

MONTANA **SPRING 2022** **TRAIL RIDER NEWS**

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MONTANA TRAIL VEHICLE RIDERS ASSOCIATION



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Recreation and Trails Specialist Job Opening

From Fish, Wildlife & Parks

The State of Montana has advertised the position of Recreation and Trails Specialist that will be primarily responsible for administering the Montana Trail Stewardship Grant Program. For details go to the State of Montana CAREERS website (<https://statecareers.mt.gov>) In the Keyword field, enter the Job ID "22140417" or "Recreation and Trails Specialist".

Job Duties (narrative summary):

The Recreation and Trails Specialist is part of the Access and Landowner Relations Bureau and is primarily responsible for administering the Montana Trail Stewardship Grant Program. This includes providing good customer service to grant applicants and recipients, as well as ensuring the department with applicable fiduciary and administrative obligations. The work requires close coordination, interaction, and support of the staff members in the Access and Landowner Relations Bureau as well as the Financial Assistance and Compliance Bureau. It is important for the Recreation and Trails Specialist to work in an interdisciplinary fashion and communicate closely with other FWP staff in the Helena office and in the Regions in order to provide good service to the public and the resources. The position may be assigned other duties related to recreational access programs and trails planning and coordination. The position reports to the Access and Landowner Relations Bureau Chief.



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SCAN THIS QR CODE FOR A
DIRECT LINK
TO THE JOB OPENING



MTVRA General Membership Meeting Friday May 13th, 2022

From the MTVRA Board of Directors

The MTVRA General Membership meeting will be held at 7:30 PM on May 13th, 2022. The meeting will be during the 2022 MTVRA State Ride gathering at the Bull Run Guest Ranch in Cascade Montana. The meeting is open to all MTVRA members.

Electronic Network

Attention: Members if you are not receiving email news, please send in your email addresses. The cost of producing the newsletter, shortage of volunteers, and the real time lag in getting information to you in a timely fashion make the electronic network an important tool now and for

the future. We promise we will not deluge you with excess notices. All news releases sent to MTVRA will be reviewed for importance to Montana before sending out. To be added to the network, simply email mona.ehnes@gmail.com and ask to be added.

MONTANA TRAIL RIDER NEWS

Is published by the Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the MTVRA or its officers. Your editorial or news contributions would be appreciated. Carl Siroky, Editor, CarlSiroky@hotmail.com.

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MTVRA BYLAWS - Current bylaws, with changes approved June 2006, are available by request to Mona Ehnes, mona.ehnes@gmail.com

RTP2015 Trail Safety & Maintenance June & July 2021 on the Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest

By Mona Ehnes, Great Falls Trail Bike Riders Association

The Great Falls Trail Bike Riders Association hired two trail stewards again this past summer to perform tree clearing and trail maintenance on the OHV trails in the Jefferson Division. The focus of this project is to provide a safe and enjoyable recreational experience for the riders on the designated trails in the Little Belts, Highwood, & Castle Mountains.

The employees began on June 7th in the Highwood Mountains. There are a series of interconnecting loop trails, about 29 miles total, which are open early in the spring and many riders from Great Falls area ride there as soon as the snow is out. Since they are aware the Stewards start in June, many riders now carry chain saws and hand saws with them and clear a lot of trees themselves as they ride. With the bug kill over the past years, any area of the forest is sure to have down trees at any time. Down timber had been cleared by riders, but there were more trees down that were cleared by the Stewards. The following day they began work in the Hughsville area. The down timber was cleared on the trails with 40 trees cut and cleared. Some alternate routes around down trees were closed to keep on the designated trails. When the riders do not carry saws, they will find a way around and create unwanted trails.

The Stewards camped in the Logging Creek area and spent 8 days on the trails working on 7 trails. Trail 341 Rugby Creek, referred to by riders as the Airplane Trail, is 4 miles long, 4 days of work and cut over 100 trees. Trail 343 Balzinger to Taylor, is 6.4 miles, 2 full days and cut over 150 trees. This trail was covered again when they cleared 344 Taylor Hills where over 50 trees were cut, and they finished logging out to the top of Tenderfoot. 315 Tobin Gulch trail had no trees down, but once connected to 304 Pilgrim Creek trail, there were over 20 trees cut and some routes around those trees blocked. (The Balzinger/Pilgrim Creek Trail head is the area of the wildfire started in late July that led to the closure of trails and the shutting down of the trail work for the summer.)

They spent 3 days on 345 Daisy Springs clearing over 250 trees. Other trails in the Logging Creek area were cleared prior to being opened for use on July 1st and the heavy use anticipated over the 4th of July weekend. The Belt Ranger District issues a special permit yearly for the Stewards to clear trails that is not open until the 1st of July.

They encountered and cleared over 50 trees on the 347 Williams Mountain trail which is 2.5 miles long. June was finished working on the Dry Wolf, Baldy, Silver Gulch and the Jefferson Creek Trails. The Jefferson Creek is a main access trail to multiple loop opportunities and is heavily used. 2 BIG trees were cleared.

Trail 346 Lost Stove is a short 1.4 mile trail taking you from Divide road to the Tenderfoot Creek. In that short section they cut over 100 trees and spent an entire day working.

In July, the Calf Creek/Island Park trail loop system was cleared with well over 200 trees cleared. They then moved back to the Logging Creek area where the Deep Creek, Blankenbaker, & Ming Coulee areas were cleared and work was finished on the 29th with the closure of the project for the year due to the wildfire danger.

The number of trees cut are approximate. If you are riding, find downfall, get off your motorcycle, cut the trees, get back on and try to give an accurate count of trees cut, considering this happens 10 or 20 times in a day, plus unloading your saw, fueling, and then reloading to ride again, we have determined that an approximate count is all they can do. The actual clearing to assure a safe and good experience is more important than specific number of trees cleared.

On the 22nd of July, while riding one trail, one of the Stewards smelled smoke. They began a search and found a lightning strike with about a 20-foot diameter fire started. Since they always have a 'Spot' they were able to get the coordinates, ride to the top of the ridge and call in the location to the Forest. Until the USFS team arrived, the Stewards created a fire line around the fire and cut some burning trees and worked to keep it from spreading. In total they fought fire for 5 hours. When they talked to the Ranger about it, he offered them a job fighting fire and they quickly said they would keep their current jobs. It was an educational experience for our fellows as it was a first for both. They received a big thank you from the US Forest. This is the second time in the life of this

program that our Stewards have found a fire and turned the location in.

