

DESIGNATION OF SOME ROADS FOR “MIXED TRAFFIC”

In some locations, hikers, bicycle riders, pack strings and horseback riders must travel on short segments of the road system to access trails from the trailhead parking facilities. There are no signs on the road that alert drivers to the potential for encountering people, stock, and riders. Similarly, it is illegal for unlicensed OHVs to be ridden on short segments of road that provide access between the parking lot and the trail system, or on segments of road that connect motorized trails. Several people commented that the Forest Service could correct these situations by legal designation of key pieces of roads for “mixed traffic”, and proper signing on the ground to alert people to the presence of other traffic.

1. EXISTING CONDITION

a. Past Events and Conditions

Currently, there are no roads on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District that are designated for mixed traffic in accordance with Forest Service regional policy. This means there are no signs that warn drivers of highway legal vehicles that they may encounter hikers, pack strings, or riders on the roadway in specific locations where people must use the road to travel from the parking lot to the trail. There are no accommodations for recreational traffic to make connections between different trails, unless they incur the hazards and comply with legal requirements to use an existing road as a link.

There are no laws that prohibit hikers, bicycle riders, or horseback riders from traveling on a roadway. Montana state law does require that every motorized vehicle being driven on a Forest Service “system” road be street legal and be operated by a properly licensed driver. There is no history of accidents on the District involving highway vehicles and other types of traffic, nor are there complaints from the public about near-misses between types of traffic.

In 1995 the Montana legislature amended State Law MCA 23-2-821 to allow for unlicensed OHVs to be driven on roads designated for mixed traffic. The amendment included language to make State law compatible with Federal regulations in regard to mixed traffic. State law was also amended to allow youth between age 12 and 16 to operate an OHV on a public road designated for mixed traffic, if they had passed an OHV riding course, and if they were accompanied by a properly licensed adult. Provisions for non-residents were also included, and all riders under 18 must wear a helmet.

Under normal circumstances, Montana state laws (MCA-61-8-110 and MCA-61-8-111) regulate traffic on all public roads, which includes all roads on NFS lands that are open to highway vehicles. Designation of a road for mixed traffic is accomplished through a special order that designates a route (or segment thereof) as a special service road, which would not be subject to enforcement by Montana state law enforcement officers (MCA-61-8-112). Federal regulations under 36 CFR 212 are the authority by which the Forest Supervisor could administratively designate the special service road for the types of traffic restricted. [Special orders need to be carefully worded to ensure the language meets legal requirements.]

b. Desired Condition

Ideally, the Forest Service would not mix traffic types on a road open to highway vehicles. Developing a parallel trail would be the preferred course of action to keep physical separation between the modes of traffic. Mixing traffic should only be considered if there are no other feasible options to designating parallel routes, restricting highway vehicle traffic, or restricting trail traffic. If accidents occur on dual-use roads, human suffering could be tragic, and financial liability could be immense. Therefore, managers should carefully evaluate the need for, and feasibility of managing a road for mixed traffic before allowing such use.

In some low-risk situations it may be feasible to allow a mix of highway vehicles and other traffic such as OHVs, snowmobiles, stock, or hikers. Mixing vehicle types is possible after an evaluation of the route, documentation of the evaluation, and approval by the Forest Supervisor. The process described in Forest Service publication EM-7700-30 *Guidelines for Engineering Analysis of Motorized Mixed Use on National Forest System Roads* should be used. Signing is an important part of the process to mix traffic, so that drivers of highway vehicles are alerted to the potential for encounters with other types of traffic. Reconfiguration of the road alignment and road surface are also considerations in order to slow the speed of highway vehicles and OHVs, and to improve visibility of other traffic. Roads with a low volume of vehicles, and/or low speed of vehicles are the most likely candidates to evaluate.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

a. Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

1. Direct and Indirect Effects

Under Alternative 1 there would be no effort to designate any roads on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District for mixed traffic. Every OHV driven on a Forest Service “system” road would have to be street legal and would have to be operated by a properly licensed driver. There would be no signs warning drivers of highway vehicles that they may encounter hikers or pack strings on the roadway. There would be no accommodations for recreational traffic to make connections between different trails, unless they incur the hazards and comply with legal requirements to use an existing road as a link.

