

24. Traffic Control During Wet Periods (PRACTICE: 2-24)

- a. **Objectives:** To reduce road surface disturbance and rutting of roads; to minimize sediment washing from disturbed road surfaces.
- b. **Explanation:** The unrestricted use of many Forest Service roads, during rainy season or snowmelt conditions, often results in rutting and churning of the road surfaces. Runoff from such disturbed road surfaces can carry a high sediment load. The damage and maintenance cycle for roads that are frequently used during wet periods can create a disturbed road surface that is a continuing sediment source.

Use of Forest Service roads during rainy season or snowmelt generally fall into three categories: (1) access for authorized Forest Service activities by contractors, permittees, purchasers, and cooperators; (2) access for administrative activities by Forest Service personnel, such as controlled burning, timber marking, resource monitoring and surveying; and (3) access by the public for activities such as fuel wood gathering, hunting, dispersed winter and snow play, and off road vehicle use.

For the authorized Forest Service activities, use is allowed during rainy season when surface and drainage are stabilized to accommodate the traffic volume and type. Hard surfaced roads have base that is not saturated. Both surfaced and unsurfaced roads have functioning drainage features, and erosion control measures are in place to maintain water quality. Additional measures may be employed to allow use during rainy season, such as addition of spot rock, upgrading portions or entire roads, installing additional erosion control devices, restriction to low tire pressures, or use only during time when the ground remains frozen without thawing between day and night. Maintenance intervals may need to be increased to keep surface and drainage elements intact. Coincidental use by the public may not be authorized, depending on the management objectives of the road.

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For use of roads during rainy season or wet periods following snowmelt by Forest Service personnel for administrative activities, employees limit access to prevent road surface or road base deterioration. If access must be more frequent, additional surface and drainage controls maintenance is necessary to protect water quality. Coincidental use by the public may not be authorized, depending on the management objectives of the road.

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Access on roads by the public during rainy season may not always be sanctioned, especially where road closure devices or road closure orders are not honored. Forest Motorized Vehicle Use Maps (MVUM) display which roads are open to public use. Roads closed to use during the wet season are indicated on the MVUM. The MVUM, not the presence or absence of gates or closure devices, is the tool to inform the public when use of the road during rainy season is not allowed [in part due to protection of water quality].

Comment [WW1]: I am not familiar with this map, and most people either explore or drive without a map, or they have the traditional Forest map they purchase at the Ranger station. The MVUM will only be effective if it is widely disseminated and it is advertised as an enforcement tool.

This BMP is not intended to be used year round, as it is impossible to predict the occurrence of irregular sustained precipitation. Seasonal closures as depicted on the MVUM are based on historical climate conditions, in addition to mapped resource data.

Comment [WW2]: This makes it sound like these "Practices" (the 8 we are reviewing) are intended to be BMPs. If that is the case they are lacking. This one (Practice 2-24) is the best of the ones I have read out of this group, but it still does not include actual specifications or technical standards. Perhaps those are included in the references that are listed at the bottom of this document.

- C. Implementation: Timber sale implementation procedures can be enforced by District personnel. Hauling activity can be controlled by the FSR, ER, or TSA within active timber sales. The decision by the TSA for closure during a timber sale is based on local soil moisture conditions and other criteria. Other authorized activities are controlled by the COR or permit administrator.

Forest Service employees communicate with district and area personnel on road and weather conditions, and consult with other field personnel prior to using roads during wet periods to conduct administrative activities. Use is limited to prevent unnecessary disturbance or damage to roads. Education of field going personnel on the potential impacts of using roads during wet periods is a continuing need. Use of low impact vehicles is encouraged. Costs to maintain roads used during wet periods are included in project budget, and are part of the annual road maintenance plan.

Road closure devices, such as locked gates and barricades, are more effective when used in conjunction with heavier vegetation, and steeper or restrictive side slopes. Where topography and terrain don't support effective closure devices, traffic control signs and education are incorporated. Continuous public education, through various media, is necessary. The MVUM is in effect at all times.

Reference: 36 CFR 212.56 – Identification of designated roads, trails and areas
36 CFR 261 for Forest Road Closure Authority
FP-03 Section 618 – Concrete Barriers and Precast Guardwalls
FP-03 Section 619 – Fences, Gates, and Cattleguards
FP-03 Section 633 – Permanent Traffic Control
FP-03 Section 635 – Temporary traffic Control
EM 7100-15 – Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service
Forest's Motor Vehicle Use Map

Comment [WW3]: Hopefully, no surface grading is actually occurring during wet periods. I have seen FS contractors and FS personnel grading roads in areas where timber sale log hauling is occurring and the grading was having a clear negative impact on the road surface and on water quality.

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