

Suggestions for System Improvements: 9-23-03

- 1. No clear understanding or communication of current regulations and policies: don't know where it's legal to ride, don't know when others are breaking the rules, get different message from the agency, rules seem to change in mid-stream.**

Positive:

- Knowledge of rules and regulations is necessary in order to understand what is allowed. This requires a high degree of involvement by the user.
- The USFS already has some posted regulations.
- Forest Service people wish to go a good job in communicating these regulations, and rangers seem to know their area well.

Negative:

- Misunderstanding and confusion due to poor communication: users do not know where they are allowed to go, and sometimes receive conflicting answers from Forest Service personnel.
- When regulations are unclear, should we assume it is legal to ride/use the trail, or illegal?
- Why are users not allowed to ride on *all* primitive and/or gravel county roads?

System Improvements Suggestions:

Clarification:

- More signs on location indicating what user groups are allowed, and where the forest boundaries are.
- Maps with more clarity and that are more readily accessible to the public.
- Need usage policies and rules posted at trailheads (helmets, speed limits, etc.)

Communication:

- Agency and public need to come together.

Other Suggestions:

2. Need to be assured of access for all users and interest groups. Need to provide for a particular activity or sport.

Positive:

- We *all* have the *same* access. It is only the *means* of access that is, in some cases, restricted.
- Approximately 48 miles of motorized trail, and 115 miles of non-motorized.
- The Colville National Forest *is* a multi-user group area.

Negative:

- Many trailheads do not accommodate the user groups needs, as far as parking space for trucks, turn-around space for horse trailers, etc.
- Concerns about segregation.
- OHV users should receive as much trail mileage as non-motorized users.
- Lack of access leads to overuse of the trails that *are* open and accessible.
- There is not enough enforcement to monitor illegal access.

System Improvements Suggestions:

Access:

- Would like to see access provided from one trail to another.
- Most users agree to provide separate trail systems for motorized and non-motorized user groups, as long as the trails are clearly marked.
- Build and maintain roads.

Clarification:

- More clarification of what areas are permissible for what user groups.

Other Suggestions:

3. Need for information and education.

Positive:

- There *are* maps, and a process is underway to improve education and communication of information.

Negative:

- Maps are outdated, incomplete, confusing, and often unavailable.
- Visitors from other areas are more likely to have problems finding their way around and accessing maps and information.

System Improvements Suggestions:

Clarification:

- Need brochures, maps, and information available where and when users need them.
- More distribution of information.
- Publicize information on TV, fliers at fairs, and home shows, for example.

Other Suggestions:

4. Need for user ethics: sharing of users, conflicts with user groups, conflicts with other user groups.

Positive:

- Most people are courteous, and the education that exists now does enforce courtesy.

Negative:

- It is often misunderstood that users are generally multi-users and not just affiliated with one specific group.
- The USFS is not able to manage conflicts or enforce the rules.
- Hikers concede that OHV users are the problem, and OHV users concede that hikers and non-motorized users are the problem.

System Improvements Suggestions:

Accessibility:

- Share but also have some separation.

Education:

- Educate each user group to help them understand the differences and be courteous of other recreation types: share!

Enforcement:

- Perhaps police multi-use areas by advocates of both user groups, to avoid partiality.

Other Suggestions:

5. Ability of the Forest Service to manage recreation: not enough money, doesn't fix facilities, doesn't address safety concerns, doesn't fix resource damage, doesn't enforce regulations and rules that exist.

Positive:

- Forest Service employees are motivated, well trained, and try hard to manage recreation. They do what they can with the amount of money they are provided.
- Facilities are nice.
- Volunteers do much of the work.

Negative:

- Lack of funding, resources, and enforcement.
- Lack of enforcement leads to misunderstanding and confusion.
- USFS offices are closed on the weekends.
- The public feels that the USFS makes up rules as it needs them without going through and informing the public.
- Concerned with efficiency of USFS: "What happened to the old past—all roads, trails, etc were maintained by Forest Service people with 1/3 of the staff they have now. Now it's contracted out even though the Forest Service staff is tripled in size. What do they do?"

System Communication Suggestions:

Communication:

- Be creative in communication—email, news articles, events, (like the Colville nature hikes but focused somewhat on education of users). Take advantage of user groups and do joint activities.
- Forest Service should outreach *frequently* to users.

Education:

- Emphasize education of regulations.

Enforcement:

- When education fails, do strict enforcement. Do press releases on citations to your user list and especially user groups. Ask user groups to assist with enforcement.

Funding:

- Take advantage of grant programs.
- Perhaps establish a pass/fee system: trail pass, motorized vehicle pass, user fee, licensing, etc.
- Perhaps establish a tax system: gas tax, OHV tax, etc.

Resources:

- Take advantage of volunteer programs; use users as volunteers.
- Advertise for volunteers.

Other Suggestions:

6. Concerns about the economy and tourism, with or without any particular user group.

Positive:

- As natural resources industries (mining, logging, etc.) decline, local population needs other sources of income. Motorized users of national forest lands provide positive economic effect. Tourism is not only by non-motorized vehicles. Recreation generates revenue from sales, parts maintenance, and travel (restaurants, motels, quick stops, etc.)
- Recreation adds money flow into rural communities; economy could rise with more access to recreation areas.

Negative:

- Possible closures of recreational areas have a negative effect on the economy: small businesses close, etc.
- If tourism is unregulated, it will add chaos, miscommunication, and resource damage.
- The attitude that forests belong *more* to local residents does not help the economy.

System Improvements Suggestions:

Land Use Designation:

- More designated wildlife habitat protection areas will lead to more wildlife viewers visiting the area. Recreation is not only for motorized and non-motorized user groups.

Other Suggestions:

7. Need for compromise: Need for better communication, need for multi-use trails that are only non-motorized, need for non-motorized users to accept motorized use.

Positive:

- Motorized users need to accept that there should be places they are not allowed, and non-motorized users need to accept that there should be places motorized use is allowed. If this is understood, there will be more use.
- There should be both multi-use trails and designated trails, with understanding and respect between all groups to avoid conflict.

Negative:

- Hikers often seem to think that motorcycle riders are intruding on their private trails, treating riders as interlopers. Since they have their own non-motorized trails, it seems only fair that they respect our presence on multi-use trails.
- There is often no respect between user groups.
- There is not enough enforcement of regulations.
- The protection of ecosystems and wildlife habitat don't have recreational user voices speaking up in the process—this affects hunters, fishes, photographers, wildlife, and bird viewers.

System Improvements Suggestions:

Clarification:

- More clarity of regulations: post signs, etc.
- More information and direction.

Education:

- There needs to be more education to promote cooperation between user groups.

Other Suggestions:

8. Concerns about all use and how it affects the environment.

Positive:

- If trails are built to code and users are provided with ample opportunities, less resource damage occurs.
- Most people believe that preserving the environment is worth their time and money.
- Most users advocate, within their user group, good stewardship.

Negative:

- There are differing opinions on the effect of OHVs on the environment. Motorized users say there is little to no effect on the environment, while non-motorized users claim that the effects can be quite harmful.
- People need more information.
- There is a lack of enforcement.
- Forest fires and logging operations do more damage than OHVs.
- “Some users deny or excuse the damage their group causes. Their ignorance perpetuates a continuation of the legacy of damage. Because of the groups that don’t practice stewardship, many deny any impact.”

System Improvements Suggestions:

Accessibility:

- Disperse use rather than shrink area

Education

Other Suggestions: