

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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To: All State Directors
Attn: State Recreation, Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) and Planning Leads

From: Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning

Subject: Clarification of OHV Designations and Travel Management in the BLM Land Use Planning Process
Effective Upon Receipt DD:

Program Area: Recreation and Land Use Planning.

Purpose: Emphasize policy; provide clarification and additional guidance for travel management decisions for the land use planning process.

Background: The BLM defines appropriate access to the public lands through the land use planning process. The process includes the preparation of Resource Management Plans (RMPs), which usually cover large areas, and subsequent activity plans, which are more site-specific documents. The planning process is flexible and allows for revision, amendment or maintenance as appropriate.

The BLM released the current version of the Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1) in November 2000. Guidance for Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) designations in the land use planning process was incorporated in the Recreation Section (Appendix C, Section II. C.). As field offices implemented the guidance for RMP development, revision or amendment, they identified a need to 1) clarify how to implement the guidance in the recreation section, and 2) introduce refinements to the existing process.

The Policy/Action section in this memorandum summarizes the most important elements of policy in the H-1601-1. Attachment 2 clarifies handbook policy, provides guidance on how to implement the policy and introduces the planning process refinements. Attachment 3 summarizes current policy and process refinements in a matrix format.

Policy/Action: The BLM will manage motorized and other access on the public lands in accordance with existing law, executive orders, proclamation, regulation, and policy. Within this context:

- Road and trail access (and OHV management) guidance will be incorporated into every RMP to ensure public and resource needs are met. At a minimum, each RMP will divide planning areas into OHV **area** designations that are open, limited or closed. The RMP will include a map of area designations.
- Specific criteria for open, limited and closed designations are provided in definitions outlined in 43 CFR 8340.0-5 (f), (g) and (h). Additional criteria are provided by existing law, proclamation, executive order, regulation or policy.
- Selection of a network of roads and trails should be performed for all limited areas in each RMP. This requires

establishment of a process that includes selecting specific roads and trails within the limited area or sub-area and specifying limitation(s) placed on use. The RMP will include a map of the roads and trails open and available in each area.

- If complexity, controversy, or incomplete data make it impossible to complete the selection of a road and trail network for any area designated as limited within reasonable timeframes or budget availability, the BLM will perform the selection process for all limited areas that can be completed. For any limited area or sub-area that cannot be completed in the RMP, the BLM will, to the extent possible:
 - incorporate a map of a preliminary road and trail network, including known roads or trails that are expected to be included in the final network;
 - define short-term management guidance for road and trail access and activities, including interim management guidelines for proper identification of the preliminary road and trail network, including signing and maintenance of open roads and trails;
 - outline additional data needs and a strategy to collect needed information;
 - establish a clear planning sequence, including public collaboration, criteria and constraints for subsequent road and trail selection and identification;
 - produce a schedule to complete the limited area or sub-area road and trail selection process. Normally, this process should **not exceed** five years; and
 - Install signs, and in some cases, construct barriers or perform restoration on closed roads and trails.

Time Frame: These clarifications are in effect immediately.

Budget Impact: There is no significant budget impact.

Manual/Handbook Sections Affected: Implementation of guidance provided in BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1 Appendix C, Section II.C.1., Release 1-1667, 11/22/00).

Coordination: The BLM Washington Office Recreation and Planning Groups prepared this guidance, with extensive consultation from State Recreation, OHV and Planning Leads, the National Travel and Trails Team, and the Washington Office National Landscape Conservation System staff.

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3 Attachments:

[1 – Definitions \(1 p\)](#)

[2 - Clarification Guidance \(3 pp\)](#)

[3 - Designation Process Requirements & Recommendations \(1 p\)](#)

Definitions

Implementation Plan: A site-specific plan written to implement decisions made in a land use plan. An implementation plan usually selects and applies best management practices to meet land use plan objectives. Implementation plans are synonymous with “activity” plans. Examples of implementation plans include interdisciplinary management plans, habitat management plans, and allotment management plans.

Land Use Plan: A set of decisions that establish management direction for land within an administrative area, as prescribed under the planning provisions of FLPMA; an assimilation of land use plan-level decisions developed through the planning process outlined in 43 CFR 1600, regardless of the scale at which the decisions were developed.

Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV): OHV is synonymous with, and the more current term for, Off-Road Vehicles (ORV). ORV is defined in 43 CFR 8340.0-5 (a).

