United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Montana State Office

June 2003

RECORD OF DECISION

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND PROPOSED PLAN AMENDMENT FOR MONTANA, NORTH DAKOTA AND SOUTH DAKOTA

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for the stewardship of our public lands. It is committed to manage, protect, and improve these lands in a manner to serve the needs of the American people for all times. Management is based on the principles of multiple use and sustained yield of our nation's resources within a framework of environmental responsibility and scientific technology. These resources include recreation; rangelands; timber; minerals; watershed; fish and wildlife; wilderness; air; and scenic, scientific, and cultural values.

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United States Department of the Interior

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June 2003

Dear Reader:

This is the Record of Decision (ROD) and the approval of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Final Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Plan Amendment for 5.8 million acres of public land administered by the BLM in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. With this decision, these lands are designated limited yearlong for motorized wheeled cross-country travel as described in the preferred alternative (Alternative 5). This decision amends the following nine management plans:

Big Dry Resource Management Plan (1996)
Billings Resource Management Plan (1984)
Dillon Management Framework Plan (1978)
Headwaters Resource Management Plan (1984)
Judith-Valley-Phillips Resource Management Plan (1994)
North Dakota Resource Management Plan (1988)
Powder River Resource Management Plan (1986)
South Dakota Resource Management Plan (1986)
West HiLine Resource Management Plan (1988)

This document has been sent to all recipients of the OHV Final EIS and Proposed Plan Amendment. We are pleased to provide this copy for your reference and we extend our appreciation for your cooperation and assistance during this planning process.

Sincerely,

Martin C. Ott
State Director

RECORD OF DECISION

For the Approval of the

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT and PROPOSED PLAN AMENDMENT for MONTANA, NORTH DAKOTA AND SOUTH DAKOTA

JUNE 2003

Prepared by

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Montana State Office

Martin C. Ott
State Director, Montana

June 18, 2003
Date

INTRODUCTION

This document records the decision reached by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for off-highway vehicle (OHV) area designations on 5.8 million surface acres administered by the BLM Field Offices in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota.

LOCATION OF THE PLANNING AREA

The BLM administers 8.4 million acres of public land within nine field offices in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. About 5.8 million acres were previously designated as available to motorized wheeled cross-country travel, either seasonally or yearlong, and are affected by this Record of Decision (ROD).

DECISION

The decision is hereby made to approve the Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Proposed Plan Amendment published in January 2001. This plan was prepared under the regulations for implementing the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA).

The preferred alternative (Alternative 5) in the OHV FEIS and Proposed Plan Amendment has been selected as the approved plan. The public land, approximately 5.8 million acres, is designated a limited area under BLM regulations 43 CFR 8342 and as defined under 43 CFR 8340.0-5(g).

> "Limited area means an area restricted at certain times, in certain areas, and/or to certain vehicular use…"

The area restriction includes no motorized wheeled cross-country travel, with some exceptions, as defined in the preferred alternative (Alternative 5). The field offices and affected acres are listed in Table 1.1.

This decision amends the management plans displayed in Table 1.2 as provided for by 43 CFR 1610.5-5.

Table 1.1 BLM Field Offices and Acres Affected

BLM Field Office	Affected Acres	Total Acres
Billings	317,000	426,000
Butte	182,000	311,000
Dillon	792,000	968,000
Lewistown	1,154,000	1,392,000
Malta	1,994,000	2,105,000
Miles City	1,070,000	2,699,000
Missoula	0	163,000
North Dakota	58,000	60,000
South Dakota	274,000	281,000
Total	5,841,000	8,405,000

Table 1.2 BLM Management Plans

Big Dry Resource Management Plan (1996)
Billings Resource Management Plan (1984)
Dillon Management Framework Plan (1978)
Headwaters Resource Management Plan (1984)
Judith-Valley-Phillips Resource Management Plan (1994)
North Dakota Resource Management Plan (1988)
Powder River Resource Management Plan (1986)
South Dakota Resource Management Plan (1986)
West HiLine Resource Management Plan (1988)

MANAGEMENT COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES

The BLM has six OHV intensive use areas in Montana (4,210 acres) that would remain open to motorized wheeled cross-country travel: South Hills area near Billings, Glendive OHV area near Glendive, Terry OHV area near Terry, Glasgow OHV area near Glasgow, Fresno OHV area near Havre, and Radersburg OHV area near Radersburg. In addition, some isolated BLM lands (5,500 acres) would remain open. These isolated lands were addressed in the Elkhorn Mountains Travel Management Plan (1995).

