



## Revised Forest Service Guidelines for OHV Travel-Management Signs

Mary Ann Davies, Project Leader

More and more Americans are using off-highway vehicles (OHVs) to enjoy the national forests and grasslands. When OHV recreation is managed carefully in the right places, it is an appropriate use of national forest roads, trails, and areas, but unmanaged OHV recreation can damage land and resources.

Many national forests have not had guidelines for OHV travel-management signs. Some forests used these signs to designate open routes, while other forests used the signs to identify restricted routes. The lack of consistent guidelines was confusing (figure 1) and contributed to problems of public compliance with regulations. Enforcement was difficult. The *Sign and*

*Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service* (EM-7100-15) was revised in December 2005 to help achieve a consistent, effective, and economical sign program that meets Forest Service objectives (figure 2).

In 2005 the Forest Service published a new rule, *Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use* (36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295), providing for motor-vehicle access to National Forest System lands. The final rule requires each forest and grassland to designate roads, trails, and areas for motorized use by making decisions at the local level after appropriate public involvement, environmental analysis, and documentation.

Example of an  
unacceptable sign



Figure 1—Signs can be confusing when they are not consistent.



Figure 2—Signs that follow the revised guidelines for OHV travel management are consistent, making them easier to understand.



Motor-vehicle-use maps will identify roads, trails, and areas that are open to motorized use. Signs indicating motor-vehicle closures or restrictions are not required for enforcement. As a practical matter, signs may need to supplement the motor-vehicle-use maps, drawing attention to some closures. Every effort should be made to ensure that all designated routes have route identification signs that correspond with the map. Some major changes in the guidelines for OHV signs are:

- Travel-management signs will follow the standards and guidance contained in the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)* and the *Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service (EM 7100–15)*.

For example:

- Sign colors have changed from a brown legend on a white background to a black legend on a white background.
- Signs on open roads maintained at levels 3, 4, or 5 need letters that are at least 4 inches tall.

- Symbols for uses that are **not allowed** should be displayed. These symbols have a red slash across them. Symbols for allowed uses should not be displayed.
- Travel management symbols should be placed in the order specified in the guidelines to ensure consistency.

Each region and forest is required to have an up-to-date sign plan for roads and trails.

Forest Service employees can view and print a copy of the *Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service* on the Forest Service's internal computer network at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/eng/programs/signs.htm>.

Anyone can view the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)*, 2003 Edition, on the Internet at <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/>.



## Library Card

Davies, Mary Ann. 2006. Revised Forest Service guidelines for consistent OHV travel-management signs. Tech Tip 0623–2317–MTDC. Missoula, MT: U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Missoula Technology and Development Center. 2 p.

Describes the use of the *Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service (EM 7100–15)* to establish consistent signs for off-highway vehicles using the national forests and grasslands.

Keywords: closures, motor vehicle use maps, off-highway vehicles, travel plans

---

**For further technical information, contact Mary Ann Davies at MTDC.**

Phone: 406–329–3981

Fax: 406–329–3719

E-mail: [mdavies@fs.fed.us](mailto:mdavies@fs.fed.us)

**Electronic copies of MTDC's documents are available on the Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/> (Username: t-d, Password: t-d).**

**Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management employees can search a more complete collection of MTDC's documents, videos, and CDs on their internal computer network at <http://fsweb.mtdc.wo.fs.fed.us/search/>.**



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of

program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.