

**WORLAND FIELD OFFICE
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Project No: WY-010-8300	EA Number: WY-010-EA06-56
Proposed Action Title/Type: Approximately 160 miles of OHV route signs would be installed on existing BLM roads with informational Kiosks at strategic BLM public land access areas.	
Applicant (if any): Cooperation between BLM, Worland-Ten Sleep Chamber of Commerce, Wyoming State Trails Program and local OHV enthusiasts.	
See attached map.	
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INTRODUCTION

Need for Proposed Action:

Motorized and nonmotorized users generally orient their travel on public lands with a BLM, 1:100,000 scale surface management status map. These maps show a number of road terminologies from primary US highways through rough bladed two-tracked roads. Lower standard roads are many times inaccurate or not shown on the maps.

Signing of BLM roads is limited. Users are many times confused, frustrated or are lost trying to get from point A to Point B. As a result, new routes are pioneered and areas such as dry washes and cow trails are utilized as travel routes. OHV enthusiasts look for trails that incorporate informative signs, maps, diverse terrain, scenery, and varying difficulty, and will seldom venture off trail if these are present.

Additionally visitors using public lands many times do so uninformed of opportunities and information that provide for a quality experience and enjoyment of public lands. OHV enthusiasts using the proposed project area would require information and education to provide a safe, ethical, high quality recreational experience.

Through project implementation, public land users would be informed through several methods. Such things as web sites, maps, signs, kiosks, news media and word of mouth would enhance natural and cultural resource protection, public health and safety and the principles of TREAD LIGHTLY and Leave No Trace.

Description of Project

Proposed project would provide off-highway vehicle (OHV) route signs on about 160 miles of existing public roads. Route locations would be designed using input from BLM resource specialists, Wyoming State Trails Program specialists, various agency comments, local OHV enthusiasts, commercial users, and public scoping comments.

The project consists of signing existing BLM-administered roads that provide a direct route between Ten Sleep and Worland Wyoming, with loop routes north and south of U.S. Highway 16. Kiosks located at primary road access points would inform and educate public land users about natural resource and cultural concerns as well as public health and safety issues. Wyoming State Trails Program standard signing would be used to sign routes.

Signed routes would provide a service to OHV enthusiasts who would like to participate in a guided activity, access to public lands for scenic riding and enjoyment. Routes would traverse a variety of road conditions and landscape. Loops would allow for varying riding durations. Existing roads that would not be signed as OHV routes would remain open for vehicle access. Under the proposed action users would travel delineated routes that would promote public health and safety, principles of TREAD LIGHTLY!, protection of natural and cultural resources and minimize user conflicts.

This project would be in partnership with the Worland-Ten Sleep Chamber of Commerce, Wyoming State Trails Program and local OHV enthusiasts. County and municipal routes could be incorporated with BLM routes to provide access from towns. Selection of routes to be signed would vary over time dependant upon public safety, resource and cultural concerns.

Implementing the OHV route signing would define an appropriate network of roads and would discourage unauthorized cross-country travel and travel on routes not suitable for the vehicle type.

Conformance with Existing Land Use Plans

The document which directs management of federal lands within the project area is the Washakie Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision of 1988.

The Recreation Management Decision on page 21 states:

“The recreation management objective is to enhance and expand opportunities for recreation while intensively managing areas with high recreation values.”

The Off-Road Vehicle Management Objective on page 21 states:

“To control the use of off-road vehicles as a means of reducing damage to fragile soils, wetlands, cultural values, and wildlife.”

Based on the analysis contained in this EA, Alternative I (proposed action) and Alternative II

would be in conformance with the Washakie RMP objectives for recreation and OHV management. Alternative III would be a continuation of existing OHV management objectives.

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, Policies, Plans or Other Environmental Analyses

The principal statute law governing public land management is the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. This proposed project is consistent with National Forests in the State of Wyoming and their participation in the Wyoming State OHV Trails Program.

This environmental assessment is tiered to, and incorporates the following documents by reference: The Washakie RMP and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The RMP specifies general management direction for the Worland Field Office, including management of OHVs. The EIS contains background information on the existing environment and resources found in the area and environmental consequences of various management actions.

The Washakie RMP states that the resource objectives for Off-Road Vehicle (OHV) Management are to control the use of off-road vehicles as a means of reducing damage to fragile soils, wildlife habitat, and cultural values. Further the RMP states that the resource objectives for recreation management are to enhance and expand opportunities for recreation while intensively managing areas with high recreation values.

The Honeycombs Wilderness Study Area (WSA) is within the project area and is subject to management guidelines contained in BLM Handbook H-8550-1, Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands under Wilderness Review (IMP).

The principal Bureau permitting regulations for travel on BLM public lands are found in 43 CFR 8340. Guidance is given in the U.S. Department of the Interior, BLM National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands.

Wyoming State Statutes, rules and regulations governing OHV operation on roads enrolled in the WY State Trails Program, would apply to all roads within the project area.

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Alternative I - Proposed Action (Description)

Alternative I would approve installation of informational bulletin boards (kiosks) at strategic BLM public land access roads and route signing on approximately 160 miles of existing roads (see map).

Signs would be installed in accordance with Wyoming State Trails Program signing standards. Existing routes to be signed would include a Ten Sleep, WY to Worland, WY route which would primarily follow the old US highway 16 route. This would be supplemented with north and

south loop routes. Routes may vary as shown on attached map. Signed routes would be alternated over time because of unforeseen issues such as deteriorating road conditions, weather, wildlife, oil & gas networking, right-of-ways and safety issues.

Signed routes would provide OHV users, as well as mountain bikes and others, access to public lands for scenic riding and enjoyment. Routes would traverse a variety of road conditions and diverse landscapes. Loops would allow for varying riding durations. Existing roads that would not be signed as OHV routes would remain open for motorized access. Users would travel delineated routes that would promote protection of natural and cultural resources. Public safety, resource information, ***Tread Lightly!***, interpretive information and maps would be provided at kiosks.

Directional and reassurance signs along routes would consist of flexible fiberglass posts driven into the ground and used for sticker applications. Treated wood posts would be used primarily for larger sign mounting. Kiosks would be a roofed 4' by 8' structure mounted on two 6" by 6" treated posts.

Alternative II – (Description)

Alternative II would approve installation of informational bulletin boards (kiosks) at strategic BLM public land access roads (see map). Route signing would not occur.

Portal kiosks would be installed at primary access roads to project area. Maps, public safety, resource information, ***Tread Lightly!***, and interpretive information would be provided.

Adequate user information and education is critical for BLM resource concerns as well as visitor satisfaction and enjoyment. Existing roads would not be signed. OHV users would utilize existing roads and provide their own orientation and navigation.

Alternative III – No Action (Description)

Alternative III, no action would be taken, recreational use of the project area would continue as statuesque.

Portal information bulletin boards and route signs would not be installed. Dispersed recreational use in the project area would continue to be random, primarily with the use of BLM surface management status maps and occasional road signs. The using public would have minimal on site information providing public safety, natural and cultural resource protection, ***Tread Lightly!*** and interpretive information.

There would be no on site public information, nor opportunity for a quality OHV recreation experience that follows a designated route.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Project Area Description:

The project area is located east of Worland WY and west of Tensleep WY divided by U.S. Highway 16. North of Highway 16, the north and east boundary is the Nowood River with the Bighorn River being the west boundary. South of Highway 16 the BLM Nowater Road and Blue Bank Road make the west, south and east boundary. The Honeycombs Wilderness Study Area is within the southeastern portion of the project area. (See map)

The terrain is broken badlands to gently rolling areas both north and south of Highway 16. Vegetation is predominately desert shrub, sagebrush and grasses. The view shed consists of the Bighorn mountain range to the east, the Absoroka mountain range to the west and the Owl Creek mountain range to the south. The project area roads are used by the general public, BLM, ranchers, recreationists, commercial outfitters, utility companies, oil and gas companies and private landowners.