The BLM regulations (43 CFR 8341.2 and 8364.1) allow for area, road, or trail closures where off-road vehicles are causing or will cause considerable adverse effects upon soil, vegetation, wildlife, wildlife habitat, cultural resources, threatened or endangered species, other authorized uses, or other resources. The authorized officer can immediately close the areas affected until the effects are eliminated and measures are implemented to prevent future recurrence.

Disabled access will be allowed per the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Under the Act, an individual with a disability will not, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by the BLM. Disabled access per the Rehabilitation Act is considered at the local level on a case-by-case basis. Motorized wheelchairs, as defined in the Rehabilitation Act, are not considered OHVs and therefore are not restricted by this decision.

The BLM will consult in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to ensure that any site-specific plan is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any species listed or proposed to be listed under the provisions of the ESA, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated or proposed critical habitat. Access standards in effect for existing recovery plans will be followed in all site-specific plans. In addition, the authorized officer can immediately close areas, roads, or trails if OHV use is causing, or will cause, considerable adverse environmental effects to species listed or proposed to be listed.

Definition of Motorized Wheeled Cross-Country Travel

It is difficult to provide one definition of motorized wheeled cross-country travel and have that definition fit all situations. Roads and trails appear differently on the landscape because of the great variety of terrain, vegetation, soil type, and climate in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

This definition is not intended to supersede road and trail motorized vehicle restrictions already in place that regulate the type of vehicle or season of use.

Cross-country travel is wheeled motorized travel off roads and trails. The following examples further clarify this definition.

Motorized travel is considered cross-country when:

- the passage of motorized vehicles depresses undisturbed ground and crushes vegetation (Figure 1.1, FEIS).

- the motorized vehicle maximum width (the distance from the outside of the left tire to the outside of the right tire or maximum tire width for motorcycles) does not easily fit the road or trail profile (Figures 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4, FEIS); however, an ATV traveling within a two-track route established by a pickup truck is not considered cross-country travel (Figure 1.5, FEIS).

- motorized vehicles use livestock and game trails, unless the trails are clearly evident, continuous single-track routes used by motorcycles over a period of years (Figures 1.6 and 1.7, FEIS).

Motorized travel is not considered cross-country when:

- motorized vehicles use constructed roads and trails that are maintained by the BLM. Constructed roads and trails are often characterized by a road or trail prism with cut and fill slopes.

- motorized vehicles use clearly evident two-track and single-track routes with regular use and continuous passage of motorized vehicles over a period of years. A route is where perennial vegetation is devoid or scarce, or where wheel tracks are continuous depressions in the ground, evident to the casual observer, but are vegetated (Figure 1.8, FEIS).

- motorized vehicles travel on frozen bodies of water; however, access to the body of water must come from existing land-based routes that meet the above specifications and lead to the water's edge.

- motorized vehicles travel over snow on a road or trail that meets the above specifications.

Routes must meet the above specifications for their continuous length. Routes newly created under wet conditions or in wetlands and riparian areas should be easily identified as not meeting the specifications because many portions of the route from its beginning to its terminus would not show signs of "regular and continuous passage of motorized vehicles" and many areas would still be fully vegetated with no wheel depressions.

Providing recreational opportunities and managing the resource values for the public to enjoy depends on the public's cooperation when recreating on OHVs. The following factors should be considered along with the definition when using public lands:

Some routes would still be open that go through riparian areas and wetlands. These areas provide habitat for over 70% of our wildlife and aquatic species and should be avoided.

Some routes are found on very steep slopes that provide a motorized challenge; however, this may cause serious erosion and gullying that can introduce sediment to streams and should be avoided.

The spread of noxious weeds has become a serious threat to wildlife habitat and rangelands. Ensure that

your vehicle's undercarriage and tires are not carrying weed seeds.

Many forms of human use can stress or harass wildlife. Respect wildlife you may encounter and proceed with care.

Cultural resources, such as old cabins, historic mining sites, fossil areas, and traditional cultural properties are part of our heritage and are for your enjoyment through observation and learning. Leave for others to enjoy and be careful where you drive.

ALTERNATIVES

Six management alternatives were considered in the development of this plan. These were identified as the No Action Alternative (Current Management); Alternative 1; Alternative 2; Alternative 3; Alternative 4; and Alternative 5, the approved plan. Each alternative was described in detail in the OHV FEIS and Proposed Plan Amendment.

