

2012 - May Valley Mapping

IMBA worked alongside Idyllwild Cycling to map the entire trail network for the Forest Service.

2012 - Proposed Action

The *Proposed Action* went out with a *Scoping Notice Letter* letting the public know what was proposed for May Valley. The purpose of this letter was to encourage public comment. Some of you may remember seeing the map that was included showing what trails were in consideration. This was not by any means the final word, again, it was meant to encourage public comment from all users and members of the community.

After the *Public Comment Period*, which lasted a couple of months, the comments went through a *Comment Analysis* process. During this time, the Forest Service focused solely on what the public had to say. Some of the best comments pointed out that May Valley had several levels of trails for different riding abilities.

The comments that were useful and had substance were selected to develop *alternatives* for May Valley based on their content. As mentioned above, the *Proposed Action* contained a map of trails that were considered for the trail system. An *alternative* is best described as another version of this map that has a different selection of trails. Some *alternatives* may have more trails than the *Proposed Action* and some less, for example.

After the *alternatives* were drafted, the ‘ologists’ became involved. They reviewed the *Proposed Action* and the *alternatives* to see if there were any specific effects to whatever their specialties are. For example, a biologist will study the habitat around the trails. If any TES (threatened endangered species) are noted, Fish and Wildlife become involved and their decisions are based on that information. Another issue is sediment loading in the area, which is considered by the Water Quality Board. These are some examples of when other collaborators (city, county, state, fed, Fish and Wildlife, Water Quality Boards, etc.) become involved.

In the end, each specialist has to develop his or her own report, which impacts the *alternatives* further (all *alternatives* remain internal at this point). As you can see, there are many other factions involved besides the Forest Service.

2013 - Mountain Fire

The Mountain Fire was detrimental to the May Valley Trails Project because it brought about a changed condition and set the process back at least 2 years. The fire’s impact was devastating in areas because the fire’s intensity killed most of the organic matter in the soil making regeneration more difficult. More time, in fact years were needed for these areas to take hold again. During this time, the ‘ologists’ were busy studying the fire’s impact to the area.

Note that the closure was not only about safety issues and protecting visitors, but more importantly, protecting the resources from the visitors.

2015 - Process Continues

Things start rolling again in 2015 slowly but surely. Other issues were also being dealt within the Forest Service and recourses were stretched, especially during big fire seasons.

2016 - Environmental Assessment (EA)

The *Final Draft EA* will go out to the public, which includes the original *Proposed Action* and the series of *alternatives* to the *Proposed Action*. This now triggers another *Public Comment Period*, which lasts approximately one month. And once again, the public comments drive the *alternatives*.

Idyllwild Cycling will keep everyone apprised of the upcoming date of the *Public Comment Period* through its emailing circulation, the Idyllwild Cycling website and Facebook page. In addition, the *Public Comment Period* is officially posted on the USFS site under *Project and Plans* for the San Bernardino National Forest. Legally, there will be a public notice in the local paper. At this point, people need to type out a comment either by email (to email listed in announcement in paper or website) or however it is stated in the actual document. If time permits, an open house may be scheduled.

This is a crucial time for all of us to get involved. It is very important to do the homework before making a comment by reading the *EA* and observing the maps. The *EA* is not meant to be entertaining but it does contain everything you'll need to know. Individual comments or groups compiling comments are welcome. Comments should be well thought out and have substance or it will be a waste of everyone's time (to put it bluntly). To repeat the importance of this, public comment drives the *alternatives* so this is the opportunity to speak up about what you feel is important.

Comment Analysis

After the *Public Comment Period*, the Forest Service now goes through the second *Comment Analysis* (the first was in 2012), which lasts approximately 60 days. This is the time all relevant comments and any info from the ID team ('ologists', etc.) are reviewed and the final trail system is outlined. The final decision (see next section) could be the *Proposed Action* (remember the original map), an *alternative* or a hybrid that is created based on comments. So once again, the importance of our involvement during the *Public Comment Period* cannot be stressed enough.

A Decision Memo

A *Decision Memo/Finding of no Significant Impact*, also know as a *FONSI*, is driven by comments from the public and ID team during the *Comment Analysis* and is the final word on the May Valley Trail System. The final *Decision Memo/FONSI* is based on finding no significant impacts.

Implementation

IMBA's trail solution crew now becomes involved with the Forest Service along with a few select Idyllwild Cycling representatives. The three factions will work together outlining the *Implementation* process.

Implementation will happen in phases. Closures potentially will be in place throughout depending on recovering rate of the area; a trail cannot be built if there is no vegetation. *Implementation* is not just about putting tools to the ground, it also could involve different permits from the water board or Army Core of Engineers for any type of stream crossing, etc.

Once a plan has been laid out, we volunteer up and start digging!

Summary in Steps:

- The Proposed Action
- Public Comment
- Comment Analysis drives Alternatives to the Proposed Action
- Internal Analysis
- Environmental Assessment (EA)
- 2nd Public Comment
- 2nd Comment Analysis
- A Decision Memo
- Implementation

Whew!

Feel free to contact me if there are any questions.

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