



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Idaho Panhandle
National Forests

Coeur d'Alene River
Ranger District

P.O. Box 159
Smelterville, ID 83868

2502 East Sherman Avenue
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814

File Code: 1950

Date: November 13, 2012

Dear Interested Parties:

This letter is in response to information the Idaho Panhandle National Forest has received through the scoping process regarding the proposed change of vehicle designation on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) for the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District. The purpose of this letter is to inform interested parties of the decision I have made as a result of our scoping efforts: for the foreseeable future, no action will be taken, and the proposed change to the 2013 MVUM will not occur.

The proposed change in vehicle designation was to allow 4-wheel drive vehicles greater than 50-inches width on routes that are currently designated as "trails open to vehicles 50 inches or less in width," which includes Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs) such as All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and some Utility Vehicles (UTVs). The routes proposed for redesignation were Trails 113, 16B, 16 (from the junction of Trail 16B to the junction of Trail 226), and the segment of Trail 226 from Trail 16 to Road 2354. These routes total 13.5 miles in the vicinity of Big Creek and the St. Joe Divide (T47N, R2 and 3E, Sections 31, 32, 5, 7, 8, 17, 16, 15, 14, 13, Boise Meridian) and include only those trails, or segments of trails, west of Lake Elsie and Big Creek Road 2354.

Between March and July of 2012 several attempts were made to reach consensus among groups who use these trails. A meeting between these trail users and the 4-wheel drive community was held on May 17. Issues were discussed at this meeting and field reviews scheduled. The first field review on July 17 included only trail users and the 4-wheel drive community. The next one on July 27 included trail users, the 4-wheel drive community, and Forest Service personnel. During the 30-day public comment period (which ran from August 27 through September 27, 2012), more than 80 comment letters were received, with opposition to the change being a significant component. It is my view that an Environmental Assessment would be a more appropriate analysis, due to the controversy and complexity associated with the issues identified during scoping, and the lack of consensus among trail users. Such an analysis is beyond the time allotments I've allowed for my staff during the 2013 work season. As a result, I have decided to postpone my decision indefinitely; for the foreseeable future, no action will be taken and this change to the 2013 MVUM will not occur. The analysis completed to this point will be kept on file and utilized, should time allow in the future for revisiting this proposal.

Sincerely,

for
CHAD E. HUDSON
District Ranger

