

PUBLIC COMMENT ON PROPOSED ACTION

Winter Motorized Use Forest Plan Amendment and Travel Management USDA Forest Service – Uinta National Forest

The Uinta National Forest is proposing to amend the 2003 Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) to change the definition of “over-snow vehicle” to: “*A motor vehicle that is designed for use over snow and that runs on a track or tracks and/or a ski or skis.*” The Forest Plan’s definition of “over-snow vehicles” currently includes vehicles operating on low pressure tires. Vehicles operating on low pressure tires and not retrofitted with tracks or skis would no longer be included. This would change the recreation opportunities for low-pressure-tired vehicle use in the winter on National Forest System (NFS) lands that are currently open to this use. These changes would bring our management direction into alignment with the Travel Management Rule (TMR).

- ◆ The proposed change would NOT preclude continued cross-country travel of “*over-snow vehicles*” (as defined in the TMR) where provided for in the Forest Plan. An exception would be that the Chicken Springs area at Strawberry Reservoir (see enclosed map) would be closed to all winter motorized vehicle use to protect sage grouse using this area. The TMR provides specific direction to consider harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of wildlife habitats.
- ◆ The proposed change would generally discontinue allowing cross-country over-snow travel by motorized vehicles other than “*over-snow vehicles*”. This would eliminate cross-country over-snow travel by any motor vehicle not designed for travel on snow or ice and steered and supported in whole or in part by tires and low pressure tires. An exception would be within designated areas encompassing Currant Creek Reservoir, Vernon Reservoir, and most of Strawberry Reservoir except the Chicken Springs area. To facilitate access to Currant Creek Reservoir, I am proposing to designate FS0471 from the confluence of FS0080 to FS 0106 as open to ATV travel. Use of motorized vehicles, other than “*over-snow vehicles*”, on this road and in designated areas would be restricted to motorized vehicles less than 50 inches in width from December 15th to March 31st.

The TMR also contains direction to consider conflicts among different classes of motor vehicle use when designating routes and areas open for motorized vehicle use. I am proposing to seasonally close (December 1st to March 31st) the following designated routes to vehicles other than “*over-snow vehicles*” to avoid winter motorized vehicle user conflicts and maintain the investment expended on grooming snowmobile trails.

Heber District: 6.3 miles of FS0046 north of Daniels Pass; 3.5 miles of FS0134 west of Strawberry Reservoir; and 4.5 miles of FS0150 west of Strawberry Reservoir.

Pleasant Grove District: 13.8 miles of FS0085; 0.7 mile of FS0010; 3.1 miles of FS0008; and 0.5 mile of FS0317 in American Fork Canyon.

Spanish Fork District: 7.3 miles of FS0042 west of Little Baldy Mountain; and 2.1 miles of FS0131 north of Soldier Summit.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES THAT MAY BE CONSIDERED

Alternative A: This alternative would change the definition in the Forest Plan to be consistent with the definition in the TMR. This alternative would not affect snowmobile use on the Forest, would not address user conflicts on groomed snowmobile trails, and would not close the Chicken Springs area at Strawberry Reservoir to protect sage grouse. This alternative would not designate any areas on the Uinta National Forest for over-snow travel by motorized vehicles other than “*over-snow vehicles*” as defined in the TMR.

No Action Alternative: This alternative would NOT change use on the ground from that currently approved. The Forest Plan and direction in it would be corrected to be consistent with definitions in the TMR, but these corrections would not change application of the Forest Plan.

PURPOSE AND NEED

This purpose of the amendment is to make the definition for “over-snow vehicles” and direction relative to winter motorized vehicle use consistent with definitions and direction in the November 9, 2005, Travel Management Rule. Correction of the definition of “*over-snow vehicles*” in the 2003 Forest Plan will change criteria for use of motorized vehicles steered and supported in whole or part by low pressure tires, and therefore, a Forest Plan amendment is needed.

The amendment would also address winter recreation issues raised regarding motorized vehicle user conflicts, expenditures on grooming snowmobile routes, and protection of sage grouse habitat

The public is invited to comment on the proposed action. Only those who submit timely comments will be accepted as appellants. Each individual or representative from each organization submitting comments must either sign the comments or otherwise verify identity in order to attain appeal eligibility. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project. Comments should include the information required pursuant to 36 CFR 215.6(a)(3). Please send written comments to: Brian Ferebee, Forest Supervisor, Uinta National Forest, 88 West 100 North, Provo, UT 84601; phone: 801-342-5100; fax: 801-342-5143. Email comments may be sent to **comments-intermtn-uinta@fs.fed.us** and must be submitted in rich text (rtf.) or Word (doc.). Documents in other formats (tiff, jpg etc) should be mailed in hardcopy. Comments may also be delivered to the above address during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday, excluding federal holidays. The opportunity to comment ends 30 days following the date of publication of this notice in the Provo *Daily Herald*.

If you have questions regarding this proposal, please contact Reese Pope at the Uinta National Forest Supervisor’s Office at the address or phone number listed above or visit our website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/uinta/projects> for additional information and maps.

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