

Forest Service listens to public voice

Input for motorized use of trails essential for plan

By ERIKA KIRSCH
Staff writer

Sho. Press
6/3/06

CATALDO — Denny Blankenship, of Rathdrum, grew up recreating on the forested trails of the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District.

"So many trails are closed now," Blankenship said. "It's going to get to the point of 'oh, here's the five acres you can ride on.'"

Blankenship owns land in along the Coeur d'Alene River and rides four-wheelers with family and friends in the district, he said. Blankenship also enjoys riding the St. Joe River area, he said.

Blankenship was just one of several trail users who came out to express his feelings about what should be included in the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District motorized Plan Wednesday at Canyon Elementary School in Cataldo. The purpose of the meeting was to gather information from the public regarding which trails within the district should be used for motorized travel, according to Linda McFadden, the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District deputy district ranger/project team leader.

According to the U.S. Forest Service Web site, policies need to be put into place in order to accommodate an increasing number of off-road vehicle users on National Forest System lands. The process will take a few years, but the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District will decide which roads, trails and areas to designate for motor vehicle use, in coordination with

state, county and local governments, according to the Web site. The purpose of the motorized travel plan project is to: bring the current travel plan into compliance with laws, regulations and other higher

level management direction; designate a reasonable route system for public access and recreation travel on the district, considering both the quantity and quality of experiences provided, in balance with forest management objectives and resource concerns; and identify the types of use and restrictions associated with each designated route, according to the USFS Web site. Designated routes chosen will include the class of vehicle and, if appropriate, time of year, according to the USFS Web site.

The public was invited to provide input and suggestions will continue to be considered. During the Wednesday evening meeting, several USFS maps were posted so those interested could provide proposals for the travel plan.

Recreation, wildlife and aquatics screening stations were set up to map out the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District for users.

The purpose of this step was to identify any changes desired to the current condition of the district, McFadden said. Any opening or closing of the roads or creating new roads or trails is the task that the USFS is currently trying to tackle. Several individuals were present to have their opinions heard. High Mountain ATV Association and JEEPS were also at the meeting to express their desires for the trail system.

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PLAN

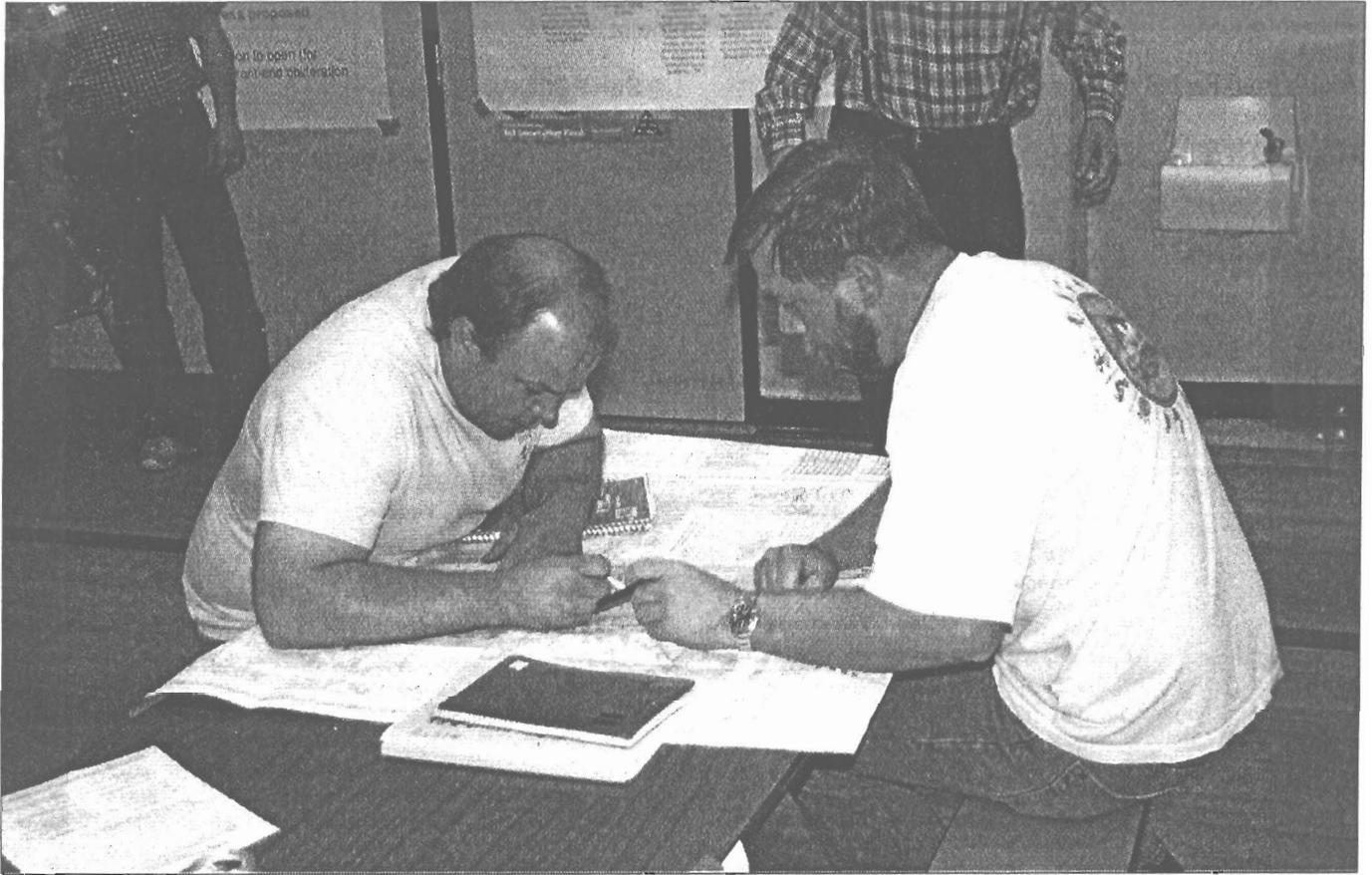
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Fifty-six proposals were gathered at the Wednesday meeting and the USFS is still accepting proposals, McFadden said. The next meeting will be held on June 22 in Coeur d'Alene, however the time and place has yet to be established, McFadden said. Maps can be viewed at the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District offices in Smelterville and Coeur d'Alene. Maps are also available at the Shoshone County

courthouse, McFadden said. Proposals submitted on May 31 will be put onto a disk and available at the offices as well, McFadden said.

"This is going to be your motorized trail system," McFadden said. "We want your input."

Photo and article from the June 3, 2006 edition of the Shoshone News Press newspaper.



— Photo by ERIKA KIRSCH

Mark Tihonovich, of Coeur d'Alene, and Hans Archer, right, of the Spokane area, check out a map of U.S. Forest Service land during the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District Travel Plan meeting on Wednesday at Canyon Elementary in Cataldo.