OHV area designations: Refers to the land use plan decisions that permit, establish conditions, or prohibit OHV activities on specific areas of public lands. All public lands are required to have OHV designations (43 CFR 8342.1). The CFR requires all BLM-managed public lands to be designated as open, limited or closed to off-road vehicles, and provides guidelines for designation. The definitions of open, limited and closed are provided in 43 CFR 8340.0-5 (f), (g) and (h), respectively.

Resource Management Plan (RMP): The BLM considers resource management plans to be synonymous with land use plans (as defined above), so the terms may be used interchangeably. Land use plan decisions made in RMPs establish goals and objectives for resource management (such as desired future conditions), the measures needed to achieve these goals and objectives, and parameters for using public lands. Land use planning decisions are usually made on a broad scale and customarily guide subsequent site-specific implementation decisions.

RMP area: Most RMPs cover a large planning and management area. As a result, the planning area may be divided into smaller areas, each with differing values, issues, needs and opportunities that may warrant differing management prescriptions.

Road and Trail Selection: For each limited area, the BLM should choose a network of roads and trails that are available for motorized use, and other access needs including non-motorized and non-mechanized use, consistent with the goals, objectives and other considerations described in the plan.

Road and Trail Identification: For the purposes of this guidance, road and trail identification refers to the on-the-ground process (including signs, maps and other means of informing the public about requirements) of implementing the road and trail network selected in the land use plan or implementation plan. Guidance on the identification requirements is in 43 CFR 8342.2 (c).

Preliminary Network: If a final road and trails network is not identified in the RMP process, the plan should include a preliminary network that will be identified for use until a final network is selected through a subsequent implementation plan.

Clarification Guidance

This attachment provides policy clarification and additional guidance for travel and access designations for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) travel management planning process.

Designation Process Requirements

This clarification applies specifically to the second paragraph of the Recreation Section of the Land Use Planning Handbook 1601-1 (Release 1-1667, 11/22/00-Appendix C.II.C.1.), which states:

“...All OHV designations, including road and trail designations or redesignations (see 43 CFR 8340.0-8 and 8342.2), must be made through the land use planning process described in 43 CFR 1600. OHV designations should be reviewed periodically to assure that the resource objectives are being met (see 43 CFR 8342.3).”

To ensure consistent implementation of this guidance during land use plan development, revision or amendment, all Field Offices must complete the following steps:

1. Include OHV designation decisions for all public lands in the planning area in all Resource Management Plans (RMPs). All public lands must be designated as “open, limited or closed.” Criteria for open, limited and closed **area** designations are established in 43 CFR 8340.0-5, (f) (g) and (h) respectively. Other existing law, proclamation, regulation or executive order may limit the use of the open area designation or impose additional requirements relating to OHV use in specific circumstances. Include a map of all area designations.
2. Include selection of a travel management network in the limited areas that can be completed during the development of an RMP. Establish a process to identify specific roads and trails that will be available for public use, and to specify limitations placed on use. Products from this process will include:
 - A map of roads and trails open for OHV use.
 - Definitions and additional limitations for specific roads and trails (defined in 43 CFR 8340.0-5 (g)).
 - Criteria developed to set parameters, to select or reject specific roads and trails in the final network, and to specify limitations.

Examples of these criteria might include: desired future conditions for access, important destinations or roads or trails critical for particular activities, road and trail density or location criteria, goals related to conservation of visual resources, or sensitive habitat management.
 - Guidelines for management, monitoring and maintenance of the limited area or sub-area road and trail system.

Guidelines might include items such as: seasonal limitations, vehicle type and size restrictions, and road construction and maintenance standards.
 - Indicators to guide future plan maintenance, amendments or revisions related to OHV area designations or the approved road and trail system within limited areas or sub-areas.

Indicators could include results of monitoring data, new information, or changed circumstances.

3. There is an alternative to the preceding step for areas designated as limited that cannot be completed during the RMP process because of one or more of the following constraints:
 - the existing situation involves especially complex or controversial travel management planning;
 - existing data are inadequate;
 - more time is needed than is available under the RMP planning schedule; or
 - sufficient funding is not available.

