

# **National Mountain Bicycling Strategic Action Plan**

**NOVEMBER 2002**

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Washington, D.C.**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

**It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.**

**BLM/WY/PL-03/001+1220**

**Cover: The Antonelli family on Kokopelli Trail, Loma, Colorado. Photo by Karen Enenkel, Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Association.**



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Washington, D.C. 20240  
<http://www.blm.gov>

OCT 25 2002

Dear Interested Citizen:

The Bureau of Land Management is pleased to announce the release of its *National Mountain Bicycling Strategic Action Plan*. This Action Plan reflects many of the comments BLM received on the draft document, and we greatly appreciate your interest in this issue. We welcome your continued involvement as we work together to provide for mountain bicycle opportunities on public lands.

This Action Plan will provide guidance to BLM state office and field office managers and staff, interest groups, and individuals for implementing on-the-ground actions and resource protection measures for mountain bicycle use and other muscle-powered, mechanical transport uses.

In addition to providing field guidance, the BLM developed this Action Plan to:

- update the BLM's 1992 Mountain Bike Strategy;
- recognize the changing demographics, increasing populations, increase in mountain bicycle use, emerging technologies, and issues unique to mountain bicycling;
- provide consistent management approaches among BLM states and field offices;
- encourage effective use of existing staff, resources, volunteers, and partnerships; and
- assess planning, environmental and regulatory needs.

Substantive comments voiced by the public, along with BLM's responses, are listed in Appendix 1. Where appropriate, the comments were incorporated into the Action Plan.

Many of you are involved in innovative and effective efforts to address issues associated with mountain bicycle use. Your continued involvement and cooperation with the BLM is essential to effectively implement the Action Plan. The plan can be viewed at any BLM office or online at [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov). You may request a copy of the plan from Margy Tidemann, BLM-Worland Field Office, P.O. Box 119, Worland, WY 82401-0119.

If you have any questions or would like to be involved in BLM's implementation of the National Mountain Bicycling Strategic Action Plan, please contact your local BLM field office at the address listed on BLM's website, [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov).

Thank you for your interest in the management of your public lands.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Clarke  
Director

**NATIONAL  
MOUNTAIN BICYCLING  
STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN**

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Washington, DC  
[www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov)**

**November 2002**

## ABBREVIATIONS

BBM	benefits-based management
BLM	U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management
CCS	challenge cost share
CFR	code of federal regulations
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
FS	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
FWS	U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
GPS	global positioning system
IMBA	International Mountain Bicycling Association
IMP	BLM's Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review.
LAC	limits of acceptable change
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NLCS	National Landscape Conservation System
NPS	U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
OHV	off-highway vehicle
RAC	Resource Advisory Councils
ROS	recreation opportunity spectrum
TMO	trail management objective
WSA	wilderness study area

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# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
PURPOSE AND NEED .....	1
BACKGROUND .....	2
Highlights of the 1992 Strategy .....	2
SCOPE OF THE ACTION PLAN .....	3
THE ACTION PLAN .....	3
What it <i>Is</i> , What it <i>Is Not</i> .....	3
What it <i>Can do</i> and <i>Cannot do</i> .....	4
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION .....	5
MANAGEMENT THEMES, GOALS, AND ACTIONS .....	6
Overview .....	6
Coordination .....	6
Education/Interpretation/Information .....	7
Planning and Environmental Considerations .....	9
Funding .....	14
Emerging Issues .....	16
Regulations .....	17
GLOSSARY .....	19
Appendix 1: Public Participation .....	23
Appendix 2: Tips for Ethical Mountain Bicycle and Trail Use .....	27
Appendix 3: National Mountain Bicycle Strategic Action Plan Team .....	31

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# NATIONAL MOUNTAIN BICYCLING STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) National Mountain Bicycling Strategic Action Plan (hereafter referred to as Action Plan) is a comprehensive approach to addressing issues regarding mountain bicycling and other mechanical transport activities on the public lands. This Action Plan is the second of three action plans focusing on recreational uses of the public lands and comprehensive travel management planning. The first was the National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands that was completed in January of 2001. The third action plan will address nonmotorized/ nonmechanical activities and will be developed to meet the needs of visitors such as hikers and equestrians.

This Action Plan focuses on guidance and actions for BLM field office managers and staff, interest groups, and individuals. It provides innovative and proactive approaches to protecting soil, water, wildlife habitat, threatened or endangered plant and animal species, native vegetation, heritage resources, and other resources while providing for high-quality, environmentally-responsible recreational opportunities.

Implementation of this Action Plan will be an ongoing, adaptive approach that will require the continued cooperation and participation of the public. As a guiding document, the plan will be refined and implemented as opportunities arise and funds allow.

## PURPOSE AND NEED

Over the years, the number of mountain bicyclists using BLM-managed public lands has increased dramatically. An estimated 13.5 million mountain bicyclists visit public lands each year to enjoy the variety of trails. What was once a low-use activity that was relatively easy to manage, has become more complex. Land managers are now challenged with millions of mountain bicyclists and advanced technologies that enable riders to more easily reach remote areas. At the same time, land managers must deal with environmental impacts and visitor conflicts, as well as the need to provide high-quality experiences, information, and education.

The purpose of this Action Plan is to provide guidance to BLM field office managers and staff, interest groups, and individuals to implement on-the-ground actions and resource protection measures relative to mountain bicycle use and other nonmotorized/mechanical transport uses.

In addition to providing field guidance, there are a number of reasons why the BLM has developed this Action Plan. Those reasons include:

- fulfilling BLM's need to update its 1992 Mountain Bike Strategy;
- recognizing the changing demographics, increasing populations, emerging technologies, and issues unique to mountain bicycling;

- providing consistent management approaches among BLM states and field offices;
- making more effective use of existing staff, resources, volunteers, and partnerships;
- assessing planning, environmental and regulatory needs; and
- fulfilling a recommendation by BLM's National OHV Strategy.

This Action Plan recognizes, as does the 1992 Mountain Bike Strategy (BLM 1992), that mountain bicycling is an acceptable use of the public lands wherever it is compatible with established resource management objectives. As established by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the BLM is required to manage the public lands on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield, while protecting natural values. The mission includes recreation management. The BLM believes that implementing this Action Plan will help promote a balance between these sometimes competing principles.

Creating a "toolbox" of best practices for mountain bicycle management is the next step in the Action Plan implementation process. It will contain visible examples of work that has been completed—the successes and the lessons learned.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 1992 a task force of BLM employees prepared a National Mountain Bike Strategy. The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) and other interest groups and individuals took part by commenting and participating through several meetings. This strategy's sunset was in the year 2000.

In 1999 the BLM initiated a national management strategy for off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on public lands. Since management of nonmotorized and motorized vehicle activities on the public lands share many of the same solutions, the draft strategy initially incorporated mountain bicycling. Many of the recommended on-the-ground and administrative actions for OHV management contained in the draft strategy could equally and effectively be applied to mountain bicycling and other trail and road activities. However, based on analysis of the issues and concerns, and the specific differences between the activities, BLM determined in the final strategy that management of mountain bicycle and other nonmotorized vehicle use warranted its own strategy and management guidance.

This Action Plan updates the 1992 strategy, incorporates provisions from the OHV strategy, and includes new recommendations from the public.

## **Highlights of the 1992 Strategy**

- BLM Policy recognizes mountain [bicycling] as an appropriate use of public lands under its jurisdiction.
- Each state will set a goal of trails and miles to be identified and marketed by the year 2000.
- In order to reach the goal, partnerships will be sought at local, state and national levels.
- The BLM National Mountain Bike Outreach Action Plan will be used as a guide to develop local ideas.
- The BLM will identify and implement diverse mountain bicycle opportunities

into the multiple use system of trails and roads by the year 2000.

These opportunities will be enhanced by a proactive, educational program emphasizing safety, fitness, ethics and environmental protection and appreciation.”

