



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Spotted Bear  
Ranger District  
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8975 Highway 2 East  
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Hungry Horse, MT 59919

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**File Code:** 1950

**Date:** February 7, 2007

Dear Interested Party,

You are invited to an Open House that will be held on Thursday, February 22, from 5-8 PM at the North Valley Community Center on Nucleus Avenue in Columbia Falls (just north of Smith Foods). The purpose of the Open House is to ask for input on the implementation of the 2005 Travel Rule for motorized travel on the Spotted Bear Ranger District, Flathead National Forest.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Flathead National Forest provides a variety of recreation opportunities – camping, driving, fishing, hunting, and more. Each year more and more people are involved in Off Highway Vehicle or OHV recreation whether driving all terrain vehicles (ATVs), trail motorcycles, or four wheel drive vehicles. Motor vehicles are an appropriate way to access and enjoy National Forest lands – in the right places and under appropriate management.

Unfortunately, the growth in use of OHVs and their increasing ability to travel in rougher terrain has outraced the development of management strategies for them. While most riders use their OHVs responsibly, the damage from growing cross-country travel is obvious. Proliferation of trails, vegetation loss, unsightly scars, soil erosion, and stream damage are a few of the issues with irresponsible use of OHVs.

### **THE 2005 TRAVEL MANAGEMENT RULE**

To address this situation, the Forest Service adopted a national rule regarding Travel Management and OHV's in November 2005. (Travel Management – Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use – Final Rule, effective 12/9/2005) The final content of this rule was shaped not only by the need for appropriate OHV management, but also by more than 81,000 public comments. The Travel Management Rule requires each National Forest to formally designate those roads, trails, and areas where motorized travel is permitted and to show them on a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). Once the rule is implemented, motorized travel will be permitted only on the roads, trails, and areas shown on the MVUM. Specific schedules were assigned across Montana to allow for the Rule to be fully implemented in the region by 2009. As a result, Spotted Bear Ranger District is implementing the rule in 2007. Hungry Horse and Glacier View Ranger Districts will publish a Motor Vehicle Use Map by September 2008, followed by Tally Lake Ranger District and Swan Lake Ranger Districts in September 2009. More information on the 2005 Travel Management Rule can be found at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/>



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## **IMPLEMENTING THE TRAVEL MANAGEMENT RULE**

Implementing the Travel Management rule on the Spotted Bear Ranger District, Flathead National Forest will be initiated with a review of the existing motorized roads and trails on the district.

The Spotted Bear Ranger District is initiating actions to designate a system of roads, trails and areas for motorized vehicle use to secure a wide range of recreation opportunities while ensuring the best possible care of the land.

The following sideboards will guide this project:

- Travel management planning has been ongoing on Spotted Bear Ranger District and on the Flathead National Forest in general. It is expected in the future that additional projects (i.e. vegetation management or other) could also consider additional travel management actions.
- Utilize the past site specific motorized decisions and implementation actions related to motorized access.
- Grizzly bear security needs remain a very important component related to motorized recreation opportunities.
- Motorized use is currently only allowed on designated motorized roads and trails, and also on motorized wheeled cross-country travel to a campsite has been permissible within 300 feet of motorized roads and trails as per the January 2001 Off-Highway Vehicle Record of Decision for Region One.
- The Motorized Vehicle Use Map is to be reviewed, updated if needed, and reprinted for each Ranger District each year so this review is not a one time occurrence.
- Winter use will not be addressed by this effort. Over-snow vehicle use will continue to be managed under the current Flathead National Forest 2002 snowmobile settlement agreement and/or Winter Motorized Recreation Plan (Amendment 24) to the Forest Plan.

## **YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED**

We welcome your participation at the open house in reviewing the current motorized road, trail, and area access on the Spotted Bear Ranger District. We invite you to send or phone in any comments, suggestions, or concerns that you have regarding motorized travel management planning on Spotted Bear Ranger District. If you have no comments at this time but wish to remain on the mailing list for this project, please let us know or your name will be removed. Please feel free to share this letter with neighbors or other interested parties in the event we have missed somebody.

Please send written comments to me at the Spotted Bear Ranger District, P.O. Box 190340, Hungry Horse, MT 59919 (or drop them off at our office – 8975 Highway 2 East, Hungry Horse, MT). To submit comments electronically, please send to: [comments-northern-flathead-spotted-bear@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-northern-flathead-spotted-bear@fs.fed.us).

In order to be most useful to us, send or phone your comments by March 23, 2007. Please contact Project Leader Dale Luhman at 387-3820, or me at 387-3851 if you have further questions.

Thank you for your interest in implementing the 2005 Travel Planning Rule on Spotted Bear Ranger District.

Sincerely,

DEB MUCKLOW  
District Ranger