Safety is a big part of the work that is done. Large roots across or in trail that could be a hazard are cut, brush and trees are cut back from trail for vision and to prevent foot injuries. If there are extreme safety hazards found, the Ranger District is notified so the condition can be corrected. Leaners are cleared and removed over trails. This season, a leaner fell at a worksite, and landed where one of the Stewards had been working minutes before.

Since the wildfire closure ended work, we had rain and wet weather for a week. However, the Stewards did not return to the field. About 302 miles were covered for 2021 summer



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The 50 Inch Rule

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Some side-by-sides exceed 50 inches in width and are too wide for typical ATV trails. These wider vehicles are limited to designated 4x4 routes only. Observe all signs and access barriers.

Application cycles open for more than \$1.3 million in motorized and nonmotorized outdoor recreation grants

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks begins accepting applications for more than \$1.3 million in recreation grants on Wednesday, Dec. 15, through the online system at funding.mt.gov. Applications will be accepted for the Off-Highway Vehicle Grant Program, the Montana Trail Stewardship Grant Program (MTSGP), and the Summer Motorized Trail Pass Grant Program. Application deadlines vary and are noted below. The application cycle for the federal Recreational Trails Program opens Jan. 18.

Montana Trail Stewardship Grant Program: The MTSGP is a state-funded grant program. This is the program's second grant cycle. This program will award funds for construction or maintenance of motorized and nonmotorized trails or trail-related facilities.

- Applications accepted: 15 – Feb. 15, 2022
- Awards announced: April
- Contracts issued and projects begin: July
- Anticipated funding available for awards: \$1,000,000
- More information: <https://fwp.mt.gov/aboutfwp/grant-programs/trail-stewardship>

Summer Motorized Trail Pass Grant Program: A grant program funded through the creation of the OHV Trail Pass. This is the program's second grant cycle. The program will award funds to non-federal entities for the maintenance of OHV trails on public lands.

- Applications accepted: 15 – March 31, 2022
- Awards announced: May
- Contracts issued and projects begin: August
- Anticipated funding available for awards: \$153,000
- More information: <https://fwp.mt.gov/aboutfwp/grant-programs/summer-motorized-trail-pass>

Off-Highway Vehicle Grant Program: This is a state-funded grant program. This program provides project funding with the goal of enhancing and maintaining OHV recreational opportunities for the benefit of OHV enthusiasts in Montana.

- Applications accepted: December 15, 2021 – March 31, 2022
- Awards announced: May
- Contracts issued and projects begin: August
- Anticipated funding available for awards: \$230,000
- More information: <https://fwp.mt.gov/aboutfwp/grant-programs/off-highway-vehicle>

Training sessions will be offered as needed for prospective applicants of the Off-Highway Vehicle Grant Program and Summer Motorized Trail Pass Grant Programs.

For more information on attending a grant application training session or applying to one of these opportunities, visit: <https://fwp.mt.gov/aboutfwp/grant-programs>.

For questions about the Montana Trail Stewardship Grant Program, contact Carissa Beckwith at carissa.beckwith@mt.gov

For questions about the Summer Motorized Trail Pass Grant Program and the Off-Highway Vehicle Grant Program, contact Seth McArthur at SMcArthur@mt.gov

From the MTVRA Office

By Mona Ehn

It's been a strange year for all.... We got the sanction number and insurance for a 'State Ride' at the Ranch in August, then when the fires started at the ranch we had to cancel. We did that in time to get the prepaid costs refunded, but paperwork remains.

Bills have been paid, deposits made, and the Contractor trail tractor grants require coordination and paperwork, so the office remains busy thru the summer.



Cathy Covert moved the membership 'operation' into her house since their shop office is no longer open. She still has the business of renewals and notices regardless of the outside world. Her dedication is above and beyond. Thank you Cathy!

Hope to see you on the trail this summer!



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Trail Maintenance Report

Jody Loomis, CTVA

Greetings Singletrackers!

Here's a quick recap of some of our efforts in the 2021 season and a look ahead to 2022. This year definitely had it's challenges; high winds, high temperatures, extreme fire danger, and lots of smoke. There are about seven singletrack trail systems we normally work to clear and maintain.



The Bigbelt's were in pretty good shape with just a few large fir trees that needed to be removed. Some new singletrack signs were installed at the top of Little Hellgate and the Harris Gulch trailhead.

The Nez Pierce trail is getting more attention than in years past. We expected a couple of hot, sweaty days removing downfall. Instead, we found the trail in great shape, with only thirty or so stops needed to clear trees.

Thankfully, more riders are carrying saws these days! A few extreme mountain bikers

have discovered this trail. It's great to see them enjoying the trail as well.

Volunteers in the Basin area reported some clearing on Buttermilk Jim, but Sullivan Gulch is obstructed with downfall and didn't get ridden last season.

The Red Rock singletrack system is always a challenge and has not been cleared for two seasons. This area has a lot of trees affected by beetle-kill, so with all the windstorms and lack of maintenance this one will be the most difficult to reopen.



Through the Capital Trail Vehicle Association, we applied for a trail grant through FWP. The funds for this grant program are generated by the new Trail Pass. Our grant request proposal would reroute a steep washout and a road-to-trail conversion of approximately two miles on Little Hellgate in the Bigbelts.

This would help control erosion issues and preserve trail "flow". The grant also provides funds to replace collapsed jack leg fencing that serves as a width restriction at the Harris Gulch trailhead. A portion of singletrack switchbacks have been damaged by four wheelers and side-by-sides riding around the downed fence. Early last season

we salvaged what fence we could to temporarily restore the width restriction. As of now, the grant has been approved by FWP, we have a contract, and our status is "underway". We were unable to perform any work on the project in 2021 because we had been waiting for the final approval from the Forest Services Grants and Approval staff. The project will have to be completed this season to fulfill our contract with FWP. Hopefully we will see action from the FS soon. I will keep you updated on this one. We will be looking for some help to get this wrapped up by next fall.



Thanks to all who work volunteer time and efforts on the trail!

Click on the QR Code to go to the FWP Summer OHV Trail Pass Website.