## SCOPE OF THE ACTION PLAN

This Action Plan is designed to accomplish the following:

- Provide recommended actions to protect public land resources, promote safety for all public land visitors, and minimize conflicts among the various users of the public lands.
  - Provide guidance on mountain bicycle management to field offices as they prepare the next generation of management plans.
  - Provide practical management guidance to BLM field office managers and staff, interest groups, and individuals regarding mountain bicycle-related activities on BLM-managed public lands.
  - Provide a window to the future for BLM field managers to better understand the technological, demographic, and use trends influencing mountain bicycling and other nonmotorized/mechanical uses over the next 10 years.
  - Identify resource and funding needs at state and local levels to improve mountain bicycle management and identify potential outside funding sources.
- Provide practical guidance to improve BLM’s capability to provide information and environmental education to mountain bicycle users.

Since the BLM began managing mountain bicycle opportunities in the late 1980s, new technology and opportunities have emerged. Technological advances in frames, suspension, and equipment are enabling riders to travel farther and traverse more rugged terrain.

User needs for single-track trails and more primitive experiences have emerged as priorities for users. This will necessitate a proactive planning approach to help alleviate concerns over impacts on resources and user conflict. This Action Plan provides guidance to address these concerns and user needs.

## This Action Plan

The following is a summary of what this Action Plan *is and is not*, and what it *can and cannot do*.

## What it *Is*, What it *Is Not*

### This Action Plan *is*:

- a general guidance document for BLM field offices, interest groups, and individuals on ways to address mountain bicycling and other non-motorized/ mechanical management issues;
- a list of recommended best management practices that may be used by BLM land managers for local planning;
- an effort to assist in the management of mountain bicycling activities with an eye to increased use and new technology;

- an effort to enhance the management and protection of public lands managed by the BLM;
- ideas and recommendations contributed by the public, including interest groups and individuals; and
- an approach that reflects public input, offers flexibility (meaning it can, and will, change over time as resource issues emerge and visitor conflicts arise), and seeks to promote local solutions to local problems.

**This Action Plan *is not*:**

- a decision document—land use plans are, and will continue to be, the principal decision documents guiding BLM land managers. There will continue to be activity plans to address local issues;
- a new regulation;
- a means to close, limit, or open trails and roads to mountain bicycle use;
- a forum for changing any proclamations or legislation relating to national monuments, national conservation areas, designated wilderness and wilderness study areas, national scenic and historic trails, or national wild and scenic rivers; or
- a forum for changing existing policy or guidance for accessibility issues with respect to wheelchair users or other mobility devices.

**What it *Can do* and *Cannot do***

**If fully implemented, this Action Plan *can*:**

- promote responsible mountain bicycle and related use that will protect soil, water, wildlife habitat, threatened or

endangered plant and animal species, native vegetation, heritage resources, and other resources while providing for high quality, environmentally responsible recreational opportunities;

- provide mountain bicycling management guidance for BLM managers in areas where mountain bicycling has increased, new technologies are appearing, and plans are out-of-date or are nonexistent;
- promote consistent decision-making and management of nonmotorized/mechanical transport use on public lands within the BLM by clarifying guidance and promoting understanding of mountain bicycling management goals;
- focus specifically on mountain bicycle use while also recognizing the emerging trends and technologies of mechanical transport vehicles that may warrant different or additional management in the future (when most land use plans were developed, mountain bicycling was an emerging use on public lands);
- highlight the BLM's need for additional funding, staffing, volunteers, and partners to effectively manage mountain bicycle use;
- provide guidance to minimize potential conflicts among user groups; and
- review and recommend changes to existing regulations, if appropriate.

**However, this Action Plan *cannot*:**

- formulate regulations (which can occur only in the formal rulemaking process, with full public participation);

- change any legislation, proclamation, or executive order; or
- provide the additional funds and staffing needed for effective mountain bicycling management.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Many comments received by the BLM on mountain bicycling management came from the mountain bicycling community during the development of the draft National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands. The BLM conducted 49 public meetings and received 19,000 comment letters either through the mail or electronically during the 90-day public comment period in 2000. Most of the comments pointed out the differences between motorized, nonmotorized, and mechanical transportation and the differences in issues and concerns surrounding both types of activity. After considering this point of view, the BLM's final OHV Strategy determined that the management of mountain bicycling and other nonmotorized vehicles warranted its own strategy and management guidance.

The National Mountain Bicycling Strategic Action Team started its planning effort in the summer of 2001. The team was invited to the International Mountain Bicycling Association summit conference in Moab, Utah, in April 2002, for a session on the future of mountain bicycling on public lands. The IMBA audience generated numerous concerns and shared ideas for solving problems and enhancing mountain bicycling opportunities on public lands. Concerns included protecting natural and heritage resources, mitigating environmental impacts, and providing education and high-quality recreation experiences.

A letter announcing the availability of the draft National Mountain Bicycling Strategic Action Plan was sent to all groups and individuals who commented on the draft national strategy for motorized OHV use on public lands. The document was also posted for public review and comment on the BLM's national website, and was available at all BLM offices. There was a 38-day public comment period for the draft document.

Approximately 400 comments were received on the draft Action Plan. Overall, comments were supportive of the Action Plan's goals and action items. Many people provided suggestions on how to modify the Action Plan to meet the particular needs of the trails community and protect natural resources.

This Action Plan is intended to be a comprehensive approach or vision on how best to develop and manage an adaptive and effective mountain bicycling program. Many comments were received that encouraged the BLM to expand the Action Plan to address a multitude of other important but separate issues related to transportation system management, public access, wilderness management, and others. Some action items were modified and new action items were incorporated as a result of these comments.

The following is a list of the substantive comments voiced through public participation. Where appropriate, the comments were used to modify the Action Plan. Appendix 1 contains BLM's response to these comments, along with a list of additional ideas and suggestions from the public.

**Comment: The BLM should adopt a nationwide policy to close public lands to mountain bicycling unless determined to be appropriate and posted as open (or open unless posted closed).**

**Comment:** Any new regulations to be developed should address all nonmotorized uses, not just mountain bicycles. All uses should be regulated based on impact rather than mode of transportation.

**Comment:** The plan needs to more specifically address the assessment, management, and mitigation of resource impacts associated with trail use.

**Comments:** Mountain bicycling should/ should not occur in NLCS units such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, national monuments, or national conservation areas.

**Comment:** There is not enough specific information in the plan about how best to resolve user conflict.

**Comment:** Mountain bicycle use should be defined as muscle-powered instead of mechanical [transport].

## MANAGEMENT THEMES, GOALS, AND ACTIONS

### Overview

Themes that emerged from public comments and the OHV strategy are addressed in this Action Plan. They are:

- Coordination
- Education/Interpretation/Information
- Planning and Environmental Considerations
- Funding
- Emerging Issues
- Regulations

The themes are not listed in any specific order. Implementation of actions will be

dependent on agency appropriations and priorities, land use planning, and partnerships and collaborative assistance.

## Coordination

Proper mountain bicycle management relies on good coordination and communication both internally and externally, including the general public; mountain bicycle interest groups and organizations; environmental organizations; state, local and tribal governments; and other agencies.

**Issue:** How can BLM do a better job of coordinating mountain bicycle management?

*Rationale: The BLM must coordinate within the agency to ensure appropriate consideration of mountain bicycle use in land-use planning, and subsequent management activities. Since mountain bicycling use often crosses multiple agency boundaries, it is essential that BLM also coordinate with other agencies. Consistency in management should result in a better understanding of issues and concerns by visitors; improved compliance with rules, regulations, and ethical practices; reduced conflict with other visitors; and reduced impacts to natural resources.*

*Coordination with community leadership, organizations, and the mountain bicycle industry will allow the BLM to stay up-to-date regarding the needs and concerns of the public. Coordination with emergency services and volunteers will be essential to enhance the safety of visitors and improve opportunities to educate visitors on management issues.*

**Management Goal 1:** The BLM will collaborate within the agency and with other agencies to coordinate

appropriate resource management and diverse mountain bicycle opportunities.

**Action Item 1:** Consider opportunities for mountain bicycle use during the development of all BLM land use plans.

**Action Item 2:** Provide technical on-the-ground training for BLM field staff and managers.

**Action Item 3:** Develop a “tool box” for field staff that will offer examples of successful mountain bicycle management efforts and lessons learned.

**Action Item 4:** Emphasize interagency coordination to provide consistent management, application of regulations, boundary identification, and signage.

