

Bureau of Land Management
For release: Friday, January 19, 2001

Jim Keeler

(202-452-7771)
Celia Boddington
(202-452-5125)

BLM Publishes Final Version of National Management Strategy on Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Use

In an effort to accommodate growing motorized Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use on the public lands while protecting natural resources, the Bureau of Land Management today released the final version of its National Management Strategy (Strategy) on motorized OHV use. In a change from the BLM's Draft OHV Strategy, published last month, the final Strategy does not cover mountain bicycles and other non-motorized forms of transportation. Instead, the final version calls on the BLM to develop a separate, comprehensive management strategy for non-motorized vehicles and to consider developing regulations that would focus on such mechanized (human-powered) vehicles.

The final Strategy, which takes into account more than 14,000 comments received during a recent 30-day public comment period on the Draft OHV Strategy, is aimed at promoting environmentally sound motorized OHV use on BLM-administered lands. "This Strategy seeks to recognize the interests of motorized OHV users while protecting environmentally sensitive areas on the public lands," said Henri Bisson, the BLM's Assistant Director for Renewable Resources and Planning. "It also highlights what the BLM needs in the way of staffing and funding to manage motorized OHVs more effectively."

Bisson added, "Public comments on the Draft OHV Strategy caused us to reconsider our initial decision to cover mountain bikes and other mechanized vehicles. Because of the substantial differences between motorized and mechanized vehicles, including their types of use and impacts on resources, we have removed human-powered vehicles from the final Strategy. Instead, we recommend that the BLM develop a separate management strategy for mountain bikes and other mechanized vehicles."

The final Strategy, which the BLM is initially publishing on the Internet, offers general guidance to land managers and recommends numerous actions aimed at creating a local framework for reviewing and resolving motorized OHV issues. These issues include current motorized OHV designations; signs, maps, and other public information; existing motorized Off-Road regulations; monitoring and inventory data; OHV impacts on resources; road and trail design, maintenance, and restoration; management of special areas, including Wilderness Study Areas; monitoring; education; law enforcement; and the BLM's budgetary needs.

The final Strategy recognizes, consistent with the BLM's existing policy, that motorized Off-Highway Vehicle (Off-Road) use is an acceptable activity on public lands wherever compatible with the Bureau's resource management objectives and when in compliance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. The Strategy notes that under FLPMA, the BLM is required to manage the public lands in a way that accommodates multiple uses while protecting public land resources. "The BLM believes that implementing actions in this Strategy will help promote balance between these sometimes competing principles," the document says.

The final Strategy says that, if fully implemented, it can promote consistency of motorized OHV decisionmaking and management within the agency; highlight the additional funding and staffing needed by the BLM to manage motorized OHV use effectively; lead to an updating of existing motorized Off-Road regulations and policy guidance; clarify for BLM land managers their legal authorities in managing motorized OHV use; reduce conflicts among public land user groups; promote responsible motorized OHV use and reduce habitat degradation; and provide an opportunity for long-term involvement by the public in motorized OHV management on public lands.

The Strategy makes clear that it cannot revise existing OHV regulations (which can occur only in the formal rulemaking process, with full public participation); cannot change any legislation or existing Off-Road Executive Orders; cannot provide the additional funds and staffing needed for effective motorized OHV management; and cannot increase any fines or penalties for violations of motorized OHV rules and regulations (which the BLM can do only through coordination with the U.S. District Courts).

The Strategy will be available on the BLM's Home Page (www.blm.gov) after today (January 19) and can be downloaded by the public. The public can also obtain a downloaded copy of the Strategy from any BLM office. The printed version of the Strategy will be available by mid-February. Anyone who sent comments to the BLM during the Strategy's development and provided a return address will receive a letter and postcard to mail back if they would like a printed copy. Printed copies for those who did not provide their address will be available by request from: Bureau of Land Management Motorized OHV Strategy, 1849 C Street, N.W. (LS-204), Washington, D.C. 20240-0001.

The BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages more land – 264 million surface acres – than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 Western States, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1.8 billion and a workforce of some 9,000 full-time, permanent employees, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM preserves open space by managing the public lands for multiple uses, including outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, and mining, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources found on the public lands.