

## **TRAVEL PLANNING UPDATE (MAY 22, 2007)**

### **TRANSCRIPT**

**GARY:** Hello, I'm Gary Chancey, and welcome to this edition of ForestNet. Today we are speaking with Forest Supervisor, Craig Bobzien, of the Black Hills National Forest about travel planning: what we are doing now and what we intend to do in the near future. Craig discusses what we are doing now to prepare our travel planning proposal, what our proposal will look like, and what you can expect in the weeks before we release our travel plan proposal planned for the first week in August.

We asked Craig: Where have we been so far?

**CRAIG:** All across the United States, National Forests and Grasslands have been engaged in travel planning since the Chief came out with the rule in 2006. Here in the Black Hills though, we actually started years before that, knowing that in the future we needed to have a travel system that would be quality system, one that would be attractive, and a way that we could sustain our motorized uses on the Black Hills. A couple of things happened here. First is our National Forest Advisory Board went out and did listening with communities all through the Black Hills and Wyoming and South Dakota and even in eastern South Dakota to help get some baseline of what people were interested in seeing in the future for motorized travel and also for non-motorized uses on the Black Hills. And so then they gave us eleven recommendations as a result of that for me to consider as we go through this travel planning process. What's going to be happening is, we on the Black Hills, like the other forests and grasslands, will be going from a system that has been open to motorized cross entry travel, to one that is a designated system of motorized routes and trails through the forest for all different kinds of uses and our goal is to take these recommendations from the advisory board and to work closely with the public in trying to come up with the very best quality, attractive, and sustainable system we can. Last November, we held public meetings here in the Black Hills and we had over 450 people come and tell us what was really important to them, areas, trails, and routes that they liked, and for some people quieter areas of the forest that they would like to see maintained in a less-motorized travel setting. So we've been pulling all that information together this winter and spring in developing a proposed action.

**GARY:** What are we doing now?

**CRAIG:** Well, there's really two main areas. One is I have been out, District Rangers and staff have been out meeting with local governments. I have been to six different county commissioner meetings talking about the importance of working with the county. Now, while my decision will only be for the Black Hills National Forest in December 2008, it's going to be very important that our system edge-matches very well with local, county, and state road systems and that those mesh together

very well. And so we have been talking about the importance with that. I've also been out with different groups with motorized and non-motorized interest describing what we've been doing. And what I've been telling them is that we have been taking all the information that we received from the public meetings and we have been evaluating that in light of the National Forest Advisory board recommendations and looking at the maps and information we receive from the public through public meetings and helping develop a plan that will reflect those two sources of information that we think are invaluable to help us shape our initial proposal.

GARY: How are we protecting the integrity of public participation?

CRAIG: When you mention the integrity of the information, that is that these are the public's lands and the public's forest and when we receive information from people, we want to do the very best we can to make sure that we keep the integrity of that information: that we know why somebody told us something was important to them, or why there is a route that they would like us to consider, and that we will be able to track that through this whole process. This is a huge challenge for us. I'll mince no words about that. When we said that we want to work closely with this, it has taken a lot of careful consideration on our part of all the information we receive from the public. But that's what we want to do and that's what we are going to do. And so as we track through this, we are looking and evaluating each one of these routes that we receive. We are looking at each one of these areas that people said were special to them, and in some areas there are areas of conflict. And so we are going to do our very best to try to sort those out and then we are going to be developing a proposed action with that. And by developing this proposed action, we believe that people are going to come back and look at that and they will recognize the pattern that they submitted to us. Now, as I mentioned earlier there are some areas where we are going to have some overlap where some groups wanted to see it for motorized or individuals wanted it to see certain areas for motorized while others said for non-motorized, and we are going to try and strike that balance of a system that we think is quality, attractive, one we can operate and maintain, and one that's sustainable and just a great system of travel and uses on the Black Hills.

GARY: Will people recognize the proposal when they see it?

CRAIG: They are going to recognize it. What we will have will reflect what we heard from the public and will also reflect the recommendations from Black Hills National Forest Advisory Board. There are parts of the forests where different types of interests wanted to do different things in the same areas. For example, some areas wanted to be both developed for motorized travel and also remain as non-motorized areas. So we had some areas in there where both different types of interests wanted something different. And we will try to sort that out the best we can and try to achieve a balance across the landscape that provides our folks with

a wide variety of uses that protects the environment that is so important to us, that is something we can sustain, and that is socially acceptable.

GARY: What happens next?

CRAIG: We will plan to have the proposal available and have the public look at it for a few weeks before we have our public meetings. This will give people a chance to review it, to think about what they have sent to us, compare those, and look at some of the recommendations that we have had, so that when it comes time to have our public meetings people will have had a chance to sort those out. Then, we are going to be asking for input on alternatives to the proposals we have shared with the public. And what we would like to do through this whole period is give people 60 days to go and really give some thoughtful consideration of what we have given, give us some further advice on what they would like to see if it differs from the proposal that we have out there, and we will continue to work with the public to try and shape the best alternatives we can for evaluation in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. From having our initial proposal out to review the public meetings on that, the public will help us shape a better alternative that will become our proposed action that we will evaluate. And it will be the very best that we can come up with in working with the public.

I would like to thank the people that have been so involved in helping us shape our plan that we have developed so far. We could not have done this without the volunteer effort, the cooperation, and the turnout that we have had for people to come out and say how important motorized and non-motorized uses are in the Black Hills National Forest. At this point, we are going to stay hard at work and I hope people just go out and have a great time enjoying the Black Hills National Forest this summer.

GARY: Thanks Craig for joining us today on ForestNet. This edition of ForestNet is coming to you as a videocast and is available at our website. For more information, please call us at (605) 673-9200.