

EXPLANATION OF U.S. FOREST SERVICE FINAL OHV Route Designation Rule

The final rule was issued by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on November 9, 2005. Below is an explanation in a nut shell of how the rule will be implemented and key provisions of the rule.

- OHV use will be designated by vehicle class and/or by time of year on roads, trails, and areas.
- This process of designating OHV use will be open to public involvement, consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- Those forests that utilize this OHV designation process must take into account the following criteria in considering which routes are suitable for OHV designation:
 - GENERAL criteria for ROADS, TRAILS, and AREAS:
 - Effects on natural and cultural resources
 - Public safety
 - Provision of recreational opportunities
 - Access needs
 - Conflicts of uses of NFS lands
 - Need for maintenance
 - Availability of resources to meet maintenance needs
 - SPECIFIC criteria for TRAILS and AREAS – must
 - Consider and minimize damage to soil, vegetation, and other resources
 - Consider and minimize harassment of wildlife and significant disruption of habitat
 - Consider and minimize conflicts between classes of motor vehicles uses of the forest and neighboring federal lands
 - Consider compatibility of OHV use with existing conditions of populated areas, taking into account sound, emissions, etc.
 - SPECIFIC criteria for ROADS – must
 - Consider speed, volume, composition, and distribution of traffic on roads
 - Consider compatibility of vehicle class with road geometry and surfacing
- Every forest must post a “Motor Vehicle Use Map” which will indicate and be the sole authority for the designated OHV routes.
 - The Motor Vehicle Use Map will be posted on each Forest website ASAP
 - Travel will be limited to those routes identified on the map. If the route is not on the map it will be illegal to wheel on it.
- Forests that have previously restricted OHV use to designated routes over the entire forest or district through a NEPA process will NOT go through this OHV Route Designation process, regardless of whether that NEPA process was undertaken 10 days ago or 10 years ago. Instead, they will simply be required to give the public notice that they have completed their Motor Vehicle Use Map. **No agency imposed public opportunity to comment on the use map will**

be provided. Travel will be limited to those routes identified on the map. If the route is not on the map it will be illegal to wheel on it.

- The term OHV includes four wheel drive motor vehicles, All-terrain vehicles (ATVs), motorcycles, and other vehicles capable of cross-county travel over land, water, snow, ice, marsh, swampland, or other natural terrain. Snowmobiles are not considered OHVs in this rule.
- The USFS can issue temporary, emergency closures if they determine OHV use is directly causing or will directly cause considerable adverse effects. The closure notice must include the reason(s) for the closure and how long the closure is estimated to last. The agency must provide public notice of the closure.