

# BLM's ORV Travel Plans Will Eviscerate Utah's Roadless Areas

The Utah Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) is finalizing long-overdue off-road vehicle (ORV) Travel Plans for approximately 11 million acres of public lands in Utah. These travel plans were drafted during the agency's process to update its general land use plans (officially known as Resource Management Plans, or "RMPs"). As part of its general land use planning process, BLM identified and confirmed that 2.8 million acres of these spectacular lands have wilderness characteristics. These "BLM Roadless Areas" include high desert plateaus and mesas, deep sandstone canyons, rare desert streams and springs, relict plant communities, and critical wildlife habitat. In addition, some of the most significant and well-preserved prehistoric cultural artifacts in the United States are located in Utah's Roadless Areas.

Although BLM, itself, acknowledges that these BLM Roadless Areas have wilderness values – characteristics that, once destroyed, are lost forever – the agency is choosing to manage these lands for motorized recreation. BLM's proposed Travel Plans would, incongruously, designate 1000 miles of ORV routes in these agency-identified roadless areas.

When BLM finalizes these plans in the coming months, the agency should act conservatively, and preserve the remaining Roadless Areas. Not designating ORV routes in the roadless areas leaves approximately 17,000 miles of route available for ORV use on public lands in southern Utah – the equivalent to five trips between Los Angeles and New York City.

## Utah BLM's Travel Plans: The Facts and a Reasonable Solution

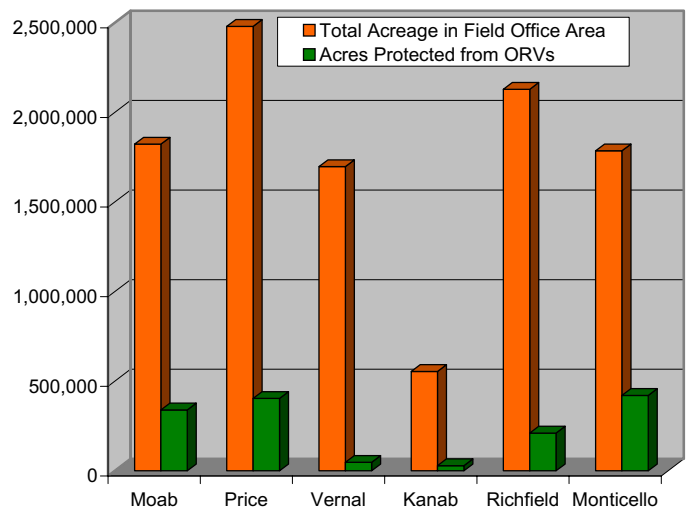
**FACT:** BLM is proposing to allow off-road vehicle use in each of the areas identified by the agency, itself, as being roadless, including such iconic landscapes as Fisher Towers, Labyrinth Canyon, Upper Kanab Creek, Muddy Creek, and Moqui Canyon.

**FACT:** BLM plans to make eighty-four percent of these 11 million acres of public lands available for off-road vehicle use. In particular BLM plans to designate approximately 18,000 miles of motorized vehicle route in the new ORV travel plans – the equivalent to driving between Los Angeles and New York City five times.

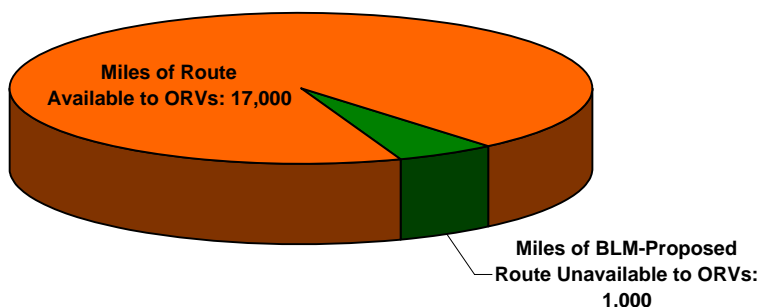
**FACT:** Utah BLM is proposing to designate roughly 1,000 miles of route in BLM Roadless Areas. If the roadless areas were preserved, there would still be approximately 17,000 miles of route for ORV use on Utah's public lands.

**FACT:** Riparian areas are extremely scarce resources in Utah's high desert landscapes. Indeed, riparian areas make up only 1-2% of Utah's public lands yet they host 75-80% of all wildlife. Utah BLM plans to designate ORV routes in most (if not all) of the riparian areas in the 11 million acres under review.