No Action Alternative (Current Management)

This alternative would continue current direction and was used as the baseline condition for comparing the other alternatives. The BLM would continue to manage OHVs using existing direction and regulations. It addressed a number of issues and concerns raised during scoping, such as the proposal is too restrictive and effects on the ground do not warrant any change. It also addressed the concern that it is unrealistic to provide consistent management of OHVs across a three-state area due to wide variations of issues and problems that would necessitate decisions be made at the local level.

Areas currently open seasonally or yearlong (5.8 million acres) to motorized wheeled cross-country travel would remain open. This reflects designations identified in existing resource management plans.

Alternative 1

This is the most restrictive alternative for management of OHVs. Motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be prohibited with only a few exceptions for emergency and limited administrative purposes. This alternative was developed to address concerns that OHV use needed to be restricted quickly and was overdue because of resource impacts and user conflicts. Concerns addressed were to stop the expansion of problems associated with the spread of noxious weeds, user conflicts, wildlife harassment and habitat alteration, effects on vegetation, and soils and aquatic resources.

The BLM would restrict motorized wheeled cross-country travel yearlong. These lands, approximately 5.8 million acres, would be designated limited yearlong under BLM regulations (43 CFR 8342).

Alternative 2

This alternative was based on the initial proposal and public comments received during scoping. It restricts motorized wheeled cross-country travel throughout the analysis area but allows some exceptions for relatively infrequent activities. Similar to Alternative 1, concerns addressed were to stop the expansion of problems associated with the spread of noxious weeds, user conflicts, wildlife harassment and habitat alteration, effects on vegetation, and soils and aquatic resources. It meets the concern that the BLM needs to allow for some exceptions for motorized wheeled cross-country travel, such as game retrieval and camping.

The BLM would restrict motorized wheeled cross-country travel yearlong. These lands, approximately 5.8 million acres, would be designated limited yearlong under BLM regulations (43 CFR 8342).

Alternative 3

This alternative is similar to Alternative 2, but game retrieval would be allowed in all areas from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Concerns addressed were to stop the expansion of problems associated with the spread of noxious weeds, user conflicts, wildlife harassment and habitat alteration, effects on vegetation, and soils and aquatic resources.

The BLM would restrict motorized wheeled cross-country travel yearlong. These lands, approximately 5.8 million acres, would be designated limited yearlong under BLM regulations (43 CFR 8342).

Alternative 4

This alternative restricts motorized wheeled cross-country travel seasonally to lessen impacts on resource values and to minimize user conflicts. Motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be restricted to times of the year when the ground is generally frozen (December 2 to February 15) or during drier periods (June 15 to August 31) to reduce soil and vegetation impacts, aquatic resource damage, and to minimize user conflicts. No motorized wheeled cross-country travel would be allowed during big game hunting

seasons in all three states, with the exception of game retrieval, to minimize user conflicts and wildlife harassment. Game retrieval would be allowed in all open areas of the analysis area. It meets the concern that the BLM needs to allow some exceptions for motorized wheeled cross-country travel, such as game retrieval and camping. It provides almost the same ease of enforcement as Alternative 1 because the timing and exceptions are the same throughout the three-state area.

The BLM would restrict motorized wheeled cross-country travel seasonally. These areas would be open to motorized wheeled cross-country travel from June 15 to August 31 and from December 2 to February 15. These lands, approximately 5.8 million acres, would be designated limited seasonally under BLM regulations (43 CFR 8342).

ALTERNATIVE 5 (Preferred Alternative)

This alternative was developed in response to comments on the OHV Draft EIS and Plan Amendment from the public and other agencies. It restricts motorized wheeled cross-country travel throughout the analysis area to protect riparian areas, wetlands, crucial wildlife habitat, threatened or endangered species, soils and vegetation, aquatic resources, and to reduce user conflicts. The alternative addresses the concern that the BLM needs to allow an exception for camping, but includes specific limitations on that exception. This alternative limits travel for administrative use by the BLM, other government entities, and lessees and permittees, but allows motorized wheeled cross-country travel when necessary.

The BLM will restrict motorized wheeled cross-country travel yearlong. These lands, approximately 5.8 million acres, are designated limited yearlong for motorized wheeled cross-country travel under BLM regulations (43 CFR 8342).

