

Scoping Document Request for Comments

Review and Revisions to the Ely Ranger District Motor Vehicle Use Maps

**USDA Forest Service – Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Ely Ranger District
White Pine, Nye and Lincoln Counties
February 24, 2012**

BACKGROUND

In 2005, the Chief of the Forest Service identified unmanaged recreation, especially impacts from unmanaged off-highway vehicles (OHVs), as one of the four threats facing the nation's forests and grasslands. In response to that issue, the Forest Service released revised regulations (36 CFR 212) for Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use. The final rule was published in the Federal Register on November 9, 2005. The rule requires: Designation of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use by vehicle class and, if appropriate, by time of year (36 CFR 212.51); and Identification of designated roads, trails, and areas on a published motor vehicle use map (36 CFR 212.56).

Following designation and map publication, possession or operation of motor vehicle other than in accordance with those designations would be prohibited off designated routes (36 CFR 261.13).

On February 9, 2009 a Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact was signed for the Ely Ranger District Travel Management Project. This decision designated which roads and trails were open to motorized use on the Ely Ranger District. In 2010 motor vehicle use maps were published for the Ely Ranger District in accordance with the decision signed in 2009. Since 2009, the Ely Ranger District has been actively working to install route markers on nearly all open motorized routes on the District. The District has been emphasizing education in regards to the motor vehicle use maps and enforcement has generally been limited to prohibited cross-country travel and wilderness related offences.

PROPOSED ACTION

Regulations for Travel Management at 36 CFR 212.54 provide for periodic review and possible revisions of travel management plans including updates to the motor vehicle use maps. This scoping document is very different from documents which you may have seen in the past. At this time there is really no Proposed Action. As we have worked to implement the Ely Travel Management Plan we have received comments from the public as well as our own employees with concerns that there may be mistakes on the maps, roads that were overlooked, or roads that may not be passable to the vehicle class identified. Between now and November of 2012 we are requesting public comments and participation to identify if there are changes that need to be made to the Ely Ranger District Motor Vehicle Use Maps (Travel Maps). The following are some key points that I ask that you consider when providing comments:

- This process is not about starting over on the Ely Ranger District Travel Management Plan. This process is about having open communication about specific routes on the District to identify potential mistakes or omissions on the Maps. This open public discussion will occur over the next 8 months at which time we will identify a course of action to address any potential changes to the maps.
- In 2006 a number of new wilderness areas were designated and acres were added to existing wilderness areas on the Ely Ranger District. This process will not address motorized access

within wilderness areas. The Ely Ranger District does not have the authority to change wilderness area boundaries.

- In 2005 the District Ranger for the Ely Ranger District signed a Decision on a Travel Management Plan for the Duck Creek Basin in the Schell Creek Mountain Range. This Plan has been in effect for nearly 7 years. Although we can discuss motorized access issues in this area and we will consider issues brought forward I am less inclined to make changes to this plan since it has been relatively successful and the Travel Management Plan has been in place for an extended period of time.
- If you provide comments during this process it is very important that you provide as much information as possible. Good location data (GPS Information if possible), pictures, or a personal on the ground description of the situation and other pertinent information.
- Finally, if you own private property within or adjacent to the Ely Ranger District, hold a permit for an activity on the Forest (grazing permit, outfitter and guide, or other special authorization), or visit the Forest frequently it is important that you review the current Travel Maps which are available at the Ely Ranger District Office to determine if the roads and trails you use are identified on the maps.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation in this process is critical. It is important that if you use motor vehicles on the Ely Ranger District or have concerns regarding motor vehicle access that you become involved and let us know your thoughts. We are not always going to agree and we will not be able to meet all expectations, however, with good communication I feel strongly that we can identify a course of action which is balanced and meets most public needs.

Over the next 8 months we will hold a series of open houses where members of the public can come and look over maps and talk with me and my staff about specific concerns. The following are the dates and times for each public meeting:

- Saturday March 24, 2012 from 2:00 to 6:00 PM
- Wednesday May 15, 2012 from 3:00 to 7:00 PM
- Monday July 23, 2012 from 3:00 to 7:00 PM
- Friday September 21, 2012 from 3:00 to 7:00 PM

Meeting locations will be at the Ely Ranger District Office at 825 Avenue E. In the meantime I encourage anyone with an interest or concerns to review the Ely Ranger District Motor Vehicle Use Maps which are available at our office or on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest web site at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/htnf/home/?cid=stelprdb5246242>

I also encourage you to talk with me or my staff about your concerns. You may also send in the attached form to indicate your interest in continuing to be involved in this process.

Thank You,

Jose Noriega
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Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
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jnoriega@fs.fed.us

Joshua Simpson
Ely District Recreation Staff
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
(775) 289-5129
jsimpson@fs.fed.us

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU ...

If you would like more information or to comment on this proposal, write or call:

Joshua Simpson, District Recreation Staff or
Jose Noriega, District Ranger
Ely Ranger District
825 Ave E
Ely, NV 89301
775-289-3031
jsimpson@fs.fed.us or jnoriega@fs.fed.us

**Ely Ranger District – Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Review and Revisions for the Ely Motor Vehicle Use Maps**

For Official Use Only

Comment #: _____
Date Received: _____
Logged in by: _____

Comment Form

We have provided this form for your convenience. Please use this or any other format to let us know your concerns or ideas about this project. Send comments to: Joshua Simpson, District Recreation Staff; or Jose Noriega, District Ranger, Ely Ranger District, 825 Avenue E, Ely, NV 89301.

For your information: names and individuals commenting on Forest Service proposals may be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

Name: _____
Organization: _____
Address: _____
Contact Phone Number: _____

Here are my concerns, issues, and/or ideas about the Review and Revision to the Ely Motor Vehicle Use Maps (use additional pages if needed):

Please check all that apply...

_____ **I have information about the area that may be helpful in the decision.**
_____ **Feel free to contact me at _____.**

_____ **Please send me the final decision document.**

_____ **I have no further interest in this proposal and do not want to receive further mailings.**