**Acres Protected from Off-Road Vehicles in BLM's Proposed Travel Plans**



**Miles of Route Still Available to Off-Road Vehicles if Roadless Areas Are Protected**

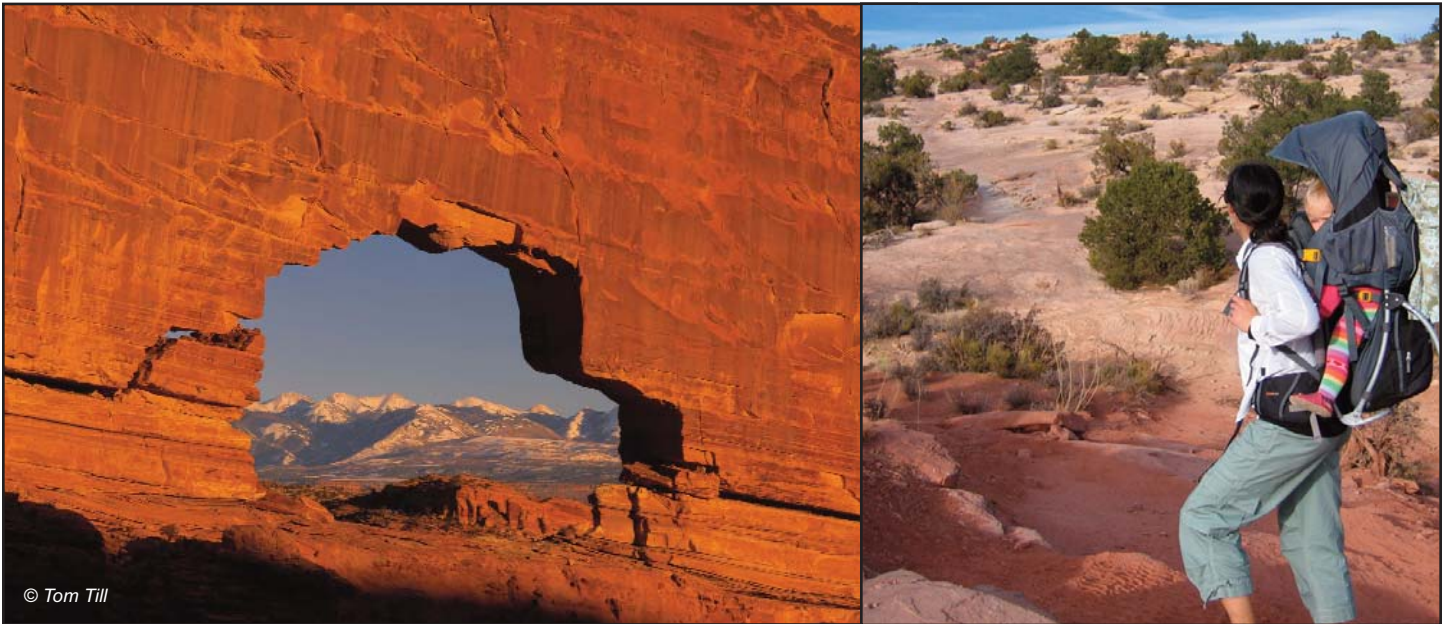


**FACT:** Utah's Colorado Plateau contains some of the most renowned cultural sites in the world. Some of these sites have been documented, the vast majority have not been – BLM estimates that less than 6% of its lands have been inventoried for cultural resources. BLM plans to designate off-road vehicle routes in areas known to have cultural resources, even though scientific studies conclude that motorized routes within sight of cultural resources greatly increase the risk of vandalism, looting and other damages to these irreplaceable resources.

**FACT:** Under BLM's preferred management scheme, the vast majority of the 11 million acres of public lands under review will be within 1 mile of a motorized route. In the heart of canyon country near Moab, 84% of the public

lands will be within 5 city blocks of a motorized route, leaving few places where visitors can find a quiet, remote place away from the noise, pollution, and other impacts caused by off-road vehicle use. BLM's plan to blanket public lands with official off-road vehicle routes is at odds with the agency's own visitor survey that revealed that only 7% of visitors to Moab's public lands said their main activity on public lands was using off-road vehicles.

**SOLUTION:** Although the conservation alternatives that BLM has analyzed in its draft travel plans are not perfect, these would clearly be a step in the right direction to preserve the roadless and wilderness values of these BLM Roadless Areas. Adopting the conservation alternatives would mean that BLM would designate approximately 6% fewer off-road vehicle routes (approximately 17,000 miles rather than 18,000 miles). Ample access to scenic viewpoints, trailheads, canyons, and other points of interest would be provided. This is an easy choice for the most magnificent lands on the Colorado Plateau.



**Above left:** Scenic Jeep Arch in the Golbar Canyon Roadless Area. **Above right:** A BLM-proposed ORV route in the Goldbar Canyon Roadless Area. **Below left:** ORVs on BLM-proposed routes through riparian areas. **Below right:** A BLM-proposed ORV route in the Hell Roaring Canyon Roadless Area threatens riparian and cultural resources.



For more information contact Justin Allegro at the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance  
(202) 546-2215 ♦ [justin@suwa.org](mailto:justin@suwa.org)