Background information and context for our public OHV collaborative learning process.

Why All This Investment and Effort Around OHV Recreation?

OHV recreation in large amounts represents a classic “wicked” land management situation: extremely contentious and highly complex. Our public has communicated its desire for decision makers across jurisdictions to manage OHV use in the Black Hills during the Black Hills OHV Summit held in February 2021. The Black Hills National Forest created an OHV Action Team to address the ideas that the public brought to the table in the Summit that are implementable now for all decision makers including the Forest Service. That leaves several ideas on the table that found a considerable amount of support by Summit attendees, that the US Forest Service alone cannot control or implement:

1. Need one official app that is regularly updated regarding trail conditions, grazing issues, approved trails, etc.
2. Continue the collaboration that started at the Summit through a working group representing all interests that looks at all issues and creates recommendations to all decision-makers. Use this collaborative group to leverage funding for trail work, education efforts, etc.
3. Communication solutions need to be found that allow reporting of non-ethical behavior, open gates, regulatory information, current conditions. Solutions suggested are an app, advertising campaigns, messaging platforms and education.
4. Define the Black Hills community’ protocols for trail etiquette.
5. Create a comprehensive education program that involves OHV businesses, schools, OHV clubs, agencies, counties, cities, tourism bureau etc. based on the Black Hills OHV trails etiquette.
6. Conduct an audit to explore where funding is available and what funding needs exist. Find entities/individuals who will write grants for a remuneration.
7. The role of hunting in OHV use needs to be explored, as well as the use of OHV use in hunting. This may elicit additional solutions.
8. Find ways to reduce the spread of invasive weeds and erosion through OHV use.
9. Explore ways to have OHV use but in ways and places that disturb wildlife the least e.g., seasonal closures.
10. More law enforcement is required. This requires more funding. Explore ways to enhance the law enforcement capacity in the Black Hills region.
11. Explore ways to manage regulator/legislative OHV use on roads where the FS has no regulatory authority e.g. through legislation or licensing.
12. Create easily accessible and usable maps with information, trails, conditions, etc.
13. Find robust signage methods.
14. Look at use patterns and intensities to improve the trail system in all areas, looking also at connections, re-routings, etc.
15. Clearly define width of vehicles allowable in what locations.
16. Create a volunteer group willing to help with patrolling and education.
17. Ensure as little conflict as possible with wildlife using seasonal closures, trail design and law enforcement.
Our goal is to bring together as many interested individuals as possible who have the desire and the resources to address these management issues and challenges. The purpose of this collaborative learning process will be to generate as many implementable options as possible for all decision makers to consider.