



NEWS RELEASE

Nebraska *National Forest*

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Contact Jerry Schumacher

Phone (308) 432-0300

FS hears comments on National Forest travel

The Forest Service completed a series of eight public information meetings across Nebraska in January to explain its proposal to limit motorized travel on the Nebraska and Samuel R. McKelvie National Forests and Oglala National Grassland. According to spokesman Jerry Schumacher, it was time well spent.

“We felt good about the turn-out at the meetings, and confirmed that people have wide-ranging ideas about how travel should be managed on the national forests and grassland in Nebraska,” said Schumacher.

Schumacher noted that over 350 people attended the meetings that included some common themes.

“We heard consistently that there are too few places to ride ATV’s and dirt bikes in Nebraska, and that people value the privilege of riding on the national forests and grassland. At nearly every meeting the suggestion of having a daily fee to ride was proposed, especially if it would mean that more areas would be available for motorized recreation, or that existing areas would be better maintained. In addition, most meeting participants seemed to understand that there are good reasons to propose some limits,” said Schumacher.

A fee to help offset resource impacts is a possibility since the Forest Service, along with other federal land management agencies, has temporary authority from Congress to collect user fees through the Recreation Fee Demonstration program. Under this authority, 95% of the fees collected stay where they are collected to provide necessary funding for maintenance, or upgrading facilities or services.

The Forest Service has received well over a hundred written comments since the series of information meetings. The **comment period will run until March 15, 2004**. Earlier, February 13, 2004, was erroneously identified as the end of the initial comment period.

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Nebraska National Forest
125 North Main Street
Chadron, Nebraska 69337
(308) 432-0300

“The comments we have received so far, run the spectrum from “no motorized travel”, to “unlimited motorized travel” on the national forests and grassland, but most recognize that the concerns about user conflicts, resource impacts, and limited maintenance budgets will only get worse if we do nothing,” said Schumacher. “The discussion seems to be focused more toward the type, and level, of controls on motorized recreation, rather than whether controls are needed. Many of the comments contain well reasoned suggestions that appear to be very workable.”

To emphasize the fact that Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use is a national concern, Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth recently formed two OHV working groups. One group will analyze current regulations dealing with OHV use on national forests and grasslands, and make recommendations for change. The other group will look at successful tools, techniques, and best practices for managing OHV use that are being used across the country, and share those with local Forest Service managers.

To provide comments that will be considered in the analysis for travel management on the Nebraska and Samuel R. McKelvie National Forests and Oglala National Grassland write to: **Nebraska National Forest, 125 North Main Street, Chadron, NE 69337, Attention: Travel Management**, or via e-mail at comments-rocky-mountain-nebraska@fs.fed.us. **Comments must be received by March 15, 2004.**

For more information about the travel management proposal and process contact Jerry Schumacher at (308) 432-0300 or go to:
www.fs.fed.us/r2/nebraska/projects/travel_management

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