



File Code: 1950

Date: January 10, 2008

Dear Forest User:

The Hungry Horse and Glacier View Ranger Districts are beginning the process of evaluating roads, trails, and areas available for motor vehicle use as directed in the 2005 National Forest Service Travel Management Rule. You are invited to an open house that will be held on Thursday, January 24, from 4:00 to 8:00 pm at the Hungry Horse Ranger Station in Hungry Horse. Please feel free to stop by any time during this time period. This open house will focus on an overview of this national rule, provide a display of the existing wheeled motorized travel system on the two ranger districts, and ask for input on this system. Winter motorized use will not be addressed in this evaluation process since this has already been done through the recent Winter Motorized Recreation Plan (Amendment 24).

When the wheeled motorized evaluation process is completed this year it will result in clear, standardized designations of where motorized recreation is appropriate, sustainable and desirable on the two ranger districts. It will protect natural resource values through effective management of motor vehicle use, enhance motorized recreation experiences, and allow for areas of non-motorized travel and experiences.

BACKGROUND

Most National Forest visitors use motor vehicles to access the National Forests, whether for recreational sightseeing; camping and hiking; hunting and fishing; commercial purposes such as logging, mining, and grazing; administration of utilities and other land uses; outfitting and guiding; or the many other multiple uses of National Forest System lands. For many visitors, motor vehicles also represent an integral part of their recreational experience. People come to National Forests to ride on roads and trails in pickup trucks, off-highway vehicles (OHV), motorcycles, and a variety of other conveyances. Motor vehicles are a legitimate and appropriate way for people to enjoy their National Forests—in the right places, and with proper management.

Recent management direction of OHVs occurred in 2001 with a Regional Forester decision to amend nine national forest plans, including the Flathead National Forest, that restricted yearlong-wheeled motorized cross-country travel. One notable exception was that wheeled motorized cross-country travel to a campsite would be permissible within 300 feet of roads and motorized trails as long as no resource damage was incurred. Subsequently, the Flathead National Forest issued a special order that prohibited motorized vehicles off National Forest System roads when no visible, clearly evident, two track or single track routes are present. Additionally, the motorized travel must fit to the same width of the track. The 300 feet wheeled motorized use to a dispersed campsite was also permissible within this special order.



In 2005, the Forest Service adopted a national Travel Management Rule (hereafter known as the Rule) which requires each National Forest to formally designate those roads, trails, and areas where motorized travel is permitted and show them on a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). Once the rule is implemented, motorized travel would be designated 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, the Hungry Horse and Glacier View Ranger Districts will publish a MVUM by September 2008, followed by Tally Lake Ranger District and Swan Lake Ranger District in September 2009. Spotted Bear Ranger District printed a MVUM in October 2007. Information about this Rule can be found at the following websites:

[http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/.](http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/)
http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/flathead/nepa/trav_mngmt.shtml

DESIGNATION CONSTRAINTS

In designating a system of roads, trails and areas for wheeled motorized vehicles and meet the timelines to produce a MVUM by September 2008, the following constraints will be used to guide the planning process:

- Providing for grizzly bear security habitat is a major management factor on the Flathead National Forest. The current Forest Plan grizzly bear standards limit the areas of consideration for designating new wheeled motorized use.
- Travel management planning has been occurring on the two ranger districts through past planning projects. Some of these planning efforts have solely been related to access management whereas others have included access management as one of the components of the decision. These decisions form the basis for the existing wheeled motorized situation during our current travel planning process. We do not plan on re-visiting these decisions at this time.

Once we produce a MVUM, it will be updated annually to account for any changes to the designated system from future planning efforts.

OPEN HOUSE AND NEXT STEPS

We welcome your participation at the open house to review the current motorized road, trail, and area access on Hungry Horse and Glacier View Ranger Districts. If you wish, you may send or phone in comments within the constraints regarding motorized travel management planning. Written comments may be sent to me at the Hungry Horse and Glacier View Ranger Districts, P.O. Box 190340, Hungry Horse, MT 59919 (or drop them off at our office – 10 Hungry Horse Drive, Hungry Horse, MT). To submit comments electronically, please send to: comments-northern-flathead-hungry-horse-glacier-view@fs.fed.us. 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.

We anticipate there may be some changes needed to the existing wheeled motorized travel system on the two ranger districts. Changes to the existing system will require more specific planning actions with further public involvement. These further planning actions would likely take place in the near future in a separate analysis.

Please visit the previously mentioned Flathead National Forest website for additional information regarding travel planning. We will post the existing condition maps, sideboards and other pertinent travel information as it becomes available.

If you have questions about the open house and travel planning in general please contact either Paula Peterson at 387-3818 or Michele Draggoo at 387-3827.

Sincerely,

JIMMY DEHERRERA
District Ranger