



Forest
Service

Washington
Office

1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

File Code: 2350-3
Route To: (2300)

Date: October 6, 2009

Subject: Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan

To: Regional Forester, R-1, Regional Forester, R-2, Regional Forester, R-3, Regional Forester, R-4

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) Comprehensive Plan was amended on September 24, 2009 and notice was published in the Federal Register on October 5, 2009 (74 FR 191). This amendment sets forth direction to guide the development and management of the CDNST. The enclosed 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan provides consistency with the decision made in the Federal Register notice, and replaces the 1985 CDNST Comprehensive Plan. The Federal Register notice also responds to comments received from the public on proposed changes and makes final changes to FSM 2350.

The Federal Register notice, 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan, and other CDNST information are available on the CDNST website – <http://www.fs.fed.us/cdt>. If you have any questions, please contact Jonathan Stephens, Congressionally Designated Areas and Trails Program Manager at 202-205-1701 or Greg Warren, CDNST Administrator at 303-275-5054.

/s/ Richard W. Sowa (for)
JOEL D. HOLTROP
Deputy Chief, National Forest System

cc: Jim Bedwell
Jonathan Stephens
Greg Warren

Enclosure

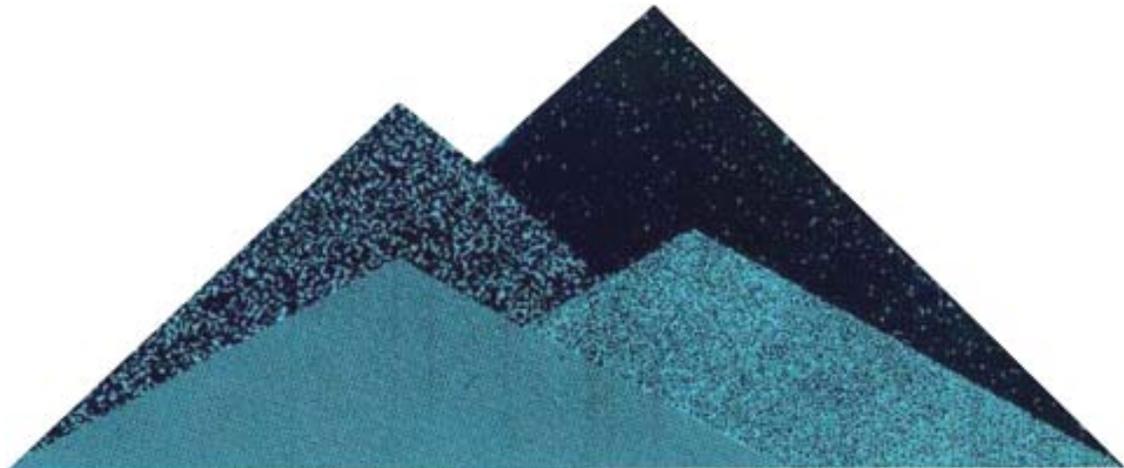


It's Cool to Be Safe

Printed on Recycled Paper



The 2009
Continental Divide
National Scenic Trail
Comprehensive Plan



Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan

Approved


THOMAS L. TIDWELL, CHIEF

SEP 28 2009

Date



Table of Contents

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION	1
A. Comprehensive Plan Amendment	1
B. History and Administration	1
C. Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan	2
II. PURPOSE OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL	3
A. Nature and Purposes Description	3
B. Description of the Route	4
III. PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT PROCESSES	4
A. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation Study Report.....	4
B. Agency Responsibilities	5
C. National Environmental Policy Act Requirements	5
D. Comprehensive Plan	5
E. Land and Resource Management Plans	6
F. Process for Locating CDNST Segments	6
IV. MANAGEMENT POLICY AND DIRECTION	8
A. Nature and Purposes of the CDNST	8
B. Management Policies and Direction	8
1. Locating the CDNST	8
2. Rights-of-Way Establishment	10
3. Rights-of-Way Acquisition on Non-Federal Lands.....	12
4. Visual Resource Management.....	12
5. Recreation Resource Management.....	14
6. Motorized Use.....	19
7. Administration and Coordination of Permits	20
8. CDNST Trail and Facility Standards.....	22
9. Carrying Capacity.....	24
10. Monitoring and Evaluation.....	25



I. INTRODUCTION

A. Comprehensive Plan Amendment

The 1985 Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) Comprehensive Plan amendment, published in the Federal Register on October 5, 2009 (74 FR 51116), set forth direction to guide the development and management of the CDNST. The 2009 CDNST Comprehensive Plan herein provides consistency with the decision made in that amendment, and replaces the 1985 CDNST Comprehensive Plan.

B. History and Administration

The National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 established the CDNST (Pub. L. No. 95-625, 92 Stat. 3467), which amended the National Trails System Act of 1968 (16 U.S.C. 1241-1251).

The Chief of the Forest Service adopted the 1976 CDNST Study Report and 1977 CDNST Final Environmental Statement on August 5, 1981 (46 FR 39867) pursuant to the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1244(b)).

The National Trails System Act requires the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with other affected Federal agencies, the governors of affected states, and the relevant advisory council established pursuant to the Act, to prepare a comprehensive plan for the management and use of the CDNST (16 U.S.C. 1244(f)). The Forest Service goal in 1981 for the CDNST Comprehensive Plan was to provide a uniform trail management program reflecting the purposes of the CDNST while providing for use and protection of the natural and cultural resources along the CDNST. The Chief of the Forest Service approved the Comprehensive Plan for the CDNST in 1985.

