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Comments: I want to ask you about some concerns I have heard expressed, about potential unintended access issues which may be raised by the OSV plan as presently conceived. The concern is that "treaded vehicles" may be legally allowed to access any areas open to over snow vehicles, whether or not snow is on the ground, if they are considered as "intended" for OSV use. This could possibly result in a situation where treaded vehicles such as side-by-sides could legally and practically travel on closed roads and trails (or actually even cross country) until May 31st, in any areas legally open to OSV's.

If this is the case, it seems that motorized vehicles could be legally operated on lower elevation lands devoid of snow, which are normally protected from motorized use, including elk winter range and calving areas. They could also be used for spring bear hunting, and would reduce habitat security for a number of species. In addition, this use could conflict with goals for quiet recreation and non-motorized public use.

I never would have thought of this potential problem myself, until someone recently brought it to my attention. I wonder if FS biologists and planners are aware of the potential problem. Is this on your radar?

I recommend that the upcoming draft OSV EA makes it clear what vehicles are defined as OSV's, and limits their ability to travel in areas that are not fully snow covered. A couple of years ago this might have seemed to me as more of a theoretical than an actual problem, but recently I have seen a dramatic increase in the tracks of treaded recreational vehicles on snow covered roads and trails.