Air, Soils, Water and Vegetation; The airshed for the project area is classified as Class II and the quality is generally considered good. Suspended particulates from surface disturbing activities are the primary contributor to air quality.

The following areas of oil/gas extraction have significant amounts of H₂S present: Cottonwood Creek, Worland, Slick Creek, Manderson, and Ainsworth, (areas of known geologic structures).

Approximately 50% of the soils in the project area are considered fragile due to depth, slope and resistance to erosion. Typically maintained roads and two tracks have exposed soils as a result of repeated vehicle traffic and blading.

Several intermittent drainages occur throughout the project area. These drainages show considerable evidence of disturbance and are often eroded down several feet below their original base level. OHV use is evident in many of these ephemeral drainages during dry conditions.

Vegetation for the area is predominately desert shrub/saltbush, greasewood and sagebrush/grass. The climate is typical of cold desert with average annual precipitation ranges from 5 to 9 inches.

Invasive Species; Noxious weed species including Canada Thistle (*Cirsium arvense* (L.) Scop.), Russian Knapweed (*Acroptilon repens* (L.) Desv.) Cheat Grass (*Bromus tectorum* (L.), and Whitetop (*Cardaria draba* (L.) Desv.) have been identified along many of the roads for the project area. Noxious weed seeds are transported by vehicles, people, animals and other natural processes. Areas of surface disturbance can provide establishment of invasive, non-native species.

Recreation; This proposed action occurs within the Extensive Recreation Management Area, Washakie RMP. The OHV travel management for this proposed project area is designated limited (primarily existing roads and trails). Approximately 60% lies within a roaded natural-appearing area where there is visible developments such as telecommunication sites, range improvement facilities and oil/gas facilities. The remaining portions of the project area are considered semi-primitive motorized.

Recreation use for this area consists of site seeing, hunting, driving for pleasure, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, rock hounding, photography, destination travel for viewing the area and general dispersed recreation. The majority of the proposed project area is considered back country or semi-primitive motorized.

Group encounters along motorized travel routes for back country areas are estimated at 3-6 per day; fewer on non-motorized travel routes. Recreation use is considered low throughout the area; the primary use of existing roads is for commercial purposes. During big game hunting seasons recreational use is considered moderate; group encounters can exceed 6 per day on motorized routes.

The Honeycombs Wilderness Study Area (WSA) is located in the southeastern portion of the project area and is 21,000 acres in size. The WSA was studied under section 603 of the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act of 1976 and was determined to possess wilderness characteristics of naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined recreation and other special values as set forth in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964. The area was included in the Washakie Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement, of 1990 and the Wyoming Statewide Wilderness Study Report, Wilderness Study Area Specific Recommendations, of 1991.

The WSA is managed under The Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review (BLM Handbook H-8550-1) pending a decision by Congress to designate them as Wilderness or release them for other purposes. In accordance with the IMP, these lands must be managed to maintain their suitability for preservation as wilderness. Motorized and mechanized travel on vehicle ways that existed at the time of the WSA inventory may continue as long as use of the routes does not impair wilderness suitability. No route signs are being proposed inside of the Honeycombs WSA.

Visual Resource Management (VRM) classes determine the amount of modification allowed be made to the basic elements of the landscape. 80 % of the proposed project area fall under VRM Class IV, which stipulates that project activities may attract attention and be a dominant feature of the landscape (in terms of scale), but should repeat the form, line, color, and texture of the characteristic landscape. U.S. Highway 16 and Bighorn River corridor are VRM Class III; project activities can be evident but should remain subordinate to the existing landscape.

Range and wildlife; There are various grazing allotments throughout the proposal area as well as numerous authorized trailing uses. Grazing permittees rely heavily on BLM public lands for their

forage needs.

Pronghorn antelope and Mule deer are the common big game wildlife species for the project area. Predators, furbearers, upland game birds and numerous species of nongame birds and wildlife are common throughout the area. There are no known fisheries within the proposed project area.

Other Uses; Oil and gas production, utility companies, ranchers, private land owners, public recreation, Federal, State, City and County entities all use portions of the project area roads. Rights-of-way for pipelines, power lines and associated easements are numerous throughout the area.

