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Caribou-Targhee NF
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**Environmental Consequences: Recreation – Travel Management,
User Safety**

Travel Management: Possible increase in trail users not staying in designated trails, violating travel plan restrictions, increasing impacts to natural resources, wildlife and other users. The concern is that by thinning, reducing fuels, creation of fire lines, and reducing the vegetation along and adjacent to trails in the specific project areas within the west bench area, users, especially motorized, will be more likely to violate travel management restrictions by leaving the designated trails and pioneer additional unwanted trails, which would have a negative impact to other users and natural resources in the area.

No Action Alternative: There would be no change from the existing condition. Some travel restriction violations continue to occur. The land managers would continue to post and repair travel management signing at trailheads, close and sign non-system trails as they are identified, and patrol the area as person power and funding permits.

Preferred Action Alternative: There will be an increase in users wanting and being able to leave designated travel routes and pioneering un-authorized trails. In the spring and late fall when the trails are open, there could be times when snow may block the existing trail. With the reduction of trees, brush and fuels along the trails there will be a strong tendency to ride around the snow off the trail where they should not be.

In turn this will lead to degradation of the other trail users quality of experience and impacts to other resources in the west bench area. This is especially true for Project area 4 (Gibson Jack) where a prescribed burn is planned between Slate Mountain and Upper Gibson Jack Trails. With no or little vegetation between the two trails to retard travel there will be a strong temptation to short cut between these trails.

Mitigation of these impacts will be to have a Landscape Architect and Recreation Forester on site and assist in the design and layout of the specific projects to reduce the possibility of promoting additional unauthorized trails in the project areas.

In addition, where there is a potential for un-authorized use to occur or where it does occur, at the expense of each fuels reduction project, there will be barriers in the form of fencing, logs, natural debris, etc. put in place to prevent or stop this activity. Signing will be used if required. This potential impact will be monitored regularly throughout the accessible season.

Use of equipment in the implementation of these projects and access for this equipment should be such that off trail use is not encouraged. Any cross country travel must be rehabilitated so it does not appear to be a trail others would want to follow. Any hose lay corridors should be located in areas where trail users would not be encouraged to ride.

Safety of recreationist with each project area: Safety of the trail users are of paramount importance. Currently there are blind spots along portions of the trails within some of the project areas. Many users who ride motorcycles and mountain bikes travel too fast for existing conditions on the trails. They may be able to stop within their sight distance but should they meet someone coming from the opposite direction, they could not stop in time, causing injury and equipment damage.

No Action Alternative: The existing condition will continue. Trail riders will go too fast for existing conditions and get hurt. The land management agencies will work to provide better sight distance and safety for the users as workforce and funding permits.

Proposed Action Alternative: Thinning, reduction of brush and willows, and removal of hazard fuels adjacent to the trails will provide better sight distance for the trail riders so they can see oncoming traffic, thus reduce accidents. The flip side of creating better sight distance is that some users will go even faster on the trails because they feel they can see what is coming sooner.

Mitigation measures: There will need to be signing and education of the dangers of riding the trails too fast and that there are other users on the trails at some trailheads.