The CDNST crosses Federal lands administered by the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, and the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service. The Regional Forester of the Rocky Mountain Region is the lead Forest Service official for coordinating matters concerning the study, planning, and operation of the CDNST (Forest Service Manual 2353.04).

Federal interagency trail programs generally are coordinated through an interagency memorandum of understanding (MOU) governing the National Trails System (06-SU-11132424-196). Programs specific to the CDNST are developed and coordinated through the CDNST Interagency Leadership Council (Council), consisting of Regional Foresters for the Forest Service, State Directors for the Bureau of Land Management, and a Regional Director for the National Park Service. The Council provides leadership and oversight to complete and sustain the CDNST and ensures consistent, coordinated, and effective programs.



C. Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

Preparation of the Comprehensive Plan for the CDNST is required by the National Trails System Act, P.L. 90-543 enacted on October 2, 1968 as amended. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the implementing regulations for each of the Federal agencies with responsibilities for the CDNST require assessment of the environmental impacts of locating the CDNST. In addition, each of the Federal agencies is required by various Acts of Congress to prepare and implement land and resource management plans for the Federal lands over which they have jurisdiction.

Because of the number of Federal and state land management agency jurisdictions and various political subdivisions traversed by the CDNST the Secretary of Agriculture intends that the Comprehensive Plan provide for a fully coordinated approach by each of the responsible Federal and State agencies for the location, development, and management of the CDNST. It is the goal of this Comprehensive Plan to provide a uniform CDNST program that reflects the purposes of the National Scenic Trail system, and allows for the use and protection of the natural and cultural resources found along the rights-of-way and located route on lands of all jurisdictions.

The National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1244(f)) details the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan. A comprehensive plan for the management and use of the trail is to include, but not limited to, the following items:

1. Specific objectives and practices to be observed in the management of the trail, including the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved, details of any anticipated cooperative agreements to be consummated with State and local government agencies or private interests, and for national scenic or national historic trails an identified carrying capacity of the trail and a plan for its implementation;
2. The process to be followed by the appropriate Secretary to implement the marking requirements established in section 7(c) of this Act;
3. A protection plan for any high potential historic sites or high potential route segments; and
4. General and site-specific development plans, including anticipated costs.



II. PURPOSE OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

A. Nature and Purposes Description

The 1976 Study Report describes the purposes of the CDNST:

The primary purpose of this trail is to provide a continuous, appealing trail route, designed for the hiker and horseman, but compatible with other land uses. . . . One of the primary purposes for establishing the CDNST would be to provide hiking and horseback access to those lands where man's impact on the environment has not been adverse to a substantial degree and where the environment remains relatively unaltered. Therefore, the protection of the land resource must remain a paramount consideration in establishing and managing the trail. There must be sufficient environmental controls to assure that the values for which the trail is established are not jeopardized. . . . The basic goal of the trail is to provide the hiker and rider an entree to the diverse country along the Continental Divide in a manner, which will assure a high quality recreation experience while maintaining a constant respect for the natural environment. . . . The Continental Divide Trail would be a simple facility for foot and horseback use in keeping with the National Scenic Trail concept as seen in the Appalachian and Pacific Crest Trails.

In 1997, memorandum from the Deputy Chief of the Forest Service to Regional Foresters clarifies the Forest Service's intent with respect to motor vehicle use on newly constructed CDNST trail segments. In addition, this memorandum identifies the importance of understanding the nature and purposes of the CDNST in establishing direction governing its development and management:

As the CDNST is further developed, it is expected that the trail will eventually be relocated off of roads for its entire length. The memorandum further states: It is the intent of the Forest Service that the CDNST will be for non-motorized recreation. . . . Allowing motorized use on these newly constructed trail segments would substantially interfere with the nature and purpose of the CDNST.

In 2004, the Council adopted the following guiding principles for the CDNST:

Complete the Trail to connect people and communities to the Continental Divide by providing scenic, high-quality, primitive hiking and horseback riding experiences, while preserving the significant natural, historic, and cultural resources along the Trail.



In 2009, the amended Comprehensive Plan describes the nature and purposes of the CDNST:

The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor.

B. Description of the Route

As proposed, the route for the CDNST would traverse portions of 25 National Forests, 3 National Parks, 4 Bureau of Land Management Districts as well as various private lands in the states of Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. The total distance from the Canada-United States border on the north and the United States-Mexico border on the south would be approximately 3100 miles. The actual mileage will depend on which of the several alternative routes are chosen during the process of locating specific rights-of-way segments. Of the total distance, approximately 750 miles are located in Montana, 180 miles in Idaho, 610 miles in Wyoming, 770 miles in Colorado, and 790 miles in New Mexico.

III. PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

In order to achieve the objective of establishing a continuous trail of the magnitude and quality of the CDNST, it is necessary to establish a formal process for integrating the CDNST requirements into the long-range land and resource management programs of the various Federal and State agencies. Such a process should be both faithful to the intentions and requirements of the National Trails System Act and compatible with the regulations and procedures under which the agencies must work.

A. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation Study Report

The study of the proposed CDNST was assigned to the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) by the Secretary of Interior in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture. The study began in June of 1967 and was conducted with the active assistance of other Federal agencies (Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Fish and Wildlife Service), States (Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico), and numerous private organizations and individuals.