A detailed description of the affected environment can be found in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (pg 67) for the Washakie Resource Management Plan, 1986.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The following are mandatory elements and/or environmental resources that are required for consideration in all NEPA analyses. The elements were reviewed against the three alternatives and any element that was affected by the proposed action is discussed and analyzed in the narrative.

Mandatory Elements			
ELEMENT	Alt. I- Signing existing routes with informational kiosks at BLM road portals	Alt. II- Informational kiosks at BLM road portals	Alt. III- No Action
Air Quality	See text	see text	No change
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	Not present	Not present	Not present
Cultural Resources	No effect	No effect	No effect
Farm Lands (prime or unique)	Not present	Not present	Not present
Flood Plains	Not present	Not present	Not present
Native American Religious Concerns	No change	No change	No change
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	Not present	Not present	Not present
Water Quality, Drinking or Ground	See text	No change	No change

Wetlands/Riparian Zones	No change	No change	No change
Wild and Scenic Rivers	Not present	Not present	Not present
Wilderness	See text	No change	No change
Environmental Justice	No effect	No effect	No change
Invasive, Non-Native Species	See text	See text	No change
Threatened or Endangered Species	Not present	Not present	Not present

The following impact analysis consists of those impacts that were considered to be substantial enough to warrant narrative as determined by the preparers, reviewers, and from public comments received during a 30 day scoping period. The threshold of impacts is directed at real environmental issues that affect the quality of the human environment as stated in the policy of Council on Environmental Quality regulations 40 CFR 1500.2.

Alternative I - Proposed Action - Environmental Impacts

Installation of informational bulletin boards at BLM public land access portals and route signing on approximately 160 miles of existing roads (see map).

Soils, Water and Vegetation; Natural processes of precipitation, wind, vegetation cover and slope affect the rate at which soils erode and reduce water quality. Existing roads and two tracks are mostly void of vegetation and vary in slope percent. Repeated use of roads create surface disturbance such as vegetation loss and loosening of soil compaction which are major contributors to soil erosion and poor water quality.

Implementing Alternative I would increase numbers of motorized users on signed routes. Signed low standard roads that do not receive routine maintenance would tend to widen. This would cause additional surface disturbance through vegetation loss, exposing more soil surface. Existing low standard roads that are not signed would remain unchanged or trend toward less use because OHV enthusiasts prefer trails with diverse terrain, varying difficulty, and quality signs that include information, direction, and interpretation.

Higher standard roads (those that receive regular maintenance, have a hardened surface and are wider) would not be affected by vegetation loss. Soil erosion would not increase significantly because the road surface would not change.

Use of roads during wet soil conditions causes rutting. Rutting funnels water and accelerates soil erosion and sediment deposits into streams during precipitation. When vehicles avoid ruts the results are road widening and multiple parallel routes.

Vehicle travel off existing routes causes vegetation trampling, uprooting, and leaves tracks that

promote additional off road travel. Kiosks locations would result in loss of vegetation immediately around the sign. Users at these areas would trample vegetation and increase soil exposure. Site selection for kiosk installation would consider areas least susceptible to soil and vegetation loss, flat areas, naturally armored areas or previously disturbed sites.

Air Quality; Fugitive dust and exhaust fumes are created from motorized vehicles when traveling on dirt roads. This may lead to short term impacts to the air quality in the immediate location of vehicles. Areas void of vegetation, such as gravel and primitive roads are prone to wind erosion and are sources of dust. This would not impact overall air quality of the region because of the quick settling time of particulate matter.

Noxious and Invasive weeds; Noxious and invasive weeds have been identified along many of the roads in the project area. There is evidence that weeds have been spread throughout roads within the project area. Since noxious weeds can be introduced and propagated by vehicular travel, bare soil near roads provides seedbeds where noxious weeds germinate and establish.

Information on techniques and methods to prevent spread of noxious and invasive weeds would be provided to OHV enthusiasts at portals. The project area would be monitored for the presence of noxious weeds, and noxious and invasive weed infestations would be controlled using an Integrated Pest Management approach.