**Action Item 5:** Establish a list of people, both within and outside the agency, who have experience managing mountain bicycling and other trail use, and who would be willing to offer expertise or assistance to field staff.

**Management Goal 2:** Coordinate with community leaders, trail organizations, and the recreation industry to enhance recreational opportunities and visitor safety, and to provide opportunities for educating visitors on management issues.

**Action Item 1:** Encourage community leaders and interested organizations or individuals to participate in land-use planning.

**Action Item 2:** Recruit volunteers for trail inventory, trail construction and maintenance, monitoring, and for visitor services.

**Action Item 3:** Coordinate with local search and rescue organizations to ensure that access routes are identified and evacuation procedures are established to efficiently and effectively service popular riding areas.

**Action Item 4:** Provide training and education for volunteers.

**Action Item 5:** Communicate with local communities, individuals, and interest groups to encourage feedback regarding trail-related concerns and needs.

**Action Item 6:** Use e-mail, listservs, websites, and other electronic means to notify interested parties of current or developing trails issues. Also use these electronic media to encourage feedback and involve interested parties in planning and volunteer efforts. Set up web links where trail users can communicate and provide feedback regarding trail-related concerns and needs.

## **Education/Interpretation/Information**

Education, training, interpretation, and information-sharing efforts are essential to foster responsible mountain bicycling and sound resource management. This approach is usually more effective than regulatory management approaches.

**Issue: How can BLM communicate a more effective message relating to mountain bicycle management through education, training programs, interpretation, and informational materials?**

*Rationale: The BLM 1992 Mountain Bike Strategy called for a "...proactive, educational program emphasizing safety, fitness, ethics, and environmental protection and appreciation." Recognizing that education, training, interpretation, and information-sharing efforts are preferable to regulatory management approaches, the BLM needs to incorporate these techniques into mountain bicycle management. Educational efforts will promote resource protection, responsible mountain bicycle use, and cooperation among user groups, special recreation permit holders, and other service providers.*

**Management Goal 1:** Develop a consistent mountain bicycle ethics message—products, tools, and recommendations designed to foster a responsible-use ethic for mountain bicycling within the trail community.

**Action Item 1:** Adopt the *Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics*, the *Tread Lightly! Inc.*, *Guide to Responsible Mountain Biking* programs, and the International Mountain Bicycling Association's *Rules of the Trail* (see Appendix 2) and incorporate them for use in each local BLM mountain bicycle management program.

**Action Item 2:** Expand and enhance BLM's relationship with the *Tread Lightly! Inc.* and *Leave No Trace* organizations and with other federal agencies to communicate mountain bicycle and trail-use ethics through education and information.

**Action Item 3:** Incorporate ethics messages into BLM's trail-related communications. Emphasize that mountain bicyclists are members of a larger trails community.

**Action Item 4:** Encourage the development of ethics messages that will appeal to youth and those new to mountain bicycling.

**Management Goal 2:** Increase use of interpretive messages and information about mountain bicycle management and emphasize the value of BLM-managed public lands to current and future generations.

**Action Item 1:** Use interdisciplinary teams to produce informational products and interpretive programs with accurate information and consistent messages that portray mountain bicycling opportunities on public land. Those products could include signs, maps, web sites, brochures, videos, power point programs, and CD ROMs.

**Action Item 2:** Develop more detailed descriptions of mountain bicycling areas and trails that will allow the public to determine the appropriate route for their individual recreational interests and abilities.

**Action Item 3:** Develop a clear and consistent method of on-the-ground route identification and signing.

**Action Item 4:** Pursue opportunities for volunteer involvement in mountain bicycle management and promote a sense of self-regulation among mountain bicyclists on public lands.

**Action Item 5:** Develop interpretation and information along trail routes, emphasizing the relationship between resource protection and responsible mountain bicycling.



**Action Item 6:** Develop a national mountain bicycling brochure that incorporates resource protection, responsible riding tips, and trail opportunities.

**Management Goal 3:** Pursue relationships with mountain bicycle interest groups, such as manufacturers, retailers, service providers, and communities of bicyclists who either belong to formal organizations, or are casual users, to enhance education and information opportunities and increase awareness of public lands resources and trends in mountain bicycle use.

**Action Item 1:** Develop an information package that will help establish open communication lines between BLM, other land management agencies, local businesses, industry, and mountain bicycling groups.

**Action Item 2:** Establish an information network to ensure that BLM land managers are up-to-date on emerging technologies and trends related to mountain bicycling.

**Action Item 3:** Develop standard stipulations for commercial mountain bicycle use relating to the BLM information, education, and interpretation goals. For example, require Special Recreation Permit holders and other service providers to use mountain bicycle ethics messages in their operations.

**Management Goal 4:** Provide education and training for BLM field managers, staff, and volunteers.

**Action Item 1:** Identify training needs, use existing training courses, and develop new training in cooperation with interested organizations.

Examples of available training can be found on the National Trails Training Partnership website, [www.nttp.net](http://www.nttp.net).

**Action Item 2:** Identify, recruit, and train instructors to deliver all facets of trails education, management, and interpretation.

**Action Item 3:** Encourage BLM staff, field managers, volunteers, and members of the mountain bicycling community to plan rides to learn about the resources and discuss issues along the trail.

**Action Item 4:** Organize events such as volunteer trail work rides (such as Epic Rides organized by IMBA and industry partners) and interpretive presentations to encourage active participation in mountain bicycle management efforts.

## Planning and Environmental Considerations

Good planning and public involvement is the foundation of the BLM's decision-making process. The planning process includes the use of

- accepted scientific principles and procedures;
- reliable and accurate inventory and monitoring data;
- knowledge from local users;
- political and financial realities;
- laws, regulations, and valid existing rights; and
- professional judgement.

Planning is the key to reducing adverse environmental and social impacts associated with public land uses and providing high-quality recreational opportunities. The BLM is required to conduct resource management planning by FLPMA of 1976.

**Issue 1: How to best plan, design, construct, maintain, and operate mountain bicycle trail systems.**

*Rationale: Increased popularity of mountain bicycling and technological advances have created a greater need to consider all aspects of on-the-ground mountain bicycle and trail management issues, relating to both resource and social conditions. There is also a need to provide guidance for mountain bicycle use in special management areas, such as the National Landscape Conservation System.*

**Management Goal:** Address mountain bicycle issues and concerns throughout all levels of the land-use planning process.

**Action Item 1:** Conduct a thorough analysis of issues and concerns related to mountain bicycling during the land-use planning process and other interdisciplinary planning efforts.

**Action Item 2:** Educate mountain bicyclists about the proper procedures for identifying, planning for, designing, and building new trails and integrated trail systems on BLM-managed lands. Focus on the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and cultural resource protection laws.

**Action Item 3:** Use a variety of public involvement techniques during the planning process to ensure meaningful input by mountain bicyclists and other user and interest groups (Ad-Hoc committees, task force committees, field site visits). Resource Advisory Councils would also be used as part of the public outreach process and their input would be considered.

**Action Item 4:** Make use of outside expertise and labor to help plan, design, or construct and maintain trails. (Examples include Subaru/IMBA Trail-Care-Crew, trail crew swaps, prison crews, American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacations, and AmeriCorps programs.)

**Action Item 5:** Develop a national *Adopt-a-Trail* program to guide state and local programs to ensure needed monitoring and maintenance is accomplished on key trail systems.

**Action Item 6:** Develop guidelines that would outline the elements of a well-integrated trail system, such as stacked loops, directional travel on specific single-track trails, and down-hill trails. Consider freeride areas where environmentally and socially appropriate. Guidelines should include an emphasis on integrating the BLM trail system with other trail systems offered by local, state, and other federal agencies. (An example is IMBA's *Building Better Trails* manual.)

**Action Item 7:** Involve planners from city, county, regional, and state parks to identify opportunities where community trail systems can be linked

with BLM trails to help bridge the rural/urban interface gap.

**Action Item 8:** Work with trail user groups to identify existing and potential user conflicts and recommend solutions to address these conflicts. Strategies to help address user conflicts include joint trail improvement projects, trail design elements, alternate use days, segregation where appropriate, trailhead notices, clinics at local bicycle shops, and increasing the amount of trails available to all users.

