



The Travel Management Rule and Off Highway Vehicle Use

Ottawa National Forest

February 2007

Message from the Forest Supervisor

Last December, the Ottawa National Forest hosted a series of open houses across the Forest focusing on the 2005 Travel Management Rule. As you'll remember, this Rule directs each national forest to designate a system of roads and trails available for motor vehicle use. It also requires each national forest to map the designated system and update that map annually. The purpose of the open houses was to provide general information on the Travel Management Rule and to share a draft copy of the Motor Vehicle Use Map that will be coming out this Spring.

As you can imagine, we heard from a wide spectrum of people who suggested a variety of ideas for changing the draft Motor Vehicle Use Maps. We also heard from a large audience that liked the draft maps, but wanted to see some additional connector routes identified. On the next couple of pages, we provide you with an overview of the comments that we received.

We are currently working on the production of the first Motor Vehicle Use Map. The map will display all roads and trails that are open to OHV use on the Forest. The first map produced, is a "snapshot" of our current conditions and will be updated annually. Maps will be made available free of charge at each of our offices once they are published.

I hope the vital interaction between us will continue after the first Motor Vehicle Use Map is published. Your continued involvement and feedback on our OHV trail system will be invaluable to us as we create a system over the years ahead that provides access to our Forest visitors, while protecting the natural resources of the Ottawa.



Bob Lueckel

What We Heard

Over 100 people attended the December open houses, providing comments and insights to the draft maps, and discussing implementation of the Travel Management Rule on the Ottawa National Forest.

As we listened to and read the comments received, it was obvious that the Ottawa and its resources are very important to the many people who live in the surrounding communities and across the Lake States area.

A short synopsis of some of the comments that we received is displayed on the following pages.

Travel Management Rule Draft Motor Vehicle Use Map

General Comments Shared

- ▲ Connector Routes, Dual Use
- ▲ Designating New Routes
- ▲ Access to Private Property/Leases
- ▲ Signing
- ▲ Motor Vehicle Use Map

Connector Routes and Cross-Country Use

Connector Routes. By far, one of the most frequent comments that we received was a concern over the lack of connector routes. Several factors contribute to the obvious absence of connector routes on the draft Motor Vehicle Use Map:

- ▶ **Current Conditions.** The first Motor Vehicle Use Map produced by the Forest will display current, on-the-ground conditions. Because OHV use on our collector system roads (OML 3 roads) was not allowed in the past, this use is not reflected on the Motor Vehicle Use Map.
- ▶ **Dual Use Analysis.** Before we can designate our collector roads as part of the designated trail system, a dual use analysis must occur. A dual use analysis is a systematic process that determines the safety and liability when allowing both highway legal and non-highway legal motor vehicles on the same roadway at the same time. The decision to allow for dual use must be documented and approved by an authorized engineer.
- ▶ **Future Updates.** Roads can be added or subtracted annually based on public comment and changed conditions. We realize that some of our collector roads may serve as connector routes once a dual use analysis has been completed. Interested individuals, user groups, and communities are encouraged to work with their local Forest Service office to identify those connector routes they would like to see designated.

Cross-Country Use. Somewhat tied to the comments regarding connector routes, was a concern about the prohibition on cross country travel. This is a significant change for the Ottawa National Forest. It is important to note, however, that this change will bring the Ottawa in line with all of the other National Forests in the Eastern Region. Once the Motor Vehicle Use Map is published, OHV use will be limited to those roads and trails identified on the map. Travel off of these routes is prohibited.

Access

Access to UPPCO Camps. Several people who attended our December open houses were concerned about access to their UPPCO camps. Access to UPPCO camps is provided under the terms and conditions of the UPPCO lease. This has not changed under the Travel Management Rule.

Access to Private Property. Private property can be accessed with the appropriate authorizations. Individuals who require access to property that adjoins or is surrounded by National Forest System lands are encouraged to work with their local Forest Service office to determine access routes.

Handicapped Accessibility. Several individuals commented on access to the Ottawa for those people who are elderly or handicapped. All users are afforded the same access to the designated road and trail system. The only reason access to a particular area would not be allowed would be for environmental reasons (usually related to water and soils protection) or if it is contrary to management direction provided in our Forest Plan, such as wilderness and semi-primitive non-motorized areas.

Signing

While many people applaud the creation of a Motor Vehicle Use Map, there was a concern expressed that inadequate signing on the ground would make it difficult to know if you were on the right trail or not. Forest personnel have been diligently installing signs across the Forest over the past several months. In fact, you've probably seen the results of our efforts already. An emphasis has been placed on signing our collector routes and intersections. We will continue to work on sign installation throughout the summer.

The Motor Vehicle Use Map

While many people are glad to have a map displaying a designated system of roads and trails for OHV use, the format of the map itself generated several comments.

- ▲ Lack of identifying landmarks. The purpose of the Motor Vehicle Use Map is to display designated motor vehicle routes. Therefore, it does lack many of the features that we are used to seeing on our maps. This is a standard, national format. We are, however, working with the national Travel Management Rule team to identify ways to make the map better (many of which came from you).
▲ Other trails. It was mentioned at our open houses that identification of state trails would make the maps more useful (and easier to track). We have been able to add a new symbol to our map which will identify "other" trails.

- ▲ Services. We received several comments about looking at opportunities to include additional information on our maps about the local communities and services they offer. While we will not be adding these features to our map, we did discuss opportunities available for us to partner with local chambers of commerce, OHV groups, and others to produce other maps and information products.

Enforcement

Many of the comments that we received were related to enforcement of the Travel Management Rule. Because the map serves as the primary enforcement tool, it is extremely important that OHV users obtain a copy before they head out to ride. Throughout the summer, Forest personnel will be available to answer questions from our users to help transition them to the new policy.

Ottawa National Forest — Travel Management Rule

If you received this newsletter, you either stopped by our office or attended a recent open house to request information on the Travel Management Rule, or you are on our current mailing list.

Our final Motor Vehicle Use Map will be available in Spring 2007. Prior to release of the Motor Vehicle Use Map, we will send out notification to those individuals who are interested in receiving a copy. Additionally, we will continue to produce our Travel Management Rule updates throughout the year.

Please let us know if you would prefer to be removed from our mailing list.

If we do not hear from you, we will continue to send you information hard copy.

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Contact Us

If you have any questions about the Travel Management Rule, our current or future activities, or how you can receive a copy of the final Motor Vehicle Use Map, please contact us.

By Mail

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906-932-1330

Travel Management Rule Key Points

The 2005 Travel Management Rule moves the Agency to a designated use system to minimize or eliminate the impacts from unmanaged motor vehicle use.

- Prohibits motor vehicle use off the designated system.
- Designation also includes class of vehicle and time of year.
- Designated routes will be identified on a motor vehicle use map (MVUM).
 - Motor vehicle use maps will be free to the public.
 - Motor vehicle use maps will be updated annually.
- The Rule requires public involvement and coordination with state and local government agencies.

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