Visual Resources; Signs and bulletin board installations would be visible in foreground viewing but would blend and be subordinate to surrounding landscape at middle and background viewing ranges. Coloring, design and placement would be used to lessen contrasts to existing landscape.

Recreation; BLM public lands have inherent recreational value and are described by the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS). Settings, activities and associated facilities for the various ROS classifications in the project area would be maintained. Within the road corridors, additional use could change the existing backcountry setting to a more rural environment. Signs would be placed in areas where very few on-site controls currently exist.

An enhanced system for OHV destination travel and public outreach would result in more motorized users. Estimated group encounters along primitive roads could exceed 3-6 per day on weekends and holidays. Additional road use would increase the potential for off-road use. Inclement weather would result in slick road conditions and limit travel during times of precipitation. Riders could become temporarily stranded until conditions dry.

Several different types of motorized use occur on BLM roads. OHV route signs would increase the mix of user types through areas of oil and gas development, utility sites and on BLM higher maintenance level roads. These user types can range from semi-tractor trailers to dirt bikes. Route selection for signs would keep this mixture to a minimum.

Signed routes would traverse areas of oil & gas wells that release significant amounts of hydrogen sulfide gas. Increasing use within these areas would require additional signs for public health and safety. Careful OHV route selection through oil and gas road networks could reduce the H₂S hazard to OHV users.

Implementing the OHV route signs would identify an appropriate network of maintained and primitive roads. Roads and primitive roads not signed as OHV routes would remain open to motorized use. Signed routes with portal information would reduce cross-country travel and travel on dry washes, steep grades or livestock trails.

The project area proposes two crossings of U.S. Highway 16 with a northern loop route. These crossings are currently signed in conformance with WY State Highway standards for approaches to U.S. Highway 16. Sight distance at these crossings is somewhat limited. Signs to alert highway traffic for OHV crossing would be requested from the Wyoming Department of Transportation.

Honeycombs Wilderness Study Area Management of the Honeycombs Wilderness Study Area is subject to BLM Handbook H-8550-1, Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands under Wilderness Review (IMP). The IMP specifically mentions cross-country vehicle travel as a surface disturbing activity that would not be allowed under the non-impairment criteria, “Cross-country vehicle use off boundary roads and existing ways is surface disturbing because the tracks created by the vehicle leave depressions or ruts, compact the soils, and trample or compress vegetation” (H-8550-1 CH I.B.3).

The Bluebank Road provides approximately thirty percent of the eastern boundary for the Honeycombs Wilderness Study Area. This 4 mile stretch of existing road adjacent to the WSA would be signed. Additional motorized use on signed OHV routes would increase potential for motorized entry into the WSA. Within the Honeycombs WSA no existing routes would be included for the proposed project.

Wildlife; Motorized travel on roads displaces most species of wildlife. At certain times of the year, vehicle travel would disturb reproduction areas, young and/or nesting wildlife. Increased or improper human presence could cause wildlife to abandon use of certain areas. There is no current seasonal wildlife or other closure restrictions on existing roads within the project area. Existing roads traversing sensitive areas for wildlife such as fawning, critical big game winter range or sensitive sage grouse habitat would not be signed for OHV routes without further analysis. OHV enthusiasts using signed routes tend to follow those trails and not deviate.

Livestock; There are numerous grazing allotments within the project area. Scoping notices were sent to all grazing permittees affected by the proposed project. Common issues that impact authorized livestock grazing on public land allotments include such items as: trespassing on private lands, vandalism to facility improvements on both private and public lands, costs for

repair of damage to utilities, fences, and other improvements, harassment of livestock, and most commonly, gates not left as they were found.

Delineation of routes would help to reduce trespass issues on private lands in the area. Maps, signs and markers, education and information material provided at portals would provide a means to educate the public about the location and access status of private lands.

Motorized travel on roads temporarily displaces livestock use occurring on or near roads. Vehicles traveling signed routes would have potential to disperse trailing of cattle and sheep along and adjacent to roads. No significant reduction in forage would occur.

