



HIAWATHA NATIONAL FOREST NEWS RELEASE

USDA – Forest Service

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Using Your OHV on National Forest Land: New Map Available

Escanaba, MI – With spring in the air, many people have put away their snowmobiles in favor of their Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs, such as ATVs and other 4-wheel drive vehicles designed for off-highway use). Hiawatha National Forest would like to remind the public about Forest Service policies for OHV use on National Forest lands. While on National Forest land, OHV riders must use the current Hiawatha's Motor Vehicle Use Map to determine which roads, trails and areas are open to wheeled motor vehicle use.

"We encourage all motor vehicle users traveling within Hiawatha National Forest to obtain a copy of the free Motor Vehicle Use Map," noted Tom Schmidt, Forest Supervisor. "The maps display which roads, trails and areas are open to motor vehicle use, including OHVs."

Riders who utilize Forest Service roads and trails are encouraged to stop at one of the Forest's local Ranger District offices regarding the Motor Vehicle Use Map, which is updated annually. The new April 2009 update is now posted on our website, and paper copies will be available in the near future.

Over 2,000 miles of roads and trails are designated open for off highway vehicles on the Hiawatha National Forest. Use of motorized vehicles off these designated routes (such as cross country travel through the woods) has been prohibited since 1986 and remains unchanged.

"This means that OHVs may not be used cross-country, not even for the retrieval of big game or baiting blinds," explained Schmidt. "Hunters must drag game to roads where ATVs are allowed."

Along with the Hiawatha National Forest's recent effort to increase awareness of existing OHV policies, the Forest is committed to increased enforcement of these policies. More law enforcement officers will be present in the field, along with continued cooperation with officers from local and state law enforcement and natural resources agencies. Riders who witness illegal OHV use are encouraged to report these observations to the Forest Service.

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Under the 2005 Travel Management Rule, each National Forest across the United States is required to establish a designated system of roads, trails and areas for OHV use. The benefits of a designated system of roads include improved recreation experiences and enhanced protection of wildlife habitat and aquatic, soil, and air resources.

Illegal off-road OHV use and resource damage have increased on the Hiawatha. While responsible users make an effort to learn and follow the rules, some OHV users do not make the effort. Erosion, water degradation, habitat destruction, damage to cultural sites and conflicts between users are commonly the result. In addition, irresponsible OHV users pose a safety threat to themselves and others.

The Hiawatha National Forest encourages riders to remember safety, to follow the rules, and to respect the resource. Irresponsible riders will affect future opportunities and experiences for all OHV enthusiasts.

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