

# NEWS RELEASE



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USDA • FOREST SERVICE • Mark Twain National Forest

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Release: MT-297	Contact: Kris Swanson	Voice: 573-341-7416
Date: May 6, 2004	Kill Date: June 4, 2004	Email: kswanson@fs.fed.us

## FOREST SERVICE TO PURSUE EIS ON PROPOSED OHV STUDY

**ROLLA, MO.** -- Mark Twain National Forest will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze and disclose environmental effects of proposed activities within three off-highway vehicle (OHV) study areas in the eastern part of the national forest.

The proposal is to study the impact of OHV use for a three-year period. Under the proposed study, approximately 137 miles of existing roads and trails will be designated for ATV or other OHV use in three separate areas on the Poplar Bluff, Potosi and Fredericktown districts. The proposed designated trails will mostly be on existing roads and trails with only about nine miles of new trail construction. New construction will consist of short sections to connect current roads and trails.

Several OHV user groups have approached the Forest Service to designate OHV trails on the eastern side of the National Forest. The Forest currently has two trail systems, one in southwest Missouri and one in south central Missouri.

Earlier this year, the Forest Service announced that it was planning to do a study and asked for public comments. As a result of public comments, it was decided to pursue further analysis through an EIS. The three-year OHV study will be designed to allow resource managers to monitor changes to soil and water quality and vegetation during the three years. The amount of illegal trails developed by OHV users will be monitored and at any time during the three years, trail use would be terminated should unacceptable levels of resource damage occur.

The OHV study areas will include closing several miles of roads and trails that are currently receiving illegal OHV use. This will reduce places where OHVs cross permanently flowing streams within the three proposed trail areas.

Various trail management techniques are proposed to be used during the study period, including seasonal trail closures during wet or thawing periods, trail hardening techniques, and Tread Lightly! environmental ethic education.

There would be a daily fee or annual pass to use the proposed trail system. The fees collected would be used locally to provide information, parking and other trailhead features, law enforcement and trail maintenance within these areas.

A public comment period occurred December 22, 2003 to February 24, 2004. All previous comments will be considered.

People wanting to comment or send additional comments on the proposal should send their comments or requests for additional information to the Potosi/Fredericktown Ranger District, P.O. Box 188, Potosi, MO 63664, telephone (573) 438-5427, or the Poplar Bluff Ranger District, P.O. Box 988, 1420 Maud Street, Poplar Bluff, MO 63901, (573) 785-1475. Electronic comments must be sent via the Internet to: [comments-eastern-mark-twain-potosi@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-eastern-mark-twain-potosi@fs.fed.us)

The 30-day comment period will begin May 6, 2004 and ends June 4, 2004.

To access project information electronically, go to:

**<http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/marktwain/projects/project.htm>**.

Comments received including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection upon request.

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