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The Montana Summer Motorized Trail Pass

By Russ Ehnes



RECREATION GRANTS
Summer Motorized Trail Pass Grant Program

During the 2019 Legislature Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association (MTVRA) worked with Montana Legislator Kerry White to pass HB 355, which among other things, created a "Summer Motorized Recreation Grant Program". The program will be funded through the sale of a "Summer motorized recreation trail pass", which will cost \$20, will be good for two years, and will be required to ride on summer motorized recreational trails on public lands in Montana. To quote the law, "Summer motorized recreation trail" means a trail designated as open to motorized use and approved for inclusion in the

summer motorized recreation trail grant program established in [section 4] by the land management agency with jurisdiction over the trail.

Why did we need to pass this new law? Simply put, there isn't enough money available to OHV clubs and associations or land managers to maintain our trails. Of course, we've all heard about federal budget cuts that affect agency trail budgets and while that's a real problem, it's only part of the problem. Another part of the problem, and the part MTVRA could affect, has been the loss of funding for the Montana OHV Grant Program.

An Important History of the Montana OHV Grant Program

In 1985 the Montana Legislature passed a bill that required every OHV to have a \$25 registration decal to operate on public lands. The problem was every penny went to county budgets, not OHV trails. MTVRA entered the legislative arena in 1987 in an effort to change this misguided law so it would benefit OHV users. MTVRA succeeded in getting the law changed so \$5 from each \$25 decal went to an OHV grant program while the balance still went to the counties. In 1991 MTVRA again worked to change the law so a portion of the Montana gas tax, 1/8 of 1%, would be returned to the OHV program. This is a refund for the taxes we pay on gasoline that is not used on-road, similar to the snowmobile program. Every OHV user was required to buy a \$25 decal annually (every year) for every OHV they used on public lands.

As the annual decal sales increased because of increased compliance and increased numbers of riders registering machines, the grant program grew to its peak in the late 1990's when about \$300,000 was available each year for grants to maintain OHV trails and for educational efforts in Montana.

In the 1999 legislative session legislators changed the law to give owners the option to register motorcycles and quadricycles (ATVs) 11 years or older permanently. In 2003 the legislature changed all registration of motorcycles, ATVs, Boats, RVs and trailers to permanent registration at the request of Montana counties. The reason was legitimate; county motor-vehicle registration offices were being overwhelmed by the sheer volume of registering and selling annual plates and decals for these vehicles.

While the permanent registration eased the burden on the counties, it was based on flawed information. The assumptions made by the bill drafters and used in the fiscal note for the bill said that OHV users bought new vehicles about every three years, therefore the permanent registration would be sold for \$61.25 with about \$15 of that going to the OHV fund, roughly triple the annual rate.

MTVRA presented data at the bill hearings acquired from actual sales numbers from the Motorcycle Industry Council that proved the average rider purchased a new OHV about every seven years, but our data was ignored. In addition, the law required sellers of used vehicles to remove the permanent decal and the new buyer would be required to buy a new permanent decal. That simply doesn't happen in the real world. Montana Snowmobile Association (MSA) found snowmobiles with permanent decals that had been through six different owners without a new decal. The same is true for OHVs.

The result has been that almost all permanent decals sold now are for brand new units and our OHV grant program has declined from a high of \$300,000 annually in the late

1990's to a low of \$75,000 several years ago. The fund has been hovering between \$75,000 and \$100,000 for the past several years.

The permanent registration had the same devastating effect on the snowmobile program so MSA worked to implement a "Winter Trail Pass" in the 2015 Legislative session to restore funding to their trail grooming program. The new Summer Motorized Recreation Trail Pass closely resembles the snowmobile trail pass and was created to restore funding for OHV trail maintenance.

More information about the Montana Summer Motorized Trail Pass program can be found on the Montana State Parks website at <https://stateparks.mt.gov/activities/off-highway-vehicles>

Questions and Answers

Where do I buy a trail pass?

Trail passes can be purchased online at stateparks.mt.gov/recreation/ohvProgram.html and will be mailed to the address you specify. To buy passes in person, visit any Fish Wildlife and Parks office or an authorized vendor. A list of vendors can be found on the same site listed above.

Where does my \$20 go and what is my money used for?

If you buy a trail pass from a vendor, \$18 goes to the grant fund and the vendor gets \$2. All \$20 goes in the grant fund. If you buy a pass from Fish, Wildlife, and Parks either in-person or online. The grant funds are administered by Montana State Park Department. Up to 5% of the fund can be used by the department for administration of the program, \$1 from each pass is to be granted for mitigation and eradication of noxious weeds along summer motorized recreation trails, and the remainder of the grant funds are available for designation, maintenance, and improvement of summer motorized recreational trails.

Who can apply for grants?

Only private clubs and organizations can apply for grants from this grant fund. Therefore, any grant money spent on trails must be done through cooperative agreements and partnerships with the agencies managing the trails. While this gives OHV riders assurance the money is being used to benefit them, it also means that local clubs and the state association will be responsible for acquiring grants, spending the money responsibly and working in cooperation and partnership with the managing agencies.

How will MTVRA use money they get from the grants?

In western states the vast majority of trail maintenance on Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) trails is performed by state operated OHV trail programs and volunteer organization. In Montana there is no state sponsored OHV trail maintenance program so that burden has fallen to MTVRA and its member organizations.

For the past seven years MTVRA has operated a statewide OHV mechanized trail maintenance program in cooperation with the BLM and USFS. MTVRA has applied for and received grants from the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) each year. The grants have been \$45-90,000 each year and are used to hire a contractor to perform trail maintenance with a Sutter Trail Dozer on OHV trails in five National Forests and three BLM areas in Montana.

The maintenance program has been exceptionally successful but the demand for maintenance from other USFS and BLM areas far exceeds the capacity MTVRA has with the current \$90,000 limit on RTP grants. The Summer Motorized Recreation Grant Program will provide a reliable funding stream and allow additional funding for the maintenance program so MTVRA can expand it to additional areas across Montana.

Why not just rely on the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) money?

The RTP is a federal program derived from a gas tax refund for fuel we use off-highway. The RTP Program must be reauthorized every few years and is under constant threat of being eliminated from the federal budget. While MTVRA and others will continue to defend RTP, it is a very real possibility the program could end at any time.

Additionally, the program is extremely competitive and while MTVRA has been successful every year we have applied, the \$90,000 request has been reduced to \$45,000 in the past. This is less likely to occur in the Summer Motorized Recreation Grant Program.

