

BLM News Release

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BLM Clarifies Guidelines for Travel Management *Flexibility added to OHV route designations in limited areas*

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has issued nationwide planning guidance that allows its field-level staff more time to complete route designations in areas identified as limited. Current guidance requires route designations to be in place before completion of the plan. Information related to the guidance is on the BLM Website at www.blm.gov.

In every plan, the BLM designates areas as open, limited and closed to off-highway vehicle travel. In open areas, off-highway vehicles can travel anywhere. In closed areas, no motorized activity is allowed. In limited areas, off-highway vehicles can travel only on designated routes.

“This is a common sense approach that will better serve the public,” said Ed Shepard, BLM’s Assistant Director for Renewable Resources and Planning. “With this flexibility, our offices can complete their resource management plans, which address many issues, in a reasonable amount of time. Then the field staffs can concentrate on selection of road and trail systems, and give the public more opportunity to be involved in the designations.”

BLM offices try to complete resource management plans within three to five years, depending on complexity. The completion of an entire resource management plan may be delayed for many years, or it may never be completed if conflicts over route designations in limited areas cannot be readily resolved. In almost every resource management planning effort, reaching a decision on designation of off-highway vehicle routes within the planning area is controversial, complex, or hampered by lack of resource data, conflicts in planning schedules, or budget shortages.

The requirement that all designations for open, limited and closed areas be completed during the resource management plan process has not changed. However, instead of requiring that all route-specific road and trail selections in limited areas be completed during the resource management plan process, the new guidance specifies that where route designations cannot be completed within the planning process, they can be completed during the plan’s implementation phase. The guidance strongly recommends they be completed within five years.

The additional time allows the public to be more involved in the selection and resolution of routes, and the BLM to ensure that specific OHV route designations provide for appropriate access, motorized recreation opportunities, and protection of natural and cultural resources.

The BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages more land — 261 million surface acres — than any other Federal agency, in 12 Western States, including Alaska. With a budget of about \$1.9 billion and some 10,000 full-time, permanent employees, The Bureau also administers 700 million acres of subsurface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM’s multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. This is accomplished by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on the public lands.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

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To: All State Directors
Attn: State Recreation, Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) and Planning Leads

From: Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning

Subject: Clarification of OHV Designations and Travel Management in the BLM Land Use Planning Process

Effective Upon Receipt

DD:

Program Area: Recreation and Land Use Planning.

Purpose: Emphasize policy; provide clarification and additional guidance for travel management decisions for the land use planning process.

Background: The BLM defines appropriate access to the public lands through the land use planning process. The process includes the preparation of Resource Management Plans (RMPs), which usually cover large areas, and subsequent activity plans, which are more site-specific documents. The planning process is flexible and allows for revision, amendment or maintenance as appropriate.

The BLM released the current version of the Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1) in November 2000. Guidance for Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) designations in the land use planning process was incorporated in the Recreation Section (Appendix C, Section II. C.). As field offices implemented the guidance for RMP development, revision or amendment, they identified a need to 1) clarify how to implement the guidance in the recreation section, and 2) introduce refinements to the existing process.

The Policy/Action section in this memorandum summarizes the most important elements of policy in the H-1601-1. Attachment 2 clarifies handbook policy, provides guidance on how to implement the policy and introduces the planning process refinements. Attachment 3 summarizes current policy and process refinements in a matrix format.

Policy/Action: The BLM will manage motorized and other access on the public lands in accordance with existing law, executive orders, proclamation, regulation, and policy. Within this context:

- Road and trail access (and OHV management) guidance will be incorporated into every RMP to ensure public and resource needs are met. At a minimum, each RMP will divide planning areas into OHV area designations that are open, limited or closed. The RMP will include a map of area designations.

- Specific criteria for open, limited and closed designations are provided in definitions outlined in 43 CFR 8340.0-5 (f), (g) and (h). Additional criteria are provided by existing law, proclamation, executive order, regulation or policy.
- Selection of a network of roads and trails should be performed for all limited areas in each RMP. This requires establishment of a process that includes selecting specific roads and trails within the limited area or sub-area and specifying limitation(s) placed on use. The RMP will include a map of the roads and trails open and available in each area.
- If complexity, controversy, or incomplete data make it impossible to complete the selection of a road and trail network for any area designated as limited within reasonable timeframes or budget availability, the BLM will perform the selection process for all limited areas that can be completed. For any limited area or sub-area that cannot be completed in the RMP, the BLM will, to the extent possible:
 - incorporate a map of a preliminary road and trail network, including known roads or trails that are expected to be included in the final network;
 - define short-term management guidance for road and trail access and activities, including interim management guidelines for proper identification of the preliminary road and trail network, including signing and maintenance of open roads and trails;
 - outline additional data needs and a strategy to collect needed information;
 - establish a clear planning sequence, including public collaboration, criteria and constraints for subsequent road and trail selection and identification;
 - produce a schedule to complete the limited area or sub-area road and trail selection process. Normally, this process should **not exceed** five years; and
 - Install signs, and in some cases, construct barriers or perform restoration on closed roads and trails.

Time Frame: These clarifications are in effect immediately.

Budget Impact: There is no significant budget impact.

Manual/Handbook Sections Affected: Implementation of guidance provided in BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1 Appendix C, Section II.C.1., Release 1-1667, 11/22/00).

Coordination: The BLM Washington Office Recreation and Planning Groups prepared this guidance, with extensive consultation from State Recreation, OHV and Planning Leads, the National Travel and Trails Team, and the Washington Office National Landscape Conservation System staff.

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