**Issue 2: How to sustain integrated trail systems while protecting resources and providing high-quality recreational opportunities for all trail users.**

*Rationale: Through planning and monitoring, BLM can mitigate the social and resource/trail impacts of overcrowding to preserve a high-quality recreational experience for all trail users, from beginners and family to experts. Planning should be flexible and adaptable to adjust to unanticipated trends and changes in the recreation environment.*

**Management Goal:** Clearly define the process for making decisions regarding mountain bicycle use opportunities in relation to other recreation and trail uses.

**Action Item 1:** Employ good science while using a variety of planning and monitoring techniques such as trail use emphasis areas, benefits-based management (BBM), recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS), limits of acceptable change (LAC), adaptive management, trail management objective (TMO), and visitor preference studies. (See Glossary.)

**Action Item 2:** Clearly define where mountain bicycling fits within the ROS and the kinds of physical, social, and administrative settings that are essential for providing a diversity of mountain bicycling opportunities. Include the full range and variety of riding opportunities, experiences, and benefits, ranging from beginners and families to experts and freeriders.

**Action Item 3:** Develop a source book of internal and external individuals who have expertise in integrated trail system management and make the source book available to all BLM offices.

**Action Item 4:** Educate all trail users on the process BLM uses to make trail use decisions. Produce a trail planning and development process fact sheet and make available to the public through a variety of channels such as bicycle shops, bicycle clubs, brochures, internet, and e-mails to local cycling groups.

**Issue 3: How can recreation facilities be provided in a timely and cost-effective manner?**

*Rationale: Mountain bicycle use has increased dramatically in certain locations and recreation facilities are needed to support or mitigate that use (parking, trailhead facilities).*

**Management Goal:** Provide needed infrastructure and facilities to manage increasing levels of mountain bicycle use.

**Action Item 1:** Develop partnerships with local mountain bicycle clubs and organizations and work together to apply for grants that could be used to pay for needed facilities (the BLM can

also apply). Work closely with local and state trails programs to acquire grant money.

**Action Item 2:** Coordinate with state and local governments and businesses, encouraging them to fund mountain bicycle facilities, such as toilets at trailheads, staging areas, and parking lots.

#### **Issue 4: How can access be obtained in areas where legal public access to existing and potential mountain bicycle trails is not available?**

*Rationale: Many areas of public lands with the potential for recreational use are currently unavailable because of BLM's dispersed land pattern and lack of legal public access through private land. This creates additional pressure and adverse impacts on BLM-managed public lands with existing access routes.*

*Due to the rapidly increasing popularity of mountain bicycling, new trails are needed to prevent user conflict and unacceptable resource damage. Many popular riding areas can only be reached by crossing private land where legal public access is not available. Private land liability and trespass issues have become an increasing problem in many areas. In response, some private landowners are closing key access points to public land.*

**Management Goal:** Obtain legal access to public land in areas that would increase opportunities for mountain bicyclists and other trail users—such as enabling the creation of long-distance trails.

**Action Item 1:** Analyze and evaluate access needs during the planning process, identifying key opportunities for improving legal public access.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage the development of trail master plans that will identify future critical connections and identify ways to protect critical corridors from rural/urban interface exchanges.

**Action Item 3:** Actively seek—either through exchange, purchase, easements, or agreements—critical lands offering key access to new trail areas or connections between trails.

#### **Issue 5: What is the best way to provide and preserve single-track trails?**

*Rationale: Single-track trails exemplify the highest quality riding experience for most mountain bicyclists. To maintain this experience, attention needs to be given to design elements, trail width, resource condition, other visitors, and visitor behavior. A well-designed and maintained single-track trail could also benefit other trail users, particularly where mountain bicycling use levels are light to moderate.*

**Management Goal:** Maintain or improve the quality of existing single-track mountain bicycle trails.

**Action Item 1:** Minimize environmental damage caused by incorrect riding techniques such as incorrectly passing while riding on single-track trails. Educate trail users by including information in publications, at trailheads, and through electronic media.

**Action Item 2:** Retrofit or reconstruct existing trail segments to enhance the flow of the trail system, which will encourage users to stay on the trail while creating a better riding

experience. Example: replace switchbacks with climbing turns.

**Action Item 3:** Develop universally agreed-upon definitions of single-track trail, trail, and route.

**Action Item 4:** Implement “directional travel” (see Glossary) on appropriate single-track trails to preserve the width and reduce conflict with other visitors.

**Action Item 5:** Properly sign all designated nonmotorized single-track trails, making it clear that all-terrain vehicles and other 4-wheel drive vehicles are prohibited. Display this information at trailheads, on trail maps, and through electronic media.

**Action Item 6:** Organize trail maintenance days using local volunteers and organized groups from bicycle shops, bicycle clubs, and other user groups.

**Action Item 7:** Clearly communicate to the users that maintaining and respecting trails is essential to ensuring continued use and access.

**Issue 6: What is the best way to identify and manage the high use and growth of mountain bicycling in certain areas and the resulting social and environmental impacts?**

*Rationale: Mountain bicycling “hot spots” are existing or emerging areas where mountain bicycling has become, or has the potential to become, a predominant, high-level use on a large portion of existing trail systems. Adverse impacts to natural resources may be present in these areas, and recreation experiences of all users may be negatively affected. Hot spots will require significant resources to manage in a manner that protects the resource, reduces conflicts, and provides quality recreational experiences for all*

*users. One estimate is that these popular areas will double and possibly triple in number in the next 10 years. The BLM managers will use the recreation permit system to satisfy recreation demand within allowable use levels, providing for equitable, safe, and enjoyable use while minimizing adverse resource impacts and user conflicts.*

**Management Goal:** Improve the ability of managers and the bicycling community to proactively respond to rapidly increasing levels of mountain bicycling use in key “hot spot” areas, as well as in emerging areas.

**Action Item 1:** Use a team approach (including other agencies and interest groups) to identify, map, and prioritize existing and emerging “hot spots.”

**Action Item 2:** Coordinate with community and interest group leaders and service providers to help them understand the impacts (economic, social, and cultural) of developing “hot spots,” or destination mountain bicycling areas.

**Action Item 3:** Encourage local mountain bicyclists to form a National Mountain Bike Patrol Unit to assist riders, to educate users, and to help monitor trail conditions and resource impacts.

**Action Item 4:** Encourage communication among local user groups and trail organizations to work through conflict and help with education, trail development, and trail maintenance. For example, forming coordinating councils made up of agency representatives and members of the trails community to rapidly address issues as they emerge, posting a calendar of events in local newspapers and local bicycle shops, developing web sites, and e-mail lists.

**Action Item 5:** Coordinate with public agencies and the private sector to inform users about lesser-known riding areas to take the pressure off high-use trails.

**Action Item 6:** Coordinate with tourism destination marketing organizations, industry, media, and other service providers, to ensure their advertising and marketing messages reflect correct information and BLM's land-use planning objectives.

**Action Item 7:** Issue recreation permits to manage use in a manner that is consistent with management objectives determined in resource management plans, recreation area management plans, or (in their absence) through recreation management objectives identified through the analysis of resources and visitor use for each area.

**Issue 7: How can the BLM define and obtain the appropriate information needed to continue making sound decisions regarding mountain bicycle use?**

*Rationale: Gathering and analyzing proper inventory and monitoring data is essential to making sustainable and sound resource and social decisions. Selecting what to monitor is a critical component in data collection. Monitoring methods should be accurate and cost-effective.*

**Management Goal:** Improve the BLM's ability to collect accurate and timely inventory and monitoring data to detect and evaluate the impacts caused by mountain bicycling and other recreational uses.

**Action Item 1:** During planning, and as necessary, establish monitoring criteria, indicators, standards, and thresholds, that will result in meaningful data collections, analysis, and decision making. General topics for monitoring should include impacts to soils, vegetation, wildlife, cultural/historical resources, as well as types and numbers of user conflicts.

**Action Item 2:** Train field staff and volunteers in the proper use of appropriate technologies, such as global positioning system (GPS), and methods to inventory and monitor trails.