Can my local club get grants?

Absolutely! Your club can get money for trail signing, trail repairs and maintenance, or to develop a maintenance program of its own. MTVRA and State Parks will be glad to share examples and information to help you and your local club succeed.

Why do I need a permanent sticker and a trail pass?

The permanent decal requirement was not changed because the existing OHV Grant Program is still funded by permanent decal sales and gas tax refund. The existing program and the new Summer Motorized Recreation Grant Program complement each other since the existing program allows grants for educational programs and allows agencies to apply for small grants. Both programs can be used as matching funds for RTP grants which require 20% match.

Also, in order to purchase a trail pass, your vehicle must be registered and titled, which is accomplished when you buy a permanent decal.

What is a designated trail?

A designated trail is a "Summer motorized recreation trail", which means a trail designated as open to motorized use and approved for inclusion in the summer motorized recreation trail grant program by the land management agency with jurisdiction over the trail.

Why do trails need to be enrolled in the program?

The trail pass differs from the permanent decal in a technical sense because the trail pass is not a "registration" which is applicable to all OHVs owned by residents of the state (with few exceptions). The trail pass is required under this new state law (HB0355) for users of trails that are included in the OHV grant program by the land management agency. Trails included in this program are designated as open to motorized use and approved for inclusion ("enrolled") in the summer motorized recreation trail grant program by the land management agency with jurisdiction over the trail. The system of "enrollment" allows users of the facilities to know where the pass is required. This is the same system that has been used in Wyoming for their trail pass for over a decade. While this is a little complicated and confusing, it is necessary to comply with federal laws.

How are trails enrolled?

On Forest Service lands, nearly all Rangers Districts have completed travel management decisions in accordance with the 2005 Travel Management Rule (TMR). The TMR requires each unit to produce a "Motor Vehicle Use Map" (MVUM) that is the legal document that designates trails and areas where motorized use can occur, the type or class of vehicle allowed, and when use may occur. The MVUM also includes a complete table (list) of every legal OHV trail. The USFS is working with Montana State Parks to finalize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will recognize every MVUM and accompanying table in Montana as the list of enrolled trails. The MOU will also allow Rangers Districts that have not completed travel planning in their districts to list routes open to summertime OHV use individually or through other means of description as enrolled. This will be completed in the spring of 2020.

The BLM is working with Montana State Parks on a similar MOU that will be completed in the spring of 2020.

Will the pass help open trails that have been closed?

Trails are closed and restricted for a variety of reasons. Some are closed because they are eroded or damaged by use or storm events. In many cases these trails can be reopened after being repaired, redesigned,

or relocated using money from the Summer Motorized Recreation Grant Program. Money from the grant program could be used to mitigate other problems that have caused trail closures. For instance, a trail could be rerouted to avoid riparian habitat, raptor nests, other critical habitat, or sensitive cultural sites.

Will the pass help build new trails?

Yes. While not as common as we riders would like, new trails are being built on public lands. The Summer Motorized Recreation Grant Program will be an excellent source of funding for new trails and can be used as matching funds for the RTP program. A good example of new trail construction are the new system trails being constructed near Lincoln by the USFS using RTP funds.

Do Jeeps need the trail pass?

Full size street-legal vehicles like Jeeps meet the definition of "motorized equipment" in HB 355 and will be required to buy a trail pass to be used on USFS trails and open to vehicles greater than 50" and BLM "primitive roads" enrolled in the program. The USFS 2005 TMR specifically defines trails over 50" and several forests in Montana have utilized this designation. BLM defines their routes as trails, primitive roads, and roads. Full size street-legal do not need a trail pass for USFS roads or BLM roads not designated "primitive roads".

My side-by-side is over 50" wide. Do I need a trail pass?

Side-by-side vehicles greater than 50" will be required to buy a trail pass to use USFS trails open to vehicles greater than 50" and BLM "primitive roads" as described above. Side-by-side vehicles are not required to buy a trail pass to use unpaved roads on USFS and BLM route systems. For more specific information about the use of OHV's on unpaved roads in Montana, consult your local land manager or look at SB 314 at <https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2017/billpdf/SB0314.pdf>

Do I need a trail pass if I rent an OHV from a rental vendor?

No but you will need to carry a copy of "proof of rental".

Where can I read HB 355?

<https://leg.mt.gov/bills/2019/billpdf/HB0355.pdf>

Permanent means permanent doesn't it?

In the case of a permanent OHV registration, permanent means "the time period you own the vehicle". If the vehicle transfers ownership, the new owner is required to buy a new permanent registration.

I bought a permanent registration. Haven't I already paid my fair share of trail maintenance?

When you bought a permanent registration decal for \$61.25 you paid approximately \$15 to the maintenance fund one time. In the future, if you buy a vehicle and purchase a \$20 trail pass, you can then purchase a permanent registration decal for \$41.25. You will be required to buy a new trail pass for \$20 every two years.

Do I need a trail pass if I don't live in Montana?

If you are not a resident of Montana and you would like to bring your vehicle from another state, you will be required to purchase a non-resident temporary use permit for \$35, of which \$27.50 will be used for trail maintenance.

Non-resident temporary use permits are good for the calendar year in which they are purchased. They can be purchased online at <https://stateparks.mt.gov/activities/off-highway-vehicles> will be mailed to the address you specify. To buy passes in person, visit any Fish Wildlife and Parks office or an authorized vendor. A list of vendors can be found on the same site listed above.

If you are coming to Montana and want to order your temporary non-resident use permit online, it's a good idea to order at least two weeks before you depart.

If I'm from another state but ride a borrowed vehicle that has a trail pass, will I also need a non-resident temporary use permit?

No.

Continental Divide Travel Plan Draft Decision

Jody Loomis, CTVA

The draft Continental Divide Travel Plan has been released and here's a discouraging summary of how many trails and camp sites are being planned for closure. Unfortunately, it is apparent that a lot of the regulations were ignored by the forest service in the process of developing the travel plan.