Through subsequent site-specific planning, the BLM will designate roads and trails for motorized use. With public involvement, the BLM will continue with ongoing travel management plans and develop new travel management plans (e.g., landscape analysis, watershed plans, or activity plans) for geographical areas. Through site-specific planning, roads and trails will be inventoried, mapped, and analyzed to the degree necessary to evaluate and designate the roads and trails as open, seasonally open, or closed. The inventory will be commensurate with the analysis needs, issues, and desired resource conditions based on resource management plan objectives for the analysis area.

Site-specific planning could include identifying opportunities for trail construction and/or improvement or specific areas where intensive OHV use may be appropriate. A change in area designations from limited to open will require a plan amendment. Implementation includes prioritizing areas for site-specific planning within six months of this Record of Decision based on the resources in the area, such as riparian areas and threatened or endangered species, along with opportunities for recreational OHV use. Implementation and monitoring are described in Appendix B of the FEIS.

The BLM recognizes there are some valid needs for motorized wheeled cross-country travel; however, when driving cross-country, individuals should avoid riparian areas, avoid steep slopes, wash vehicles after use in weed-infested areas, travel with care near wildlife, avoid areas with important wildlife habitat, and travel with care near cultural sites. Restrictions in riparian areas, areas with steep slopes, important wildlife habitat areas, etc. are addressed through the BLM's normal permitting and leasing process based on existing management plans and best management practices. The following outlines the varied needs for motorized wheeled cross-country travel.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel is allowed for any military, fire, search and rescue, or law enforcement vehicle used for emergency purposes.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for the BLM is limited to official administrative business as outlined by internal memo (Appendix D, FEIS). Examples of administrative use include prescribed fire, noxious weed control, revegetation, and surveying. Where possible, agency personnel performing administrative functions will place a sign or notice in the area they are working to identify for the public the function they are authorized to perform.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for other government entities on official administrative business will require authorization from the local field manager. This authorization will be through normal permitting processes and/or memoranda of understanding. Some examples of other agency administrative use include noxious weed control, surveying, and animal damage control efforts. Where possible, the authorized party performing administrative functions will place a sign or notice in the area they are working to identify for the public the function they are authorized to perform.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for lessees and permittees is limited to the administration of a federal lease or permit. Persons or corporations having such a permit or lease could perform administrative functions on public lands within the scope of the permit or lease; however, this would not preclude modifying permits or leases to limit motorized wheeled cross-country travel during further site-specific analysis to meet resource management objectives

or standards and guidelines. Some examples of administrative functions include, but are not limited to:

> Gas or electric utilities monitoring a utility corridor for safety conditions or normal maintenance,
>
> Accessing a remote communication site for normal maintenance or repair,
>
> Livestock permittees checking vegetative conditions, building or maintaining fences, delivering salt and supplements, moving livestock, checking wells or pipelines as part of the implementation of a grazing permit or lease, and
>
> Scientific groups under contract for resource assessments or research.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for personal use permits, such as firewood and Christmas tree cutting, could be allowed at the local level (BLM field office or field station) in specific areas identified for such use. In all other areas, motorized wheeled cross-country travel associated with personal use permits is not allowed.

Motorized wheeled cross-country travel for big game retrieval is not allowed. The retrieval of a big game animal that is in possession (i.e., tagged) is allowed on roads and trails unless currently restricted. Through subsequent site-specific planning, options for big game retrieval could be considered. For example, big game retrieval could be allowed from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily on restricted roads or trails. This big game retrieval requirement also amend the BLM's Big Dry and Judith-Valley-Phillips Resource Management Plans where motorized wheeled cross-country travel is currently allowed for big game retrieval.

The following exception applies unless currently restricted:

> Motorized wheeled cross-country travel to a campsite is permissible within 300 feet of roads and trails. Site selection must be completed by nonmotorized means and accessed by the most direct route causing the least damage. This exception does not apply where existing seasonal restrictions prohibit traveling off designated routes to a campsite. Existing local rules take precedence over this exception. This distance could be modified through subsequent site-specific planning.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA require that the Record of Decision specify "the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable" (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). This alternative has generally been interpreted to be the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA Section 101 (CEQ's "Forty Most-Asked Questions," 46 Federal Register, 18026, March 23, 1981). Ordinarily, this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources.

Alternative 1 is the environmentally preferred alternative since it has the greatest level of restrictions on the use of wheeled motorized OHVs traveling cross-country; therefore, it would have the least effects on the biological, physical, cultural and historic resources.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

The alternatives were reviewed for effectiveness in resolving the planning issues, conformance with the guidance established by the planning criteria, avoidance of unnecessary impacts to the human environment, responsiveness to public concern, and compliance with BLM statutory authority and Executive Orders 11644 and 11989.

