

Questions and Answers

National Mountain Bicycle Strategic Action Plan

What is the National Mountain Bicycle Strategic Action Plan?

The National Mountain Bicycle Strategic Action Plan will provide guidance for the management of mountain bicycling on BLM-managed public lands. The plan will suggest ways to effectively manage a form of recreation that is growing in popularity, while also protecting natural resources on public lands.

The strategic action plan is neither a decision document nor a new regulation; rather, it provides general, national guidance to BLM land managers on ways to deal with mountain bicycle management issues. Site-specific activity plans will continue to address local issues.

What is the purpose of the National Mountain Bicycle Strategic Action Plan?

The purpose of the action plan is to ensure that mountain bicycle use on public lands is managed in an environmentally responsible way in regards to ethics, conflicts, and impacts, and that opportunities for this activity are not only recognized, but provided, on public lands where appropriate.

Why does the BLM need a Action Plan for managing mountain bicycles?

During the development of the National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands, completed in January 2001, public comment recommended that mountain bicycling use be separated from OHV use. The BLM decided that the growth in mountain bicycling use on public lands warranted the development of its own strategic action plan.

This strategic plan will ensure that mountain bicycling will continue to be recognized as an appropriate activity on public lands, and should be considered in land use plans.

Why is the BLM developing a separate strategy related to the management of mountain bicycling on public lands?

The purpose of this Action Plan is to provide guidance to the BLM field offices, interest groups, and individuals to implement on-the-ground actions and resource protection measures.

Additional reasons for the BLM to develop this action plan include:

- fulfilling BLM's need to update its 1992 Mountain Bicycle Strategy;
- recognizing the changing demographics, increasing populations in formerly sparsely settled rural areas, emerging technologies, and issues unique to mountain bicycling;
- providing consistent management approaches for BLM state and field offices;
- making more effective use of existing staff, resources, volunteers and partnerships;
- assessing planning, environmental and regulatory needs; and

- fulfilling the recommendation by BLM's National OHV Strategy to develop a plan focused on mountain bicycling use.

How are mountain bicycles currently managed on public lands?

There are no national policies that relate specifically to the management of mountain bicycle use on public lands. As a result, land use plans have not consistently addressed mountain bicycle issues and opportunities.

What is the scope of the strategic action plan?

This Action Plan will focus on guidance and actions for BLM field offices, interest groups and individuals. The Action Plan will seek innovative and proactive approaches to protecting soil, water, wildlife habitat, Threatened and Endangered plant and animal species, native vegetation, heritage resources and other resources while providing for high-quality, environmentally responsible recreational opportunities.

The implementation of this Action Plan will be an on-going, adaptive approach that will require the continued cooperation and participation of the public. As a guiding document, the Action Plan will be refined and implemented as opportunities arise and funding allows.

Will strategies be developed for other trail-related activities on public land?

This action plan is the second of three action plans focusing on recreational uses of the public lands and comprehensive travel management planning. The first was the National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands, which was completed in January 2001. On completion of the National Mountain Bicycling Strategic Action Plan, a third plan addressing nonmotorized/nonmechanized recreational use will be developed to meet the needs of visitors such as hikers and equestrians.

What are the main issues/topics the Action Plan will cover?

The following thematic issues were derived from public comments received during the development of the National OHV Strategy. The comments related to mountain bicycle use were analyzed and assessed for inclusion into this effort. The public is being asked to comment on the following themes, which will serve as the basis for the Draft National Mountain Bicycle Strategic Action Plan, as well as submitting new ideas or proposals.

1. **Coordination** – Coordinate with both internal and external groups, and stakeholders.
2. **Education/Interpretation/Information** – Develop and implement a consistent mountain bicycle ethics message and incorporate it into interpretive efforts and informational materials.
3. **Planning and Environmental Considerations** – Consider all aspects of on-the-ground mountain bicycle and trail management issues, relating both to resource and social conditions. Provide guidance for mountain bicycle use in special management areas.

4. **Funding** – Identify the immediate and future funding needs and opportunities for BLM’s efforts to manage mountain bicycle use. Explore innovative funding sources and encourage partnerships to aid management efforts for mountain bicycle use.
5. **Emerging Issues** – Recognize the evolving nature of the sport of mountain bicycling and associated “hot spots.” Adequately prepare for new technologies and uses that may change with the capabilities of nonmotorized/mechanized travel in the future.
6. **Regulations** – Recommend criteria that would allow for clear and consistent management of the use of mountain bicycles and other mechanized vehicles on public lands. Development of any regulations would follow the formal rule-making process.

7. Other ideas and suggestions

Why are regulations needed for mountain bicycles and other mechanized forms of transportation?

The BLM currently has no regulations governing the use of mountain bicycles. Such regulations would recognize that mountain bicycles potentially have an impact that merits regulatory attention.

The BLM vehicle-related regulations (43 CFR part 8340) were issued over 20 years ago. The arrival of the mountain bicycle in the land management setting is far more recent than this set of regulations. Had the resource impacts and user conflicts related to mountain bicycle use been apparent when these regulations were issued, bicycles would probably have been included. The National OHV Strategy was initiated to determine what needs to be done to address current and future vehicle-related issues. The result of this process was to recommend the development of a national mountain bicycle strategy to further address nonmotorized/ mechanized travel management issues.

How will this effort affect mountain bicycling on public lands?

This effort will:

- help ensure that new land-use plans and revisions to existing land use plans consider mountain bicycling along with other recreational uses, in the development of long-term management strategies;
- provide a framework for day-to-day management;
- provide a tool box of best management practices for field offices; and
- provide a starting point for developing regulations governing mountain bicycle use on public lands.

Does the BLM plan to make mountain bicycling illegal on the public lands?

No. The BLM continues to recognize mountain bicycling as an appropriate use on public lands. Local land use plans and federal laws (such as wilderness legislation) will identify public lands where the use may be restricted or prohibited.

Will the strategy change the way mountain bicycles are managed in special areas such as wilderness areas, wilderness study areas and within other components of the National Landscape Conservation System?

No, the management of mountain bicycle use in special management areas will still be managed by the applicable law or policy—such as the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the BLM Wilderness Study Area Interim Management Policy—as specified in the National Landscape Conservation System proclamation and through existing BLM policy. The strategy may provide additional guidance for appropriate management of mountain bicycle use and related issues.

What opportunities will be available for the public to comment on the proposed strategy?

There will be an opportunity for the public to become involved in the development of this plan. Public involvement for the draft plan will include a comment period of 38 calendar days, August 19 through September 25. Comments can be submitted electronically through BLM's national website at www.blm.gov or through the mail.

When will the strategy be completed?

The anticipated completion of the strategy is the end of the calendar year 2002.