The Continental Divide Travel Plan currently covers 155,500 acres and had 435 miles of open roads and trails. Implementation of the the decisions in the draft Continental Divide Travel Plan will result in significant losses for the OHV community:

- A reduction in the open roads and trails to 284 miles, from 435 miles.
- 151 miles, or 34% of the routes will be closed. Many of these are primitive two-track trails which are ideal for ATV use.
- 13 miles of the Continental Divide National Trail System will be illegally closed to motorized use.
- 100% of the popular Sweeney Creek recreation area by Priest Pass will be closed to motorized use.
- Most OHV trails will be closed every year on August 31st, thereby only allowing about 3 months of motorized use.

In addition to losses in trails, the draft travel plan limits camping to within 70 feet of an open road unless it is a designated camp site and limits parking to within 30 feet of an open road.

Dakota 600 - July 17-21, 2022

Dakota Rider News

Some of you may be interested in this adventure. Registration opens February 15, 2022. To find out more go to <https://www.dakota600.com>

DAKOTA 600
SINGLE TRACK - DUAL SPORT - ADVENTURE
JULY 17-21, 2022

Registrations are now open and will close at 5pm February 21st.

Home | Dates & Details | Ride Info | Resources | Fun Stuff | 3D Trails Development Corp. | Contact Us | OGC Scholarship | Open Application

MISSION STATEMENT

The Dakota 600 is the region's premier off-road, fund-raising motorcycle trail ride. Proceeds from the ride are used to create and enhance motorcycle trails in the Western South Dakota and other western mountain states.

Riders will create riding memories that will last a lifetime and provide funds for continuing creation of motorcycle adventures.

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Trail Counter Report for 2021

By Dan Thompson, RCORUA

For the past four years Ravalli County Off Road User Association (RCORUA) has deployed trail counters at selected sites in the Bitterroot National Forest. The intent of collecting trail travel data is to help RCORUA and the Forest Service understand visitor activities and preferences.

RCORUA began their trail monitoring program during the summer season of 2018 using four TRAFX (www.trafx.net) vehicle counters. These counters detect the disturbance to the earth's magnetic field as any magnetic object moves through it. These devices count how many disturbances occur for every hour of every day that the sensors are deployed. Following their period of deployment, the data stored in the sensors is downloaded to a computer and analyzed using software supplied by TRAFX. The key parameter that characterizes vehicular travel at a particular site is the "average number of visits per day". Use of this parameter allows quantitative comparisons among sites even though the period of deployment for those sites may have been different.

RCORUA purchased three additional TRAFX counters for use during the 2020 season, so a total of seven sites were monitored during 2021. One site – Trail 313 – did not initialize properly and did not produce usable data.

Results — Table 1 below shows all of the use data for all of the sites that have been monitored over the past four years.

YEAR	Loop 1	Loop 2	Trail 104	Lick Creek	Tepee	Overwhich	Sheep Creek	Coal Creek	Kerlee Ridge
2018	1.7	3.1	2.0			2.4			
2019				4.2			7.0	1.9	
2020	1.8	4.0	2.5	1.9	0.5	2.3	2.0		
2021	1.9	3.1	2.5	1.9	0.6				2.5

More detailed information, including a description of the locations of the various 2020 sites, is available from the attached document entitled "2021 trail counter data".

Table 1 demonstrates that there is quite remarkable consistency in year-to-year travel at each site. To be sure, there are some anomalies, but generally speaking, visitation rates are remarkably consistent at a site from one year to the next. In 2021, RCORUA provided routine maintenance for the Kerlee Ridge trail and visitors responded with a very respectable visitation rate for that trail of 2.5 visits/day. Tepee remains as the least popular of the monitored routes, suggesting that improvements to the connector trail may be in order. Darby Trails Loop 2 remains our most visited monitored trail with 3.1 average visits per day.

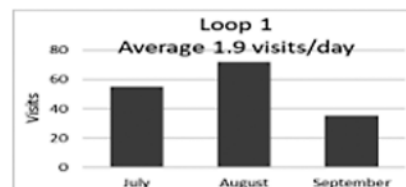
Because of the way TRAFX counters are designed, it is possible to sort and average data in a wide variety of ways. For example, it is interesting to know which days of the week are most popular for OHV recreation. With TRAFX and its analysis package, it is easily determined that Saturday is by far and away the most popular day and that Saturday and Sunday account for nearly half of all OHV activity on the trails monitored. This has been a consistent result for all of the trails monitored so far and probably applies to nearly all forms of recreation on the Forest.

In our travel report for 2020, we noted that travel patterns were atypically subdued

in the spring of the year and accelerated in the fall. This observation was reinforced by anecdotal reports of similar reports for other Forest recreational activities. Many speculated that this anomalous pattern was the result of COVID lock downs and restrictions and the public response to those events. This anomaly did not persist in 2021 where the visitation rates were more typically high in the spring and subdued in the fall. If anything, fall OHV activities were even more suppressed in 2021 due to heavy unhealthy smoke conditions during August and September in Montana.

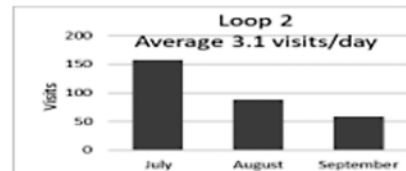
For those Forest visitors who value solitude and want to avoid the crowd or get a good parking place, the counter data suggests that you begin your activity before "rush hour" on the trails. There is little traffic on the monitored trails (presumably all trails) before 9 am. After that, traffic rapidly peaks at about 10 am and gradually decreases as the day goes on. If you like solitude, start early to avoid rush hour and enjoy your ride during the week to avoid the weekend crowds!!

2021 Trail Counter Data



This counter was located on Darby Trails Loop 1 at connector D between the end of FR 1127 and the White Stallion Road FR 273.

This counter was deployed for 116 days and recorded 226 visits. Since there are multiple entry and exit points for travel on this trail system, be aware that this does not capture all visits to Loop 1.



Located on NE portion of Darby Trails Loop 2 on FR 62467. Count rates for this site are relatively high, indicating that eastern limb of Loop 2 is a popular destination for OHV visitors. This counter was deployed for 116 days and recorded 365 visits.



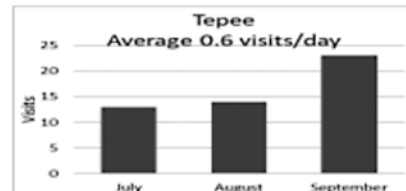
Trail 104 is a popular motorcycle trail in the Sapphire mountains. This counter is located on TR 104 near where the trail crosses the White Stallion road FR 273 due west of White Stallion camp.

