

DECISION RECORD

Iron Mask Travel Management Plan

DOI-BLM-MT-B070-2013-19

DECISION

It is my decision to approve the *Iron Mask Travel Management Plan*, as described in the Preferred Alternative (Alternative B) of the *Iron Mask Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-MT-B070-2013-19-EA)*.

Specifically, the temporary closure of routes in the Iron Mask acquisition area to wheeled motorized use by the general public will become permanent for the majority of the area, with the following exceptions:

- Segments of routes 012 and 013 (1.6 miles) in and around the county shooting range (previously designated as “Open” in the Elkhorns Travel Plan) will remain “Closed” yearlong to motorized uses to the public to provide for public safety
- Route 002 (0.1 miles), immediately across the railroad tracks off Whitehorse Lane, will be “Open” yearlong to wheeled motorized uses to the public to provide private access to a proximity home and upper lands northwest of the area. A locked gate will be installed at the beginning of Route 003 (east boundary)
- Route 19 (0.5 miles) on Shep’s Ridge that leads to the abandoned Iron Mask Mine Site will be “Open” to wheeled motorized uses to the public from May 16th to December 2nd each year, following the completion of the reclamation work planned at the site

Wheeled motorized use on the remainder of travel routes in the Iron Mask acquisition area will become “Limited” to administrative (BLM) and authorized uses (i.e. grazing operators, other agencies, etc.)

In addition to these route designations, 2 trailheads will be constructed:

- (1) Near the junction of routes 001 & 002 (Whitehorse Lane)
- (2) Near the junction of routes 008 & 019 (Shep’s Ridge)

Improvements at these trailheads will include:

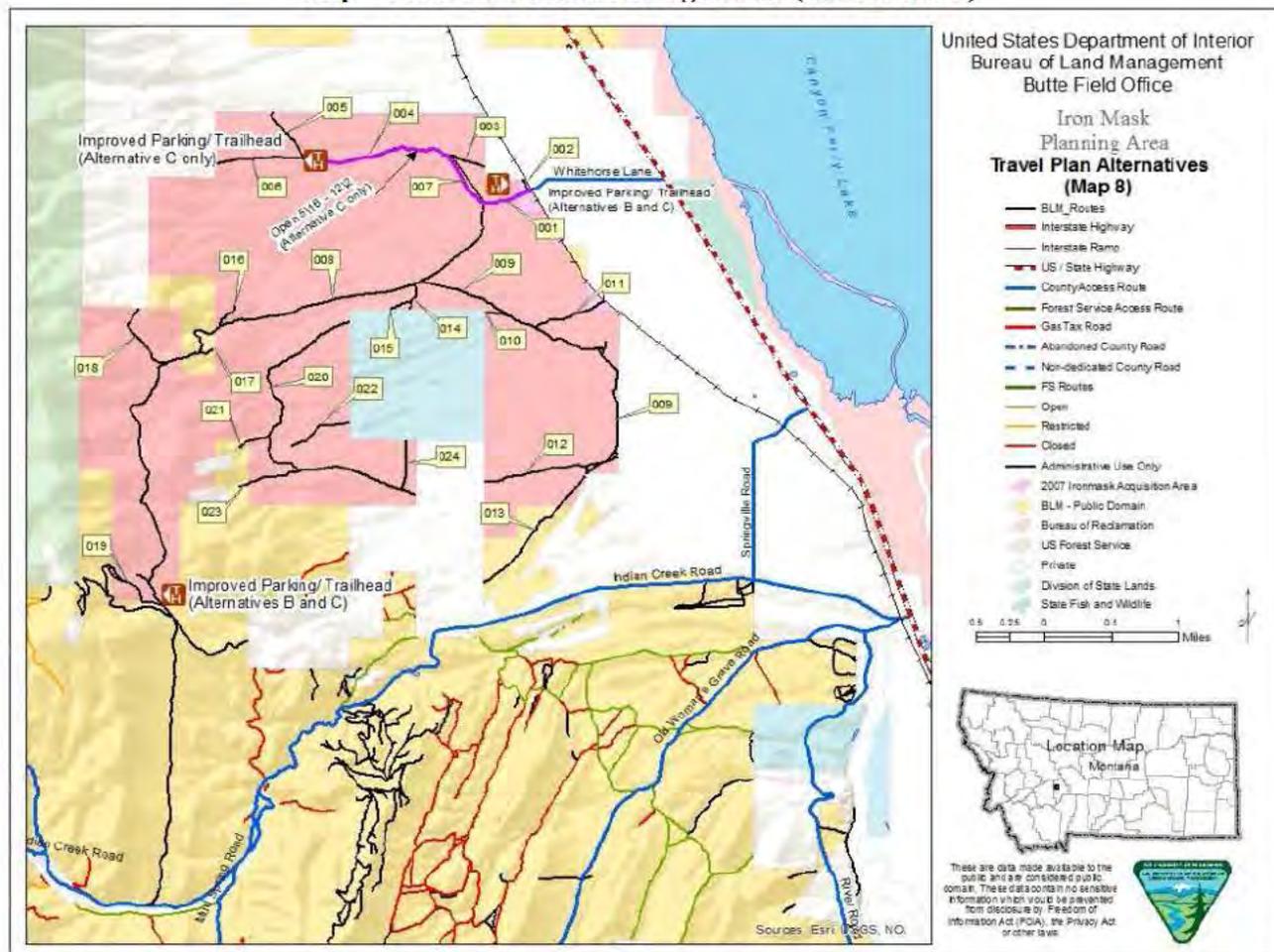
- Grading and graveling parking surfaces large enough for several vehicles and trailers
- Perimeter Fencing (Jack leg or similar)
- Placing barriers to limit vehicle violations as needed
- Installation of locking gates for administrative traffic during seasonal closures
- Installation of gates to allow for non-motorized entrance (foot, horses & mountain bikes)
- Erecting kiosk panels with maps and other information

