

**Crook County Land Use Planning & Zoning Commission**  
**P.O. Box 37**  
**Sundance, WY 82729**

November 12, 2007

Travel Management  
Black Hills National Forest  
1019 North 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Custer, SD 57730

Greetings;

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed USFS Travel Management Plan for the Black Hills National Forest. We object to USFS apparent assertion that off-road travel is a problem throughout all USFS managed lands and therefore off-road travel must be tightly regulated or curtailed. We, in Crook County, Wyoming, have not experienced the severe problems that must be occurring elsewhere to drive the USFS to curtail off-road vehicular travel to the point of creating defacto "Wilderness Areas" out of our national forests. We do not believe this one-size-fits-all solution is appropriate for national forest lands in Crook County, Wyoming.

While we oppose the imposition of the proposed USFS Travel Management Plan for the Black Hills National Forest in Crook County Wyoming, we applaud the efforts of our local District Ranger, Steve Kozel and his staff, for their exemplary efforts to adapt a broad and heavy handed USFS mandate to the needs and desires of the local people that depend on national forest for their livelihood and recreation. In light of the excellent work performed by Steve and his fine staff, we offer the following specific comments on the proposed USFS Travel Management Plan for the Black Hills National Forest in Crook County Wyoming:

1. **Dispersed Camping:** Dispersed camping is a historic and widely practiced use of national forest lands in Crook County. The current proposal restricts dispersed camping to 100 feet of a designated road or trail. Many dispersed campsites are farther than 100 feet off a designated road or trail. We propose this limit be increased to 200 yards to allow the continued use of existing dispersed campsites.
2. **Big Game Retrieval:** The current proposal limits big game retrieval to elk only and further restricts motorized retrieval efforts to 100 yards of a designated road or trail. As our population ages, many hunters find they no longer have the physical ability to pack a large deer or elk out of the woods even though

they can reach their desired hunting locations on foot. We propose that big game retrieval be extended to deer and allow limited cross-country use of OHV's except in areas presently closed to motorized travel. A single OHV, per retrieval effort, should be allowed to travel cross-country when necessary for big game retrieval. The operator of the OHV involved in cross-country big game retrieval shall have in their possession, a completed Wyoming big game hunting license with the carcass coupon detached and properly completed in accordance with applicable state statute and/or regulation.

3. **Open Forest vs. Closed Forest:** We currently enjoy open forest access for motorized vehicles except for specifically closed areas. The proposed USFS Travel Management Plan will close the entire forest to motorized vehicles except for specifically designated roads and trails. This management action will severely curtail motorized national forest access that the public currently enjoys. In an effort to restore some of this lost access, we request that all currently closed roads and trails be opened to some form of motorized travel. We propose these currently closed roads and trails be opened to OHV travel and then evaluated for additional motorized travel where environmentally feasible. We recognize that District Ranger, Steve Kozel and his staff propose to open some of the currently closed roads/trails to OHV travel and we applaud their efforts. However, many more miles of currently closed roads and trails should be opened to help offset the loss of motorized access the proposed USFS Travel Management Plan will impose.
4. **Handicap Access:** The proposed USFS Travel Management Plan will eliminate the cross-country motorized access currently enjoyed by the handicapped. We propose that handicapped persons with state issued handicap decals/placards be allowed to operate placarded OHV's cross-country in areas not currently closed to motorized travel.
5. **Firewood Access:** Motorized access and limited motorized cross-country travel should be allowed for firewood retrieval in areas open to non-commercial firewood cutting.

We look forward to working with the USFS to insure appropriate access and use of our national forests.

Sincerely,

*Michael P. O'Brien*

Michael P. O'Brien

Vice-Chair

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