Alternative 5 was approved because it minimizes further resource damage, user conflicts, and related problems—including new user-created roads—associated with motorized wheeled cross-country travel on 5.8 million acres of public lands administered by the BLM. It also provides management direction for subsequent site-specific planning to address motorized use on individual roads and trails.

Alternative 5 does not allow motorized wheeled cross-country travel for big game retrieval, although use of roads and trails to retrieve big game could continue. This game retrieval restriction will: reduce the conflicts between motorized and nonmotorized users during the hunting season; reduce the potential for introducing invasive weeds; reduce the potential for soil erosion; reduce the potential for impacts to wildlife; be more responsive to numerous public concerns that were expressed about the inappropriateness of allowing an exception for game retrieval; and be consistent with the long-term goal of using vehicles on designated routes.

Alternative 5 maintains efficient and effective management of the public's resources by allowing limited motorized wheeled cross-country travel for management of the resources by agency personnel, permittees, lessees, and other government entities while conducting needed work.

This work will be conducted in a controlled manner, according to permit requirements, to mitigate potential adverse effects. Example requirements include the cleaning of equipment to avoid spreading invasive weeds, avoidance of threatened or endangered species habitat, timing restrictions, etc.

Alternative 5 allows cross-country travel for military, fire, search and rescue, and law enforcement for emergency purposes consistent with BLM regulations (43 CFR 8340.0-5).

Alternative 5 allows for dispersed camping within 300 feet of a road or trail provided recreationists use the most direct route and select their site by nonmotorized means. This will allow people to move away from the dust and noise generated on the road. Agency recreation specialists expect relatively little use of this exception, as most popular dispersed campsites already have a road accessing them.

Alternative 5 allows for continued energy resource exploration and development. Geophysical operators are required to file and receive approval for a Notice of Intent to Conduct Oil and Gas Geophysical Exploration Operations with the BLM prior to commencing operations on public land. Some survey work may need to be performed with the assistance of vehicles cross-country to provide information for completion of this notice. Survey work that involves the use of vehicles cross-country, independent of oil and gas lease rights, will require approval from the authorized officer. There is no effect to existing holders of mineral leases or permits.

Alternative 5 requires that operators engaged in activities under the Mining Law obtain advance approval from the authorized officer prior to using vehicles for cross-country travel. The requirement for approval prior to motorized wheeled cross-country travel applies to activities that are normally considered as casual use under 43 CFR 3809.5, where a Notice or a Plan of Operations is not required.

MITIGATION MEASURES

Mitigation allows for area, road, or trail closures where off-road vehicles are causing or will cause considerable adverse effects upon soil, vegetation, wildlife, wildlife habitat, cultural resources, threatened or endangered species, other authorized uses, or other resources consistent with the BLM regulations (43 CFR 8341.2 and 8364.1). All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the alternative selected have been adopted.

PLAN MONITORING

The approval of the OHV FEIS and Proposed Plan Amendment constitutes formal designation of OHV areas. Public notice of redesignation will be provided through publication of a notice of availability of the ROD in the Federal Register.

Implementation of plan amendments on BLM lands will require modifications to current information and enforcement measures. These modifications will include: notices, maps, signs, education, enforcement, and monitoring.

The BLM regulations for OHVs are contained in 43 CFR 8340. After designation or redesignation of public lands, the authorized officer will take action by signing and other appropriate measures to identify designated areas so that the public will be aware of applicable locations and limitations. The authorized officer will make appropriate information material, including maps, available for public review. Implementation for mapping, signing, education, and enforcement is discussed in detail in Appendix B of the FEIS.

Monitoring is an important component of implementation of this ROD. An OHV Interagency Workgroup has been established to provide direction for an OHV program. The OHV Interagency Workgroup will provide long-term strategic coordination for planning OHV use, provide education and training opportunities for the public and agencies, and promote consistent administration of OHV use in the field. One of the responsibilities of the OHV Interagency Workgroup will be to conduct annual joint monitoring trips to review the effects of OHV travel. Monitoring will track agency progress on signing, mapping, prioritizing areas for site-specific planning, and progress toward initiating site-specific planning within the time frame identified for the particular priority. This monitoring is not intended to replace the required monitoring at the field level as directed in 43 CFR 8342.3. Monitoring is discussed in detail in Appendix B of the FEIS.

