



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA FOREST SERVICE RELEASES FINAL RULE FOR MOTORIZED RECREATION IN NATIONAL FORESTS & GRASSLANDS

New Rule will Balance Best Possible Care of Land with Public's Enjoyment of Recreational Vehicles through Local Collaboration

WASHINGTON, Nov. 2, 2005 – U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service today announced a new regulation for recreational motor vehicle use in national forests and grasslands which will forge a sustainable system of routes and areas designated for motorized use in the future.

"OHV and other motorized vehicles are fun and exciting ways to experience national forests and we've seen dramatic increases in their popularity in the last decade," said Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth. "Land managers will use the new rule to continue to work with motorized sports enthusiasts, conservationists, state and local officials and others to provide responsible motorized recreational experiences in national forests and grasslands for the long run."

The new travel management policy requires each national forest and grassland to identify and designate those roads, trails and areas that are open to motor vehicle use. Local units will seek public input and coordinate with federal, state, county and other local governmental entities as well as tribal governments before any decision is made on a particular road, trail or area. Unplanned, user-created routes will be considered at the local level during the designation process.

The agency expects that it will take up to four years to complete the designation process for all 155 national forests and 20 grasslands. Each unit will also publish a motor vehicle use map. The final rule addresses the more than 80,000 comments received on last year's proposed rule. Most comments strongly supported the concept of designating routes and areas for motor vehicle use.

Once the designation process is complete, motor vehicle use off these routes and outside those areas (cross-country travel) will be prohibited. This prohibition will not affect over-snow vehicles, such as snowmobiles.

The rule will impact motor vehicle use on roads, trails and areas under Forest Service management. State, county or other public roads within national forest and grassland boundaries will not be included in the designation process.

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Some national forests and grasslands already have established systems of roads, trails and areas designed and managed for motorized use. This rule does not require those units to change existing plans.

In 2002, the Forest Service had more than 214 million visits, with about the same number driving through just to enjoy the scenery. More than 200,000 miles of forest roads are currently open to off-highway vehicle (OHV) use as well as more than 36,000 miles of trails. In addition, national forest recreation has become the biggest contributor to many local economies, including rural communities.

Recreational motor vehicles include OHVs, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), off-highway motorcycles (OHMs) and off-road vehicles (ORVs), such as 4-by-4 trucks or Jeeps.

A copy of the new rule can be found at www.fs.fed.us.

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