

The National Forests are here for use by all who are willing to abide by the rules, whether they like them or not. It is my belief that those who believe they are not bound by the rules are no more than 5 or 10% of any category of users including hiking or off road vehicles.

I believe that it is proper for any use category of persons to pursue avenues that would have the potential of increasing their opportunities for accessing their particular mode of enjoying the National Forests. This includes those who enjoy hiking or off road vehicles.

I also believe that it is the responsibility of all concerned to be sensitive to the values of others who do not have the same values as those who are attempting to make changes. In this case IF it was possible to ban off road vehicles, I would NOT support it even though I personally have no use, nor desire, to use an off road vehicle, and would have been very happy if they had never been invented.

Having said all that, it appears to me that the Shoshone National Forest (SNF) Travel Plan is not being fair handed relative to my previous statements. The reasons for this statement are the following, and are based on my observations of and in the Clarks Fork Ranger district.

I can not speak for all those who prefer to walk/hike/backpack, but for myself, I have, and still do so, in part for the solitude that can be found off trail. I would note that solitude was frequently mentioned by commentators to SNF 10 or 15 years ago, we have not disappeared, we have become the minority.. There are many places in the Forest where this condition can be found, but some of my treasured places (located over more than 70 years) have been discovered by off road vehicles, without any obvious (no?) direction or control by the SNF. Add to that the fact that as one ages, his/her ability to cover ground decreases; yet the availability of solitude that does not require significant physical effort appears to decline with every passing year, especially recently. Of course, distance needed to travel to distant places is no barrier to those who use motorized vehicles.

As the time passed my ability to cover ground decreased, yet I am pleased to know that I have passed those areas on to the next generation (possibly even to off road vehicles) almost exactly in the same condition as I found them. I can find nothing in the Plan that takes this use into consideration. Indeed, my ability to hike to places of solitude are now limited to the amount of supplemental oxygen I can carry or induce relatives/friends to carry for me as I have survived, at least to this date, two different cancers and can not hike without it.. Efforts to persuade Shoshone National Forest to close 178-1b and NZ37 where it crosses into the Wild and Scenic Clarks Fork River Corridor on more than one occasion have not been successful, Having accessed much of the deep canyon, I had hopes, years ago, that the area accessed inside the Corridor by NZ37(NZ05) would remain close to what it was those many years ago.

I would note that the 1975 amendment to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was applied to evaluating the Clarks Fork for wild and scenic designation, with a completion date of 2 October 1975. That study, in part, provides: (1) description of objectives, suitability, recommend suitable segments; (2) Established boundaries; (3) Map shows dotted lines, not SNF numbered roads; (4) “*General management directed toward maintenance of natural conditions in the **study area.***” (emphasis added).

Section 1(b) of the wild and scenic rivers act (Public Law 90542) states in part “...**shall** be preserved in free flowing condition *and* that they **and** their *immediate environs shall be protected...*” (emphasis added). Any one who has served in a Governmental entity knows that the word 'shall' means it must be done. I submit that the SNF has not complied with either the general management nor the preservation section of public law 90542. If the SNF had competent responsible management back then that would have complied, there would be no issue today concerning road incursions into the Clarks Fork Corridor. The current Shoshone Forest decision makers need to step up and **do what their predecessors failed to do, and do what is right and proper by closing 178-1b and NZ37 (NZ05) where it meets the Clarks Fork Wild and Scenic River Corridor boundary.** On the SNF website you list the Clarks Fork as a “Special place”. I submit that the area serviced by NZ 37 within the

corridor is far from a special place now due to, what appears to be, unauthorized and/pr unregulated road extension and alteration of the natural environment since I first saw it in 1972. If, once again the road incursions into the corridor are not closed, I can only assume that the "Squeaky Wheel" principle and economics trumps the law, respect for all users, and responsible decisions. Off road vehicle users presumably put more money into the economy than any other category of user, certainly more than hikers/backpackers, and therefore, in some opinions, deserve preferential treatment.