2. Cumulative Effects

The absence of roads designated for mixed traffic would not have a cumulative effect with other proposed and foreseeable activities summarized in Appendix M.

b. All Action Alternatives (Alts. 2-5)

1. Direct and Indirect Effects

Alternative 3 has no need for designation of mixed traffic because there are no trails open to motorized use.

Table III-80A. Road Mileages Proposed for Mixed Vehicle Traffic by Alternative*

ROAD	ALT. 1	ALT. 2	ALT. 3	ALT. 4	ALT. 5
West Fork C.G. Rd. 9181 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 9182 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 9182001 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 9182002 (0.1 mi.)	n/a	0.4 mi. Motorcycle/ATV from campsites to access main road.	n/a	n/a	n/a
N.Fk. Teton Rd. 144	n/a	10.2 mi. Motorcycle/ATV from dispersed campsites/cabins along main road.	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cave Mtn. C.G. Rd. 8982 (0.6 mi.) Rd. 8982A (0.1 mi.) Rd. 9228 (0.3 mi.)	n/a	1.0 mi. Motorcycle from dispersed campsites to Trl 108.	n/a	n/a	n/a
Green Gulch Rd. 3307	n/a	2.0 mi. Motorcycle/ATV from creek to end of east road.	n/a	2.0 mi. Motorcycle/ATV from creek to end of east road.	2.0 mi. Motorcycle/ATV from creek to end of east road.
Hannan Gulch Rd. 3305	n/a	1.0 mi. Motorcycle/ATV from Guard Station to end of road.	n/a	1.0 mi. Motorcycle/ATV from Guard Station to end of road.	1.0 mi. Motorcycle/ATV from Guard Station to end of road.
Beaver-Willow Road 233	n/a	10.4 mi. Motorcycle loop from dispersed campsites via Trl 275. ATV loop via Rd. 6497.	n/a	10.4 mi. Motorcycle loop from dispersed campsites via Trl 275. ATV loop via Rd. 6497.	10.4 mi. Motorcycle loop from dispersed campsites via Trl 275. ATV loop via Rd. 6497.
Beaver-Willow Campsite Spurs Rd. 233002 (0.3 mi.) Rd. 233004 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 233005 (0.8 mi.) Rd. 233006 (0.2 mi.) Rd. 233007 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 233010 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 233011 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 233012 (0.2 mi.) Rd. 233013 (0.2 mi.) Rd. 233014 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 233015 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 233016 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 233037 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 233039 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 233040 (0.3 mi.) Rd. 233041 (0.3 mi.) Rd. 233042 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 233A (0.2 mi.) Rd. 3310 (0.1 mi.) Rd. 6497 (0.8 mi.) Rd. 6497005 (0.2 mi.) Rd. 9153 (0.5 mi.)	n/a	5.1 mi. Motorcycle loop from dispersed campsites via Trl 275. ATV loop via Rd. 6497.	n/a	5.1 mi. Motorcycle loop from dispersed campsites via Trl 275. ATV loop via Rd. 6497.	5.1 mi. Motorcycle loop from dispersed campsites via Trl 275. ATV loop via Rd. 6497.
Glade Tract Rd. 9205	n/a	0.1 mi. Motorcycle from parking to Trl. 204	n/a	0.1 mi. Motorcycle from parking to Trl. 204	0.1 mi. Motorcycle from parking to Trl. 204
Bailey Basin Rds 196001/196A	n/a	0.6 mi. total Motorcycle/ATV on entire road.	n/a	0.6 mi. total Motorcycle/ATV on entire road.	0.6 mi. total Motorcycle/ATV on entire road.
TOTAL		29.7 mi. ATV 1.1 mi. m/c		19.1 mi. ATV 0.1 mi. m/c	19.1 mi. ATV 0.1 mi. m/c

* All routes proposed for mixed traffic are in the Birch Creek South area; none are in the Badger Two-Medicine area.

Alternatives 4 and 5 would evaluate 19.1 miles of road for mixing ATV/motorcycle traffic and 0.1 miles of road for mixing just motorcycle traffic with highway vehicles. This includes mixing 4x4 traffic on Hannan Gulch road and Green Gulch road with non-street legal ATVs and motorcycles. Both Hannan Gulch and Green Gulch roads are rough, low-speed routes that dead-end, and have a relatively low volume of traffic.

