



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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OCHOCO NATIONAL FOREST SHIFTS GEARS ON PROPOSED OHV TRAIL SYSTEM

PRINEVILLE-Forest Supervisor Jeff Walter recently announced a change in location for a proposed off-highway vehicle (OHV) trail system on the Ochoco National Forest. Until recently, an interdisciplinary team of natural resource specialists had been working on a draft proposal for a trails system in a 26,000-acre block of the McKay Creek watershed. The team was looking for opportunities to provide OHV recreation in an area that has received considerable resource damage from OHV use in the past. The intent of the trail system proposal was to provide motorized recreation opportunities that would encourage managed use while protecting against future damage to the natural resource. The proposed system would have provided recreational opportunities for Class I & Class III motorized vehicles (quads and motorcycles).

Walter and staff recently discussed the proposal with members of the Deschutes Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC)-Travel Management Subcommittee and Working Group and to the Crook County Natural Resource Committee. These two groups represent a cross-section of agencies and citizens, including Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, US Fish & Wildlife, Deschutes, Jefferson and Crook Counties, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Oregon Wild, Oregon Equestrian Trails, Timber Industry Representatives, Oregon Hunters' Association, Juniper Group Sierra club, and a number of motorized and non-motorized recreation enthusiasts.

"After receiving feedback from these two groups whom represent a broad base of community interests, we have decided there is not an adequate level of local support to develop an OHV trail system in the McKay area at this time," said Walter.

Both groups have expressed support for a motorized trail system at an alternate location on the Ochoco National Forest described as "Ochoco East," located on Forest Service-administered lands in the vicinity of Big Summit Prairie. The actual boundaries of the project area have yet to be determined. The interdisciplinary team will start collecting and assessing field data this fall/winter, with plans for having a proposed project boundary in the winter/spring of 2009. The Ochoco East area could offer opportunities for Class II motorized vehicles (jeeps), in addition to Class I and Class III.

“The Ochoco East area is not devoid of natural resource concerns with regards to the development of a motorized trail system. However, we believe that we can mitigate those concerns with additional input from the working group,” added Walter.

A proposed motorized trail system on the Ochoco National Forest follows the direction from the Forest Service’s 2005 Travel Management Rule. The Rule prohibits motorized travel off of existing designated routes on national forests and grasslands where it is not currently prohibited and will incorporate options and criteria for continuing to provide motorized access for dispersed camping. The purpose is to adapt Forest Service travel management policies to: provide consistency for motor vehicle use across the nation, enhance and secure recreational opportunities for public enjoyment for both motorized and non-motorized users, to better protect natural and cultural resources and to address user conflicts. For additional information on the 2005 Travel Management Rule and timeline for publication of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement in Central Oregon, visit our website at www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon/travel-mgmt

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