

FAQs/Questions and Answers

Pacific Northwest Region – Colville National Forest

South End Project – April 10, 2015

Why is this project important?

Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use has grown substantially over the past few decades. To meet this growing demand, the Colville National Forest is designating new routes for OHV use that connect communities and provide riders with loop opportunities and increased riding time. The South End motor vehicle management project will increase opportunities for motorized recreationists to enjoy National Forest System (NFS) lands in a manner compatible with the natural and cultural resources in the project area. This Decision is designed to implement a system of routes for off-highway vehicles that provide for longer rides, create loops, connect communities, connect with County roads open to OHV use, and are accessed directly from campsites.

The South End project will designate up to 177 miles of road currently open to highway-legal vehicles as 'Open to All Vehicles' including OHVs. With more designated quality routes, riders will have a place to go on the Forest that gives them the opportunity to engage in the experience they are after. The OHV route system has been designed to reduce the level of erosion caused by OHVs and the impact of sediment getting into creeks and degrading fish habitat. Longer rides and designated routes should also help reduce the damage to forest resources caused by unmanaged cross-country travel and the creation of new routes by users looking for new opportunities or ways to connect existing routes themselves. Steps will be taken to reduce off-road travel. These steps include increased education, increased enforcement, increased signing, physically blocking the access to illegal off-road routes, and possibly changing the designation of some roads within the project area from "Open to All Vehicles" to "Open to Highway-Legal Vehicles Only".

What's been happening?

The Colville N.F. has completed many of the required road safety analyses and restoration efforts required in the project decision document in order to begin designating routes for OHVs in a phased approach. For the 2015 riding season, 96.7 miles of roads will be designated for use by all vehicles in the project area. These routes are specifically designed to connect communities and create loop opportunities, while protecting the natural environment. With the addition of new routes this year, communities located in the Pend Oreille Valley, near the Little Pend Oreille Lakes, and the town of Chewelah are now connected by OHV routes.

What new routes are open to OHV's in the project area this year?

Two new major connector routes have been designated this year, in addition to other connectors and loops. The two largest connectors are North Fork Chewelah Creek Rd. (Forest Service Road 9521000) with 22.30 miles and Tower/Winchester Creek Rd. (Forest Service Road 9517000) with 18.15 miles.

What is going to change and over how long?

The biggest changes you can expect to see over the next several years are the following: new OHV routes, three new developed trailheads, moving dispersed campsites away from creeks and wet meadows, and the temporary closure of the Phillips Lake area for rehabilitation and restoration of resource damage (rutting associated with hill climbing) that has occurred over the years.

What's keeping the decisions from being implemented quickly?

This is a large project area, with a number of complex restoration efforts. In order to implement the project in manageable increments, this project will be phased in over the next several years as funding becomes available. In addition, each potential new OHV route located on Forest Service Roads requires a safety analysis and a one year monitoring period to ensure there is no unauthorized motorized use off of the designated routes.

What now?

Implementation of the project was designed around a phased approach in which route designations are paired with restoration, safety, and monitoring activities. Therefore, not all 177 miles of road will be available to OHVs initially. In order to create loops and improve the trail riding opportunities for OHV enthusiasts, this project may convert about 8 miles of closed NFS roads and 4.5 miles of existing unauthorized



for the greatest good

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OHV routes to managed OHV trails. As funding allows, project implementation may also result in the new construction of about two miles of OHV trail that would provide connections between existing roads and create additional loop routes across the project area. Priority routes have been identified that connect communities and provides loop opportunities for riders. These routes will receive their safety analyses and monitoring early in the implementation phase of the project so they can be added to the MVUM as quickly as possible. Some of these routes connect Chewelah with communities located along the Little Pend Oreille Lakes and within the Pend Oreille Valley.

Does this mean I can ride all of these routes right now?

Not quite yet, the project will be implemented in phases as funding and staffing allow. There are existing routes that are open to OHV use. To ensure you are on a legally open route, please check the most current version of the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). It's critical to understand that only routes shown on the latest version of the MVUM are open to use.

Why should I stay on routes shown on the MVUM when there are other roads and trails to ride that are not on the map?

Illegal use of roads and trails in the project area would prevent routes (roads and trails) identified through the South End Project from being opened to OHVs and added to future motor vehicle use maps and may also result in currently open roads being closed to OHVs. If new unauthorized routes are created, or existing unauthorized routes are continued to be used, the South End Project's implementation plan will not allow that route to be added to the MVUM.