**Action Item 3:** Encourage the development of volunteer mountain bicycle patrols and adopt-a-trail agreements to help the BLM monitor trails as well as educate users.

## Funding

Increasing and concentrated recreation use in many areas has exceeded the BLM's funding levels and management capabilities.

**Issue 1: How will BLM identify, plan for, and obtain immediate and future funding needs to manage integrated trail systems and comprehensive travel management?**

*Rationale: The BLM must leverage appropriated and other existing sources of funding to meet current and future needs. It also needs new sources of funding, including revenue from visitor fees, outside funding, and grants to manage mountain bicycling and other trail uses effectively.*

**Management Goal 1:** Work with partners and other interest groups to help fund the management of mountain bicycling on public lands (planning, maintenance, education, resource protection, and enforcement).

**Action Item 1:** Encourage field offices and partners to develop business plans to estimate the cost of managing mountain bicycle activities in high use and(or) intensively-managed areas.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage partners to seek alternative funding sources such as grants, assistance agreements, and in-kind services to assist implementation of BLM land use and business plans.

**Action Item 3:** Encourage partners to assist with funding for planning and constructing new trails, and maintaining existing trails.

**Management Goal 2:** Emphasize a variety of agency funding approaches for long- and short-term implementation of local BLM plans in the annual budget submissions to Congress.

**Action Item 1:** Encourage field offices to develop funding strategies through Challenge Cost Share (CCS) and assistance agreements.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage internal collaborative funding efforts, beyond recreation management funding, to implement integrated trail systems and comprehensive travel management for both resource-related and recreation-related benefits.

**Management Goal 3:** Pursue outside funding and generate visitor revenue sources.

**Action Item 1:** Identify all potential outside funding sources and share them throughout the BLM. A cost-share program should be used to leverage outside partnerships and funding.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage field offices to consider the collection of fees, including voluntary donations, for appropriate projects and services when developing their business plans.

**Action Item 3:** Encourage field offices to consider legal donation programs, such as equipment donations from manufacturers.

**Action Item 4:** Compile a list of successful trail-related fee and donation programs and share them throughout the BLM.

**Management Goal 4:** Form new or expand existing partnerships with manufacturers and retailers to collaboratively provide funding or in-kind services for on-the-ground implementation of visitor services, interpretation, information, education and other mountain bicycle and trail-related services.

**Action Item:** Form a workgroup with interested manufacturers, retailers, and interest groups to take a fresh look to determine the most appropriate strategies for the mutual benefit of all parties.

**Management Goal 5:** Work with communities to establish areas and fund projects where intensive management is desired for mountain bicycle use.

**Action Item 1:** Develop a “how-to guide” of best practices for obtaining community involvement, designing and building community-based trail systems, building partnerships, and developing a cadre of volunteers, and creative funding for trail development and signage.

**Action Item 2:** Encourage tour operators, outfitters, bicycle shop owners, and other interested businesses to become more involved in planning, proposing, and developing mountain bicycle trails, and funding educational efforts such as maps, brochures, and information kiosks.

## Emerging Issues

Provide a window to the future for BLM field managers to better understand the technological, demographic, and use trends that could happen with mountain bicycles and similar nonmotorized/mechanical transport uses over the next 10 years.

**Issue 1: How could emerging technologies in the development of mountain bicycles affect the way in which mountain bicyclists recreate on public lands? What type of impacts could occur and what proactive measures could be taken to better manage these uses?**

*Rationale: Technology, trends, and demographics related to the management of mountain bicycles will continue to change. What was once a simple, rigid bicycle with knobby tires has evolved into a high-tech bicycle with shock absorbers in front and back, more gears, lighter-weight materials and improved handling characteristics that allow riders to travel*

*deeper, faster, and farther into public lands. Technological improvements are allowing the production of bicycles with long-travel front and rear shock absorption that allows bicyclists to descend steep, rugged, rocky terrain at relatively high speeds.*

*New activities, technologies, and equipment lead to greater expectations. Effective management must include a combination of planning, guidance, education, and enforcement to ensure resource protection and quality experiences from all user groups. In addition, the demographics of the West have changed, and so have the needs and demands of the public.*

**Management Goal:** Increase the BLM’s awareness of changes in technology to ensure that mountain bicycling uses are appropriate to the opportunities available, and that changes with the potential for adverse impacts on resources are addressed.

**Action Item 1:** Establish long-term relationships with trail organizations, bicycle manufacturers, and retailers to better understand trends and emerging technologies.

**Action Item 2:** Track mountain bicycling media and websites, such as [www.mtbr.com](http://www.mtbr.com), to stay up-to-date on trends and share the information with other BLM staff.

**Action Item 3:** Identify highly specialized user groups, such as downhill/freeriders and “North Shore” riders (riding on man-made structures), and develop a dialogue with representatives. Locate appropriate areas where specialized or extreme activities could be done without causing adverse impacts on natural and heritage resources.



**Action Item 4:** Determine if a new use or technology observed on BLM-managed public lands is an isolated incident or a local or wide-spread trend, and if the activity is consistent with the local land use plan.

**Issue 2: What might the public need, expect, or desire in the way of mountain bicycling opportunities on public lands in the future?**

*Rationale: Population and demographic changes in the West are influencing the way the public views lands administered by the BLM. Demand for recreational opportunities of all types will increase. Rural/urban population interface issues will escalate, and high-risk recreation activities will continue to gain popularity. As urbanization absorbs the front country, some BLM-managed lands may be well-suited for "urban trail parks," or trails that compress a lot of miles into a relatively small space. Demand is increasing for high-quality trail opportunities that are reasonably close to home. (American Trails has the goal of providing recreational trail opportunities within 15 minutes of every residence.)*

**Management Goal:** Provide a variety of experiences and opportunities, ranging from rural/urban interface areas to back country.

**Action Item 1:** Conduct a visitor preference study and update it every five years. Share results with interest groups, permittees, lessees, and other agencies and landowners.

**Action Item 2:** Establish relationships with the scientific community to better understand existing research and initiate new research as needed to help predict and accommodate change.

**Issue 3: What other forms of mechanical transport and activities are emerging or are likely to occur over the next 10 to 15 years on public lands?**

*Rationale: While this Action Plan will not provide specific guidance on those mechanical transport activities, it acknowledges that there are other activities of a similar nature that managers should be aware of. Some of those activities are road bicycle touring, scooters, mountainboards, skateboards, in-line skates, and land yachts. Wheelchairs and other mobility devices are addressed under other policies. Electric-powered mountain bicycles and other nonmuscle-powered vehicles are considered motorized and are subject to OHV policies.*

**Management Goal:** Stay current with other recreational activities using mechanical transport, and help BLM field offices prepare to manage them.

**Action Item 1:** Track emerging outdoor activities through the electronic media, extreme sports magazines, and other media.

**Action Item 2:** Clarify the distinction between nonmotorized/ mechanical transport and motorized uses. Any device that uses a power source other than human muscles is considered an OHV, and subject to the national OHV policies.

## Regulations

Regulations pertaining to recreational trail use on BLM-managed public lands do not specifically reference mountain bicycles or other nonmotorized or mechanical modes of transportation.

**Issue 1: How could BLM regulate, plan for, and enforce the protection of resources, safety of public land visitors, and minimal conflicts among user groups?**

*Rationale: The off-road vehicle regulations contained in 43 CFR 8340 through 8344 are specifically for the management of motorized modes of transportation. Although FLPMA recognizes recreation as an appropriate activity on public lands, specific guidance and direction for managing mechanical transportation does not exist. Guidance that takes into account both resource and social aspects of recreation activities is needed to adequately and effectively manage these activities. The agency recognizes that comprehensive travel management planning is essential to establishing integrated trail systems and to meeting the needs of all visitors.*

*The third Action Plan will address nonmotorized/nonmechanical modes of transport. Regulations will be developed incorporating the second and third action plans.*

**Management Goal:** Develop regulations that provide for the effective management of mountain bicycles and other mechanical modes of transportation on BLM-managed public lands.

**Action Item 1:** After completion of the third action plan (nonmotorized/nonmechanical transportation), the BLM will review 43 CFR 8340 through 8344 (OHVs), 8364 (closures and restrictions), 8365 (rules of conduct), and 8370 [2920] (special recreation permits); modify and propose new regulations applying to the use of mountain bicycles and other modes of transportation, as appropriate.