In these cases, develop a preliminary road and trail network, and establish a process to select a final road and trail network, normally at the implementation plan level. This work should be completed within 5 years. The outcome of this interim process should document the decision-making process used to develop the initial network, provide the basis for future management decisions, and help set guidelines for adaptive road and trail network adjustments throughout the life of the plan. These uncompleted areas should be identified in the RMP and the following tasks completed for each area:

- produce a map of a preliminary road and trail network;
 - define short-term management guidance for road and trail access and activities in areas or sub-areas not completed;
 - outline additional data needs, and a strategy to collect needed information;
 - provide a clear planning sequence, including public collaboration, criteria and constraints for subsequent road and trail selection and identification; and
 - provide a schedule to complete the limited area or sub-area road and trail selection process.
4. Develop guidance regarding the monitoring process in each RMP. An important component of the monitoring process is the development of specific management objectives, maintenance standards and other narrative guidance so that future management actions are consistent with desired standards.

Protests and Appeals

The open, limited and closed area designations, and the criteria established for road and trail selection in areas designated as limited, will be considered RMP-level decisions and are protestable under the planning regulations at 43 CFR 1610. Selection and identification of the individual roads and trails within the system will be considered implementation-level decisions, and are appealable under 43 CFR Part 4, even when performed concurrently with the RMP.

Area Designation and Road/Trail Selection Process Recommendations

To ensure consistent land use plan decisions for public access via mechanized and non-motorized/non-mechanized modes of travel, it is highly recommended that all Field Offices complete the following steps during land use plan development, revision or amendment.

1. Complete travel management planning, which should incorporate comprehensive travel management, in addition to making the required OHV decisions in land use plans. Comprehensive travel management involves proactive consideration of public access, resource management, and regulatory needs through land-use planning. It should incorporate consideration of access needs, effects of, and interactions among all forms of travel, including motorized; mechanized; and non-motorized/non-mechanized travel; equestrian and other livestock, walking, mountain bike, boat and other travel modes.
2. Provide specific guidance about the process of managing excepted motorized vehicle access for authorized, permitted or otherwise approved vehicles for those specific categories of motorized vehicle uses that are exempt from designation as off-highway vehicles (43 CFR 8340.0-5 (a) (1) through (5)).
3. Start travel management planning and the decision-making process by identifying desired future conditions at a landscape level. Determine the level of data and information needed for area designations and road and trail selections. Select and incorporate roads and trails into the transportation network according to the guidance established in the RMP.
4. Use road and trail inventory information from all available sources, including states, tribal governments, counties, other agencies, interest groups and individuals. This information is usually sufficient to enable the BLM to make the necessary OHV area designations in the RMP. Involving the public in the collection and analysis of transportation data can be an important factor in achieving transportation management goals.
5. Choose individual roads and trails, rather than using inherited roads and trails. Most existing roads and trails on public lands were created by use over time, rather than planned and constructed for specific activities or needs. Instead of a decision-making process to decide which individual roads and trails should be closed or left open, consider a broader range of possibilities for management of individual roads and trails, including reroutes, reconstruction or new construction, as well as closures. These are tools that should be used to develop a quality travel system. A well-designed travel system can direct travel away from sensitive areas, yet provide quality recreational activities and access for commercial and recreational needs.

Designation Process Requirements

Issue Covered	November 2000 Handbook Guidance	Clarification
OHV and travel area designations - open, closed, limited.	Performed at RMP level.	Performed at RMP level. Limited areas should have any area criteria established - seasonal limitations, desired future conditions for resources and access/recreation needs.
Selection of a road and trail network for limited areas.	Required to be performed as part of RMP process.	Performed to extent possible in RMP. Assumption is that it can be accomplished in RMP. If complexity, controversy or incomplete data make it impossible to complete designation for limited areas, the RMP must clearly state process and schedule for completion, to the extent possible, within 5 years.
Which decisions are protestable as RMP decisions? Which can be appealed to IBLA?	All OHV decisions to be made as part of the RMP process; implies that all decisions are protestable.	Area designations, objectives and criteria for limited area travel considered RMP decisions and are therefore protestable. Individual road and trail selections are implementation decisions and therefore appealable, even if performed within the RMP.
Travel management monitoring.	OHV monitoring is required, but not defined in CFR and not mentioned in 1601 Handbook.	The importance of OHV monitoring to planning, development of management standards and objectives, and maintenance standards for road and trail systems is emphasized in Attachment 2, under <i>Designation Process Requirements</i> .