This counter was deployed for 116 days and recorded 243 visits. This site displays a more typical monthly trend of visits.



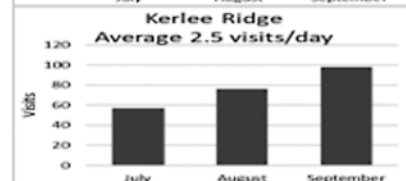
Located on the OHV portion of FR 5771 at Lick Creek Saddle.

This counter was deployed for 105 days and recorded 197 visits.

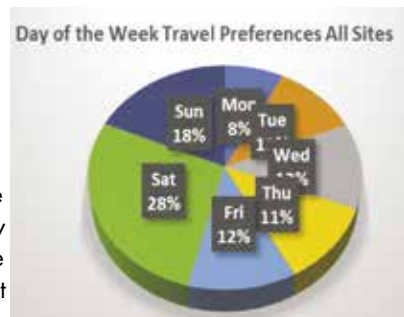


The Tepee connector joins OHV roads 13313 and 13314 together at their western ends. The Tepee route is in the East Fork area about 2 miles north of Springer. The counter was located in the middle of the Tepee connector.

This counter was deployed for 112 days and recorded 68 visits. Visitor reports indicate difficulty with deadfall on routes in the area.



This trail is in the Meadow Creek area of the East Fork. Together with FR 5759, this trail, designated RD-OHV2-02 by the Travel Plan, forms an attractive loop route. RCORUA performed routine maintenance on this trail last summer, and usage rates have increased as a result. Visitation rates for this site were uncommonly high during September. This counter was deployed for 103 days and recorded 254 visits.



2021 Fall Trail Clearing

From RCORUA Fall Newsletter

These photos are from the trail clear in Kerlee Ridge in the East Fork. The crew of 8 (6 with saws) spent over 72 hours cutting out the many trees that had fallen on the trail. Much thanks goes to Randy and Mike for the big saws that they had; without them the 30" to 36" trees would still be blocking the trail. The crew consisted of Dave, Mike and Rae, Don, John, Randy, and Jim and Marsha. It was a long, hot day but the trail is open to 50" vehicles again. With the amount of dead trees in the area, any wind storm could block the trail again, so if you plan on riding it you may need a saw.



Trail clearing on Ambrose Saddle/Three Mile this summer by Bruce, Kristi, Mike & Kathy. And one of the 1st signs we installed on a motorized trail.



Miscellaneous notes from happenings this summer!

- Vandals destroyed our signs on the Kiosk at the Sleeping Child/ White Stallion Road for the Darby Lumber Trails, we are in the process of replacing them now.
- Crews of volunteers opened several trails in the East Fork (Kerlee Ridge, TeePee connector, Lick/Reynolds Trail and various roads) West Fork (Coal Creek Trails, Overwich Trail, and various roads) and Ambrose Area (Ambrose/ Three Mile Saddle) this year.

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WE NEED PHOTOS!

We are always looking for good photos to feature in the newsletter. Set your camera to high-resolution and snap away. Who knows, your image may end up as the next newsletter cover! Send your photos to Carl Siroky, carlsiroky@hotmail.com Be sure to include the date the photo was taken, the location, the event (if applicable), and the names of anyone in the photo. You may also include a little write-up about the photo. We may include your story in the newsletter!

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Neversweat Trailhead Toilet Facility Update

From Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest Facebook Page and Doug Abelin

Thanks to our invaluable partnership with Capital Trail Vehicle Association (CTVA), a new bathroom was installed at the Never Sweat OHV trailhead!!! This bathroom was funded through a Yamaha grant that was awarded to the CTVA Club. In addition to the bathroom installation, the Club helped by doing a lot of mowing and improving some of the fencing along the perimeter of the trailhead. In fact, club members also finished tying in the jackleg to the outhouse and seeded the work site so new vegetation will come in, especially with all this rain! Thank you Capital Trail Vehicle Association for your continued partnership, and for your passion to help care for, and enjoy, our public lands!



"This project has been in the works since the early 1990's, and thanks to the Yamaha outdoor access Grant's funding, which we applied for 2 seasons ago, we received it last season. We now have a nice trailhead with a large parking area and a beautiful Kiosk with neat signage identifying routes that are all accessed from here. It's a nice place to sit, relax, and release the excitement of a great ride, in a great location, deep in public lands. As the President of "Capital Trail Vehicle Association", I want to



thank Yamaha, the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest and all the Volunteers who have worked for years towards this. I want to let the public know that it's done and please come and enjoy it." Doug Abelin

News from Capital Trail Vehicle Association, Helena Montana

Mike Sedlock, CTVA President

Greeting fellow Montana trail riders,

Our club maintains approximately 150 miles of single track and 50 inch motorized trails in the surrounding Helena area. We are looking forward to "hopefully" getting some delayed trail maintenance done this year that has been on the maintenance agenda for several years but delayed because the trail contractors have been deployed to assist fighting numerous wildfires. Our club has done what we can to maintain trails in the Helena area but there is only so much we can do with hand tools. The trails East of Canyon Ferry Lake in the Big Belt Mountains are in dire need of maintenance that has not had any heavy equipment maintenance in many years. It's too bad that we have such a limited number of trail maintenance contractors in Montana. I guess that they have to go where they are most needed for the greater public good.

Several years ago, we sketched a plan to improve the Neversweat trailhead parking area (located on the Maggie Gulch road on the East side of Canyon Ferry Lake). The plan includes an outdoor latrine, disability cement parking pads, pavilion with picnic tables, a fire ring and a traffic control device. This is a huge undertaking that will require significant grant funding. Because of the amount of funding, it is necessary that we apply for the grants in phases. Phase 1 was completed several years ago when we received a grant from the Yamaha Motor Corporation to install the outdoor latrine and fire ring (See article "Neversweat Trailhead Toilet Facility Update"). Phase 2 grant was approved last year to fund the disability parking pads, picnic tables and 50 inch traffic control device. Phase 3 grant will be applied for this year to fund the pavilion. We anticipate that phase 2 and 3 construction will be done at the same time because it would be more cost feasible to do them together because of travel cost to the site from Helena and identical equipment needed. We hope to get the gravel area at the outdoor latrine replaced with the cement disability parking pad this summer.

