

**DECISION RECORD
and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
for
OHV ROUTE SIGNING AND
ACCESS INFORMATION**

EA WY-010-EA06-56

Project Number: WY-010-8300

I. DECISION

It is my decision to approve Alternative I: the route signing of approximately 160 miles of existing BLM roads, and placement of informational kiosks at strategic BLM public land access areas. This authorization will be granted under the legal authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, subject to the standard and additional stipulations attached to the FONSI statement.

II. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

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

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

Alternative III proposed that no action would be taken, and recreational use of the project area would continue as at present.

III. RATIONALE

Alternative I was chosen as being the most environmentally sound alternative. I have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the Washakie RMP management objective for the recreation program which is to enhance opportunities for recreation while intensively managing areas with high recreation values.

Recreation use in the project area provides positive contributions to the human environment and adds to the quality of life enjoyed by residents of and visitors to the Bighorn Basin.

Relatively unregulated recreation use in the project area has resulted in impacts to soils, vegetation, wildlife, archeological values and other resources. Visitors using public lands may not be familiar with the principles of "Leave No Trace" and "Tread Lightly!" designed to minimize impacts to other resources.

This Proposed Action outlines a direction for motorized recreation management that provides informed, quality recreation experiences while reducing or eliminating undesirable impacts to other resources. I feel it draws a reasonable balance between the demands for recreation opportunities close to several communities and the need to protect other resources present in the area.

IV. COMPLIANCE/MONITORING

The Proposed Action for the project area will be periodically monitored to ensure we are meeting Washakie resource management goals laid out in the RMP. We will continue to coordinate with all user entities, public and private, to discuss management problems in the project area and come up with workable solutions. High interest facilities such as oil and gas wells with their associated road networking, the Honeycombs WSA, and the primary range users will be regularly monitored to ensure they are meeting goals of the Washakie RMP. If the management actions of the project are not effective in achieving desired future conditions, other actions will be developed to bring us closer to our goals.

V. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT

On February 22, 2006 a public scoping letter was sent to 84 entities identified by BLM reviewers as having an interest. The list consisted of individuals, agencies, private companies and range permittees. On March 10, 2006 the Northern WY Daily News published an article on the proposal which described public input opportunities. The scoping notice was posted on the BLM Worland Field Office web site.

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

Following is a summary of those comments and BLM response.

Comment: Concern of OHV traffic having adverse effects on livestock operations within the project area.

Response: Educating and informing users at access areas and at sites of potential problem areas would provide a means to reduce conflicts associated with permitted livestock and educate the public about livestock issues. Minimal signing is currently in place.

The primary concern is gates not being “left as found”. Signing, cattle guards and user friendly levered gate closures would increase likelihood of gates being “left as found”.

Comment: Roads already exist on maps and people can use them so why sign them for a particular use.

Response: Visitors using public lands often lack information regarding opportunities

that provide for a quality experience and enjoyment of public lands. OHV enthusiasts look for routes that incorporate informative signs, maps, diverse terrain, scenery, and varying difficulty, they will seldom venture off trail if these are present.

Comment: Pros and cons of increased number of users.

Response: Through monitoring, undesirable effects that occur to users, permittees, cultural or natural resources can be identified and adjusted by signing to increase, decrease or relocate routes dependant upon need. Recreational use associated with project will contribute to the overall recreation based economy and provide access to public lands for scenic riding and enjoyment.

Comment: Health and safety of users because of multiple user types on roads and hydrogen sulfide hazards through oil and gas areas.

Response: Adequate warning signs currently exist and are stipulated by BLM for H2S hazards through oil and gas field leases; this would be supplemented at informational access areas. OHV route signing would increase the mix of user types through areas of oil and gas road networks, utility sites and on BLM higher maintenance level roads. These user types can range from semi-tractor trailers to dirt bikes. Safety signing and careful route selection for OHV signing would keep the mixture of traffic and H2S hazard potential to a minimum.

Comment: Increase potential for trespass and vandalism to public and private property.

Response: Route signing will only occur across private property where public easements are in place. Those areas will be signed as such.

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 and other local law enforcement agencies.

