



Position on Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle (ROV) Use on Public Lands

As recreational off-highway vehicles (ROVs) become increasingly popular, land managers are considering how to manage their access to public lands for recreational purposes. At both the federal and state levels, ROVs are in some cases regarded no differently than ATVs, while in other cases, a particular forest or trail system is moving toward allowing the vehicles only on mixed-use roads. In other cases, public lands officials have yet to attempt to manage the vehicles. In an effort to “get in front” of the issue ROHVA has developed the following positions regarding where ROV use should be considered appropriate.

Where should ROVs be allowed?

It is ROHVA's position that land management officials should *consider* allowing access to ROVs to any routes, trails or areas open to off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, provided that there is no safety or resource issue that should preclude ROVs. Unpaved roads open to motor vehicle use should be open to ROVs unless safety and/or resource management issues exist. Some public land units designate trails open to vehicles that are no wider than 50 inches. In these cases ROHVA supports access for ROVs that meet the maximum width requirement. ROHVA understands that some width restricted trails will not be suitable for ROVs that meet the size requirement for safety and/or sustainability reasons; however, land management officials should make those assessments on a case-by-case basis.

ROHVA supports managed trail systems that provide for opportunities for a mix of motorized uses. In some instances managers may choose to designate ATV or off-highway motorcycle (OHM) only trails as part of the system. ROHVA supports trails designated for certain classes of vehicle provided that, where appropriate, opportunities are offered for ROV drivers.

ROVs and Travel Management

The U.S. Forest Service Travel Management Rule defines an off-highway vehicle as “any motor vehicle designed for or capable of cross-country travel on or immediately over land, water, sand, snow, ice, marsh, swampland or other natural terrain.” This definition was left vague enough to accommodate the many varieties of OHVs that currently exist, including ROVs, as well as new vehicles yet to be developed. ROHVA supports the Travel Management Rule in principle and encourages ROV enthusiasts to continue to be involved in the route designation process.

It is the position of ROHVA that Forest officials should consider and identify appropriate routes, trails and areas open for ROVs as the Travel Management Rule implementation process moves forward. The rule allows individual Forests to designate trails open to only a certain class or classes of vehicle. For example a Forest could designate a single-track trail as

open only to OHMs, or designate a separate trail as ATV only. ROHVA believes that this provides Forest officials with the flexibility to provide opportunities for a broad mix of motorized uses. As such, Forest officials have the opportunity to develop trail systems that meet the needs of all motorized uses, including ROV use.

Why should ROVs be allowed?

Many routes, trails and areas currently open to OHV use are suitable for ROVs and would require little or no additional analysis to allow the vehicles. ROHVA believes that many current trail systems and OHV riding areas can support ROV use and land managers should identify where they can be driven. In addition, ROVs will provide access to public lands for many Americans who currently have few or no opportunities to enjoy our shared public lands, including the elderly and the disabled.

Moving Forward

ROHVA will partner with national and state OHV advocacy groups and with federal and state land management agency officials to increase acceptance of ROVs as a class of OHV that is legitimate for use on public lands. This effort will include encouraging federal agencies to develop approved signing for ROVs. Currently, OHV enthusiasts use agency signs with widely recognized depictions of vehicles, such as ATVs, OHMs, and four wheel drive trucks to indicate where their use is allowed. Creating an ROV symbol would allow agencies to convey to ROV operators where ROV access is allowed. The American National Standard for Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles (ANSI/ROHVA 1 – 2010) and ROHVA's *Model State ROV Legislation* include a definition for an ROV that would encompass all ROVs currently in the market.

As land managers strive to manage sustainable OHV recreation and as both the Forest Service and the BLM undergo processes to designate routes, trails and areas open to OHV use, it is important to understand the need for incorporating ROVs into travel management plans and OHV trails programs. ROHVA will partner with other national, state and local organizations to work with land managers to designate routes, trails and areas open to ROVs.