

## FAQs: Proposed Repeal of the US Forest Service Travel Management Rule

**What is the Forest Service Travel Management Rule that is proposed for repeal?** *The Travel Management Rule provides forest managers with a framework for deciding where motorized vehicles – e.g., dirt bikes, 4x4s, ATVs, snowmobiles, and ebikes – can be driven within our national forests. It is designed to maintain recreational and commercial access to national forests while preventing excessive erosion, water pollution, and destruction of fish and wildlife habitat. Major elements of the Rule include:*

- *Every national forest must have a designated transportation system that specifies where and how ATVs, dirt bikes, 4WD vehicles, snowmobiles, and cars can be driven. Designations must take into account forest wildlife and resources, maintenance needs and capacity, and potential conflicts with other recreational uses.*
- *The Rule requires that the public is allowed to participate in the process for designating roads, trails and areas for ATVs, dirt bikes, and other off-road vehicles. The planning process is called travel management planning and is carried out by the local national forest or ranger district.*
- *Every national forest must publish a Motor Vehicle Use Map and Over Snow Vehicle Use Map showing the designated system so that the public knows where it is ok to drive a motorized vehicle and where it is not.*
- *Motorized vehicles cannot be driven off the designated system except in prescribed circumstances.*

**Are travel management plans developed by a local Forest Service office or by the Washington DC office of the Forest Service?** *Travel management plans are developed locally. The Forest Service Travel Management Rule provides a national framework for the development of local travel management plans assuring public engagement and consistency for all National Forest users.*

**Can the public participate in travel management planning?** *Yes! Per the requirements of the Travel Management Rule, travel management planning is a public process.*

**Why was the Rule established initially?** *The Forest Service published the 2005 Travel Management Rule because there was widespread concern that unmanaged recreation was causing significant damage to wildlife and forest ecosystems. In fact, Dale Bosworth, the former Chief of the Forest Service who finalized the Travel Management Rule under President George Bush, identified unmanaged outdoor recreation as one of the four leading threats to our national forests.*

*Before the Rule, there was no consistency -- and few constraints -- on road-building or on off-road vehicles. In many national forests, dirt bikes, 4x4s and other motorized vehicles could be driven anywhere -- through fish-bearing streams and across wet meadows and other sensitive wildlife habitats -- leading to fragmentation and disturbance. Unmanaged access also led to significant conflict between recreational users who sought different backcountry experiences.*

*Given the absence of clear maps and consistent rules, even the most well-intentioned off-road vehicle drivers couldn't tell where they should or should not drive their vehicles. Similarly, Forest Service law enforcement officers couldn't hold bad actors accountable for their misbehavior.*

**How does the Travel Management Rule affect fish and wildlife?** *The Travel Management Rule requires the Forest Service to minimize harassment of fish and wildlife or significant disruption of habitat when designating trails and areas for motorized vehicle use. This is an extremely important tool for protecting fish and wildlife habitat on National Forest lands, including deer, elk, trout and salmon popular with hunters and anglers. This is why many hunting and angling organizations support retaining the Rule.*

**How does the Travel Management Rule affect recreation access?** *The Travel Management Rule protects public access to national forests by providing certainty over where, when, and what types of motor vehicle uses are allowed. It helps ensure that all types of outdoor recreationists can have quality experiences by designating areas and routes for motorized recreation and emphasizing other places for human-powered recreation. Before the Rule, there was considerable conflict between recreationists and dissatisfaction with the Forest Service for not managing recreational access better.*

**How does the Travel Management Rule affect grazing, mining, energy development, or logging?** *Activities on national forests such as grazing are authorized through issuance of a permit or lease. Motor vehicle use off the designated system can occur if such use is specified in the authorization for the activity. In addition, The Rule helps reduce conflicts between public recreational use on national forests and permitted or commercial activities because it reduces the likelihood of the public driving or recreating in permitted sites.*

**Will repeal of the Travel Management Rule affect wildlife?** *Rule repeal will have rippling effects. In the short term, it may be more difficult for law enforcement officers to hold those taking off-road vehicles where they are not allowed accountable, leading to destruction of wildlife habitat. In the longer term, however, repeal may take us back to the level of habitat destruction and lawlessness that existed before the Rule as travel management decisions are dismantled or modified.*

**Will repeal of the Travel Management Rule affect where motorized vehicles can be driven in my national forest?** *Existing travel management decisions will remain in place until the Forest Service changes them. However, by repealing the Rule, the overarching prohibition to driving off the designated system will go away which could lead to widespread cross-country driving and route proliferation.*

*Also and importantly, the Forest Service in 2025 repealed its regulations requiring public notification and engagement on most projects. Without the Travel Management Rule – that explicitly requires public engagement on travel management decisions -- there is no guarantee whatsoever that the public will know about or be able to engage in changes to public access or specific roads, trails and areas.*