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TO Western Oregon Plan Revision  
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RECEIVED

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JAN 14 2008

RE WOPR Comment: ATV Emphasis Areas – The Scenic Trail Concept

Dear Review Staff:

I have been involved in conversations with land owners who live adjacent to proposed ATV emphasis areas in the Medford District. Their objections to these emphasis areas fall into two categories: 1) Noise; 2) Environmental damage.

I have also had conversations with ATV owners who express the same concern about noise and environmental damage, generally because they understand that irresponsible use of ATV's results in the community rising up to close favorite riding areas.

Responsible residents on both sides of the ATV issue share a common interest in respectful use of public lands.

BLM staff have told me that they are unsure how they are going to patrol and enforce respectful use in the proposed ATV Emphasis Areas in the draft WOPR.

With these factors in mind, I would suggest the following strategy to help with enforcing respectful ATV use on our O&C lands.

The illustration below shows several sections of BLM lands that have been designated as an "emphasis area". However, rather than opening all of the O&C lands to ATV use, the emphasis areas are broken into smaller units that are accessed by a scenic travel trail.

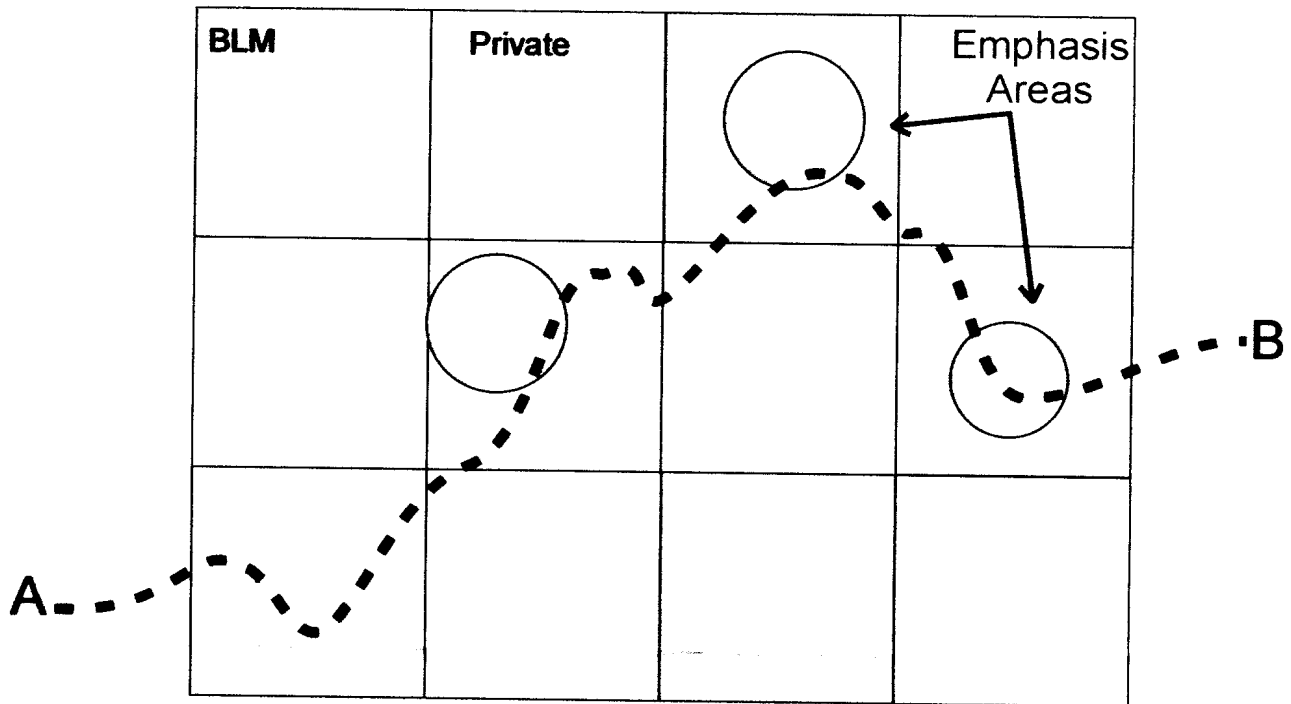
The only way into and out of the area would be on a common trail and if someone who is riding without a muffler, passes near a residence, the owner of that house can call down the trail to the next house and someone can step up and take a picture or get a license plate number as this person goes by. These pictures and license number can be forwarded to the BLM office and a file of repeated offenders can be compiled for eventual legal actions – or – if this a member of a local club, the members can talk to them. In this way, community members and responsible ATV users can work together with the BLM to help enforce respectful noise levels, one of the things that local residents who object to ATV use are most concerned about.

The smaller emphasis areas can also be established in locations that are most distant from homes, another way to reduce the impacts of noise.

Dispersed emphasis areas would help to contain environmental damage in smaller areas and, hence, trail maintenance and repair will be easier to manage.

The scenic trail concept (green dotted line) would make ATV travel an integral economic opportunity for a community. The idea of a scenic trail comes from conversations with ATV users who say that they wished there was a trail that they could follow to a campground or bed and breakfast and spend the night. They have also suggested it would be fun to be able to continue to another destination (campground or lodge) and eventually return on a different spur or loop to the point where they started their trip.

A scenic trail network such as this suggests that the community could benefit economically with a trail network of several large loops that each have destinations (A, B) that each have a place to camp or an unique bed and breakfast (such as the Tree House Resorts near Cave Junction) or a unique restaurant. Between each of these destinations are small emphasis areas that each offer a variety of challenging riding opportunities or trails to scenic vistas, fishing or other recreational activities provided by local entrepreneurs. A trail like this would become a marketable asset for our region.



The scenic trail concept offers a strategy to make the local community become partners with the BLM in monitoring respectful ATV use on public lands, as well as provides a way to reduce indiscriminate environmental damage and creates a wide variety of entrepreneurial and business opportunities that make ATV activity a significant part of the local economy.

  
Roger Brandt