



News Release

Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests &
Thunder Basin National Grassland
<http://fs.usda.gov/mbr>

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Winter Travel Regulations Established on the Medicine Bow National Forest

(LARAMIE, Wyo.) Nov. 1, 2013 – The Medicine Bow National Forest (MBNF) is addressing the growing complexity of winter recreation by setting seasonal-use dates for travel routes and snow depth requirements for over-the-snow vehicles (OSV) operating off designated routes.

The regulations are consistent with the MBNF Plan and work in conjunction with U.S. Forest Service Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUM), as well as the Wyoming State Trails map to curb user conflicts and provide resource protection.

A new Forest Special Order provides clear distinction between when roads or trails can be used by wheeled motor vehicles and when they can be used by OSVs. Additionally, it clearly defines when roads become groomed snowmobile trails and vice versa.

Order provisions:

- Wheeled motor vehicles may not be used from Dec. 15 - April 15 of each year on designated and/or groomed snowmobile trails as indicated on the current State Trails map for the MBNF.
- Between May 30 and Nov. 30, regardless of snow depth, all types of OSVs may not be used off of designated routes shown on the local MVUM. This means no off road or cross country travel between those dates in the same way that wheeled ATVs are restricted.
- In addition to establishing the seasonal dates, the order also sets a minimum snow depth of 12 inches before OSVs are allowed off of designated routes as shown on the local MVUM.

It is important to note that OSVs are still allowed to travel on open roads from May 30 – Nov. 30, but may not go off road or cross country until both snow depths and dates are in place.

“With this order we are responding to feedback from the public, our staff and law enforcement surrounding the issue of winter travel,” said Forest Supervisor Phil Cruz. “As winter recreation usage increases on the Medicine Bow National Forest, we needed to take a hard look at the results of that increased usage, in the same way that other National Forests in Wyoming have done.

“We are putting the same focus on the use of wheeled motor vehicles as we are on snowmobiles, and we are confident that the end result will be positive for Forest resources and user groups.

“As we are often faced with, we are looking to find a balance between competing outdoor recreation uses and conservation of resources.”

Prior to the implementation of this Special Order, wheeled motor vehicles could legally travel on groomed snowmobile trails and snowmobiles could travel off road at any time of year.

The new rules will protect groomed trails from damage, will enhance snowmobile safety, as well as reduce resource impacts to wildlife, their habitat and vegetation when snow is shallow. Conflict between user groups should also be reduced, such as during the fall when hunters and other recreationists are still afoot in the Forest and OSV usage begins. Another example would be when hikers begin early season treks on the Forest and OSV usage is winding down.

Owners of recreation residences within National Forest boundaries should contact their local Ranger District if a permit for an exception to this order is needed.

Forest Service employees will work this fall, winter and spring towards making contact with as many recreationists as possible and providing education on the new regulations. Signage will also be changed as time and budget allows, expecting for all information to be updated in 2014. Information will be distributed to Forest Service permittees and will be made available at locations where annual State OSV registration stickers are sold.

Since implementation of the new order will be gradual, U.S. Forest Service staff will be using discretion in the coming months when faced with enforcing the new special order. The history of winter travel in the area and the rate of information distribution concerning the new order will be taken into account.

Visitors to the Medicine Bow National Forest should contact their local Ranger District for additional information regarding winter recreation.

- Brush Creek-Hayden Ranger District, 2171 Highway 130, Saratoga, WY, (307) 326-5258
- Douglas Ranger District, 2250 E. Richards Street, Douglas, WY, (307)358-4690
- Laramie Ranger District, 2468 Jackson Street, Laramie, WY, (307)745-2300

Information may also be found on this website, <http://fs.usda.gov/mbr>, or you can follow the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland on Twitter, **@MBRNFsTBNG**.

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