

## Comments on F.S. Travel Management Plan

At the September 24 meeting in Amidon, one of the first comments I heard from F.S. personnel was the lack of law enforcement on our federal lands...with only 1 to 1-1/2 law enforcement personnel assigned to a large portion of federal lands in our state. We were also told local law enforcement would be available at times. These comments concern me. Does F.S. have plans to hire additional law enforcement with their new travel management plan?

I'm also concerned about gates being left open. In the Black Hills of South Dakota, they have installed auto gates only wide enough for ATV's to cross. Is F.S. going to provide auto gates where needed?

Will F.S. provide signs that tell visitors what trails are open to public and what trails are closed to public? I assume there are trails that go to stock tanks, electrical transmission lines, and water holding tanks. These trails should be marked as closed to public.

Are there times when all trails can be shut down for ATV access? Western North Dakota is currently suffering from extreme drought conditions. Could trails be closed to public based on drought conditions?

Can these same trails be closed to public access during wet conditions and trails are muddy? Our grasslands are mostly on gumbo soil, and during wet conditions there would be extreme ruts developed. Who is responsible for trail maintenance?

Another concern of mine is the spread of noxious weeds. Does the visiting public know what leafy spurge, hounds tongue, Canada thistle, worm wood look like? Who will be responsible for checking to see that no weeds are brought in on ATV's?

A few years ago LMGA was very concerned about sage grouse and their habitat. Are sage grouse no longer a concern? Are there certain times in the year when travel on trails should be prohibited because of nesting of the birds? Are there areas close to lecs that should be avoided during dancing rituals?

Are the big horn sheep that we currently have on Federal lands also sensitive at times to visitors disrupting their lambing process?

Will there be times when trails are closed to ATV visitors when wild life have priority?

We need trails on Federal lands to provide access for emergency vehicles, law enforcement, fire trucks, electricity maintenance, and ranchers to administer to their livestock needs. Who is responsible for maintenance for trails and crossings?

Is the public going to be charged and will they need a permit on their ATV to be on public lands?

*Rance Bowman*

With the establishment of a new travel management plan, do North Dakota section line laws prevail?

Also does North Dakota Road by prescription Law apply? These have to be spelled out as to what State, section line law, and Federal Law have precedent? Who is liable in the event of accident or injury on ATV trails?

If F.S. is going to initiate a successful travel management plan, do it right from the start. Get legalities in place first. Get adequate funding for law enforcement personnel. Get signs put up that designate what trails are open to public and trails closed to public. Who is responsible for trail maintenance? Get ATV crossings put in to eliminate gates being left open. Get verbiage in place that closes down all public access in times of drought and wet conditions. Protect our wildlife at sensitive times. Be responsible. Take care of our resource.

*Bruce Bowman*