

Notes from Shoshone National Forest Travel Management Education and Compliance Summit

February 24-25, 2016

The travel management process is the Shoshone National Forest's first step in implementation of the recently revised Land Management Plan. As the Forest began the travel management process last summer, multiple members of the public brought forward concerns about compliance and enforcement of the current motorized system. As such, the Forest leadership decided to hold a two day workshop on education and compliance to see what input the public has toward improving accountability and compliance on the Shoshone's motorized system. Over 20 individuals representing a variety of interests attended this workshop and laid the ground work for a follow-on working group (as will be discussed later in the notes).

- I. The first step for the group was to validate and reaffirm that the compliance concerns the Shoshone NF has heard from the public are accurate and valid. The following items are issues that the Shoshone staff has heard from the public over the course of the last 10 months at public meetings, in writing, and during field trips.

Signage:

- Use consistency with signage for trailheads and routes: people will be familiar with what the maps say and will be able to better follow the rules.
- Poor signing or no signing at all
- Trailheads signs don't show the appropriate route or provide education on the fragile nature of the area.
- If you have good signs and you maintain them
- How to display the distance a route is open so folks know when it is supposed to end
- Limit the # of signs but have clear messages
- Proper maintenance of signs
- Use of "confidence" markers to help public know when they are on an open route
- Having multiple maps to cover the area and seasonal closures is confusing
- Indicate reason for complete or seasonal closure, ie wildlife or resource protection

Unauthorized Routes:

- Removal of the "closed" signs and the continued use of the routes, especially during hunting season. Where there's no natural barrier or terrain is open it's tough to keep users out.
- There are many ineffective barriers – gates may send the wrong message, carsonite often driven over, bermed dirt does not work
- No barriers at all on roads that are supposed to be closed
- More effective decommissioning

Education:

- There is a lack of education
- Educate first; then fine
- Partner with WY Game & Fish during high use times

Enforcement:

- Lack of presence of FS employees, especially during hunting season
- Lack of real consequences for violators
- Dealing w/ perception that enforcing closures is closing open roads
- Use remote cameras; use a sign to discourage bad behavior
- Publicize penalties and enforcement actions taken in local news
- Self-policing by users' needs to happen more often

II. After reaffirming the above list, the group broke into four small groups and discussed each of the issues. The lists below are ideas generated by the four groups during a brainstorming session designed to look at potential solutions or tools for the toolbox in travel management.

Signage

- Consolidation of signage (types, season of use, symbols)
- Color code for seasonal closures
- Easier to use map with QR code to get MVUM electronically
- More durable signs
- System roads signed at junction with unauthorized roads
- Minimize the amount of verbiage on signs or at trailheads
- Consistent terminology that is clear across boundaries (BLM to FS to state)
- Strategy for persistent signing on problem routes
- Consistent signing protocol
- Develop icons for the reasons a route is closed which can be tied to verbiage on map or at trailhead
- Have signs to show what is allowed (confidence markers)
- Sign where route is supposed to terminate (ie "route terminates in 3 miles")
- Better signing system routes that are open
- Directional signing (ie "4 miles to overlook" or "Wildcat Loop")

Unauthorized routes

- Proper obliteration of route (better disguising of old routes)
- Gate all maintenance level 1 roads and use proper signage
- Education on what "unauthorized" routes are, there is confusion
- Adopt-a-trail program
- Phased approach to using barriers to properly shut these down
- Use of natural barriers when possible
- Inventory of unauthorized routes
- Better use of confidence markers on authorized routes
- Volunteer patrols
- Fully partner with WY Game & Fish

- Utilize Tread Lightly! for education

Education

- Increase FS presence and integrate with other agencies to educate
- Be more strategic in how to use FS staff, focus on high use times and areas
- Consistent understanding of regulations by FS staff, be able to communicate this information articulately and clearly to public
- Expand FS capacity in the field by using volunteers, explore grants for additional funding
- Work with OHV clubs to spread message
- Better trailhead maps, more user-friendly scale of maps
- Simplify message to public
- Use technology to educate – making maps available in format for GPS devices, utilize social media/YouTube
- Education trailer

Enforcement

- More presence in the field, in uniform
- Clear message to help the public learn and know the rules
- Put rules and better information on FS web
- Maps need to be clear and consistent
- Reporting hotline similar to poaching hotline
- Saturation patrols
- Improving FPO training
- Peer pressure by publicizing fines and violations, getting this information to OHV clubs
- Higher fines

III. In an effort to move these ideas forward, Forest Supervisor Joe Alexander decided to create a working group to find new tools to improve compliance. The ideas compiled by the workgroup will be wrapped into an implementation plan which will follow the completion of the travel management process on the Shoshone National Forest. In addition, the tools generated can also be utilized for mitigation measures or as design features in alternatives for the Environmental Analysis.

The groups took the above list and boiled it down into three categories: Infrastructure (signs, barriers, etc), Education and Information, and Enforcement.

Infrastructure – develop criteria for where & when to put up signs and/or barriers as appropriate as well as the correct type of sign to use in an attempt to improve compliance

Education & information – simplify messaging, ensure consistency, develop innovative communication strategy, look into funding

Enforcement – Identify ways to encourage and improve compliance on our motorized system of roads, trails, and areas through a variety of methods and techniques.

The larger group worked on a short concise message to be used to ask others to join a working group to tackle compliance and education issues over the next few months. This final statement will be used to bring members of the public together to form this new working group: ***Identify ways to encourage and improve compliance on our motorized system of roads, trails, and areas through a variety of methods and techniques.***

The next step was to determine who the critical members' of the working group are:

- Wyoming Game & Fish (Joe Alexander will contact for representative)
- Wyoming State Trails
- OHV users from different parts of the Shoshone NF (Joe Tilden offered to help find someone from Park County)
- Backcountry Horsemen
- Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
- NGOs such as Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Wyoming Wilderness Association, Sierra Club
- BLM (District Rangers will make contact)
- Interested members of the public
- Government cooperators
- USFS (ATV rangers, one law enforcement officer, and liaison)

**The public will be encouraged to come to the meetings and listen in but will not be situated at the table with the working group. They will be asked for their input at the end of the meeting and seating will be located at the back of the room.

IV. Joe Alexander will develop a charter for this working group to include the following information:

Who convenes? Forest Service – emails contacts, sets agenda, does meeting management

Who facilitates? Seek consistency. Group elects Chair who will who will develop topics and determine the “how” with the FS liaison.

Where? 1st meeting in Thermopolis then group decides

How often? Monthly; group decides how to get work done

When? Completed by September 30, 2016

Decision format? Joe will outline in charter

Additional thoughts: allow public to really be involved, be as transparent about the group and its workings as possible.