



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Medicine Bow - Routt National
Forests and Thunder Basin
National Grassland

Douglas Ranger District
2250 East Richards Street
Douglas, WY 82633-8922
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr>

EI-17771

CG

File Code: 7700/2720

Date: May 22, 2009

Catherine Glidden
Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Catherine:

As you are aware the 2002 Thunder Basin National Grassland Plan, "prohibits all motorized cross-country travel off existing roads and trails, except for authorized emergency service and administrative use." (Thunder Basin National Grassland Plan, Grassland-wide direction pg. 1-30 Q #1). Further, effective on June 2, 2003, Forest Supervisor, Mary Peterson signed a travel management order (Order no. 2003-153) restricting off road travel with the following exceptions:

1. Any person with written permission or permit specifically authorizing the otherwise prohibited act or omission.
2. Any Federal, State, or local officer, or member of an organized rescue or fire fighting force in the performance of an official duty.
3. Any person operating a wheeled motor vehicle up to 300 feet off of an existing Forest Development Road for the purpose of accessing of camping, picnicking, parking, gathering fuel wood, or retrieving downed big game provided that most direct route is taken to and from the area and no resource damage occurs.

Based on this exception, this letter authorizes the Surface Transportation Board and its representatives to use motorized vehicles off of existing roads on the Thunder Basin National Grassland to complete site visits for tribal consultation as part of the Programmatic Agreement for the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad Powder River Expansion Project.

There are currently no off road travel restrictions on the Buffalo Gap National Grassland, and therefore permission is granted for this use.

On both the Thunder Basin National Grassland and the Buffalo Gap National Grassland, please notify Ian Ritchie or me at 307-358-4690 prior to the sites visits so that we may notify the appropriate Forest Service staff and so that Ian may represent the Forest Service on these visits.

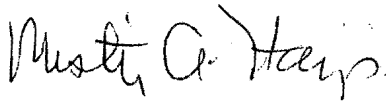


In addition, please follow the guidelines for off road travel as described below:

- Existing roads should be used whenever possible.
- Off road travel should not be conducted in sensitive areas such as riparian or stream areas, steep hillsides or areas prone to erosion.
- When conditions are wet, off road travel should not occur if it will cause rutting or other resource damage.
- Please limit off road travel to weekdays from September 1 to December 15 to reduce conflicts with big game hunters.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 307-358-4690.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Misty A. Hays".

MISTY A. HAYS
Deputy District Ranger

cc: Herb Jones, DM&E