Efforts were made throughout the study to keep the public informed and to solicit the views of citizens about the proposed trail. Sixteen formal public meetings and a host of other discussions with large and small groups were held and progress reports were issued on a regular basis. The press and electronic media were of great assistance in publicizing the study, and largely because of their efforts, several hundred letters were received from throughout the United States containing opinions and suggestions relative to the study and the trail.



B. Agency Responsibilities

Inasmuch as the Forest Service manages the greatest amount of land along the CDNST corridor, Congress directed that the Secretary of Agriculture would have overall responsibility for administration of the trail. This is done in consultation with the Secretary of Interior, who also has significant jurisdiction along the route of the trail.

Federal agency unit managers are to use volunteers and volunteer organizations in planning, developing, maintaining, and managing the CDNST (16 U.S.C. 1250). Managers are encouraged to utilize the Volunteers in the Parks Act of 1969, the Volunteers in the Forests Act of 1972, and Section 6 of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (relating to the development of Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans), to facilitate the planning, developing, maintaining and managing segments of the CDNST through the use of volunteer groups and individuals.

C. National Environmental Policy Act Requirements

The BOR prepared a Legislative Final Environmental Statement that was filed with the Council on Environmental Quality on May 3, 1977. The proposed action was to implement the legislative recommendations of the BOR Continental Divide Trail Study Report.

Based on the Study Report and the BOR Final Environmental Statement (FES), the Congress designated and established the CDNST through P.L. 95-625 (November 10, 1978). The intent was for the final trail to follow the corridor described in the Study Report.

The legislative FES and the process for locating the CDNST on a segment by segment, multi-agency basis over a period of years, lends itself to the NEPA tiering process (40 CFR 1502.20 and 1508.28).

The Chief of the Forest Service utilized the tiering process by formally adopting the 1977 USDI Legislative FES on August 5, 1981 (46 FR 39867).

D. Comprehensive Plan

The primary role of the Comprehensive Plan is to serve as an authority for broad based policy and direction for the development and management of the CDNST. In additions, the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will provide a record of issues and concerns resulting from locating segments of the CDNST rights-of-way and travel route. This record will be valuable in future revisions to the Comprehensive Plan.



E. Land and Resource Management Plans

Both the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management are required to develop land and resource management plans that are designed to integrate all resource management activities that may occur within a land use unit into a coordinated system that reflects the interaction of management activities in achieving long-range objectives and goals for public land management. This is will be accomplished through the development of a series of synergetic management prescriptions developed for specific management areas. The same type of integration of CDNST management direction will be used in National Park Resource Management Plans.

Land and resource management plans are to provide for the development and management of the CDNST as an integrated part of the overall land and resource management direction for the land area through which the trail passes. The management direction given in Chapter IV is to be used in the development of specific land and resource management prescriptions.

F. Process for Locating CDNST Segments

The following guidance is developed to aid in clarifying and understanding the process by which specific segments will be selected and made a part of the CDNST.

1. CDNST location:

a. Congress established the CDNST generally following the corridor described in the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation's 1976 Study Report and 1977 Final Environmental Statement.

b. The Chief of the Forest Service will formally locate specific segments of existing trails or primitive roads (including marked cross-country routes) and the associate rights-of-way corridors as components of the CDNST system.

2. The following describes the principal procedure for formally locating the CDNST.

a. The Regional Forester for the Rocky Mountain Region of the Forest Service will solicit from Forest Supervisors, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Field Office Managers, and National Park Service Superintendents CDNST location reports for segments that may qualify to be made part of the CDNST.



b. Forest Supervisors, BLM Field Office Managers, and National Park Service Superintendents will complete a location report for proposed CDNST segments. This location report, at a minimum, is to include:

(1) A cover page with the recommending official signature and title of Forest Supervisor, BLM Field Office Manager, or National Park Service Superintendent, as appropriate.

(2) The location report is to include the following sections, which identify and describe the characteristics of the proposed CDNST segment:

(a) The location of the travel route and rights-of-way corridor;

(b) The physical and biological environment of the rights-of-way corridor;

(c) The Trail Class, Managed Uses, Designed Use, and Design Parameters for the travel route, including identifying any uses that are prohibited;

(d) The plans for development, construction, signing, and maintenance of the travel route and facilities within the rights-of-way corridor;

(e) The significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved within the rights-of-way corridor; and

(f) The management direction for the CDNST rights-of-way corridor as described in the applicable land and resource management plans and CDNST related site-specific plans.

c. The Location Report, and associated Geographic Information System (GIS) data that supports the narrative information for the travel route and rights-of-way, is to be submitted by the appropriate Forest Supervisor, BLM Field Office Manager, or National Park Service Superintendent to the Regional Forester for the Rocky Mountain Region.

d. Regional Foresters for the Forest Service, State Directors for the Bureau of Land Management, and a Regional Director for the National Park Service will review the submitted location reports and recommend those segments that contribute to the nature and purposes of the CDNST to the Chief of the Forest Service for selection as the CDNST rights-of-way corridor and publishing notice of the availability of maps or descriptions in the Federal Register (16 U.S.C. 1246(a)(2) and 1246(b)).