Mixing ATVs and motorcycles with highway vehicles on Green Gulch road 3307 would allow people camped at the dispersed site to use an adjacent 0.6 mile (dead-end) road that receives only sporadic traffic. Mixing motorized traffic on Hannan Gulch road 3305 would accommodate a larger number of OHV recreationists camped along Sun River. The primary routes for mixed traffic would be the main Beaver-Willow road 233 and 22 associated spur roads, to provide access to trails and loop routes from the dispersed campsites. Allowing motorcycles on 0.1 mile of the Glade Tract road 9205 would mix motorcycles with a low volume of vehicles going to and from the recreation residences. Mixing ATVs and motorcycles with highway vehicles on the entire 0.6 miles of Bailey Basin road would allow people camped at the dispersed site to use a road that receives only sporadic use by highway vehicles.

Alternative 2 proposes the highest level of roads to evaluate for mixed traffic by including the designation of the main North Fork Teton road 144 between West Fork campground and Cave Mountain campground. This addition would expand opportunities for campers at both ends to ride along 10 miles of main road.

2. Cumulative Effects

Designation of some roads for mixed traffic would not have a cumulative effect with other proposed and foreseeable activities summarized in Appendix M. The proposed oil and gas drilling in the Badger-Two Medicine area would utilize some existing roads and also develop some additional road, but none of the roads associated with the oil and gas drilling project are being considered for mixed traffic. Likewise, the proposed expansion of the buried pipeline along the northern boundary of the Badger-Two Medicine does not involve roads being considered for mixed traffic. It is unlikely that designation of roads for mixed traffic would make any harvesting, fuel treatment, or prescribed burn more or less viable.

c. Effects Common To All Alternatives

1. Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

There are no known direct, indirect, or cumulative effects common to all alternatives.

d. Effects Common To All Action Alternatives

1. Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects

Under all action alternatives it would be prudent to further assess the need to manage non-motorized traffic on some heavily used roads. The roads listed in Table III-80A are being used by stock and hikers to access various trails. Some people are riding horses several miles on roads with a large volume of highway-vehicle traffic traveling at a high rate of speed. These roads should be assessed in more detail to seek other options for stock and hikers to safely access the trail system. It may be feasible to designate trails parallel to the roadway, or it may be necessary to install signs advising motorists they may encounter hikers, packstrings and horseback riders on the road.

**Table III-80B. Roads for Further Evaluation of Mixing Vehicles and Stock
On Same Roadway under All Action Alternatives**

ROAD	Mileage	Vehicle and Stock Use Occurring on Same Roadway
Blackleaf Canyon Road 145	0.6 mi.	Stock use from dispersed campsite to trailhead.
West Fork Teton Rd. 144	0.5 mi.	Stock use from trailhead to Trail 107.
	0.4 mi.	Stock use from 7LazyP to trailhead.
South Fork Teton Rd. 109	3.1 mi.	Stock use from outside Forest Boundary to Trails 154 & 126.
	0.8 mi.	Stock use from dispersed campsite & Admin. Site to trailhead.
Sun Canyon Rd. 108 (paved) Rd. 8983 Rd. 9167	1.6 mi. & Hannan Bridge	Stock use from Sun Canyon Lodge across bridge.
	0.1 mi. & Mortimer Bridge	Stock use from Beaver Creek trailhead to Trail 201.
	0.4 mi.	Stock use north of Mortimer Bridge to dispersed campsites.
	0.8 mi.	Stock use from JJJ Wilderness Ranch to Trail 201.
Benchmark Rd. 235 Rd. 9229, 9229a, 9229d, 9234, 3327	2.3 mi.	Stock use from Benchmark Campground to Straight Creek trailhead, to Trail 204, to Trail 256, to Trail 202, and to S. Fork trailhead.
Crown Mtn. Spec.Use Rd 235b	0.2 mi.	Stock use from parking to Trail 270.
Elk Creek Rd. 196	2.2 mi.	Stock use by USFS from Administrative Site to trailhead.
TOTAL	13.0 miles on thirteen graveled roads and one paved road.	

The process of designating specific roads or segments of road for mixed traffic helps to accommodate recreational traffic, and makes trips into the forest a safer and more enjoyable experience. Some of the hazards of mixing traffic on roads open to highway vehicles could be eliminated by proper signing and by applying the following mitigation measures:

Mitigation (all action alternatives):

- Evaluation and approval of roads for mixed traffic complies with Regional policy.
- Signing about other types of uses that one may encounter on roads designated for mixed traffic complies with Regional sign policy.