*Note: Public comments requested that the regulatory process address the following:*

- *unauthorized trail construction,*
- *wide vehicles on single track,*
- *banning cross-country travel, and*
- *consistency in application to all uses.*

**Action Item 2:** Use a team of internal and external advisors (including Resource Advisory Councils [RACs]) to develop regulations applicable to the use of mountain bicycles and other mechanical modes of transportation on BLM-managed public land and lands in the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS). Development of regulations will follow the nonmotorized/nonmechanical action plan.

**Action Item 3:** Until new regulations are developed specific to the management of mechanical transportation, use and enforce existing regulations such as 43 CFR 8364, 8365, and 8370 [2920], supplemental rules, planning decisions, and proclamations and legislation.

**Action Item 4:** Convene a focus group of internal and external leaders to address issues related to NLCS proclamations and legislation where direction for management of mechanical transport is unclear or nonexistent for regulatory consideration.

**Action Item 5:** To encourage compliance with existing or new regulations, emphasis should be placed on educating the public and staff on the appropriate interpretation of the regulations.

Following an adequate period of time to ensure understanding of the regulations, enforcement should be implemented to encourage compliance.

# GLOSSARY

**adaptive management:** A process for continually improving management policies and practices by learning from outcomes of operational programs and new scientific information.

**assistance agreements:** A means to transfer money, property, services or anything of value to a recipient to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by federal statute.

**benefits-based management (BBM):** An expanded conceptual framework that views the provision of recreation as a production process for an entire service delivery system composed of other key natural resource agencies, private sector businesses, and local government officials. It strongly emphasizes collaboration between these managing partners who all have a role in affecting the types of recreation opportunities and benefits produced. Benefits based management plans contain objectives for explicitly stated activities, experiences, and benefit outputs (that is, opportunities) and outcomes (that is, their realization). The plans also contain prescriptions for the kinds of physical, social, and administrative settings that must be maintained for the production and realization of these targeted experience and benefit outputs and outcomes. Management actions, marketing efforts and monitoring are all directed towards achieving the explicitly stated objectives in collaboration with the managing partners.

**best practices:** Using prevailing management guidelines, using the standards of management that apply in certain arenas, working from examples of work that has been completed, the successes and the lessons learned.

**challenge cost share (CCS):** Challenge cost share projects are partnerships with other government agencies, private organizations, institutions, corporations, and so forth, working together to accomplish common objectives.

**climbing turn:** A turn that makes the transition from one leg to the next as a trail ascends (or descends) a hill. Climbing turns are used on shallow slopes, usually not exceeding a grade of 7 percent. (Steeper slopes require more complex—and much more difficult to build—turns known as switchbacks.)

**directional travel:** A management technique, generally employed on heavily used trails, that requires mountain bicycles to travel the same direction on a trail. On shared-use trails, pedestrians and equestrians often travel in the opposite direction, so they encounter mountain bicycles face-to-face rather than being overtaken from behind.

**downhill-specific bicycles:** See "freeride"

**Epic Rides Program:** A program developed by IMBA and industry partners that highlights different trails and trail systems around the world. The program, which attempts to encourage mountain bicyclists to explore lesser-known riding areas, combines one day of trail work and one day of riding.

**The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).** A landmark piece of legislation that changed not only the Bureau of Land Management and the make-up of its workforce, but the face of the West forever. This ambitious Act both recognized the value of our Nation's public lands and provided a framework in which they could be managed in perpetuity for the benefit of present and future generations. It defined BLM's mission as one of multiple use—a new concept for the times, but which today stands as our agency's great strength.

**freeride:** This refers both to a bicycle type and a style or riding. "Freeride" bicycles use long-travel suspension (5 to 7 inches or longer), which allows riders to descend rugged, rocky areas at a relatively high speed. These bicycles are heavier than cross-country bicycles—weighing 30 to 40 pounds—and as a result are

not generally ridden where significant climbing is required. Ski resorts are popular freeriding venues, as are areas where bicycles and riders can be shuttled by vehicle up to the start of the ride.

**hot spots:** Areas that have reached a "critical mass" of popularity, drawing mountain bicyclists from well beyond the local community. Some hot spots, such as Moab and Fruita, have become mountain bicycling destinations, with the resulting economic, resource, and social impacts. Communities may encourage visitors to these areas by hosting "fat tire festivals" and races.

### **International Mountain Bicycling**

**Association (IMBA):** A nonprofit organization that promotes socially and environmentally responsible riding. IMBA's mission is to create, enhance, and preserve trail opportunities for mountain bikers worldwide.

**land use plans:** Land use plans serve as the primary tool for providing the public a voice in how the public lands are used. Adequate, up-to-date land use plans assure that the BLM's land management and resource management decisions maintain the integrity and sustainability of the public land and withstand public review of the decision-making process. The BLM's land use planning is based on the requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The land use planning process includes resource management plans (RMPs), Resource Area Management Plans (RAMPs), Activity Plans and related planning guidance.

**limits of acceptable change (LAC):** Limits of acceptable change is a planning and management framework that requires managers to define desired physical and social conditions and to undertake actions to maintain or achieve these conditions. The focus is shifted from "how much use is too much" to "what are the environmental and social conditions desired in an area." The process is used to determine what physical and social indicators and standards could be used to monitor the change taking place in various recreational settings. It is also used to identify specific management actions targeted at preventing unacceptable social and resource impacts from occurring.

**mechanical transport:** Any contrivance for moving people or material in or over land, water, snow or air, that has moving parts and is powered by a living or non-living power source. This includes (but is not limited to) wheeled vehicles such as bicycles, game carriers, carts and wagons. "Mechanical transport" does not include wheelchairs when used as necessary medical appliances, nor does it include skis, snowshoes, sleds, travois, nonmotorized river craft including driftboats, rafts, or canoes, or similar primitive devices.

### **The National Environmental Policy Act**

**(NEPA):** An Act signed into law January 1, 1970, declares that the federal government's continuing policy is to create and maintain conditions under which people and nature can exist in productive harmony and fulfill the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans. The President's Council on Environmental Quality issued final Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA on November 29, 1978. The NEPA and the CEQ regulations establish the guiding principles for safeguarding the environment and directing agencies on how to make better decisions.

### **National Landscape Conservation System**

**(NLCS):** The Bureau of Land Management has established the National Landscape Conservation System to help protect some of the nation's most remarkable and rugged landscapes. The system includes the agency's National Monuments, Congressionally designated National Conservation Areas, and other areas designated for important scientific and ecological characteristics.

**North Shore riding:** This term, taken from the British Columbia locale where the style first gained popularity, refers to "stunt" riding on structures, including balance beams, rock piles, teeter-totters, and ladder bridges.

**public lands:** Any land or interest in lands owned by the United States and administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the Bureau of Land Management, except lands located on the outer Continental Shelf and lands held for the benefit of Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos. (43 CFR 1601.0-5)

**recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS):**

Recreational Opportunity Spectrum is a planning and management framework whereby recreation area management objectives are defined. The ROS process provides a framework for defining classes or outdoor recreation environments, activities and experience opportunities. The settings, activities, and opportunities for obtaining experiences have been arranged along a continuum or "spectrum" divided into six classes: (1) primitive, (2) semiprimitive nonmotorized, (3) semiprimitive motorized, (4) roaded natural, (5) rural, and (6) urban. The resulting ROS analysis defines specific geographic areas on the ground, each one encompassing one of the unique recreation opportunity classes.

**Resource Advisory Council (RAC):** A designated group of 12 to 15 people from diverse interests in local communities, including ranchers, environmental groups, tribes, state and local government officials, academics and other public land users who meet periodically throughout the year to discuss BLM issues and provide advice on the management of public lands and resources to BLM state directors. There are 23 RACs in the western states and the members are appointed by the Secretary of the Interior. The Councils have been successful in bringing diverse—and often competing—interests to the table to deal with issues of mutual concern.

**route:** A generic term that includes roads, trails, ways and other travel corridors.

**rural/urban interface:** Refers to an area where structures and other human development or activities meet or intermingle with BLM-managed public lands. Managers will often be required to apply special planning techniques or use stipulations to minimize user conflicts.