A big MTVRA thank you to these BUSINESS MEMBERS

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RTP2015 Great Falls Trail Bike Riders, Trail Stewards, Safety & Maintenance Program.

By Mona Ehnes

These pictures show some of the various challenges the Trail Stewards encounter. They clear downfall caused by the wind and beetle kill of the past 4-5 years, remove dead trees that are leaning over the trail (leaners), rebuild cairns marking turns in trails, and clean water bars and drainage dips.

Often times along the way, they visit with other riders they meet on the trails and take the opportunity to educate them about good trail habits and the work they are doing that is funded by the OHV, RTP & Yamaha Outdoor Access grant funds.



Lookout is one of the historic places to visit in the Little Belt Mountains. The road to the Lookout is passable by automobiles and holds memories for all the riders who have visited it over the past 50+ years.

The building was relocated to ground level and work was done by volunteers to bring it back to its historic condition.

The stairs and framework were removed for safety reasons. We are glad to see it at its lower but original location.

The trail sign at 449 Lyons Gulch trail was repaired and relocated. The sign was originally located in an open area, leaving it where it could be used as a rubbing post by livestock. The sign was relocated to be near the trees where it would be protected from wear and tear.



Trail 625 showing how the trail evolved to migrate around a downed tree. The downed tree was cut back from the trail and trail repair commenced.



Trail work is not always repair of the trails. As shown in the pictures below, John Vehrs, Trail Steward is changing a flat tire he got when out in the woods working on trails.



Trail Stewards with motorcycles, at work: John Vehrs and George Chamarro



Leaners, safety hazards waiting for next wind storm or maybe just waiting.....



Daines offers alternative to Biden's 30x30 land plan

By Rob Chaney, Montana Standard

A group of GOP Congress members released an alternative to President Joe Biden's 30x30 land conservation initiative on Tuesday, pushing for more attention to productive management of working lands.

"Conservation is part of our Montana way of life — we know how to be good stewards of our lands," Sen. Steve Daines, R-Montana, wrote of the proposal.

"I believe it's a conservative principle to conserve," Daines wrote. "That's why I'm pushing a new 'Western Conservation Principles' initiative that uses science-based, time-tested, locally driven practices to bring about meaningful conservation outcomes, unlike President Biden's vague 30x30 initiative."

Daines co-authored the 9-page document with Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Washington. The version released on Tuesday afternoon contained 39 signatures, including House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy, Wyoming senators Liz Cheney and John Barrasso and Idaho senators James Risch and Mike Crapo.

The proposal came in response to an initiative in Biden's Interior Department to protect 30% of the United States' land and water by 2030. Biden's America the Beautiful initiative anticipates a 10-year national conservation effort of collaborative, voluntary, locally led projects. Its goals include protecting natural systems, adapting to climate change, and improving access to the outdoors.

"America's farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners have an important role to play in combating the climate crisis and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, by sequestering carbon in soils, grasses, trees, and other vegetation and sourcing sustainable bioproducts and fuels," Biden said in the America the Beautiful announcement.

"Coastal communities have an essential role to play in mitigating climate change and strengthening resilience by protecting and restoring coastal ecosystems, such as wetlands, seagrasses, coral and oyster reefs, and mangrove and kelp forests, to protect vulnerable coastlines, sequester carbon, and support biodiversity and fisheries."

In a video statement, Daines said Biden's proposal lacks clear information about what lands would qualify toward his 30x30 goals. Many stakeholders, he added, fear the administration's plan is "just a way to lock up more land," and that he supports eliminating "frivolous lawsuits" and "conserving healthy landscapes instead of ambiguous land status."

Several Montana-based conservation groups contacted for response to the Western caucuses' plan said they haven't had enough time to review it. Alliance for the Wild Rockies Executive Director Michael Garrity responded to the lawsuit challenge, noting that winning lawsuits against federal agencies was proof the challenges were well-grounded.

"President Trump's lawyer Rudy Giuliani got his law license suspended for filing what the court found to be frivolous lawsuits," Garrity said. "No one has ever accused us of filing a frivolous lawsuit in court, and by definition when we win, it's not frivolous. Congress wrote these laws and included citizen enforcement provisions because there's no police to call when these agencies do something unlawful."

The GOP Western Conservation Principles focus on "invasive species; overgrown, diseased and infested forests; and post-wildfire restoration." Members of the Senate and Congressional Western caucuses called for streamlining the National Environmental Policy Act to increase active forest management, better control of invasive species, reducing overpopulation of wild horses and burros on rangeland, bringing more attention to federal Superfund hazardous waste cleanup projects, encouraging visitation to national parks, improving the "checkerboard" land access that mixes federal and private land through better mapping of easements, accelerating processing of endangered species recovery, offering title transfers on federal water facilities in need of repair, removing the "D.C. knows best" limitations on conservation policies, and providing "creative financing agreements" to leverage public-private partnerships.

It specifically calls for returning management of grizzly bears and gray wolves to state wildlife agencies.

In reporting and monitoring public lands, the proposal calls for better mapping and release of data on federal mineral resources. It also seeks audits of existing federal land programs to "ensure alignment with their original mission and verify these funds are leveraged for the best rate of return on investment and going to where they are most needed."

"We believe this objective assessment of our land is the best indicator of conservation efforts underway on all of our lands regardless of what the land is being managed for — be it wilderness, recreation, energy, grazing, timber or wildlife," the group statement noted.

Members also called for changes to court challenges of environmental reviews, saying, "we can protect access to the courts while preventing the current abuses experienced."

Fox Factory Offers Grants Through Its Trail Trust Program

From NOHVCC

The information below was provided by Fox Factory. Please go to www.trailtrust.com or reach out to Fox Factory at giving@ridefox.com to learn more about the program.

Trail Trust represents Fox Factory's commitment to the future.

Fox Factory created Trail Trust to provide grants to organizations helping to preserve the places we love to play. The goal is to bring together diverse communities to build, maintain, and expand access to trails. In short, we want to make sure that the thrill of the ride can live on forever.

Trail Trust is FOX Factory's signature community investment program. Our products are an integral part of outdoor adventuring – from mountain biking and motorcycling, to off-roading and snowmobiling. With that, comes the

responsibility to promote the responsible use of land amongst outdoor enthusiasts and protect our shared playground. We also want to expand access to outdoor sports, acknowledging the importance of providing under-represented groups with opportunities to participate in activities that have historically engaged a fairly homogenous population.