IV. MANAGEMENT POLICY AND DIRECTION

A. Nature and Purposes of the CDNST

The primary policy is to administer the CDNST consistent with the nature and purposes for which this National Scenic Trail was established. The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide for high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor.

B. Management Policies and Direction

The goal of the management policies and direction section is to facilitate and insure the coordinated location, development, operation, and maintenance of a high-quality travel route corridor, extending along or near the Continental Divide from Canada to Mexico.

1. Locating the CDNST

a. Background

The BOR study found that much of the proposed CDNST existed in the form of discontinuous trail and primitive roadways in National Forests and National Parks, and that it would be located largely on public lands. Many of the existing segments of trail have long histories of recreational use. Under National Scenic Trail status, these segments could be joined to make a continuous and extended travel route offering the trail user a much greater range of options than are presently available.

b. Policy

(1) Use the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) system in delineating and integrating recreation opportunities in managing the CDNST. Where possible, locate the CDNST in primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized ROS classes; provided that the CDNST may have to traverse intermittently through more developed ROS classes to provide for continuous travel between the Canada and Mexico borders.

(2) Locate a CDNST segment on a road only where it is primitive and offers recreational opportunities comparable to those provided by a trail with a Designed Use of Pack and Saddle Stock; provided that the CDNST may have to



be located on or across motorized routes because of the inability to locate the trail elsewhere.

(3) The trail shall be located as close to the geographic Continental Divide as possible, but as far away as necessary to provide for safe travel and diverse recreation appeal, to be economically feasible, and to keep environmental impacts to an acceptable level. Use public lands or existing public right-of-ways as much as possible.

c. Management Direction

(1) Use side and connecting trails to access points of interest or supply points that are away from the main trail.

(2) Deviation from routes that more closely follow the geographic Continental Divide is acceptable under the following circumstances:

(a) To maintain an acceptable level of risk where the degree of risk cannot be reduced by public education and signing, or by facility design and construction;

(b) To protect critical biophysical environment when the impacts of the trail location or use on wildlife, wildlife habitat, soil, vegetation, or other resources are of an unacceptable level;

(c) To deviate around private land where access is unavailable;

(d) To access significant cultural, historical, recreational, or scenic opportunities; and

(e) To avoid cultural and archeological sites where public access is prohibited or restricted.

(3) Deviation from routes that more closely follow the geographic Continental Divide is unacceptable under the following circumstances:

(a) To avoid the use of cross-country routes where CDNST travel can be accommodated through utilizing cross-country routes marked periodically with marker posts or cairns;



(b) To avoid a location where the degree of risk is of an acceptable level and a reasonably experienced and prudent person would expect such risks from the natural circumstances and environment;

(c) To access a historical, recreational, and scenic area where the deviation is significant in distance or cost, or the relative benefit derived from the opportunity, is equal or less than that available on the alternative route closer to the Divide;

(d) To utilize a less costly route unless the route provides essentially equal or greater scenic recreational opportunities than a more costly route located closer to the Divide;

(e) To reduce the amount of recreational use in an area—management practices, other than relocation of the CDNST, should be implemented; and

(f) To avoid cultural and archeological sites where adequately protected.

2. Rights-of-Way Establishment

a. Background

(1) It is provided for in 16 USC 1246 (a) that the Secretary of Agriculture select the rights-of-way for the CDNST and publish notice thereof in the Federal Register, together with appropriate maps and descriptions. The locations and width of such rights-of-way across Federal lands under the jurisdiction of another Federal agency shall be by agreement between the head of that agency and the Chief of the Forest Service. In selecting rights-of-way for CDNST purposes, the Chief shall obtain the advice and assistance of the States, local governments, private organizations, and landowners and land users concerned.

(2) National Trails, H.R. Rep. No 90-1631 on the National Trails System Act states:

The rights-of-way for the trails will be of sufficient width to protect natural, scenic, cultural, and historic features along the trails and to provide needed public use facilities. The rights-of-way will be located to avoid established uses that are incompatible with the protection of a trail in its natural condition and its use for outdoor recreation. (1968 U.S. Code Cong. & Admin. News 3855, 3863-3864, 3867.)



Further, Executive Order (E.O.) 13195 states:

Federal agencies will . . . protect, connect, promote, and assist trails of all types. . . . This will be accomplished by . . . protecting the trail corridors associated with National Scenic Trails . . . to the degree necessary to ensure that the values for which [the] trail was established remain intact.

(3) Relocation of the CDNST after initial rights-of-way selection and publication of notice in the Federal Register is provided in 16 USC 1246 (b). Segments may be relocated with the concurrence of the head of the Federal agency having jurisdiction over the lands involved, upon determination that:

(a) Such relocation is necessary to preserve the purposes for which the CDNST was established, or

(b) The relocation is necessary to promote a sound land management program in accordance with established multiple use principles; provided that a substantial relocation of the rights-of-way shall be by Act of Congress.

Trail relocations on existing National Scenic Trails have been common over time. If an appropriate siting corridor is not established, a cumbersome legislative amendment process would likely result with the associated delays and costs. With this consideration, a "zone of concern" could be established that encompasses nearly all feasible existing trails and rights-of-way that could be used as segments of the CDNST.

b. Policy

(1) The rights-of-way for the CDNST is to be of sufficient width to protect natural, scenic, cultural, and historic features along the CDNST travel route and to provide needed public use facilities.