Finally, the additional trailhead and route designations proposed under Alternative C, located further west on Whitehorse Lane (at the junction of routes 005, 006 and 007), will not be constructed at this time. Depending upon impact monitoring, visitor use levels, and public demand, the BLM may propose to amend this travel management plan to include these features. If such an amendment was considered, there would be subsequent NEPA analysis with an opportunity for public input.

The table and map below depict the final route designations made in this Travel Management Plan.

Travel Route Designations						
	Existing Travel Routes	Open to all uses	Limited Open May 16 – Dec. 2 to Wheeled Motorized Vehicles	Limited Administrative, Authorized & Non-Motorized uses Closed Yearlong to all other Wheeled Motorized Vehicles	Closed and Decommission	Totals
Roads	1 route 0.1 miles	1 route 0.1 miles	0 route 0 miles	0 routes 0 miles	0 0	1 route 0.1 miles
Primitive Roads	23 routes 19.2 miles	0 routes 0 miles	1 route 0.5 miles	22 routes 18.7 miles	0 routes 0 miles	23 routes 19.2 miles
Trails	0 routes 0 miles	0 0	0 routes 0 miles	0 0	0 routes 0 miles	0 routes 0 miles
TOTALS	24 Routes 19.3 Miles	1 route 0.1 miles	1 route 0.5 miles	22 routes 18.7 miles	0 routes 0 miles	24 routes 19.3 miles

Map – Final Travel Route Designations (Alternative B)



In addition to the route designations shown on the previous table and map above, the following travel decisions apply:

Over Snow Vehicle Use

In order to conform to RMP direction of promoting non-motorized recreation opportunities and enhancing the area for wildlife, and given the general lack of adequate snow cover in the area, the current closure to motorized Over Snow Vehicle (OSV) travel will remain in effect for the Iron Mask Decision Area west of Highway 287.

Non-Motorized Use

Under this Travel Plan, people will be allowed to walk or ride horses anywhere on public lands unless an area is closed for safety or specific resource protection (example: a historical site). Mountain biking will be allowed, but will be limited to existing routes in the travel network, including those designated as "Limited to Administrative, Authorized and Non-Motorized Uses." Cross-country mountain bike use is not allowed.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION

The *Iron Mask Travel Management Plan* represents the best means to improve the management of transportation and access on Bureau of Land Management lands in this area. It draws a reasonable balance between strong demands for diverse types of access and the resources that need protection.

The Preferred Alternative (B) focuses on priorities for managing travel and transportation, including:

- Establishing a comprehensive approach to travel and transportation management;
- Minimizing the effects of vehicular use on natural and cultural resources;
- Enhancing visitor access while minimizing user conflicts; and,
- Ensuring public health and safety.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Through formal scoping, including a public meeting, and through public comments received on the draft EA, the public has been informed of the planning process and has provided us with valuable input on how the area should be managed to address a wide variety of issues and concerns, such as motorized and non-motorized uses, private land-owner desires, and access for recreational, commercial, authorized, and administrative purposes. This Travel Management Plan addresses the issues and concerns in a way that minimizes conflict and seeks to implement a management framework for an area where very little management existed previously.

MITIGATION

Areas where roads are open to wheeled motorized uses (including administrative and authorized uses) could be causing stream channel alteration, erosion, or other resource damage, would be improved to mitigate the damage. Culverts would be installed on two spots on road 008 where stream flows are currently diverted and run down the road.

The BLM will work with Montana Rail Link and Broadwater County to improve safety near the railroad crossing where Whitehorse Lane accesses public lands by way of Route 002.

APPEALS

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in this office, located at 106 North Parkmont, Butte, MT 59701, within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The BLM will not accept appeals sent by electronic mail. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition (request) pursuant to regulation 43 CFR Part 4.21 (b) for a stay (suspension) of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice to appeal. A petition for stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and the petition for a stay must also be submitted to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

1. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied;
2. The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits;
3. The likelihood of immediate or irreparable harm if the stay is not granted; and,
4. Whether the public interest favors a granting of the stay.

//SIGNED//

Scott Haight
Field Manager

July 1, 2015

Date