



June 18, 2014

U.S. Forest Service Seeks Comments on Proposed Snowmobile Rule

The U.S. Forest Service today published a proposed rule that will regulate when and where over-snow vehicles (snowmobiles) can be used on national forest lands.

“Over-the-snow access and recreation is an appropriate use of public lands, and we strive to offer a variety of opportunities for that,” said U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. “We believe it is essential that the public be engaged in decisions regarding travel management on the forest and grasslands, and we encourage the public to review the proposal and provide comments to help improve the final rule.”

The Travel Management Rule, established in 2005, designated a system of roads, trails and areas approved for recreational motor vehicles. Over-the-snow vehicles were exempt from the Travel Management Rule at the land manager’s discretion. In March 2013 an Idaho federal judge ruled in favor of a challenge by the Winter Wildlands Alliance requiring the Forest Service to conduct more analysis relating to designating roads, trails and areas that are open or closed to snowmobiling. The judge’s ruling applies to all Forests nationwide.

The American Council of Snowmobile Associations and the Idaho State Snowmobile Association, with substantial support from the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association, appealed the decision against the Forest Service. This appeal is currently ongoing. Blue Ribbon Coalition is also listed as an intervener in the appeal.

The proposed rule was published on June 18, 2014 and allows a 45-day comment period. In accordance with a due date in the Judge’s ruling, the Forest Service plans to publish a final rule by September 9, 2014.

The proposed rule would allow the responsible official to establish a system of routes and areas where snowmobile use (over snow use) is prohibited except where allowed or a system of routes and areas where snowmobile use (over-snow-use) is allowed unless prohibited.

ACSA will be filing comments with the Forest Service on this significant proposed rule.

For additional information on today's official release see:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2014/06/18/2014-14273/use-by-over-snow-vehicles-travel-management-rule>

If you have any questions, please contact the ACSA office.

American Council of Snowmobile Associations

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