risk factors and access and fire suppression needs. Risk factors would include road bed position, culvert size, fill volume, and torrent routing risk models. The limited maintenance budget is also a key consideration.

This same report (p. 23) notes that the SNF envisions a less extensive road system that will allow travel across the Forest and provide reasonable access to major points of interests and resource management areas. They will do this by identifying Key Forest Roads that can be maintained and

[1] https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r6/landmanagement/?cid=fseprd485439

closing or decommissioning the rest over time. They note that this Key Road designation should be the basis of making site specific management decisions.

The SNF Forest Wide Collaborative (Collaborative) worked through a Roads Zones of Agreement document to be able to share our collective thoughts about road issues, so as to minimize conflict during decision making processes.

[ZOAs begin on the following page]

Oregon Central Coast Forest Collaborative
Zones of Agreement: Roads

The following ZOAs were supported by consensus of a quorum of Collaborative members on June 9, 2023:

1. **Budget Allocation-** Ensure adequate funding for the Zones of Agreement below, as well as monitoring of the completeness and effectiveness of those tasks.

2. **When performing an Environmental Assessment (EA), Categorical Exclusion (CE), and all project planning where road treatments or impacts may be considered, the SNF should prepare an accurate map layer of all roads, including legacy roads.** DOGAMI LIDAR information, field visits, and other available technology should be utilized to locate and map all roads. Mapping these roads including their current condition will support better decision-making regarding treatment alternatives during resource management project preparation. Available resources can then more efficiently and effectively address risks created by these roads.

3. **Update the Road Risk Analysis Maps in the Travel Analysis Report Appendices G and H (2014) within the project boundaries with current condition information**
   https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/siuslaw/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprd3795314

4. **Evaluate the level of access needed for continuing or future uses to avoid inefficiencies in time and money that occur if a road must be reopened to get to areas that now need management or additional road decommissioning further up the system.**
   a. Make clear the considerations about the areas' desired future condition when evaluating road system elements (e.g., wildfire fighting, remediation, research activities, habitat block creation purposes, recreation, etc.)

5. **Reduce road-associated problems (e.g., by road risk map layer) by:**
   a. Closing or decommissioning Non-Key roads when:
      i. Roads are in the "wrong spots," e.g., midslope roads and in unstable areas
      ii. Are stream-adjacent roads
   b. Relocating Key roads away from legacy riparian areas, headwall cutting areas, and stream-adjacent roads when a reasonable alternative access is created or maintained.
   c. Fixing roads and culverts where resource impacts have been identified.

6. **Promote Habitat Connectivity and Species Recovery**
   a. Decommission and revegetate unneeded roads (see #3 above) to promote habitat connectivity in areas where blocks of interior forest opportunities have been identified.
   b. Ecological assessments for roads should include connectivity within and across adjoining basins (outside of planning area)

c. Avoid new roads, including temporary roads in areas meeting, or on the way to meeting Late Successional Reserve desired conditions.
d. The Collaborative supports the SNF goal to reduce the road network to the basic key road needed level, by prioritizing work based on resource impact reduction.

7. Promote Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP)

a. Ensure new culverts at road crossings meet new Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) requirements and follow Stream Simulation design when designing new road-stream crossings on fish-bearing streams.[2]
b. Prioritize and pursue repairs for culverts where aquatic organism passage is required.

Note: Although the Collaborative reached consensus to support Statement 7 as written as a "first step", the statement alone is not sufficient. The Collaborative may choose to revisit or expand this statement in the future.

8. Reduce the number of temporary roads built

a. In project planning, work to reduce the number and mileage of temporary roads required to implement the project; utilize the existing road network when possible, unless new temporary roads result in less overall impact.
b. Upgrade temporary roads if necessary to reduce risk of sedimentation and hydrological impacts;
c. Quickly close or decommission temporary roads after use.

9. *Consensus not reached on Statement 9*

10. Reduce Fire Potential

a. Gate roads or otherwise block public access during times of high fire risk, but still maintain access for administrative use in order to fight wildfires.
b. Prohibit open fires on SNF land except in campgrounds with established fire pits during fire season.
c. Prioritize the provision of higher levels of enforcement of fire restrictions and prohibitions.
d. Roads determined to be Key Forest Routes should be maintained at a high level for quick response of emergency vehicles of all sizes and visibility for safe travel.
e. Identify ridgetop roads that should be maintained to serve as firebreaks and control lines.
f. Identify key water sources at the district level and maintain road access to these key water sources.

[2]https://www.fs.usda.gov/restoration/Aquatic_Organism_Passage/glossary.shtml#:~:text=Aquatic%20Organism%20Passage%20(AOP)%20%2D,%2C%20diversion%2C%20dams%2C%20etc.