



United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service

# NEWS RELEASE

Dakota Prairie Grasslands

---

**Date: July 28, 2010**

For more information, contact: Sharon Small or Paula Johnston  
Phone: (701) 250-4443

## **U.S. Forest Service opens travel management plan for commenting**

BISMARCK, July 28, 2010 – The U.S. Forest Service – Dakota Prairie Grasslands has opened the comment period for the Travel Management Plan Environmental Assessment. Public comments on the Environmental Assessment will allow the Forest Service to make an informed decision to determine which routes shall remain open for public use on the Little Missouri National Grassland.

The Travel Management Plan is being completed by the U.S. Forest Service to comply with the Travel Management Rule published in November 2005 governing off-highway vehicles and other motor vehicle use on National Forest System lands. This rule requires each national forest and grassland to designate roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use. More Americans are enjoying access and recreational opportunities on their national forests and grasslands, in keeping with the Forest Service's multiple-use mandate. However, the increase in off-highway vehicle use also affects soil, water, wildlife habitat, and other recreational visitors. Today unmanaged recreation, including destructive impacts from off-highway vehicles, represents one of the major threats facing the nation's forests and grasslands. The rule was developed facilitate the management of off-highway vehicle use so that the agency can continue to provide opportunities desired by the public, while sustaining the health of National Forest System lands and resources.

The Environmental Assessment presents four alternatives for the roads available for use on the Little Missouri National Grasslands. Aside from the existing condition, all options in the assessment close all non-Forest System roads. These non-system, or user-created, roads are currently not maintained or inventoried by the Forest Service, may be redundant on the landscape, and/or are harmful to the natural environment.

In addition to closing non-system roads, the proposed action and two alternatives include other road closures. These closures are primarily due to lack of legal or safe access. Due to the nature of interspersed public, private, and industry-owned lands on the Little Missouri National Grasslands, not all Forest Service system roads have legal access. Where access is needed, the Forest Service will work with private landowners and grassland users to secure legal access as quickly as possible.

The comment period is open for 30 days. The Forest Service will analyze the public comments and make a decision this fall. At that time a motor vehicle use map will be released and made available to the public. Implementation of the decision will occur in 2011. The Environmental Assessment is available online at [www.fs.fed.us/r1/dakotaprairie/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/dakotaprairie/).

To comment on the Travel Management Plan Environmental Assessment, [comments-northern-dakota-prairie@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-northern-dakota-prairie@fs.fed.us). The subject line must contain "Travel." Or, you can submit your comments by writing to: Paula Johnston, USDA Forest Service, Dakota Prairie Grasslands, 240 W. Century Avenue, Bismarck, ND 58503. To submit your comments orally, please call (701) 250-4443.

The U.S. Forest Service – Dakota Prairie Grasslands manages over 1 million acres of National Forest System lands in North and South Dakota.

###