Comment: Private industry concern of liability for public health and safety and road maintenance within areas of extensive oil and gas road networks.

Response: Careful OHV route selection for the least amount of roads that coincide with commercial activities will be incorporated. There are inherent multiple uses of BLM public lands that have occurred historically. Safety signing and reasonable user precautions will minimize situations that endanger people.

Comment: Excessive resource damage caused by OHV use off existing roads, during wet weather and motorized use within the Honeycombs WSA.

Response: TREAD LIGHTLY and Leave No Trace programs are recommended as a guide to minimizing signs of visitation to the expansive and varied BLM-administered public lands. These principles are intended to support and complement BLM regulations.

Approximately 4 miles of Bluebank road that constitute boundary for the Honeycombs WSA would be signed as OHV route. Boundary signing depicting the Honeycombs WSA along this section of Bluebank road is in place. No existing routes within the WSA would be signed for OHV travel.

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.

VII. 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 and the enclosed Form 1842-1. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in the Worland BLM Field Office, 101 S. 23rd, P.O. Box 119, Worland, Wyoming 82401, within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21 (58 FR 4939, January 19, 1993) or 43 CFR 2804.1 or 43 CFR 2884.1 for a stay 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 of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below.

Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413); Rocky Mountain Region; 755 Parfet Street, Suite 151; Lakewood, CO 80215; at the same time the original documents are filed with this office.

If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

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 and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted; and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

/s/ Bill Hill
Bill Hill, Worland Field Manager

01/09/07
Date

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

I have reviewed this environmental assessment (WY-010-EA06-56) including the analysis of potentially significant impacts. I have determined that the proposed action, as modified by the mitigation measures described below will not cause significant impacts to the human environment and that an EIS is not required. I find that implementation of the proposed action would not create unnecessary or undue degradation of Public Lands. Alternative one (proposed action) would be in conformance with the appropriate approved land use plans.

Authorized Officer /s/ Bill Hill Date 01/09/07
Bill Hill, Worland Field Office

Mitigation Measures/Remarks:

Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations applies to all Public Lands: Department of the Interior.

Information will be posted on the Kiosks encouraging visitors to comply with Principles of LEAVE NO TRACE and TREAD LIGHTLY!

LEAVE NO TRACE

Plan Ahead and Prepare

Know the area and what to expect, travel in small groups, and select appropriate equipment.

Camp and Travel on Durable Surfaces

Concentrate use in popular areas, spread use in remote areas, and avoid places where impact is just beginning.

Dispose of Waste Properly

Reduce litter at the source by repackaging food, pack it in, and pack it out, dispose of trash and garbage properly. Practice good sanitation - dispose of human waste responsibly, minimize soap and food scraps in waste water, avoid contaminating water sources when washing, dispose of fishing and hunting waste appropriately.

Leave What You Find

Minimize site alterations, avoid damaging trees and plants, leave natural objects and cultural artifacts for others to discover and enjoy.

Minimize Use and Impact From Fires

Be aware of regulations and weather conditions. Stoves are often the best option. If you must build a fire, use existing fire rings. Collect only dead and downed wood or bring your own.

Respect Wildlife

Avoid disturbing wildlife, enjoy wildlife at a distance, store food properly.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Reduce your impact on other visitors, respect the privacy of others, and keep noise to a minimum.

TREAD LIGHTLY!

Travel only where permitted.

Know what areas/roads/trails are open to vehicles.

Respect the rights of others.

Be considerate of others on the roads/trail that you travel. Vehicles yield the right-of-way to bicycles, hikers, and horses.

Educate yourself.

Obtain information on your destination before you go. If you have questions contact the managing agency of the area(s) you are visiting.

Avoid streams, meadows, wildlife areas, etc.

Be aware of wildlife habitat. Crashing through underbrush or across open meadows upsets the balance of nature, destroys nesting sites, and disturbs wildlife.

Drive and travel responsibly.

Use common sense. Avoid muddy roads and trails and stay out of meadows and wetlands.

These principles of Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly! are a guide to minimizing signs of visitation to the expansive and varied BLM-administered public lands. These principles are intended to support and complement BLM regulations. Additional information on the Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly! programs are available at the Worland Field Office.