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Organization: Ravalli County Off Road User Association

Title: President

Comments: Re: Forest Plan Revision [ndash] Scoping Comments

To Whom It May Concern:

The Ravalli County Off Road User Association (RCORUA) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization located in Ravalli County, Montana. Our mission is to support OHV use on National Forest System (NFS) lands, while enjoying and promoting public lands and recreational activities. Our membership consists of individuals, families, businesses, and sponsors who have an interest in these activities.

While we mainly work with the Bitterroot National Forest (NF) on OHV use, our users cross over to the Lolo NF in several locations. We of course enjoy the proximity of the entire Lolo NF for OHV use. RCORUA requests consideration of the following points during analysis of the Forest Plan Revision.

1. OHV use is a key component in Preliminary Issue #2: Sustainable Recreation Opportunities. There should be no further road and trail access limitations placed on OHV users in the new Plan. Travel Management Planning decisions should be kept in place as is, even if roads and trails are not in a navigable state, allowing for future improvements and developments to be usable again.
2. Efforts should be made to prioritize roads that access adjacent Forests, not just the Bitterroot NF. Connectivity for recreational users should be open to future projects, while staying within current policy.
3. Developed and dispersed recreation sites should be kept and planned in the Revision that will allow OHV users to access and enjoy NFS lands. These sites need trailer access for parking, loading/unloading, and camping.
4. A number of OHV users are mobility impaired (ie elderly, handicapped), and these OHV routes provide them with access to their public lands, which would be otherwise difficult if not impossible to access and enjoy. These users access NFS lands to enjoy recreational riding, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, etc. Access also exposes younger generations to our public lands.
5. Any new restrictions on use of our public lands to OHV riders is an infringement on the public's enjoyment of their lands and undermines citizen taxpayer purposes.
6. Preliminary Issue #3: Social and Economic Sustainability. OHV users support local economies, both residents and visitors alike. Both continued and future development of OHV routes would increase and have a positive effect on local businesses (hotels, restaurants, outdoor product suppliers, camping, etc.). Tourism is a significant source of income in our local small communities, and improvements can be realized where attention is given to accessibility to NFS lands.
7. It is important to consider wider than 50" roads and trails for use. Many families, the elderly and handicap users have switched to wider than 50" side by side machines and sharing the roads with full size vehicles can be dangerous for new inexperienced or elderly riders, so having designated routes for the wider machines that are not opened to full size vehicles is a safety concern. Also, a good easy access around gates or closed roads for the size of machines allowed on the closed roads needs to be addressed.

We request careful consideration of OHV use to access NFS lands during the Plan revision. Please contact me if you need additional information, and we will participate in future planning opportunities as they occur.

Respectfully submitted,