



## Forest Roads Benefit from National Guard Training Exercises

- 1984-present
- Black Hills National Forest
- Partner: U.S. Army National Guard

### Project description

*The Black Hills National Forest hosts annual and monthly training exercises for Army National Guard soldiers. The soldiers accomplish a variety of road maintenance tasks on Forest roads as part of their training.*

Annual Training is conducted for two weeks in June, and Innovative Readiness Training is conducted one weekend each month. Road maintenance activities during the trainings include:

- Maintain and recondition Forest roads—re-blade, place gravel, cut ditches, improve drainage.
- Build and maintain roads for timber sales—this reduces the cost of the road package for the sale.
- Close Forest roads—block with large rocks or use explosives to create craters
- Build road approaches, parking lots and turn-around areas for Forest facilities such as picnic areas and horse loading areas.



Army National Guard dump trucks haul gravel.  
Photo by Greg Bohls, Black Hills National Forest.

Greg Bohls, National Guard liaison for the Forest, prepares several years in advance for the exercises. A 5-year NEPA permit gets the process underway. He posts a public notice of intent to solicit help from the National Guard and requests comments from local contractors and the public.

Bohls plans specific projects two years in advance. He works with District Rangers to identify potential projects and with the Guard to determine what types of projects are needed for the training exercises. He assigns a Forest project engineer to oversee each project. The Forest is treated as a host nation during the exercises. A special use permit issued to the National Guard includes “rules of occupation,” such as how to use and care for the Forest landscape.

### Benefits

The Forest accomplishes road maintenance work and other projects that otherwise would not get done. Timber sale-related road work reduces the cost of the timber sale road package. National Guard soldiers receive training for the types of projects they will have to complete during times of service. The local area benefits as well—some Guard units stay in other locations and perform projects for small communities and state parks.

### Keys to success

“Initial planning and follow-through coordination are absolutely essential for both the Forest and the National Guard,” says Bohls. “At the Forest, we make sure to clear all the projects with our specialists first—the archeologists, hydrologists, and so forth. We draw up plans for a suite of proposed projects. The Guard then assesses these to make sure they assign the right units and have the proper equipment at hand when the training exercises start. And they include the projects in their budget process.”

### Types of agreements

Memorandum of Understanding with U.S. Army Department of Defense  
Memorandum of Understanding with South Dakota Office of the Governor  
Special Use Permit to allow the National Guard to camp on the Forest and conduct military skills practice and engineering projects

### Project contributions

The Forest supplies materials (i.e. gravel) and construction warning signs, and pays landfill fees for any waste generated by the projects. The National Guard supplies equipment, operators, and fuel.

### Estimated savings

No funds are available for the Forest to complete these projects. The projects would not be done without this partnership.

### More information

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Army National Guard works on timber sale road intersection.  
Photo by Greg Bohls, Black Hills National Forest.

Find this story and more at the Partnership Resource Center website: <http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/roads/success-stories.php>

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