

ON THE RIGHT TRAIL!

A FOREST SERVICE PROGRAM FOR OHV ACCESS



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

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OHV USE ON NATIONAL FORESTS

More Americans than ever are using off-highway vehicles (OHV) to enjoy the outdoors. Last year, OHV users accounted for between 11 and 12 million visits to national forests and grasslands. This is a good thing. In the right places, and managed carefully, motor vehicles are an appropriate use of national forests. However, if not managed carefully, motorized recreation can damage both the land and the resources that visitors come to enjoy.



Motorized vehicles are an appropriate use of national forests. *Riders on a camping trip, Dry Creek, Fishlake National Forest, Utah.*

Today appropriately managed recreation, including use of OHVs, is one of four key issues affecting national forests and grasslands. Policies must be adapted to accommodate an increasing number of OHV users on National Forest System lands. This can be accomplished through a sustainable system of designated routes and areas for motor vehicle use.

A NEW FRAMEWORK

In 2005, the Forest Service published a new rule for providing motor vehicle access to national forests and grasslands. This rule reflects the more than 81,000 comments on a draft rule published in July 2004. Many user groups, environmental groups, and State and local governments endorsed the concept of a designated system of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use.

The final rule requires each national forest and grassland to designate those roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use. Designated routes and areas will be identified on a motor vehicle use map. Motor vehicle use outside of designated routes and areas will be provided for fire, military, emergency, and law enforcement purposes and for use under Forest Service permit. Valid existing rights are honored. The rule also maintains the status quo for snowmobile use, as determined in individual forest plans. The rule itself does not designate roads or areas for motor vehicles but provides a framework for making those decisions at the local level.



Without careful use, motor vehicles can damage the land. *Damage to meadow from cross-country use, Harbor Mountain Trail, Tongass National Forest, Alaska.*

“ We believe that off-highway vehicles are a legitimate use of the National Forest System. But it's a use that should be managed carefully. That's what our new rule for OHV use on national forest land is all about: providing access that can be used and enjoyed into the future. And if we want to sustain that use, then we've got to work together. ”

-- Forest Service
Chief Dale Bosworth

DESIGNATING OHV ROUTES

Over the next few years, individual national forests and ranger districts will decide which roads, trails, and areas to designate for motor vehicle use, in coordination with State, county, and local governments. This is a public process, and you will be able to participate. If you care which trails or roads should be open or closed to motor vehicles, we hope you will contact your local national forest and get involved.

Designations will include class of vehicle and, if appropriate, time of year. Some single-track trails may be designated for motorcycle use only. Other trails will accommodate a wider range of vehicles. Some trails will be managed for nonmotorized use. The key to making these decisions, and ensuring they are sustainable over the long term, will be working together at the local level.



Recreational users and government agencies must work together for a sustainable road and trail system. *Discussing trail repair needs, Blue Mountain OHV Trail, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, Oregon.*

WORKING TOGETHER: COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

The national forests and grasslands are shared resources held by all Americans. Recreational visitors experience them in many different ways. Across the country, some of our most effective examples of OHV management involve State and local governments, motorized and nonmotorized users, and other affected citizens working together. Partnerships extend the agency's limited resources to accomplish trail maintenance, restore damage, educate users, and promote a spirit of cooperation among national forest visitors.



Working together, we can provide sustainable motor vehicle use for the long term. *ATV rider, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Washington.*

Highlights of New Rule

- Designate roads, trails and areas for motor vehicles
- Designation by class of vehicle, time of year
- National framework for local decisions
- Status quo for snowmobiles

KEY CONTACTS

For more information on OHV access in your local area, please contact your nearest national forest or grassland. For information on the national OHV policy and the new regulations, contact: Jerry Ingersoll, 202-205-0931, jingersoll@fs.fed.us

