



U.S. Forest Service
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News Release



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Final decision released on Soldier Pass motorized use proposal

Sedona, Ariz., March 27, 2017, For Immediate Release — A final decision has been made by Coconino National Forest regarding the Soldier Pass motorized use proposal, which should reduce the volume of motorized traffic in the area and reduce the conflicts that are occurring as a result of this use.

Based on the Environmental Assessment (EA), Finding of No Significant Impact and public comments, Coconino National Forest Supervisor Laura Jo West has issued a final decision notice, which is Alternative C.

The final decision allows motorized use of Soldier Pass road by Red Rock Western Jeep Tours and up to 12 unguided public vehicles each day after a permit system has been established. The Red Rock Ranger District will convene a collaborative group on April 20 to begin developing parameters for the public permit system. This will occur within the framework of the existing Off-Highway Vehicle Working Group, which is a partnership of the City of Sedona, the Forest Service and stakeholders interested in OHV issues.

“As the popularity of motorized recreation increases, so do concerns over impacts to other recreational uses and to the quality of life in adjacent residential areas,” said West. “Moving in this direction represents a balanced approach and will reduce impacts to residential areas while still maintaining recreational opportunities for motorized travel on a four-wheel drive road.”

Red Rock Western Jeep Tours, the currently-permitted outfitter/guide company, will continue to have motorized access to the road. However, Soldier Pass road will be closed to motorized use by the public beginning this week when gate installation starts and will remain closed to public motorized use until a permit system is established. The Soldier Pass Trailhead and parking lot will be closed for up to three days during gate installation.

Hikers wanting access to the Soldier Pass area can still enter from other trailheads, such as Jim Thompson and Adobe Jack during the parking lot closure.

The project was co-funded by the City of Sedona and Coconino National Forest in response to public concerns about the effects of increasing motorized use and impacts along Soldier Pass road.

The Soldier Pass area is surrounded by private homes, located northwest of Sedona and the road totals 1.2 miles of Forest Roads 9904, 9904B and 9904C. The EA considered four alternatives in detail:

- Alternative A was the “no action” alternative, and would continue current management.
- Alternative B would have restricted motorized use of Soldier Pass Road to an outfitter/guide service and adjusted the outfitter/guide use authorization to improve consistency with other motorized outfitter/guide use on the District.
- Alternative C was the proposed action, which would have adjusted the outfitter/guide use authorization to improve consistency with other motorized outfitter/guide use on the District and established a free permit system to limit public use to 12 permits per day.
- Alternative D would have closed Soldier Pass Road to all recreational motorized use.

These alternatives were developed with the help of public involvement over the last several years. The EA contains additional information about these alternatives, the project’s background, and analysis of the potential effects of implementing these alternatives.

Members of the public wishing to participate in the collaborative group to develop parameters for the public permit system should contact Adam LaDell, special uses permit administrator for the Red Rock Ranger District, at 928-203-2928 or aladell@fs.fed.us.

For more information on this project please contact Julie Rowe, recreation special uses program manager for the Red Rock Ranger District, at 928-203-7516 or by email at jrowe@fs.fed.us. Project details, maps and additional information are available at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=38555>.