Pasture and allotment gates could be opened or closed in a manner that impedes authorized grazing use. Signs, cattle guards and user friendly levered gate closures would increase the likelihood of gates being “left as found”.

Increased motorized use could increase bumming, theft and loss of pounds during calving seasons. There is no current data available that measures effects of motorized vehicles or road densities on rangeland livestock operations. Recent observations of livestock operators on public lands indicate more ranchers are utilizing OHVs for trailing, salting, looking for strays, fence maintenance etc.

Socioeconomic; Route signs to more remote areas of public land increases the chance for impacting local resource services such as County Sheriffs’ Office, Search & Rescue and Emergency Medical Services.

Costs for implementing, maintaining and monitoring the project would be borne by taxpayers. Implementation and maintenance costs could be off-set thru partnerships with volunteers, local communities and the Wyoming State Trails OHV Sticker Program and MOU (WY930-03-06-115) with the BLM. Increase in OHV use would contribute to the recreation based economy.

Road maintenance would increase slightly where signed OHV routes coincide with sections of roads that are maintenance level 3 and 4 roads (roads receiving minimum annual maintenance). Primary users and maintenance responsibility for the majority of these roads are commercial and could increase road maintenance costs. Maintenance costs for lower standard primitive roads would not change significantly.

Potential for vandalism to adjacent facilities could increase. Active and reasonable deterrents to vandalism would be through information and education provided by OHV enthusiasts “policing their own”, local volunteers, existing reward system for information of vandalism and patrols by BLM Law Enforcement.

Increased use could also increase trespass onto private property. Roads that cross private lands would not be signed as OHV routes unless the BLM or other agencies have an existing public easement. Signs for those portions of public easements would be erected.

Other Uses; Signed routes that cross Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) lands would require revocation from withdrawal and return to BLM public domain, or documentation authorizing public use of portions of BOR lands.

All established roads and trails in WY State Trust Lands are open for OHV travel as identified in the memorandum of understanding between the State Trails Program, State of WY Office of State Lands and Investments, WY Game & Fish, Forest Service and BLM.

Cumulative Impacts

The majority of these roads have been in place for the past 30 years. Generally, use patterns have varied and use has consistently increased over time. OHV route signs would delineate an appropriate network of existing primitive and maintained roads for these enthusiasts. Current and past demands for motorized use of public lands come from numerous entities and are being served with existing transportation system roads.

Cumulative impacts to resources analyzed in the Alternatives are commensurate with use. OHV recreation and other use of transportation system roads are expected to increase. Transportation management may require future restrictions on numbers of users.

Routes would be located to pose minimum risk to public health and safety, natural and cultural resource protection and various potential user conflicts. The lands involved within the project area have historically had the existing road system. The impacts identified for the project alternatives when considered with historic, current and reasonably foreseeable use, would not significantly contribute to cumulative impacts.

Residual Impacts

Signed routes could reduce traffic on other primitive roads that would tend to naturally reclaim and eventually revert to natural cover.

Additional signs in conjunction with existing signs would remain in place for the duration of the project.

Additional demands on staff time, primarily law enforcement, would be required.

Alternative II - Environmental Impacts

Alternative II would approve installation of informational bulletin boards (kiosks) at strategic BLM public land access portals (see map). Route signing would not occur.

Soils, Water and Vegetation; Informational bulletin board locations would result in loss of

vegetation around the immediate area. Users at these areas would trample vegetation and increase soil exposure. Site selection for bulletin board installation would be areas that are least susceptible to soil and vegetation loss. These areas should be flat and naturally armored by using previously disturbed sites, exposed rock, less vegetation than surrounding area or stable soils.

Recreation; Implementing Alternative II would not provide incentive to significantly increase numbers of OHV users. OHV enthusiasts look for trails with signs for information and direction, and that have diverse terrain and varying levels of difficulty. Motorized use would not increase on unsigned primitive and maintained roads.

Numbers of OHV users would continue at approximately the same level on existing roads. Estimated group encounters along primitive roads would remain at or near 3-6 per day on weekends and holidays. Providing information at primary access areas would assist dispersed recreational users to focus attention on the critical natural and cultural resource needs.