Are you going to be posting signs?

Yes, in limited areas. Remember that the MVUM is the only legal route map – if it isn't on the MVUM it isn't an open route. Signs will be generally limited to information boards posted with the latest motor vehicle use maps and regulations associated with OHV use and dispersed camping in the South End Project area.

Can I camp where I've always camped?

Restoration and rehabilitation of campsites will be ongoing for the next 5 – 10 years across the project area. Some restoration work has already been completed along the North Fork Chewelah Creek area. If the campsite is in the process of being restored, removed or repaired – please don't camp there.

Are you going to designate new campsites this year?

Not this year, but as soon as design work is completed and signage is installed you may expect to see changes in campsites.

I've heard that Phillips Lake is closed. Why?

The Phillips Lake area will be temporarily closed beginning in the Spring of 2016 to motorized vehicles while efforts are underway to block, stabilize and restore user created trails that are causing severe erosion. Once this work is completed and vegetation has been re-established on the hill behind the lake, parking spots will be delineated with rock barriers and the area will be re-opened to vehicles. This area is a good example of how traveling off designated routes and trails can cause erosion, soil compaction and damage wetlands that are important to wildlife.

I've heard that I can drive up to 300' off of a road to a dispersed campsite. Is this true?

Motor vehicle use off of designated roads and trails for the purpose of dispersed camping is permitted. Vehicles are allowed to park 300 feet off of a designated route when dispersed camping so long as it does not cause damage to Forest resources. If vehicle access is causing rutting, damage to vegetation, or exposing soil, vehicle access to dispersed campsites is prohibited. Access to dispersed campsites is often limited by soil moisture – the higher the moisture level, the more likely resource damage will occur as a result of accessing dispersed campsites. To reduce the potential for resource damage caused by accessing dispersed campsites, please use existing campsites whenever possible. If no campsites exist in the area of the Forest where you would like to camp, please choose drier upland areas not located immediately adjacent to streams. Dispersed camping may be restricting in specific areas of the Forest through signing or Forest closure orders.

How do I know where I can legally camp?

We encourage camping away from the edges of creeks and encourage camping in existing dispersed sites (please don't create a new site). Dispersed camping is allowed where it can occur without damaging resources or facilities. Motor vehicles may be used for the purpose of accessing dispersed campsites within 300 feet from the centerline of a designated road or trail unless otherwise restricted (by physical barriers, signs, or designations on the MVUM). In the future, camping may be restricted to designated sites only along certain routes.

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Can I travel off trail or road (cross-country) to retrieve game?

No, motor vehicles may not be used off of designated roads and trails for the purpose of retrieving game.

I've heard that I can drive up to 30' off of a road in order to park my vehicle. Is this true?

Yes, forest users may travel off designated roads and trails up to 30 feet to find a safe parking area while cutting firewood or recreating in the forest so long as no damage (rutting, vegetation loss, and exposing soil) to forest resources occurs.

Who else uses this area?

You can expect to see off-highway vehicles, horses, cows, campers, travel trailers and motorhomes, logging trucks, bicyclists and pickups pulling horse trailers. You can also expect Air Force survival school traffic and other heavy equipment. This area is also popular with hunters, shed-hunters, fishermen and target shooters. In short, everyone enjoys this area and it's more important than ever to take responsibility for reducing your activities' impacts in this area to other users enjoying their national forest.

What is the implementation timeline?

The South End Implementation Team comprised of Forest Service personnel and local partners meets twice a year to discuss monitoring of current conditions and implementation plans as listed in the Action Plan for the next riding season. This project is expected to be phased in over the next several years, with a majority of new routes designated over the next five years. Campsite relocation and rehabilitation will occur over the next five years as well.

What is this OHV Ambassador program I've heard of?

We are actively working with our partners to establish an OHV Ambassador Program with Eastern Washington ATV Association and the Tri-County Motorized Recreation Association. The OHV ambassador efforts will be focused on educating riders on the new routes available, the importance of staying on designated routes and trails to keep from damaging the land, improving the image of off-highway vehicle riders and helping with clean-up and restoration efforts across the project area.

I don't ride an OHV, but still want to get involved?

Contact your local Forest Service Ranger Station and ask how you can help implement this project.