



File Code: 1950 Planning

Date: March 11, 2008

Motorized Travel Planning on Libby District

Interested Party:

The Libby Ranger District is seeking public input on project-specific planning to complete route designations for motorized vehicle use on the district. This effort will produce a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) that displays travel routes where motorized use is allowed, as directed by the 2005 Travel Management Rule. This proposal takes into account public involvement and decisions from past district activities, Forest Planning, the Forest's Social Assessment and the Kootenai Recreation *Niche*. A Proposed Action Map is included with this scoping notice. Further information is available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/kootenai/>.

PROJECT SIDEBOARDS

In completing a Motor Vehicle Use Map, the following sideboards are summarized from a preliminary analysis of the current situation:

- Travel planning has been an ongoing effort on the district for years in order to provide for access and forest management. There are approximately 2,580 miles of National Forest System roads currently on the district of which approximately 1,464 are open to highway legal motorized vehicles, including street-legal ATVs. There are also 53 miles of *trail* which currently do not have legal prohibitions to motorized use.
- There are very limited opportunities to provide additional motorized routes in some areas, such as the Grizzly Bear Management units. Other opportunities for motorized use on the district may be considered during this analysis with regard to meeting resource and management needs, on a case-by-case basis.
- The Motor Vehicle Use Map will be reviewed, updated as needed, and reprinted for the district on a recurring basis. Travel management will also continue in the future as additional forest management projects are considered.
- Only wheeled motorized vehicle use is addressed with this effort. Over-the-snow motorized use is not addressed on the district through this proposal.

The Purpose and Need for the Motorized Use Designations Project is to:

1. Meet the Chief's deadline to produce a Motor Vehicle Use Map by December 2009.
2. Designate motorized wheeled vehicle use routes on the district, while providing for public and resource concerns.



The Proposed Action for the Motor Vehicle Use Map is to:

1. *Allow motorized access on currently open National Forest System Roads.* The existing 1,464 miles of roads open to highway legal vehicles and licensed operators provide a variety of opportunities for motorized access.
2. *Allow motorized access for dispersed camping within 300 feet proximity to the designated road system only.* The current 2001 OHV decision allows for dispersed camping access up to 300 feet off open roads. Where FS roads cross state, private or corporate lands, dispersed use is subject to ownership discretion.
3. *Close the trails (50 miles) now legally open-to-motorized use to "closed to motorized use".* Note these trails are currently NOT designed for motor vehicle use. The Parmenter Flats #817 and Gloria Mine #301 trails would remain in motorized-legal status under this effort. Limited opportunities for motorized trails may be considered based on partnership-interest and collaborative planning.
4. *Publish the Motor Vehicle Use Map for public and administrative use by September 2009.* Standard format will be utilized in the publishing process for the map.

OTHER INFORMATION

- The 2001 Off-Highway Vehicle Record of Decision prohibits motorized travel off roads (cross-country) existing prior to the decision on all Federal lands in Montana, North Dakota, and portions of South Dakota. Unauthorized roads and trails created prior to this decision allow motorized traffic unless prohibited by an area closure under a Forest Order. Motorized wheeled cross-country travel to a campsite is permissible within 300 feet of a motorized route.
- In 2003 Former Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth identified specific concerns related to unmanaged motorized recreation and the creation of unplanned motorized routes, and the potential for these to have adverse impacts on natural resources.
- In November of 2005 - the Forest Service issued the Travel Management Rule revising regulations to require designation of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use. The rule provides a consistent framework for motor vehicle use on National Forests and Grasslands. Subsequent to the publication of a forest Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM), the final rule prohibits motor vehicle use off of the designated system. The Forest Service committed to implementing this rule by December 2009.

PROCESS AND TIMELINES

This proposal is considered through an Environmental Analysis with the following timelines:

Proposed Action released for scoping: March 15, 2008
Environmental Assessment issued: May 2009
Public comment period ends: June 2009
Decision expected: August 2009
Data entered in preparation for map by: May 2009
Forest Draft Motor Vehicle Use Maps available by 6/30/09
Forest Final Motor Vehicle Use Maps produced for publication by 9/1/09

Your Involvement

For this site-specific planning effort, you are invited to submit comments, opportunities or concerns. Send written comments to the **Libby Ranger District (att: Travel)**. To submit comments electronically, please send to: "comments-northern-kootenai-libby@fs.fed.us". Electronic comments must be submitted in rich text format (.rtf), Word (.doc) or Word Perfect format. The subject line must contain the name of the project for which you are submitting comments. You should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement as confirmation of receipt. If you do not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is your responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

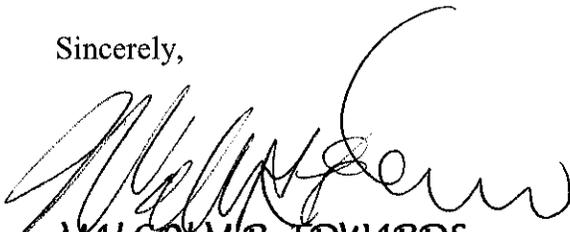
In order to be most useful to us, send your comments by April 11, 2008. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit anonymous comments may not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Part 215.

An Open House forum is planned for public information during this process on April 3rd 2008 at the Ponderosa Room, City Hall from 4 to 8 PM.

I am the responsible official for this project. Your time and participation in this planning effort are greatly appreciated.

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Sincerely,



MALCOLM R. EDWARDS

District Ranger, Libby