

# The Salt Lake Tribune

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## Too much fun: OHV overuse could harm Kane, Garfield counties

**Tribune Editorial**

Article Last Updated: 07/22/2008 05:59:23 PM MDT

Riding off-highway vehicles is a fun, easy way to experience the outdoors. But, when it comes to OHV use on Utah's arid public lands, it's easy to have too much of a good thing.

Many OHV users don't understand their responsibility to treat public lands with respect, don't know how fragile the land is, or simply don't care.

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Land Management seems to have forgotten its mandate to manage public lands for multiple uses while, at the same time, protecting its value as watershed, wildlife habitat and quiet refuge for all the Americans who own it.

It seems evident from the spiderweb pattern of OHV trails in the BLM's proposed management plan for Kane and Garfield counties that the federal agency has thrown up its hands and virtually turned over thousands of acres in the study area to OHV use. Some 1,462 miles of OHV trails were proposed in the original draft of the plan, but 1,478 are included in the BLM's preferred alternative designated in the final proposal.

That opens up huge areas within the nearly 90,000 acres found by the BLM to be of wilderness quality. Allowing motorized travel through these areas would preclude their eventually being designated wilderness or wilderness study areas and prevents cyclists, hikers, horseback riders and backpackers from enjoying quiet recreation.

But protecting beautiful, remote areas for non-motorized recreation is only one reason to limit the number of OHV trails. Too many OHV riders don't stick to recognized trails. They find it too tempting to go "where no man has gone before," ruining riparian areas, creating erosion and destroying fragile plants and wildlife habitat.

The dust in high-traffic areas during dry months is a threat to air quality and plant life. Dust on snowpack has been found to cause early and rapid melting, which threatens reservoir water storage.

The BLM says it isn't equipped to study OHV overuse on public lands as it interacts with the effects of climate change. But, instead of taking a cautious approach pending more research, the BLM seems to have decided it will not limit OHV use until the damage has been done.

Utahns who are concerned about such a *laissez-faire* attitude can send comments about the plan by logging in to this Web site: [blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/kanab/planning.html](http://blm.gov/ut/st/en/fo/kanab/planning.html)

Despite the impression given by the BLM management plans, the public lands belong to all of us, not only to OHV users.

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