(2) The "zone of concern" regarding the location of the CDNST is that area of the Rocky Mountains laying 50 miles either side of the geographical Continental Divide. The establishment of the zone of concern for the CDNST is to be used to aid in compliance with 16 USC 1246 (a) and (b). The establishment of this zone in itself will not dictate the management practices and uses of the lands involved.



(3) Initial location and any subsequent relocation of rights-of-way segments of the CDNST may occur within the zone of concern without further Acts of Congress.

(4) The Chief of the Forest Service will publish a notice of location or relocation of CDNST rights-of-way in the Federal Register in accordance with 16 USC 1246 (a) and (b).

3. Rights-of-Way Acquisition on Non-Federal Lands

a. Background

(1) The CDNST will be located largely on Federal lands. However, for a continuous trail, rights-of-way would have to be provided across certain private lands, state, and local government-owned lands.

(2) Approximately 570 miles of CDNST would cross non-Federal land with the area being concentrated near the Continental Divide within the Great Divide basin in Wyoming and the mountains and rangelands of northern and western New Mexico.

b. Policy

(1) Efforts will be made by each agency to utilize existing public rights-of-way or easements for existing trails in locating a continuous route for the CDNST.

(2) Do not acquire any non-Federal land or interest in land for the CDNST without the owner's consent. Do not acquire in fee title more than an average of one-quarter mile on either side of the CDNST.

c. Management Direction

Each Federal or State agency will use the most appropriate existing authorities for acquiring lands or rights in lands for CDNST purposes.

4. Visual Resource Management

a. Background

(1) The Forest Service uses the Landscape Aesthetics – Scenery Management System to address visual resource management on National Forest System lands



(Forest Service Manual 2380). The Bureau of Land Management uses the Visual Resource Management system to address visual management on public lands (BLM Manual 8400).

(2) Scenery and visual resource management has dual purposes, to manage the quality of the visual environment and to reduce the visual impact of development activities while maintaining effectiveness in all agency resource programs. Scenery management systems also identify scenic areas that warrant protection through special management attention.

b. Policy

The Forest Service will apply the Landscape Aesthetics – Scenery Management System to address visual resource management on National Forest System lands (Forest Service Manual 2380; Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management, Agricultural Handbook 701, 1995). Bureau of Land Management managers will apply the Visual Management System as described in BLM Manual 8400.

c. Management Direction

The visual resource, as seen from the trail, must be considered in agency Land and Resource Management Planning (Natural Forest Management Act of 1976 and Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976) and in specific project planning and design.

(1) On National Forest System lands, the visual resource inventory will follow the procedures outlined in Forest Service Manual 2380, and appropriate handbook guidelines. The CDNST is a concern level 1 travel route, and the scenic integrity objective is to be high or very high depending on the CDNST segment. The inventory will be performed as if the trail exists even in sections where it is proposed for construction or reconstruction.

(2) On public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, the visual resource inventory will follow the procedures outlined in BLM Manual Section 8400. The inventory shall be conducted on the basis that the CDNST is a high sensitivity level travel route and will be performed as if the trail exists even in sections where it is proposed for construction or reconstruction.

(3) Within lands administered by the National Park Service and on most lands within the National Wilderness Preservation System, a visual resource inventory and establishing objectives normally will not be necessary.



5. Recreation Resource Management

a. Background

(1) Eventual location of a 3100-mile Continental Divide Trail from Canada to Mexico will provide recreational opportunities of national significance. The trail managed and administered within the guidelines for National Scenic Trails and the land and resource management policies of the respective agencies will further the national goal of promoting public enjoyment and appreciation of our scenic outdoor areas.

(2) Trail users will be able to wind their way through some of the most spectacular scenery in the United States and have an opportunity to enjoy a greater diversity of physical, social, and managerial settings than found on any other extended National Scenic Trail. The route of the Continental Divide Trail will cross five ecological life zones where visitors will find most of the topography, climate, vegetation, and wildlife for which the Rocky Mountain West is noted.

(3) The areas through which the trail will pass are also rich in the heritage and life of the Rocky Mountains and the southwestern United States. The trail traverses lands of historical and cultural importance. It will provide the recreationist with examples of past periods of American development, examples of the many ways in which we now use our lands, as well as ways in which we could make better use of our resources through public awareness and appreciation of environmental relationships and good resource management practices.

(4) Both the Forest Service and the BLM use the ROS system as a basis for inventorying and managing the outdoor recreation resources on the National Forests and BLM lands. Under this system, the capability and feasibility of given areas of land to provide the opportunity for described types or classes of outdoor recreation experiences, are identified. The agency's land and resource management plans then provide specific direction and management practices to be used to maintain the existing recreation opportunities or to modify them to meet indicated needs and demands within the planning area.

(5) The National Park Service and State or local government outdoor recreation and park agencies may or may not use the ROS as a part of their recreation resource planning and management systems. However, the recreation opportunities provided by these agencies can easily be correlated and described



in terms of ROS classes. Therefore, for purposes of uniformity throughout the trail corridor, the settings and experience opportunities have been described using the ROS terminology.

(6) The following chart identifies the relationship of ROS classes and scenic integrity/visual resource management objectives.

