

September 8, 2004

Proposed Rule for Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use
C/O Content Analysis Team
P.O. Box 221150
Salt Lake City, Utah 84122-1150



Please consider the comments presented in this letter on behalf of the Colorado Wildlife Federation. Our organization is comprised of over 3000 members representing a broad spectrum of outdoor recreation and wildlife interests. These comments are based upon a review of the information provided in the July 15, 2004 edition of the Federal Register.

It is interesting to note that the topic of motor vehicle use on National Forest lands was important enough to be addressed in two executive orders in the 1970s. As stated in the Federal Register, motor vehicle use on these lands has increased dramatically since the executive orders were issued. Thus, considering the actual and potential negative impacts of motor vehicle use, there is now an urgent need to more fully and efficiently address management of these uses. In fact, this topic has been of very high interest among outdoor users here in Colorado and has been a priority issue for our organization for the last several years.

Reasonable restrictions of vehicle use have been shown to increase habitat effectiveness for elk, bighorn sheep and a wide range of nongame species, including state and federally listed species such as the lynx and wolverine. Better management of vehicle use will also reduce erosion of land areas and sedimentation of streams with corresponding benefits for fisheries and water quality.

The Colorado Wildlife Federation strongly supports your current proposed efforts, and we request strong reform that will have a positive impact upon the ground. With this in mind, we request you fully consider the following comments:

- Please limit vehicle use to reasonable and manageable systems of roads and specifically designated off-road vehicle routes utilizing the criteria outlined in the Federal Register proposal.
- Establish a clear, short-term and enforceable timeframe in which roads and routes must be designated for vehicle use.
- Establish a uniform national policy of marking roads and routes available for vehicle use and provide maps to the public that illustrate these routes. Strengthen penalties for violating the described regulations and streamline the regulations to make enforcement more effective and efficient.
- Devote the necessary resources to enforcing these regulations. This step is of critical importance. Failure to enforce existing regulations is an ongoing problem that, if not addressed, will render the current efforts meaningless. State and county law enforcement agencies can be enlisted to assist, but they will need supplemental federal resources to do so.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment upon this important and timely issue. We look forward to your final decisions and implementation schedule.

Sincerely,

Suzanne O'Neill
Board of Directors Chair
Colorado Wildlife Federation

CC: Colorado Congressional Delegation
Congressional Sportsmen Caucus