



## **Position on Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle (ROV) Use on Public Lands**

Drivers of ROVs are increasingly accessing public lands for recreational purposes, creating the need for additional oversight from land management officials. ROVs are in some cases regarded by particular National Forests and BLM Units no differently than ATVs, while other Forests and Units are moving toward allowing the vehicles only on mixed-use roads and public lands officials in other areas have yet to attempt to manage the vehicles. In an effort to “get in front” of the issue ROHVA has developed the following positions regarding where ROV use should be considered appropriate.

### **Where should ROVs be allowed?**

It is ROHVA's position that land management officials should *consider* allowing access to ROVs to any routes, trails or areas open to OHV use, provided that there is no safety or resource issue that should preclude ROVs. Unpaved roads open to motor vehicle use should be open to ROVs unless safety and/or resource management issues exist. Some public land units designate trails open to vehicles that are no wider than 50 inches. In these cases ROHVA supports access for ROVs that meet the maximum width requirement. ROHVA understands that some width restricted trails will not be suitable for ROVs that meet the size requirement for safety and/or sustainability reasons; however, land management officials should make those assessments on a case-by-case basis.

ROHVA supports managed trail systems that provide for opportunities for a mix of motorized uses. In some instances managers may choose to designate ATV or off-highway motorcycle (OHM) only trails as part of the system. ROHVA supports trails designated for certain classes of vehicle provided that, where appropriate, opportunities are offered for ROV riders.

### **ROVs and Travel Management**

The Forest Service Travel Management Rule defines an off-highway vehicle as “any motor vehicle designed for or capable of cross-country travel on or immediately over land, water, sand, snow, ice, marsh, swampland or other natural terrain.” This definition was left vague enough to accommodate the many varieties of OHVs that currently exist, including ROVs, as well as new vehicles yet to be developed. ROHVA supports the Travel Management Rule in principle and encourages ROV enthusiasts to continue to be involved in the route designation process.

It is the position of ROHVA that Forest officials should consider and identify appropriate routes, trails and areas open for ROVs as the Travel Management Rule implementation process moves forward. The rule allows individual Forests to designate trails open to only a certain class or classes of vehicle. For example a Forest could designate a single-track trail as

open only to OHMs, or designate a separate trail as ATV only. ROHVA believes that this provides Forest officials with the flexibility to provide opportunities for a broad mix of motorized uses. As such, Forest officials have the opportunity to develop trail systems that meet the needs of all motorized uses, including ROV use.

### **Why should ROVs be allowed?**

Many routes, trails and areas currently open to OHV use are suitable for ROVs and would require little or no additional analysis to allow the vehicles. ROHVA believes that many current trail systems and systems being finalized through travel management can support ROV use and land managers should identify where they can be driven. In addition, ROVs will provide access to public lands for many Americans who currently have few or no opportunities to enjoy our shared public lands, including the elderly and the disabled.

### **Moving Forward**

ROHVA will partner with other national OHV advocacy groups to work with U.S. Forest Service and BLM officials to develop direction from agency headquarters to individual Forests and Units to increase acceptance of ROVs as a class of OHV that is legitimate for use on public lands. This effort will include encouraging the agencies to develop approved signing for ROVs. Currently, OHV enthusiasts use agency signs with widely recognized depictions of vehicles, such as ATVs, OHMs, and four wheel drive trucks to indicate where their use is allowed. Creating an ROV symbol will allow agencies to convey to ROV operators where ROV access is allowed. ROHVA has provided to the USFS a proposed definition for an ROV that would encompass all ROVs currently in the market which use Forest trails/roads.

As both the Forest Service and the BLM are currently undergoing processes to designate routes, trails and areas open to OHV use, now is a good time to make sure that agency officials understand the need for incorporating ROVs into travel management plans. ROHVA will partner with other national, state and local organizations to work with Forests and BLM units to designate routes, trails and areas open to ROVs. Most Forests have started the travel management process and many are nearing completion; however, it is important to encourage local ROV enthusiasts to weigh in to ensure that ROVs are considered and included on final Motor Vehicle Use Maps, or to lay the groundwork for inclusion in subsequent revisions.

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