ROS Class	Scenic Integrity (Forest Service)/ Visual Resource Management (BLM) Objectives		
	Very High/Class I	High/Class II	Moderate/Class III
Primitive	Norm	Inconsistent	Unacceptable
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	Fully Compatible	Norm	Inconsistent
Semi-Primitive Motorized	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Norm
Roaded Natural- Appearing	Fully Compatible	Norm	Norm
Rural	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Norm
Urban	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible	Fully Compatible

b. Policy

(1) Manage the CDNST to provide high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and pack and saddle stock opportunities. Backpacking, nature walking, day hiking, horseback riding, nature photography, mountain climbing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

(2) Bicycle use may be allowed on the CDNST (16 U.S.C. 1246(c)) if the use is consistent with the applicable land and resource management plan and will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

(3) Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management managers will classify the CDNST opportunities based on the existing or proposed ROS classes through which the trail passes. Both agencies will use ROS inventory and management processes to develop management prescriptions, which will provide the physical, biological, social, and managerial settings, deemed appropriate for the CDNST segments within their jurisdiction. The National Park Service and appropriate State or local agencies will describe the recreation opportunities provided from their respective land management practices.



(4) In the course of periodic reporting concerning the development and management of the CDNST, each agency will indicate any changes in ROS classes for their respective trail segments.

c. Management Direction

(1) Use the ROS system in delineating and integrating recreation opportunities in managing the CDNST. Where possible, locate the CDNST in primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized ROS classes; provided that the CDNST may have to traverse intermittently through more developed ROS classes to provide for continuous travel between the Canada and Mexico borders.

(a) Primitive: Trail segments within this ROS class objective will provide users with a primitive recreation experience. These segments are set in an essentially unmodified environment. Evidence of humans would be unnoticed by an observer traveling through the area. The trail should be at least 3 miles from all roads, railroads, or trails with motorized use. Places for camping will be available and rudimentary facilities for overnight camping may be provided outside designated wilderness. Inside wilderness there will usually be no facilities provided.

Interactions between users will be minimal, usually less than six parties per day encountered on the trail and less than three parties visible at any campsite. The user will enjoy maximum opportunity for solitude and testing of outdoor skills. Feelings of regulation will be minimized to the greatest extent possible. Feelings of physical achievement and self-reliance will be an important part of the experience offered.

Units of the National Wilderness Preservation System are found within this ROS class. Since the management approach to wilderness is to minimize restraint and obvious regulation, rules for behavior and other needed information will be available to the user prior to entry.

(b) Semi-primitive Non-motorized: Trail segments in this category will have as their primary objective the provision of a near primitive wildland environment. The trail will have a natural setting that may have subtle modifications that would be noticed but not draw the attention of an observer traveling through the area. The trail will be at least one-half mile from all roads, railroads, or trails with motorized use. Therefore, the opportunities for direct public motorized recreation



access will not be provided. Except in designated wilderness, campsites may be provided with rudimentary improvements.

Users may usually expect no more than 6-15 parties per day encountered on the trail and 6 or less parties visible at campsites. Opportunities for solitude and exercising outdoor skills will be present, but the areas are not as remote as in the primitive class.

(c) Semi-primitive Motorized: Trail segments in the ROS class will be in a natural setting which may have moderately dominant alterations but will not draw attention, as would be judged by motorized observers on trails and primitive roads within the area. Primitive roads or motorized trail routes may access the trail no more frequently than one-half mile intervals. Roads, better than a primitive standard, may be no closer than one-half mile from the trail.

Campgrounds available along these sections may have more highly developed facilities for resource protection and comfort and convenience of the user. Such amenities as vault or chemical toilets, enclosed fireboxes, and wood tables may be provided.

User interaction along these segments will be low to moderate in frequency. The user may experience more control and regulation but will still have a feeling of achievement, adventure, and a release from the dominance of human structures or noise.

In certain located segments, motorized use of the CDNST itself is normally not permitted but motorized travel may be permitted on adjacent or crossing trails and roads. Campsites are usually serviced by motorized equipment and available for use by the public using off road vehicles.

(d) Roaded Natural: Trail segments in this ROS class pass through areas where the natural setting may have modifications that range from being easily noticed to strongly dominant to observers within the area. Roads, better than primitive, or railroads may cross the trail but no more frequently than one-half mile intervals. The most highly developed campgrounds along these segments may have tables, enclosed firebox or charcoal grills, vault or flush toilets, and litter containers.



User interaction may range from moderate to high on principal access roads and low to moderate on trails and local roads. There will be little opportunity for a feeling of remoteness and the presence of non-recreational activities may result in a need for more signing for information and regulations. This ROS class fits well in those situations where good roads make access easy for people with a variety of interests and motivations.

In certain located segments, motorized use of the CDNST itself is normally not permitted but motorized travel is permitted on adjacent or crossing trails and roads. Campsites are usually serviced by motorized equipment and available for use by the public using off road vehicles.

(e) Rural and Urban: Trail segments in this ROS class pass through areas where the natural setting is culturally modified to the point that it is dominant to the travel route observer. The setting may include pastoral, agricultural, intensively managed wildland resource landscapes or utility corridors. The urban settings may be dominated by structures with the natural elements playing an important but visually subordinate role. Trail users may consistently be in view of culturally changed landscapes. Motorized access or crossing of the trail may be more frequent than one-half mile intervals. Developments along the trail may include trailheads, parking facilities, and private services.

