

Talking Points – OHV Use on BLM-Managed Public Land in Nevada

OHV use on the public lands is a legitimate mode of transportation when used responsibly.

Managing for off-highway vehicles (OHVs) on the public lands is becoming a major challenge. Not just in Nevada, but in every state with BLM-managed public lands.

The Motorcycle Industry Council/Specialty Vehicle Institute of America provided some recent numbers about the increase in OHVs:

--Between 2001 and 2003, there was a 77 % increase in OHVs in Nevada. West wide the increase was 36 %.

--If you go back to 1998, the number of OHVs in Nevada soars to a 184 % increase.

--72 % of OHV use in on weekends.

--42 % of OHV users believe there has been a decrease in OHV use areas since 2002.

The increasing numbers of users are creating management challenges: but it is the irresponsible manner in which some of these vehicles are being used that is creating resource management conflicts across the West.

Nevada is Rich with Opportunity

Nevada's public lands offer a vast amount of open space with few restrictions for OHV use. As the number of vehicles and riders increase, the need to implement management actions addressing this use also increases.

It is important to identify the opportunities for a quality and safe recreational OHV experience, as well as areas where some restrictions may be necessary.

Resource conflicts will occur when too much use is concentrated in a few popular areas. BLM has three OHV area use designations:

--Open

--Limited, and

--Closed

Right now, about 80 percent, or nearly 40 million acres, of the BLM-managed public lands in Nevada are categorized as open to OHV use. That means people may ride across country and off roads or trails, pretty much wherever they want.

Limited is the designation for an area with some restrictions. Typically, limited will mean OHVs must stay on existing or designated roads and trails. Nearly 18 percent of public lands managed by the BLM in Nevada are in this category.

EXHIBIT G Lands

Document consists of **3 pages**.

☒ Entire document provided.

☐ Due to size limitations, _____ and _____ provided. A copy of the complete document is available through the Research Library (775/684-6827) or e-mail library@lcb.state.nv.us.

Meeting Date: **07-20-04**

A closed area prohibits off-road vehicle use. Only about 2 percent of the BLM-managed public lands in Nevada are closed.

As BLM amends or rewrites land use plans, these OHV designations are going to play a much larger role than they have in the past.

In some high-use areas, and areas where important natural and historic resources are at risk from indiscriminate OHV use, it will be necessary to limit riders to existing or designated roads and trails.

There are challenges to balancing OHV use with the need to protect sensitive resources. BLM must work to develop an understanding of the challenges we face in a few areas which may require closure to OHVs to protect resources.

As BLM updates land use plans, we will be working with all concerned to identify appropriate routes and use areas, including those sites which can best accommodate intensive OHV use.

Communication

BLM can improve our communication with people to instill responsible OHV use. We can educate people about the degradation that occurs when duplicate trails are made or streamside vegetation is destroyed.

BLM and the Nevada Department of Wildlife are working together to inform hunters about responsible OHV use on public lands by promoting the message to stay on existing roads and trails.

We are working with user groups and Friends groups to promote trail etiquette, environmental ethics and a responsible stewardship ethic.

BLM's obligation is to keep everyone informed about the requirements and the rationale for certain management goals, and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas.

Work Together to Address the Issues

--Sand Mountain

Public land in and around Sand Mountain in Churchill County is one example of the challenge BLM faces in protecting against OHV degradation. While recreation use hasn't negatively impacted the sand dune, the expanding motorized use onto adjacent land has the potential to impact two endemic species, the Sand Mountain blue butterfly and the plant it uses for its survival, the Kearny buckwheat.

The BLM is working with members of the public to find a way to protect the sensitive species while keeping most of the area at Sand Mountain open for OHV enthusiasts. The Friends of Sand Mountain and others have done an outstanding job of helping us get the

message out to users that all of us need to act responsibly when traveling in the dune areas. Thanks to the efforts of the Friends, I am optimistic that impacts to sensitive species will be minimized and more stringent management actions, such as extensive closures, can be avoided at Sand Mountain.

By listening to OHV'ers who are passionate in their pursuit to keep all public lands open and others who are just as concerned about environmental damage from OHV use, the BLM is getting a good idea of what opportunities can be offered on public lands to enhance the recreational experience. In general, most OHV enthusiasts are accepting of reasonable and consistent rules and regulations.

Special Use Permits

With the increasing numbers of OHVs on your public lands, the BLM is also getting more requests for competitive events. Our field offices in Nevada do not have the staff to address unplanned workloads associated with last minute applications for special use permits required for off-highway racing events. Nevertheless, we are working to meet as much of this demand as possible by making a few changes in the permit process by:

- Establishing application deadlines so we can better plan our staff's time to deal with permitting workloads.
- Giving priority to events that have been permitted in the past and stayed in compliance with the permit.
- Encouraging permit applicants to hold their event on previously established routes. New routes may require an environmental assessment and cultural survey that would be up to the applicant to complete.

Promote Tourism; Provide Quality Experiences

OHV riders tell us they want loop and destination trails. Nevada's public lands have the potential to be one of the best places to ride OHVs in the country. The public lands have many roads and trails already existing through great scenery that offer challenges and fun for every ability.

Working with the public and in coordination with local communities, we hope to identify and then designate statewide trail systems, including OHV trails, which will meet the ever growing demand for a quality backcountry experience.

BLM is committed to working with all segments of the public in continuing to provide opportunities for people to enjoy their public lands. We welcome your ideas.