Mixing different types of motorized use would continue on BLM roads.

Existing BLM roads traverse areas of oil and gas development that release significant amounts of hydrogen sulfide gas. Recreational travelers frequently use these road networks and inevitably “dead head” at oil & gas pads. Additional H₂S hazard information would be provided at kiosks.

TREAD LIGHTLY, regulatory information and educational material provided at access areas would inform users of undesirable cross-country travel, road proliferation, hill climbing and travel on areas not suitable for motorized vehicles such as dry washes or livestock trails.

Visual Resources; Portal bulletin board installations would be visible in near ground viewing but would blend and be subordinate to surrounding landscape at middle and background viewing ranges. Coloring, design and placement would be used to lessen contrasts to existing landscape.

Air Quality; Impacts on air quality from motorized use would be less than Alternative I because of fewer vehicles dispersed over the project area.

Noxious and Nonnative Invasive weeds; Continuation of existing use could reduce the spread of noxious and invasive weeds through information on techniques and methods of prevention provided at kiosks. The project area would be monitored for the presence of noxious and invasive weeds and weed infestations would be controlled using an IPM approach.

Wildlife; Continuation of existing use would maintain or reduce current impacts to wildlife by providing public information at portals. Such educational material would include how vehicle travel can disturb parturition areas, young and/or nesting wildlife, and how excessive or improper human presence could cause wildlife to abandon use of certain areas.

Livestock; Current recreational use within the project area indicates occasional conflicts with

authorized livestock operations on public lands. Conflicts with livestock operations include gates not left as they were found, damage to utilities, fences and other range improvements, harassment of livestock, unauthorized use on private lands and vandalism to improvements on both private and public lands. Alternative II would provide public information and educational material to public land users that impact livestock grazing operations.

Socioeconomic; Alternative II would maintain the status quo and would not impact socioeconomic conditions in the project area. With the installation of educational and informational bulletin boards, visitors using the area would be more informed and educated. Demands on local resources such as emergency services would remain constant or decrease.

Costs for kiosk installation, maintaining and monitoring would be borne by taxpayers. Implementation and maintenance costs could be off-set thru partnerships with volunteers and the Wyoming State Trails OHV Program MOU with the BLM.

Alternative III – Environmental Impacts

In alternative III, no action would be taken, OHV recreational use of the project area would continue as status quo.

Alternative III would be a continuation of existing conditions. Route signs and informational kiosks would not be installed. An appropriate network of vehicle routes and site specific information would not be defined. The area would remain susceptible to route proliferation, random cross-country travel, hill-climbing and less informed users. Such activities impact soils, vegetation, visual resources, wildlife, livestock and natural and cultural resources.

Issues related to resource protection and public health and safety would not be addressed. Visitors using the project area would continue to do so uninformed of opportunities and information that provide for a quality experience and enjoyment of public lands.

Monitoring

Monitoring of road use has been done to obtain information about the amount of visitor use occurring in the area from both commercial operations and the general public. Monitoring would continue by use of traffic counters. On a percentage basis, BLM system roads would be used for before and after comparisons of the amount of vehicle use in the project area. Regular field visits would be conducted by resource staff and law enforcement staff. The visitor use and routes would be subject to revision if necessary, based on the results of the monitoring efforts.

Public Involvement

On February 22, 2006 a public scoping letter was sent to 84 entities identified by BLM reviewers as interested parties. The list consisted of individuals, agencies, private companies and range

permittees. On March 10, 2006 the Northern WY Daily News published a request for public input. The scoping notice was posted on the BLM Worland Field Office web site.

The scoping notice outlined the project proposal and requested comments. Thirtyfour Individuals or organizations replied during the 30 day comment period. The comments were considered and specific suggestions were incorporated into this environmental assessment.

This Environmental Assessment has been distributed to the public. A news release was issued in the local media informing the public that the EA had been prepared and is available to the public. Copies of the EA are available at the Worland Field Office and on the website, www.wy.blm.gov/wfo.

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