Focus Areas

Trail Building and Maintenance: We want to meaningfully support trail building and land maintenance for both cycling and power sports.

Responsible Recreation: We aim to promote the safe and responsible use of trails/land by educating the public about minimizing the environmental impact of outdoor adventuring.

Expanding Access: We seek to diversify the population that participates in the cycling and power sports industries which have historically seen inadequate diverse representation.

Eligibility Criteria

- We focus our support on programs located within or closely related to the geographic communities where we live, work, and play. Priority is given to locations where we operate to maximize our ability to engage and support partners. We currently have a physical presence in the United States, Canada, Taiwan, Germany, and Australia.
- Your organization must be registered as a non-profit, non-governmental organization under local jurisdiction with charitable purposes and

practices (e.g. 501(c)(3) in the US).

- Your organization cannot be a political or religious organization.
- Your organization's mission cannot focus primarily on a disease or health-related issues.
- We are currently only funding programs and projects. We are not accepting applications for general operating support or fundraising events.

Application Process

Applications are received on a rolling basis and are reviewed quarterly. Following the quarterly review, grant decisions will be communicated via e-mail.

MTVRA State Ride 2022, May 13th – 15th Cascade, MT

By Russ Ehnes, President MTVRA

It's been a long time since our last MTVRA State Ride in 2019. The 2020 State trail ride, like most other gatherings of any kind, was sidelined by the Pandemic. During the summer of 2021 it looked like we were going to see a sliver of normal life return in August with the 2021 State Ride to be held at Bull Run Guest Ranch near Cascade, Montana. Then, "BOOM", a literal bolt of lightning changed our course once again. That bolt of lightning started the Harris Mountain Wildfire, which burned several thousand acres of the ranch and ultimately burned over 32,000 acres in the Adel Mountain area.



Fast forward to 2022 and MTVRA will host the MTVRA State Ride in conjunction with the Hamilton Memorial Trail Ride at Bull Run Guest Ranch, 9 miles South of Cascade May 13th through the 15th 2022. Campers will be allowed to arrive Thursday afternoon and depart Monday morning, but riding will only be allowed Friday through Sunday.

While parts of the landscape have been

changed by mother nature, it is still beautiful, and the trails are still great riding. The ranch provides a variety of motorcycle, ATV and side-by-side routes, plenty of room for dry camping at the main ranch facility, and a shaded area for evening gatherings around the firepit (and a big shop to get out of the rain if we need it).

Participants will be required to be paid MTVRA members to participate in the riding activities or pay the full registration fee for the Hamilton Memorial Ride. There will be a separate \$25 fee for MTVRA members who want to participate the Saturday night Hamilton Memorial Dinner. Non-MTVRA members can participate in the riding activities by paying the registration fees for the Hamilton Memorial Ride and Memorial Dinner. The Hamilton Dinner will be followed by a silent auction, which will benefit the Hamilton Memorial Fund. Everyone is encouraged to participate.

All OHV's must comply with the 96dba state sound limit and be spark arrestor equipped. This ride is on private property so OHV decals and MT Summer Motorized Trailpass are not required but are encouraged. Memberships and renewals will be available on-site. Trailpasses will be available on-site also.

There will be an MTVRA Board meeting Friday night at 7:00 PM, followed by the MTVRA Annual Membership Meeting at 7:30.

The ranch is located at 719 Sheep Creek Road, Cascade, MT. From Cascade, cross the Missouri River and follow Montana 330 approximately 1 ½ miles and turn right on Sheep Creek Road. Mile marker 35 will be on your left as you turn right onto Sheep Creek Road. Follow Sheep Creek Road to mile marker 7 and you will be at the ranch.

For additional information contact Russ Ehnes at russehnes@gmail.com or 406-899-0898.

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2021 MTVRA Trail Tractor Grant

By Mona Ehnes

During 2021 trail projects and maintenance miles completed were 44.5 miles in the Pipestone OHV Area 15 miles in the Clancy OHV Area. Both of these areas receive annual trail maintenance because they are high use areas.

Hebgen Lake/West Yellowstone area trails were maintained or constructed using the Sweco dozer and ATV rock rake. This work consisted of 5.5 miles of retread on the Tee-Pee Creek Trail, 16.5 miles of retread on Pica Point Trail & multi-use trail near Taylor Fork including 3.6 miles of reroute and decommission of 2.7 miles of old trail. 1 mile of retread on the lower end of trail 217 and retread sections of trail 492. Tracked the dozer 1.5 miles north to 10-year-old reroute where they completed 1.1 miles of retread of old reroute. Tracked the dozer 4.5 miles north on trail 491 for minor treadwork on this trail. Completed 1.8 miles of retread on the upper end of trail 217. Tracked dozer south on 217 to middle section of trail 217 and completed 3 miles of water drain maintenance and short sections of retread.

Quote from OHV Ranger on Hebgen, "They did such a great job on every inch of trail they worked on, and some of these trails hadn't had heavy maintenance in well over the 11 years I've been here. Thank you so much for applying for the state trail pass grant funding and sending them our way. The heavy trail maintenance that they do is worth every penny and with the complete trail tread and drainage overhaul the trail will be in amazing condition for years to come."



Glendive Short Pine OHV Area Improvements

From Bureau of Land Management - Montana/Dakotas

Staff from the Miles City Field Office were out giving the parking lot at the Glendive Short Pine OHV Area a new surface of fresh gravel this week. Here are some photos courtesy of Lynn Pluhar who was one of those on-site for the work.



Montana OHV Clubs

Billings	Billings Motorcycle Club	Hamilton	Ravalli Co Off-Road Users Assn.
Billings	Rimrock Trail Riders	Helena	Capital Trail Vehicle Assn.
Billings	Treasure State ATV Assn.	Lincoln	Blackfoot Valley OHV Assn.
Bozeman	5 Rivers Trail Riders	Manhattan	Gallatin Valley Dirt Riders
Butte	Mining City Trail Riders	Missoula	Western Montana Trail Riders Assn.
Glendive	The Ranch Riders	Seeley Lake	Seeley-Swan ATV Club, Inc.
Great Falls	Great Falls Trail Bike Riders Assn.	Trout Creek	Cabinet Ridge Riders
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Additional money included for donations to the legal defense fund are greatly appreciated!