

Nebraska Off Highway Vehicle Association **NOHVA**

TBQ Sport Club, Incorporated

A Nebraska Not-For-Profit Association For All Terrain Vehicle and Off Road Motorcycle Users - Established 1987

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November 1, 2009

Jane Darnell, Forests and Grasslands Supervisor
Nebraska National Forest and Grasslands
c/o Mark Reichert
1312 Fairlane Road
Yreka, CA 96097

Dear Supervisor Darnell,

Please find this document as our organizations comments and preferences involving the proposed DEIS alternatives for the Nebraska National Forest Bessey Ranger District and the Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest.

As you know, Nebraska offers few off road ATV and dirtbike riding opportunities. Our situation is complicated by the amount of public land available, and the absence of a state user based trail funding mechanism. With this in mind we ask that the U.S. Forest Service continue to open their lands to recreational ATV and dirtbike riders. Our organization has had a good working relationship with the Forest Service in the past, and we want to see a quality relationship continue into the future.

General Comments Concerning the DEIS –

When enthusiasts practice sensible behavior and use safety equipment, we do not believe that motorized recreation is any more dangerous than equestrian recreation and hunting.

Granted there is noise generated by those recreating on ATVs and dirtbikes at Bessey, we believe that the noise generated is less than the noise generated by the nearby Burlington Northern Railroad. Train noise and rumble is often mistaken for ATV and dirtbike noise and can be heard on the southern boundaries of the Bessey district, ten miles from the tracks. New ATV and dirtbike noise limits should help considerably. NOHVA donated a sound meter to the Forest Service in 2001 to check noise levels.

We believe that our activity does less damage to vegetation, riparian areas, and that we scar the land less than cattle grazing does. Due to the nature of the land at Bessey and McKelvie, ATV and dirtbike riding has little if any impact upon water quality, heritage resources and paleontological resources.

We believe that ATV and dirtbike recreation has little impact to other forest users, including cattle that are grazing in allotments. Cattle are very accustomed to ATV and dirtbike riders. Cattle use the ATV trails to move around and frequently lay on the trails or open sections of the trails. Often times it is difficult to get them to move off of a trail when approached by trail riding ATVs or dirtbikes. If they are startled, seldom do they run off from a trail user for more than 50 feet. Cattle feces on trails is often a nuisance to ATV and dirtbike riders.

We do not believe that the spread of noxious weeds by ATVs and dirtbikes at the Bessey District is a concern because of the existing nature of the area with the hand planted tree plantations. Some people consider the trees themselves as noxious as they are not native to the region. We believe that migrating birds and licensed vehicles such as cars and trucks probably spread more weeds than ATVs and dirtbikes would. At Bessey we have the advantage of ATV jump ups at trail heads and at fence locations. The

action of ATVs and dirtbike crossing the jumps up cause the seeds of weeds to become dislodged and fall into the pit under the jump ups.

Nebraska National Forest Bessey Ranger District

Our organization supports the Forest Service preferred Alternative 2 with some additions.

- We ask that the section of FS201-1 that is proposed to be closed to ATVs and dirtbikes but open to Highway Legal Vehicles (HLV) and located between the mixed use road to the Hill Climb (FS414) and trail 12.14 be changed to mixed use to allow ATVs and dirtbikes as well.
- We would like to see the Dismal River play area boundary fence moved to the boundary of the open sand play area instead of cutting it in half. This fence line in the sand is difficult to enforce and is usually covered with sand. The fence should be moved out to the sand area boundary and may as well be used for recreation as it serves no purpose for grazing. The fence protecting the riparian area along the Dismal River should remain as built. Better signs can be placed at the area.
- We ask that the EDAWs trail plan begin implementation no later than 2012. Alternative 2 with future implementation of the EDAWs trail plan would provide a far superior recreational experience than any of the alternatives proposed.
- We ask that accommodations be considered for larger UTVs and side by sides. While UTVs under 50" will be able to use the ATV trails, as the alternatives now stand, the larger UTVs and side by side vehicles will be limited to mixed use routes as they. Most all of the mixed routes are land locked and not accessible from a HLV forest road.
- We support the 96 dB(A) noise limit and the use of paddle tires prohibited.
- We recommend that all fence gates remain closed unless locked open by the Forest Service or by allotment leasers. Signs should be placed on all gates noting that the gate should remain closed unless locked open.

If Bessey Alternative 2 or 3 is adopted, our organization is proposing that a partnership contract between our Halsey Trails Club chapter and the U.S. Forest Service be formulated that would involve trail maintenance of ATV and dirtbike routes on a regular and coordinated schedule. Components of the partnership would include:

- We believe that we have the volunteer resources to organize at least two work party weekends a year to maintain the trails as proposed in alternative 2. We would also have a person 'on call' to help organize help for maintenance details as needed.
- We would be responsible for the removal of fallen trees and to trees that may be an obstruction to view at corners.
- We would repair minor washouts and erosion on the ATV and dirtbike routes.
- We would block and/or sign closed new and un-authorized routes and trails.
- We would clean sand out of the ATV and dirtbike jump-ups at least twice a year or as needed.
- We would complete minor fence repair where damage has been caused by ATV or dirtbike riders.
- If insufficient Forest Service funds exist or unless RTP funds are not available, NOHVA and the Halsey Trails Club will fund the manufacture and installation of ATV jump-ups or cattle guards at locations where a fence is located using Forest Service approved designs and methods. This will help keep cattle gates closed and will encourage riders to stay on the trails.

- If insufficient Forest Service funds exist or unless RTP funds are not available, NOHVA and the Halsey Trails Club will fund Forest Service approved trail signs so that trail users can have location and destination reference points.

While there is near complete agreement among our members that we would like to see the Bessey alternative 3 adopted, we do not believe that our organization has the volunteer resources to maintain those routes at this time. Instead, we believe that alternative 2 with our additions and adopting the recommendations of the EDAW trail plan would make for an outstanding decision.

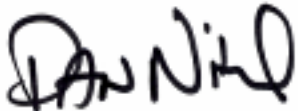
As more volunteers become involved in the process of maintaining trails at Bessey, we believe that we can develop a large enough work force to service trails as described in the EDAW plan.

Samuel R. McKelvie National Forest

Our organization supports Alternative 3 for this area. Considering the low amount of use by ATV and dirtbike riders at this location, we believe that this alternative is a workable solution. NOHVA does not plan to become involved in providing volunteers for this area unless a group of nearby riders decide to organize a group that is affiliated with NOHVA. If the Forest Service so requests, we will ask our members if there is interest in forming a chapter or a group of riders to help with maintenance needs at McKelvie. We support the 96 dB(A) noise limit and the use of paddle tires prohibited for this area.

In closing, we would like to thank the staff at the Nebraska National Forest, Bessey Ranger District for their professionalism and understanding over the years. We have had an established working relationship since 1990, let's hope that this can continue for years into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "DAN NITZEL". The letters are stylized and connected, with a prominent "D" and "N".

Dan Nitzel, Business Manager and Co-founder
Nebraska Off Highway Vehicle Association