

Proposed Rule information provided by U.S. Forest Service

<http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/>

Background Information and Need for the New Rule

Over the past few decades, the availability and capability of OHVs has increased tremendously. That's a good thing. More Americans are enjoying access and recreational opportunities on their national forests and grasslands, in keeping with the Forest Service's multiple use mandate. However, the increase in OHV use also affects soil, water, wildlife habitat, and other recreational visitors. Today unmanaged recreation, including impacts from off-highway vehicles, represents one of [*four key threats*](#) facing the nation's forests and grasslands.

On July 15, 2004, the Forest Service published proposed travel management regulations in the *Federal Register*. During the 60-day comment period, the agency received 81,563 responses representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and seven foreign countries. Most comments supported the broad concept of designating roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use. The final rule addresses these comments. The new rule provides a national framework for local units to use in designating a sustainable system of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use. The rule's goal is to secure a wide range of recreation opportunities while ensuring the best possible care of the land.

Highlights of the Rule

- The rule requires each national forest or ranger district to designate those roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicles.
- Designation will include class of vehicle and, if appropriate, time of year for motor vehicle use. A given route, for example, could be designated for use by motorcycles, ATVs, or street-legal vehicles.
- Once designation is complete, the rule will prohibit motor vehicle use off the designated system or inconsistent with the designations.
- Designation decisions will be made locally, with public input and in coordination with state, local, and tribal governments.

Next Steps

- Proposed directives (Forest Service Manual and Handbook direction) will be published for public comment in 2006.
- During the next few years, forest supervisors and district rangers will involve the public in designating roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use.
- The agency expects national forests and grasslands to complete the designation process within four years.

Working Together

- Effective partnerships with state and local government and user groups are already providing collaborative planning, maintenance, and shared resources to better manage OHV use.
- Sustainable motorized recreation will require continuing partnerships to address road and trail maintenance, enforcement, and protection of natural resources.

[Photos of OHV use on national forests and grasslands from July 13, 2005 Congressional Hearing](#) (high resolution)