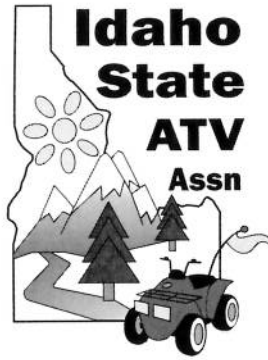


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COMMENTS TO FEDERAL LANDS INTERIM COMMITTEE

1. REPRESENT THE IDAHO STATE ATV ASSOCIATION

- a. statewide organization
- b. over twenty local riding clubs
- c. over 2,000 members
- d. represents ATV, UTV and OHV users throughout Idaho
- e. working to maintain open access to public lands
- f. encourage safe and responsible riding
- g. devote thousands of hours per year toward maintenance and improvement of trails, trailheads and other motorized use areas
- h. Support principles such as "tread lightly", "stay on trails", minimum impact
- i. We recreate on public lands because we enjoy the outdoor experience and the ability to interact with our environment – contrary to beliefs of some, we care about the environment and desire its protection – but we view that through a balanced perspective that encourages multiple use and open access

2. GENERALLY

- a. In terms of consideration by this committee of recreation interests, I think you should examine two questions



- i. Is the federal government failing the recreation community in current management practices
 - ii. How could the state better manage recreation interests
 - b. Our comments are also made on the understanding that if a change were made, it would only relate to non-wilderness areas
- 3. OUR CONCERNS WITH CURRENT FEDERAL MANAGEMENT
 - a. Over-reaching of the Endangered Species Act
 - i. Its use and application fails to recognize history
 - ii. For instance, we lose recreation opportunities under the ESA because of complaints that motor travel across watersheds without bridges, and along watersheds, results in disruption of the watershed or increased sediment load
 - iii. In reducing our opportunity, the federal government ignores the fact that listed species are currently using and breeding in the waters despite decades of motorized use
 - iv. In reducing our opportunity, the federal government ignores available science demonstrating a greater likelihood of increased sediment deposit in a watershed where trails are abandoned – this is because user maintenance of trails shores up points of erosion – without trail use, erosion develops and soils deposit in the stream
 - b. National travel management planning has become confusing
 - i. Federal government recently abandoned a decades old policy of travel
 - 1. Old rule – all roads and trails open to use unless designated otherwise and marked as such at trailhead



2. New rule – all roads and trails presumptively closed unless designated for use on a non-descript map; no on the ground signage
 - ii. This is very confusing to users; the maps are no help; this is also contrary to logic and common sense – if a road or trail exists, it ought to be allowed for travel; if travel is to be restricted, put a sign up; this is just like we do on highways with detour signs, construction signs, private street signs, etc.
- c. National travel planning is reducing opportunity
 - i. All forest lands, and now all BLM lands, are undergoing motor travel management planning – this is to implement the presumptively closed rule
 - ii. In nearly every administrative area, the net result of planning is reduced recreation opportunity
 - iii. In 2000, Idaho had about 50,000 OHVs; now we have 137,000 – more than double
 - iv. It doesn't make sense to reduce opportunity when use is expanding at such a rate; all this does is congregate use and create the potential for increased resource damage
 - v. Travel planning disregards the concerns of local community; not uncommon to see the closure of roads and trails that provide emergency evacuation routes; not uncommon to see closure of roads and trails the access areas of local cultural significance
 - vi. Travel planning often destroys interconnected trail systems, loop opportunities and access to other areas where non-motorized recreation might be enjoyed (i.e. a remote lake)



- d. Not going to go deep into this, but believe federal government is failing in regard to recognition of and respect for historic rights under RS2477; I am going to assume counties or others have given you much information on that topic
 - e. Also have concerns regarding management of RWA and other areas being proposed for some designation; tends to be an attitude and bias against motorized recreation and an attempt to limit uses, adopt roadless rules, etc., before designation is even made – we support backcountry, but believe existing routes should remain open for use
 - f. Lack of interest in maintenance – again this is reflected by a perceived agency bias against motorized recreation; we see very little effort by federal agencies to initiate upkeep and maintenance of existing routes – this is being done by users and IDPR – with respect to construction of new routes and opportunities, that is virtually non-existent
4. HOW COULD THE STATE BETTER MANAGE RECREATION INTERESTS - *opportunity !!*
- a. We strongly believe that local control and local interests create better results; the federal bureaucracy often interferes with this ability; decision makers for the federal government are far removed and don't have to feel the impact of their decision – we have to deal with land managers and travel planners who are not familiar with the terrain, local communities, etc.
 - b. State government could improve on processes to ensure local control, which corresponds with local interest in seeing outcomes succeed
 - c. We see a much greater opportunity for collaborative decision making through state control – state government is far removed from the national division, discord and lack of collaboration; our legislature promotes mutually advantageous results and we are certain this would carry over to land management; negotiated rulemaking procedures could ensure involvement of all necessary stakeholders



- d. We also see the opportunity for expanded opportunity and expanded opportunity for economic development with state control; because state agency currently is doing the major maintenance on federal lands, granting them control of the land will streamline processes for maintenance and likely increase user involvement; state will have an interest in promoting the trail systems for development of economic gains in remote areas
- e. We also see the opportunity to ensure travel management directives are consistent – problem with Fish and Game rules
- f. In short, the greatest possibility we see from state management would be a return to common sense, logical management – i.e. open unless closed

5. CONCLUSION

- a. Motorized recreation interests in Idaho are not being well-served by the federal bureaucracy
- b. State control and management of existing non-designated federal lands would improve the motorized recreation experience in Idaho
- c. We encourage the committee to further pursue, through whatever means are appropriate, the turnover of non-designated federal lands to the state for land management