Campgrounds along these segments of trail may be highly developed with facilities including flush toilets, service centers, and showers. User interaction may be moderate to high along the entire trail segment. The primary objective here is to provide the user with a safe continuous trail link between other ROS class segments. These sections of trail will generally be as short as necessary to cross highways and railroads or passage through developed areas. Private property or safety considerations may dominate local alternatives requiring fencing or rights-of-way, use of cattle guards, and gates. In some situations, Constructed barriers to prevent motor vehicle trespass will be present. Signing for safety, interpretation, and regulations may be frequent.

(f) Private Land Rights-of-Way or Easements: Trail segments in this category provide the user with a safe continuous trail link between other trail segments. They have as their primary purpose the safety, protection, and convenience of the user. Evidence of civilization usually is predominant with the recreation opportunity pointed to allowing



passage of recreationists in a safe, convenient manner. These segments will generally be as short as necessary to cross highways and railroads or passage through developed areas. Private property or safety considerations may dominate location alternatives requiring fencing of rights-of-way, use of cattle guards, and even gates. In some situations, constructed barriers to prevent motor vehicle trespass will be present.

6. Motorized Use

a. Background

(1) The 1968 National Trails System Act intended that National Scenic Trails be established primarily for hiking and horseback use; motorized vehicular use is specifically prohibited by the National Trails System Act. However, in response to the recommendations by agency planners and the BOR Study Report, the 1978 amendment specifically provides for limited motorized use.

(2) At the time the Study Report was completed (1976), it was estimated that approximately 424 miles (14 percent) of existing primitive roads would be included in the proposed CDNST alignment.

b. Policy

Motor vehicle use by the general public is prohibited on the CDNST, unless that use is consistent with the applicable land management plan and:

(1) Is necessary to meet emergencies;

(2) Is necessary to enable adjacent landowners or those with valid outstanding rights to have reasonable access to their lands or rights;

(3) Is for the purpose of allowing private landowners who have agreed to include their lands in the CDNST by cooperative agreement to use or cross those lands or adjacent lands from time to time in accordance with Federal regulations;

(4) Is on a motor vehicle route that crosses the CDNST, as long as that use will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST;



(5) Is designated in accordance with 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart B, on National Forest System lands or is allowed on public lands and:

(a) The vehicle class and width were allowed on that segment of the CDNST prior to November 10, 1978, and the use will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST or

(b) That segment of the CDNST was constructed as a road prior to November 10, 1978; or

(6) In the case of over-snow vehicles, is allowed in accordance with 36 CFR Part 212, Subpart C, on National Forest System lands or is allowed on public lands and the use will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

7. Administration and Coordination of Permits

a. Background

Each of the land management agencies have the authority to require and administer permits which regulate recreation use on lands under their respective jurisdictions. The purpose of such permits is generally to regulate the kind and amount of use in certain areas and to aid in the environmental protection of the land and safety of the users through education and information about proper use of wildlands and information about the relative difficulty of travel. However, differing policies and practices among the land management agencies could result in conflicting and confusing regulations and information on individual management units.

b. Policy

Use by long distance trekkers and commercial guides and outfitters will be facilitated by the development of a coordinated system of issuing and honoring use permits on an interagency basis. Permit requirements should be as uniform and concise as practicable.

c. Management Direction

Utilizing the authorities for interagency memorandums of understanding or cooperative agreements, Federal, and State land management agencies will provide a coordinated system for issuing and managing permits that will facilitate the use of the CDNST by



both long distance trekkers and holders of commercial and special use permits. Such a system should provide at least the following:

(1) Noncommercial long distance trekker permits:

- (a) Information on where and how to apply for a CDNST trekking permit;
- (b) Current information concerning the rules and regulations pertaining to the use of the CDNST by agency on a State-by-State basis;
- (c) Guidelines for proper use of the CDNST and adjacent lands emphasizing the concept of "least impact" on wildland ecosystems and other users;
- (d) An efficient method of providing permit information to each affected land management entity;
- (e) Uniform information regarding the user, i.e., origin of user, entry and exit points, trail segments to be traveled, method of travel, approximate dates of use by trail segment, and party size; and
- (f) The purposes for a long distance trekker permit should be to provide needed information to both the user and the management agencies.

(2) Other permits:

- (a) Criteria for establishing the responsibility for the issuing of permits;
- (b) Information and requirements concerning party size limitations and use of designated campsites, where applicable; and
- (c) Assuring that the use is compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.

(3) Existing permit systems in local areas that only incidentally use portions of the CDNST will be handled under local agency permit policies and requirements. Assure that the use is compatible with the nature and purposes of the CDNST.



8. CDNST Trail and Facility Standards

a. Background

(1) The BOR Study Report and subsequent public involvement concerning the establishment of the CDNST has recognized the need for flexible standards to accommodate different kinds of terrain and varying kinds and degrees of use. Sufficient latitude is also desirable in order to allow the development and operation of the trail to agree with established management objectives of the agencies and interests along the trail.

(2) At many places, in the mountains as well as in the desert areas along the Continental Divide, water can be scarce. Some publics have advocated that the user be expected to accept these as natural conditions and be prepared to cope with the situation. However, it is also felt that the agencies have a responsibility to provide adequate information to the user to create an awareness of what to expect concerning the availability of water.

b. Management Direction

(1) Trail Standards: The CDNST is intended to reflect the variety of wildland conditions and uses which make up the overall character of the Continental Divide. The travel route itself will be developed to no higher standard than necessary to accommodate safely the type and amounts of use anticipated or planned for in any given segment. Construction, operation, and maintenance standards will be in accordance with existing agency direction. Location and design determinations will carefully consider resulting long-range operation and maintenance costs and reflect sound environmental protection practices.