Prioritization For Site-Specific Planning

To ensure that site-specific planning is first initiated where most needed, areas will be delineated and prioritized as high, medium, or low. Prioritization will be based on several factors. In areas with adjacent National Forest System (NFS) lands, priorities for site-specific planning should be coordinated with the appropriate Forest Service office. The development of site-specific plans is dependent on the availability of funds and resources.

Site-specific planning may be analyzed at a number of different scales and across different boundaries, for example by watershed or sub-watershed. It may also be combined with other planning decision processes such as plan revisions, project or activity plans, or site-specific access and travel management plans. Selection of the appropriate area size should be based on the level of detailed analysis required and the potential to combine access and travel management planning with other analysis procedures.

Each BLM field office will complete a prioritized list of areas for site-specific planning within six months of the signing of the ROD in close coordination with the public and other partners, such as the Resource Advisory Councils. This list will be submitted to the State Director. When determining the priorities for site-specific planning, the BLM will consider the effects of the FEIS; Executive Orders 11644 and 11989; coordination with the public, other partners, agencies, and tribal governments; and the factors listed in Appendix B of the FEIS.

For each BLM field office, all areas in the affected environment should be included in one of the following categories:

High Priority Areas - These areas currently have a high level of OHV use that has resulted in resource damage and/ or user conflicts. There is a need to address all or most of the factors listed in Appendix B of the FEIS, in particular resource damage, threatened or endangered and sensitive species, and public safety. Site-specific planning will be initiated within two years of this ROD.

Moderate Priority Areas - These areas may address some of the factors listed in Appendix B of the FEIS, as well as identifying areas that could provide OHV opportunities and at the same time minimize user conflicts and resource damage. Site-specific planning will be initiated within five years of this ROD.

Low Priority Areas - These are the remaining areas categorized with minimal OHV use, with the exception of hunting seasons, and are somewhat remote. There may be some localized resource problems, but these problems can be solved easily with emergency closures until they are resolved. There are no specific requirements for initiation of site-specific planning.

Site-Specific Planning - Road And Trail Designations

Travel planning is a key element of the overall land use planning process. The land use planning process is the primary planning vehicle for identifying a travel and transportation system designed to effectively and efficiently meet resource management and visitor services needs. Travel plans identify existing transportation routes and related facilities; indicate changes in the status of existing routes and areas; and address needed improvements, maintenance levels, and legal access needs. These plans address all modes of transportation, require an interdisciplinary approach, and seek active public involvement. The travel and transportation component is essential to the successful implementation of the overall resource management plan and related activity level plans.

The BLM will continue with ongoing travel management plans and develop new travel management plans for geographical areas at the appropriate scale or level (e.g., landscape analysis, watershed plans, or activity plans). The development of site-specific plans is dependent on the availability of funds and resources. The level of detail and the types of decisions needed determines the type of plan and related decision documents. Travel planning and decisions can be accomplished as an individual activity plan or completed as part of a larger multi-program plan or large-scale integrated comprehensive landscape level plan.

At this planning level, the BLM is seeking to balance access needs of motorized and non-motorized users while sustaining the natural resources for future generations. During this site-specific planning, roads and trails would be analyzed and identified as open or closed to various types of use.

Public involvement is a key component of each step in the site-specific planning process. An environmental analysis is an integral part of each site-specific plan. Site-specific planning is discussed in detail in Appendix B of the FEIS.

Maintaining And Amending Decisions

Decisions in this plan will be maintained to reflect minor changes in information. Maintenance is limited to refining or further clarifying a plan decision and cannot expand the scope of the decision or change the terms or conditions of the decisions. Maintenance will be documented in supporting records. A plan amendment may become necessary if major changes are needed or to consider a proposal or action that is not in conformance with the plan. Plan amendments are accomplished with public input and environmental analysis.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The BLM conducted public involvement for the OHV EIS and Plan Amendment consistent with procedures required by NEPA and FLPMA. A Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register on January 22, 1999. Nearly 14,000 scoping letters were mailed to the public. During scoping,

35 open houses were conducted, which approximately 1,400 people attended. During the scoping period, nearly 3,400 letters were received, reviewed, and used to identify issues and develop alternatives.

The OHV Draft EIS had a 90-day comment period that ended February 24, 2000. During this period, 35 open houses were hosted with over 1,500 people attending. Over 2,300 letters were received and analyzed.

A thorough description of the public involvement process and responses to comments is located in Chapter 4 of the FEIS.

PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF THIS DOCUMENT

Copies of the ROD are available from the office listed below, or electronically on the following website: http://www.mt.blm.gov.

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