



Monday, Aug. 5, 2013

## Maps show forest travel plan for Elko County

The Associated Press

The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest has published maps reflecting its new travel management plan for Elko County, and has scheduled two open houses to answer questions about them.

The vast majority of national forest roads in the county will remain open to motorized vehicles and only some will be closed under the plan adopted by the U.S. Forest Service.

The plan designates some 900 miles of previously unauthorized roads and trails as part of the national forest system and keeps open another 1,000-plus miles of existing authorized roads and trails.

In all, some 2,000 miles of national forest roads and motorized trails will be open for public use in the county — over 90 percent of all such mileage on the Humboldt-Toiyabe's Jarbidge, Ruby Mountain and Mountain City ranger districts.

"Forest visitors will be able to access most of the places they could before these maps were published," said Wendy Fuell, district ranger for the three areas.

The plan also allows hunters some use of motorized vehicles to retrieve elk for up to half a mile from a designated road or trail. Hunters will be allowed one trip on an ATV to retrieve their elk between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.

The Center for Biological Diversity had appealed the travel management plan, saying it doubles the forest road and trail mileage open for motorized use in the county.

The environmental organization accused the Forest Service of "caving to pressure from sagebrush rebel extremists," and said the plan would sacrifice the environment to "a vocal minority of noisy, high-powered" off-highway vehicle users.

County commissioners long opposed the Forest Service's plans to close certain roads and trails. Among their concerns were who owns and maintains forest roads under the plan.

The Forest Service will focus on helping visitors understand how to read and use the maps during the summer, said Matt Boisseau, deputy ranger for the Jarbidge and Ruby Mountains districts.

"We are actively seeking feedback from the public, local governments, tribal governments and others throughout the year to identify changes and corrections that may be needed to update the maps," he said.

Open houses will be held from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Friday at the Mountain City Ranger District Office in Elko and from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Mountain Time) Aug. 10 at Jarbidge Community Hall in Jarbidge.

Forest Service travel management plans were initiated nationwide during the administration of President George W. Bush amid an explosion of new roads spurred by the growing popularity of off-highway vehicle travel.