(2) Facilities: Any development of and associated facilities for the CDNST should be minimal and appropriate for hiker/pedestrian and pack and saddle stock use. Facilities and services provided adjacent to the CDNST will be in accordance with the agency land and resource management direction.

(3) Water Development: In general, water sources will be limited to surface water naturally occurring along the trail. Additional water sources may be accessed by side trails where it is feasible to do so. In specific situations, the construction/development of potable water sources may be justified. These will be critically reviewed by the responsible agency. Users will be informed that all water along the trail must be treated to insure that it is potable.



(4) Signing and Marking the Trail:

(a) The purpose of the 18-inch and 9-inch markers is to identify the location of the trail to the motoring public.

The purpose of the 3 ½-inch marker is to identify the trail to the person on the trail or approaching from a side trail. It is to be used only on the CDNST at common access junctions; at intersections with other trails; and where needed as a reassurance sign if other land use activities or game trails make the trail location uncertain to the traveler.

The blazer eliminates the need for the traditional tree axe blaze. The blazer brand may be used on segments of the trail within units of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

(b) Directional, informational, interpretive, and regulatory signs will be placed along the trail, on side trails, at trailheads, etc., to meet the needs of the user, management, or to add to the enjoyment of the user by pointing out or interpreting resources and land uses.

Signs on the trail will not have the identifying words "Continental Divide National Scenic Trail" or the acronym "CDNST." The uniform marker is for this purpose. Signing on side trails, access routes, parking areas, etc., directing people to the CDNST will be done only with lettered signs.

(c) Signing within Wilderness, National Parks, National Monuments, and State Parks will conform to the objectives and standards established for each area other than the use of the uniform marker.

(d) The placement and maintenance of markers and signs on non-Federal lands will be authorized through appropriate language in memorandum of understanding, agreements, right-of-way instruments, etc., with State and County highway departments, municipalities, and private landowners. Signing of private land, in addition to identifying the route, will have objectives of educating the trail user to the concerns of landowners; interpreting appropriate management or development activities if the landowner desires; and building a positive relationship between the trail and owners of the land.



(e) The establishment of the CDNST as a National Scenic Trail mandates the maintenance of a high standard of signing. Managing agencies should give high priority to timely repair and replacement or missing or damaged markers and signs.

(5) Recreational use facilities:

(a) A trailhead is defined as a facility provided solely for the trail user to transfer from motorized highway travel to non-motorized or motorized trail travel; as such, the site is primarily for informational services, parking vehicles, rigging pack animals, and restroom facilities. A trailhead is not intended as a site for picnicking or camping.

The frequency, location, design, and facilities provided will be determined after careful consideration of the ROS class for the area, the mix of user types, carrying capacity of the trail segment, and need to mitigate conflicts between foot traffic and pack and saddle stock.

(b) Camping on public land generally is at the discretion of the user. Trail camps, if designated, will generally be of very simple design appropriate to the ROS class for the area. In wilderness, it may simply be a camp spot with no facilities. Outside of wilderness, campsites may be provided with fire rings, toilets, and separation of hikers and stock. In areas that are roaded, the camps may have road access and be provided with stock-holding facilities, vault toilets, etc.

Information services to persons planning trips on the CDNST shall describe the camping facilities available and will emphasize any limitations or regulations concerning forage availability and setbacks from watercourses or lakes.

9. Carrying Capacity

a. Background

The 1977 Final Environmental Statement prepared by the BOR concluded that establishment of the CDNST was the environmentally preferred alternative. This is because the CDNST would have significant status providing for a high degree of protection.



b. Policy

Establish a carrying capacity for the CDNST that accommodates its nature and purposes. The Limits of Acceptable Change or a similar system may be used for this purpose.

c. Management Direction

(1) Capacity determination within a management area will consider the biophysical environmental needs and the social capacity factors needed to provide desired recreation experience opportunities.

(2) National Park Service managers will utilize existing capacity estimates developed for General Park or Resource Management Plans.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

a. Background

Federal regulations pertaining to land and resource management planning for the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management require that the National Forest and BLM unit plans include a monitoring and evaluation program. The program will provide a basis for a periodic determination and evaluation of effects of management practices. The purpose of this monitoring and evaluation is to initiate the need for management actions, and plan revisions or amendments.

b. Policy

Each agency will develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation plan for segments of the CDNST for which they have responsibility. These plans should be integrated into the overall monitoring and evaluation process and schedule set forth in the individual unit land and resource management plan. Implementation of the monitoring will begin immediately following locating a trail segment as a part of the CDNST system.

c. Management Direction

(1) Monitoring and evaluation plans will include provisions for involvement of affected landowners in the determination of trail and user impacts on non-Federal land.



(2) The reports from these plans will provide, as a minimum, the following information on an annual basis:

(a) A summary of opportunities, concerns, and issues;

(b) An estimate of the types and levels of use on the trail, including trends, as related to the established carrying capacity;

(c) An assessment of compliance with the policy and direction contained in the Comprehensive Plan;

(d) A description of any ROS class change to the CDNST rights-of-way corridor and the reasons for such a change; and

(e) A description of any recommended Comprehensive Plan amendment.