I understand and appreciate that the SNF is a huge area to administer, but it would seem only reasonable that at the very least NZ37 leading to the Wild and Scenic boundary could have had some seasonal and/or moisture closure requirements put into the Plan. From my perspective over the last 15 years or so that road has been neglected to the detriment of the area adjacent to Crandall Creek. I am speaking largely to the two areas that get mucky with enough moisture. This has led to the shifting of and/or new routes through those areas. I suppose, like with most governmental agencies, an administrator can not just call a crushed rock outfit and order 15 or 20 truckloads of crushed rock to put in those mushy areas, but would have to do archaeological (even though if it had been present is now totally destroyed), environmental damage (far less than the additional tracks), and fully engineered. But to ignore it or not restrict it in some way has led to an absolute eyesore with multiple tracks made because the used track reached impassibility even for off road vehicles, or someone simply wanted to go a different way and to heck with the environment. That is poor stewardship by the SNF and poor decisions by the 5-10% of off road vehicle users of that road that push through or alter the road pathway regardless of the environmental cost. Additionally over the past few years the number of deviations from NZ37 have increased, and tracks that take off away from the road for no apparent reason other than because they could, have increased.

I, on principle, am opposed to incursion into designated roadless areas, even though it is my understanding that trails are permitted. Part of my problem centers around those who are unwilling or unable to abide by the rules. I presume that the terrain between the two legs that would make the loop is such that presently it can not be traversed even by an off road vehicle. Would making that connection result in opening up areas beyond the loop in the roadless area available for them? Has that concept been taken into account? Secondly, it has been my experience that once a 'gray area' decision is made it is much easier to do the 'end around' again. Lastly, it appears to me that the SNF is going too far to reward bad behavior and should decrease some of what the Plan proposes. Won't that penalized those who follow the rules? Yes, but if they join the effort to report/educate those exhibiting bad behavior, it is more likely that behavior will improve. Almost everyone understands that rewarding bad behavior rarely results in improvement. My perspective is that the recommendations of the User Working Group and a years' worth of implementing it to evaluate the effectiveness would only be prudent before final decisions are made. Words are cheap, actions tell the tale.

Regarding 65" widths: I do not know how many there are, but my old small pickup will fit into a 65" width road track provided the road clearance needed is not too high. I would not be hard to increase the road clearance. How many other cars & trucks are out there that can fit or altered to fit a 65 inch track. History has shown that there are those who will circumvent the vehicle restrictive vehicular specs, like tire pressure, if the opportunity roadway is found. Further, has SNF decided that 65 inches is the limit for width in the future?

In conclusion, what follows are some of the things I hope the User Work Group will recommend.

Use something similar to game motion cameras, one to monitor all incoming vehicles, at least one on non permitted trails/roads to identify (either driver or vehicle or both) those who are not licensed or are on an unauthorized trail/road.

Changing identifying signs/markers to **authorized** roads/trails at their starting point potentially solves the problem of 'no motorized vehicle' signs disappearing, which the SNF seems to have an

exceptional lack of ability and/or desire to replace. Labeling authorized routes would mean anything **without** signage is **not permitted**. At present, unauthorized routes either with the no motorized vehicles posts removed or newly established tracks by the 5-10% probably lure a significant number of normally respectful users into using it (the 'track is well used so it must be OK' argument) and the more the track is used the more users will take it.

Make it a **requirement** that all users **must** have the most recent map of authorized roads/trails for ATV/ORV vehicles with them when using SNF. Those who do not have the proper maps would be subject to a penalty of minor significance, provided they are in compliance with the road they are on.

SIGNIFICANT penalties for not complying with the rules up to and including confiscation of the vehicle, regardless of whether the driver is the owner or not. This would make owners being responsible for the behavior of persons to whom they loan their vehicles.

Maps online and at Ranger Stations are not available enough. There must be signs (similar to those at some horse/foot trail heads, showing the permitted routes. There are those who will not use or are unaware of the SNF map availability. Putting maps for users to take at "roadheads" is probably an exercise in futility, as they would probably disappear rapidly and someone to check on them all would be full time job. Making multiple map copies available to those willing to educate their fellow users could be a useful tool if significant numbers of responsible persons would step up.

Respectfully submitted 26 July, 2016

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