**single-track trail:** A narrow trail, usually no more than 24 inches wide, that allows users to experience a feeling of closeness with the environment they are passing through. For mountain bicyclists, single-track trails may require more skill to negotiate, but most mountain bicyclists prefer the challenge and closeness afforded by single-track to wider trails or "double-track," such as Jeep roads.

**special recreation permit:** Special recreation permits (SRPs) are use authorizations that allow for recreational uses of the public lands and related waters. They are issued to satisfy recreation demand within allowable use levels, providing for equitable and safe and enjoyable use while minimizing adverse resource impacts and user conflicts. Permits are issued to manage use in a manner that is consistent with management objectives determined in resource management plans, recreation area management plans, or (in their absence) through recreation management objectives identified through the analysis of resources and visitor use for each specific area.

**stacked-loop trail system:** A trail system that is designed to provide shorter, less technically demanding loops for beginners and family rides, combined with longer loops that are also more technically challenging. A good stacked loop system will have a beginner level trail, possibly two or three intermediate loops, and one or two expert loops.

**toolbox:** A group of general products that can be adapted and used by land managers to implement action items and achieve management goals for each BLM field office's mountain bicycling program. Products could include, but are not limited to: standardized messages for trail and use ethics; templates for BLM posters that can be adapted for specific areas; field guides for managing programs or special events (including examples of work that has been completed in other areas—the successes and the lessons learned); a list of best practices for mountain bicycle management that can be adapted to specific areas; a list of suggestions (generated by the public during the draft Action Plan phase) for improving the program, minimizing user conflict, and protecting the environment); a "how to guide" of best practices for obtaining community involvement, designing and building community-based trail systems, building partnerships, and developing a cadre of volunteers, creative funding of trail development and signage; a basic visitor preference study that can be adapted to local trails.

**trail:** A linear travel corridor open to multiple-use activities.

**trail management objective (TMO):** A trail-by-trail approach to setting planning objectives for specific trails within a trail system. The analysis process includes analysis and categorization of types and levels of use, maintenance standards and resource objectives. After trails are constructed and used they are monitored and compared to the standard.

**visitor capacity:** The supply, or prescribed number of appropriate visitor opportunities that will be accommodated in an area. The overarching function of a visitor capacity is to serve as one tool to help sustain natural and cultural resources, as well as the recreation opportunities and other benefits these resources afford. Reference: "Visitor Capacity on Public Lands and Waters, Making Better Decisions", Prepared by: The Federal Interagency Task Force on Visitor Capacity on Public Lands.

# APPENDIX 1

## Public Participation

Approximately 400 comments were received on the draft Action Plan. Overall, comments were supportive of the Action Plan's goals and action items. Many commentors provided suggestions on how to modify the plan to meet the particular needs of the trails community and protect natural resources.

This Action Plan is intended to be a comprehensive approach to developing and managing an adaptive and effective mountain bicycling program. Many comments encouraged the BLM to expand the plan to address a multitude of other important but separate issues related to transportation system management, public access, wilderness management, and others. Some action items were modified and new action items were incorporated as a result of these comments.

The following is a summary of the substantive comments voiced during public participation and BLM's response to those comments.

**Comment: The BLM should adopt a nationwide policy to close public lands to mountain bicycling unless determined to be appropriate and posted as open (or open unless posted closed).**

**Response:** The BLM's policy is to make this type of decision at the local level through the land use planning process. It is not the purpose of this document to close, limit, or open trails and roads to mountain bicycle use. Such an action also would be contrary to the public's request for locally developed plans and solutions.

**Comment: Any new regulations should address all nonmotorized uses, not just mountain bicycles. All uses should be regulated based on impact rather than mode of transportation.**

**Response:** Any new national regulations should address all trail uses. In addition, they should neither discriminate against nor favor any particular use. There are many considerations involved when proposing regulations or making impact-related planning decisions at the local level, such as social environment, user conflict, and resource protection. The Action Plan was modified to address these concerns. [Please refer to "Regulations," Issue 1, Action Item 1; "Coordination," Management Goal 1, Action Item 4. "Planning and Environmental Considerations", Issue 2, Action Item 1.]

**Comment: The plan needs to more specifically address the assessment, management, and mitigation of resource impacts associated with trail use.**

**Response:** Environmental consequences (impacts and mitigation) are determined at the local level through the land use planning process. The BLM's assessment of those impacts (including cumulative impacts) occurs during the required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review. The BLM conducts sound environmental analysis in compliance with all applicable executive orders and statutes such as the Federal

Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. The BLM local land-use planning will emphasize the need to identify, monitor, and mitigate impacts on resources associated with trail use. The Action Plan has been modified to more specifically address this concern. [Please refer to “Planning and Environmental Considerations,” Issue 7.]

**Comments: Mountain bicycling should or should not occur in NLCS units such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, national monuments, or national conservation areas.**

**Response:** The Wilderness Act of 1964 prohibits the use of mechanical transport [which includes bicycles] in designated wilderness areas, subject to valid existing rights. Although mountain bicycling is not prohibited in wilderness study areas (WSAs), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 requires the BLM to manage uses in a manner that protects wilderness characteristics until Congress either designates these WSAs as permanent wilderness or releases them for nonwilderness uses. This WSA protection requirement is reflected in the BLM’s Interim Management Policy (IMP) for Lands Under Wilderness Review.

National monument proclamations or national conservation area, river, and trail legislation may direct specific types of use or designations. The BLM must comply with this direction and modify its relevant land use plans accordingly.

Where this direction is unclear, resolution begins through the planning process at the local level.

**Comment: There is not enough specific information in the plan about how best to resolve user conflict.**

**Response:** User conflicts are ultimately resolved at the local level, however, many excellent suggestions were provided during the public comment period. The Action Plan has been modified to reflect these suggestions. [Please refer to “Planning and Environmental Considerations,” Issue 1, Action Item 8.]

**Comment: Mountain bicycle use should be defined as muscle-powered instead of mechanical [transport].**

**Response:** Clearly, mountain bicycling is a form of muscle-powered conveyance, but is also considered a means of mechanical transport by most federal land management agencies. The four federal agencies that manage wilderness (USDA-FS, USDI-FWS, NPS, and BLM) define mechanical transport as:

“Any contrivance for moving people or material in or over land, water, snow or air, that has moving parts and is powered by a living or non-living power source. This includes (but is not limited to) wheeled vehicles such as bicycles...” [See Glossary for full definition.]

This definition’s roots are within law and regulations. To change these laws and regulations goes beyond the scope of this document.



To clarify terminology, the Action Plan has been modified, as appropriate, by using “mechanical transport” when referring to mountain bicycle use.

## **ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Many ideas and suggestions, in addition to the above comments, were submitted during the public comment period. When appropriate, they were incorporated into the Action Plan and will be included in a future toolbox of options for local use.

### **COORDINATION**

- ◆ Supply feedback cards with adequate room for comments at trailheads
- ◆ Conduct regional and state mountain bicycle/trail conferences
- ◆ Encourage trail building clinics
- ◆ Compile a list of local BLM contacts
- ◆ Coordinate seminars at local bike shops
- ◆ Encourage consistency in messages and management within the BLM and among agencies.
- ◆ Bring all user groups together to work out problems.

