



File Code: 1950

Date: August 21, 2008

Dear Interested Citizen,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the valuable comments that each of you provided during our public scoping period, and to update you on our progress with the Off-highway Vehicle (OHV) Travel Management Plan. As you know, the Mt. Hood National Forest is preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) to establish and designate a system of roads and trails for off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, not including over-snow vehicles. The EIS will be formulated in accordance with the USDA Forest Service's new travel management policy: *Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use; Final Rule*, announced November 2, 2005. The decision resulting from this EIS will be used to prepare a motor vehicle use map for the Forest, which is expected to be published in late 2009.

Results of Scoping

Based on the scoping comments received, the scope of this project has been revised. The revised scope includes two changes.

- First, this planning process will not be determining where licensed motor vehicles are allowed to drive off roads to access dispersed (undeveloped) camping. The initial scoping for this proposal demonstrated that combining the designation of OHV routes and the designation of motorized access to dispersed camping corridors was confusing to the public and complicated the planning process. The existing condition for access to dispersed camping will remain in place. Motorized access to dispersed camping may be analyzed more in the future.
- Second, the designation of OHV routes will no longer be constrained to the six locations identified in the scoping process. The six identified locations are: McCubbins Gulch (Barlow Ranger District), Rock Creek (Barlow Ranger District), Gibson Prairie (Hood River Ranger District), Bear Creek (Hood River Ranger District), Peavine (Clackamas Ranger District) and LaDee Flats (Clackamas Ranger District). The proposed action presented during the scoping process will remain unchanged. Based on specific scoping comments received, OHV routes are being considered in other locations in the development of alternatives.

In order to reflect the changes in the scope of the proposal, the underlying purpose and need for action is being revised as follows.

The purpose of this project is to designate routes for off-highway vehicle (OHV) use by class of vehicle (excluding over-snow vehicles) and time of year. By meeting this purpose, the Mt. Hood National Forest will comply with 36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295 – *Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use; Final Rule* [Federal Register Vol. 70, No. 216 (2005)] for OHV use. The Final Rule states that we “must strike an



appropriate balance in managing all types of recreational activities. To this end, a designated system of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use established with public involvement will enhance public enjoyment of National Forests while maintaining other important values and uses of NFS [National Forest Systems] lands” (page 68265). This National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process will only address OHV use; subsequent NEPA processes may address broader access and travel management issues.

In order to comply with the OHV portions of the Final Travel Management Rule, there is the underlying need for:

- Designating and/or constructing OHV routes (as appropriate) on Mt. Hood National Forest to provide recreation opportunities;
- Changing the current management direction in the Mt. Hood Land and Resource Management Plan to comply with the Final Travel Management Rule; and
- Balancing recreation opportunities for OHV use with other recreational uses of the National Forest and resource sustainability.

Project Timeline

As the interdisciplinary team conducted the preliminary analysis and developed alternatives for analysis in the EIS, the need to conduct additional field work and surveys was identified. In order to conduct a thorough analysis for each alternative, I have extended the project timeline to allow for additional field work to be conducted this summer. I feel this is important to ensure the EIS contains a complete comparison of alternatives. Based on this extension, the draft EIS will not be available for a public comment period until March 2009. Comments on the draft EIS will be analyzed, considered, and responded to by the Forest Service in preparing the final EIS. The final EIS is scheduled to be completed in June 2009.

If you have any questions concerning this project, please contact Jennie O’Connor, OHV Interdisciplinary Team Leader, at (541) 352-6002 x634 or jennieoconnorcard@fs.fed.us. Again, thank you for your interest in the project and I look forward to reviewing your comments during the public comment period for the draft EIS.

Sincerely,

/s/ Gary L. Larsen
GARY L. LARSEN
Forest Supervisor

cc: Michelle Lombardo