

Change in off-highway vehicle use proposed for national forests

National Forests and Grasslands in Texas Forest Supervisor Fred Salinas is proposing to prohibit the cross-country use of motor vehicles and restrict their use to designated roads, trails, and areas on the Angelina, Davy Crockett, and Sabine National Forests, and is asking for public comments on the completed Environmental Assessment.

The Environment Assessment (EA) can be found on the web at www.fs.fed.us/r8/texas/planning/nepa_index.shtm

The change is required to implement the Forest Service Travel Management Rule regulations, which restrict motor vehicles to designated roads, trails, and areas on national forests and grasslands nationwide.

The proposed change would also prohibit cross-country motor vehicle use off of roads and trails for big game retrieval.

This will make the prohibition across all of the NFGT the same as the current prohibition on such use in designated Wildlife Management Areas, Salinas added.

Most of the NFGT lands outside of wilderness areas are within mile of an existing road.

The closing of areas to OHV will not occur at the time of the final decision but at a later date to be determined and coordinated with publishing Motorized Vehicle Use Maps.

However, the plan is to designate road corridors

and campsites for dispersed camping for hunters in areas where there have historically been hunter camps. Corridors will be designated on either both sides or on one side of selected roads.

Dispersed hunter campsites will also be designated at the end of some roads.

In the past, unmanaged off-highway vehicle (OHV) use has been allowed on the NFGT, but in the late 1980s, restrictions on OHV use were imposed on the Sam Houston National Forest and the Caddo/ LBJ Grasslands.

Today, OHV use is restricted to designated trails on the Sam Houston National Forest and is restricted to roads on the Caddo-LBJ National Grasslands and the Angelina National Forest Longleaf Ridge Special Area.

"OHV use is projected to continue to increase in the foreseeable future," Salinas said. "In some areas of the forest, OHV use has not caused major impacts or problems, but in other areas, there has been severe damage that requires a change in policies in how we manage OHVs now and in the future."

"In order to ensure that national forest lands retain their current integrity now and for future generations there is a need to implement this change on the NFGT," Salinas said. "It is not possible to accommodate all user demands on

all National Forests while also protecting water quality, wildlife and plant habitat, and other natural resources that people come to enjoy."

"I invite your constructive comments on this proposed Plan amendment and I value the publics' interest and ideas for management of the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas," Salinas said.

Comments on the proposed actions may be emailed to comments-southern-texas@fs.fed.us or may be mailed to the Supervisor's Office, 415 S. First St., Suite 110, Lufkin, Texas, 75901.

Comments should include your name, address and phone number, title of the proposal (OHV Plan Amendment) and specific facts or comments along with supporting reasons that should be considered.

Deadline for submitting comments is Aug. 13, 2007.

Two websites that offer additional information on the use of OHVs on national forests are: www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/ohv/final.pdf and http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/texas/planning/nepa_index.shtml

For additional information concerning this proposal or if you would like to have someone meet with you or a group, contact Don Benner at the Forest Supervisor's Office, 415 South First Street, Suite 110, Lufkin, Texas 75901, or call 936-639-8581.

Race show car to make appearance in Jasper

First Insurance Services is revving up Jasper this week with an appearance of the GAINSCO Auto Insurance No. 99 Daytona Prototype race show car Thursday, July 26.

Visitors to First Insurance Services can get a first-hand look at the race car, which is an exact replica of the car driven in the

2007 Grand-Am Rolex Sports Car Series by Alex Gurney, son of racing legend Dan Gurney, and two-time Toyota Atlantic champion Jon Fogarty.

The bright red GAINSCO machine will make its appearance at First Insurance Services, located at 300 South Wheeler Street, between 10 a.m. and

3 p.m.

Visitors can see the 500-horsepower car up close, take pictures, and get a true sense of high-speed road racing action. Also on the scene will be the car's custom hauler, which is a show in itself, featuring a 36-foot-long mural painted by famed motorsports artist Bill Patterson.

Residents urged to pick up free guide to Texas parks

With the publication of the fourth edition of the Texas State Park Guide, lovers of the outdoors and Texas' unique heritage have one more reason to plan an outing in coming months to one of more than 100 state recreational parks and historic sites.

The free, 112-page booklet is available at any Texas state park, most other Texas Parks and Wildlife Department sites and field offices, all Texas Travel Information Centers and many local convention and visitors bureaus and chambers of commerce.

For the first time, the guide can be ordered online by visiting the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Web site. Already, online visitors have placed more than 6,500 orders to have the guide mailed to them. The guide can be viewed online in Spanish, as well as English.

"The new state park guide is a convenient tool that's informative and better illustrated than ever," said Texas State Parks director Walt Dabney. "It's a very

usable, ready reference that at a glance tells you all you need to know about what makes our parks so special. And, it's a handy size, so you can keep it in your vehicle or RV."

The 2007 edition provides an overview of the breadth of activities offered throughout the diverse park system and a brief recounting of how the state park system came into existence more than 80 years ago. New chapters recommend "getaway" trips to sites that are close to Texas' four major metro areas and to "far-flung" state parks in the state's more remote areas that are well worth a longer trip.

The booklet's State Parks Directory divides the state into the seven tourism areas, such as the Panhandle Plains and Gulf Coast regions. Each section includes an easy-to-read locator map, vignettes about each state park found within the region and symbol legend indicating facilities and activities found at each site.

Once again, the Texas

State Park Guide is anchored by a centerfold state park locator map, while a three-page grid index at the back of the booklet details facilities and activities for each of the more than 100 state parks, historic sites and state natural areas. Another page is dedicated to explaining state park user fees and park passes, and how to make state park reservations by phone or online.

Last year, according to the TPWD marketing staff, a quantitative survey of more than 11,000 Texas state park visitors confirmed that 61 percent of visitors who had the guide said it had influenced their decision to visit a Texas state park or historic site, while — more significantly — 82 percent indicated they planned to use the guide to plan future trips.

Funds to underwrite the publishing of Texas State Park Guide were provided by Toyota and from advertising revenue. This is the fourth year the automaker has provided funding to help make the guide available free to the public.



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