### **EDUCATION/INTERPRETATION/INFORMATION**

- ◆ Encourage bicycle publications to include pro-environmental messages
- ◆ Post information at store outlets
- ◆ Invite mountain bicycle celebrities to promote ethics
- ◆ Support ethics at events and sponsor family activities
- ◆ Include ethics information (on hang tags) with all new bicycle sales and rentals
- ◆ Supply information to bike shops, manufacturers, and dealers
- ◆ Post information at trailheads
- ◆ Publish trail maps with ethics message

- ◆ Use peer pressure to communicate ethics
- ◆ Use trail patrol to communicate ethics
- ◆ Distribute a newsletter to bicycle clubs, retailers, and organizations
- ◆ Develop and distribute a national BLM mountain bicycle brochure incorporating opportunities and ethics

## **PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- ◆ Need to measure impacts based on good science
- ◆ Separate activities by vehicle or user type
- ◆ Separate activities by alternating days of use
- ◆ Separate competitive events and downhillers from others
- ◆ Conduct trail assessments
- ◆ Monitor all uses for social and environmental impacts
- ◆ If trail use becomes too high, prohibit use by one or more user groups
- ◆ The BLM should establish a leadership role in using good science and state-of-the-art trail management
- ◆ Trail surfaces should be designed to sustain all uses
- ◆ Develop visitor capacity levels (see Glossary) for trails
- ◆ Make surveys on the internet continuously available
- ◆ Provide trailhead questionnaires with ample room for response
- ◆ Coordinate with manufacturers to set up a fund for developing and maintaining trails

## **FUNDING**

- ◆ Mandatory fees should be used as a last resort
- ◆ Implement mandatory fees in high use areas but not in back country areas

- ◆ Mandatory fees are okay if monies are returned to the site
- ◆ Implement voluntary trailhead donation system
- ◆ Encourage event coordinators to donate a portion of revenue to local trail volunteer organizations
- ◆ Implement a national trail pass
- ◆ Develop mountain bike licenses, registration, or sticker programs
- ◆ Encourage race promoters to award points for trail work as part of a points series
- ◆ Encourage Epic Rides (organized by IMBA and industry partners) on BLM-managed public lands to enhance and maintain trails
- ◆ Limit extreme riders to trails they pay to use

## EMERGING ISSUES

- ◆ New technologies could introduce hazardous materials into the environment

- ◆ Determine if a new use or technology is an isolated incident or a local or wide-spread trend
- ◆ Forbid new technology on trails until proven benign

## REGULATIONS

- ◆ Use trail patrols to educate users on regulations
- ◆ Regulations should ban unauthorized trail building
- ◆ The action plan should not single out bicycling or mechanical transport for special regulations
- ◆ There is little scientific evidence to justify closing trails to bicycles while allowing other uses
- ◆ “The process must include promulgation of effective implementing regulations where impacts are sufficiently low that vehicle [bicycle] use is appropriate...”
- ◆ Regulations should include impoundment of bicycle for violations

## APPENDIX 2

# Tips For Ethical Mountain Bicycle and Trail Use

### Leave No Trace, Outdoor Ethics

[Source: <http://www.LNT.org>]

The *Leave No Trace* message is based on seven principles of outdoor ethics.

#### Plan Ahead and Prepare

- ! Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit.
- ! Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- ! Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- ! Visit in small groups. Split larger parties into groups of 4-6.
- ! Repackage food to minimize waste.
- ! Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of rock cairns, flagging or marking paint.

#### Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

- ! Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
- ! Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes and streams.
- ! Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.

##### *In popular areas*

- Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
- Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
- Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.

##### *In pristine areas*

- Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
- Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

#### Dispose of Waste Properly

- ! Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter.
- ! Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.
- ! Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- ! To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

#### Leave What You Find

- ! Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- ! Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- ! Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
- ! Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

#### Minimize Campfire Impacts

- ! Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry. Use a light-weight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.

- ! Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
- ! Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
- ! Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

### **Respect Wildlife**

- ! Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- ! Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- ! Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.

- ! Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
- ! Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

### **Be Considerate of Other Visitors**

- ! Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- ! Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- ! Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
- ! Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- ! Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

## **Tread Lightly! Inc. Guide to Responsible Mountain Biking**

[Source: <http://treadlightly.org>]

### ***Preparation***

- ! Obtain a map of the area you wish to explore and determine which areas are open for use.
- ! Contact the land manager for area restrictions and if crossing private property, be sure to ask permission from the land owner.
- ! Check the weather forecast.
- ! Prepare for the unexpected by packing a small backpack full of emergency items.

### ***Safety on the trail***

- ! Wear a helmet, eye protection and other safety gear.
- ! Buddy up with two or three riders as riding solo can leave you vulnerable if you have an accident or breakdown.
- ! Drinking and riding don't mix.

### ***Rules and common courtesy***

- ! Be considerate of others on the road or trail.
- ! Ride only where permitted.
- ! Leave gates as you find them.
- ! Yield the right of way to those passing or traveling uphill.
- ! Pack out what you pack in.
- ! Remember, designated wilderness areas are reserved for the most primitive outdoor adventure.

### ***Minimum impact camping***

- ! Select lightweight equipment, possibly in earth-tone colors that will blend with the surroundings.
- ! Use existing campsites whenever possible.
- ! Avoid building fires.

## ***Negotiating terrain***

- ! When climbing, shift to a gear that provides comfortable forward momentum and maintains traction.
- ! When descending, apply enough brake to maintain control, but avoid locking your bike's wheels.
- ! Avoid trails that are obviously wet and muddy to avoid trail damage.
- ! Cross streams slowly, at a 90-degree angle to the stream. Walking may be preferable as stream bottoms are often slippery.

*The Tread Lightly! Guide To Responsible Mountain Biking contains more detailed and informative information when riding in the great outdoors so check it out and adopt their policies. It makes sense and benefits everyone.*

# **International Mountain Bicycling Association's Rules of the Trail**

[Source: <http://www.imba.com/>]

The way we ride today shapes mountain bike trail access tomorrow. Do your part to preserve and enhance our sport's access and image by observing the following rules of the trail, formulated by IMBA, the International Mountain Bicycling Association. These rules are recognized around the world as the standard code of conduct for mountain bikers. IMBA's mission is to promote mountain bicycling that is environmentally sound and socially responsible.

## **1. Ride On Open Trails Only.**

Respect trail and road closures (ask if uncertain); avoid trespassing on private land; obtain permits or other authorization as may be required. Federal and state Wilderness areas are closed to cycling. The way you ride will influence trail management decisions and policies.

## **2. Leave No Trace.**

Be sensitive to the dirt beneath you. Recognize different types of soils and trail construction; practice low-impact cycling.

Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable to damage. When the trailbed is soft, consider other riding options. This also means staying on existing trails and not creating new ones. Don't cut switchbacks. Be sure to pack out at least as much as you pack in.

## **3. Control Your Bicycle!**

Inattention for even a second can cause problems. Obey all bicycle speed regulations and recommendations.

## **4. Always Yield Trail.**

Let your fellow trail users know you're coming. A friendly greeting or bell is considerate and works well; don't startle others. Show your respect when passing by slowing to a walking pace or even stopping. Anticipate other trail users around corners or in blind spots. Yielding means slow down, establish communication, be prepared to stop if necessary and pass safely.

## **5. Never Scare Animals.**

All animals are startled by an unannounced approach, a sudden movement, or a loud noise. This can be dangerous for you, others, and the animals. Give animals extra room and time to adjust to you. When passing horses use special care and follow directions from the horseback riders (ask if uncertain). Running cattle and disturbing wildlife is a serious offense. Leave gates as you found them, or as marked.

## **6. Plan Ahead.**

Know your equipment, your ability, and the area in which you are riding – and prepare accordingly. Be self-sufficient at all times, keep your equipment in good repair, and carry necessary supplies for changes in weather or other conditions. A well- executed trip is a satisfaction to you and not a burden to others. Always wear a helmet and appropriate safety gear.

*Keep trails open by setting a good example of environmentally sound and socially responsible off-road cycling*

## **APPENDIX 3**

# **National Mountain Bicycling Strategic Action Plan Interdisciplinary Team**

An interdisciplinary team was formed in May 2001 when it was determined that mountain bicycle and other nonmotorized vehicle management warranted their own strategy and management guidance. The following people served on the team.

### **Team Members**

Tim Smith, Team Leader  
California State Office

Joe Ashor  
Salem District, Oregon

Ray Hanson  
Lander Field Office, Wyoming

Stephanie Sironen  
Cody Field Office, Wyoming

Rick Waldrup  
Dillon Field Office, Montana

Suzanne Garcia, Reviewer  
Utah State Office

Sharon Wilson, Public Affairs  
Washington Office

Margy Tidemann, Writer/Editor  
Worland Field Office, Wyoming

### **Team Oversight**

Deb Salt, National Trails Coordinator,  
Washington Office

Team Advisor

Mark Flint, Former Arizona Resource  
Advisory Council member

Management Oversight

Rodger Schmitt, National Recreation  
Group Manager, Washington Office

Bob Ratcliffe, National Deputy Group  
Manager, Washington Office