

Obama Administration Must Fix Bush Land Use Plans

11 Million Acres of Utah's Public Land Are at Stake

As the clock was ticking down to its last days, the Bush administration issued land use plans for nearly 11 million acres of public lands in eastern and southern Utah. The Bush plans put Utah's redrock canyons on the chopping block, and will dictate how these spectacular lands will be managed for the next 20-plus years. The Plans prioritize destructive off-road vehicle (ORV) use and incorporate industry's wish list for oil and gas development. Spectacular and wild landscapes including Labyrinth Canyon, Cedar Mesa, the San Rafael Swell, the Book Cliffs, and the greater Canyonlands region are imperiled by the Bush Plans.

The Bush Plans were so egregious that the *Salt Lake Tribune* editorialized:

... the Bush administration is trying to make a clean sweep of it before President Bush leaves office, issuing management plans for Utah public lands that favor all-terrain vehicles and energy development over wildlife, water, scenic beauty and archaeological treasures. Ancient Anasazi ruins ... would be especially hard-hit, and could even be destroyed ... If this plan is adopted [it was], the next Congress and president should act immediately to reverse it." (Open Invitation: BLM Monticello Plan Invites Destruction of Relics, *Salt Lake Tribune* editorial, Sept. 8, 2008)

The Facts about ORVs on Utah's Public Lands under the Bush Plans

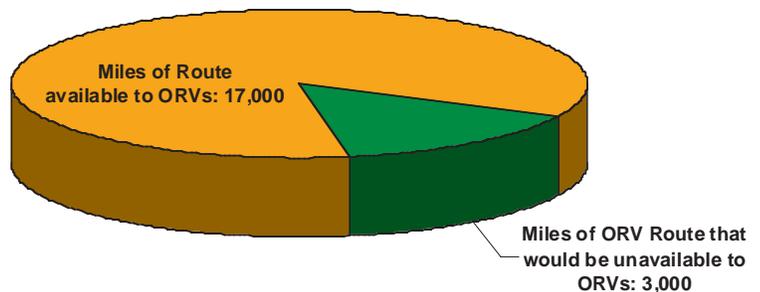
FICTION: ORV users are locked out of Utah's public lands.

FACT: The Bush plans designated 20,000 miles of ORV route. Even if all the proposed wilderness were protected in these areas, there would be 17,000 miles of route available for ORV use – the equivalent of driving from New York City to Los Angeles more than six times!

FICTION: The majority of visitors to Utah's public lands recreate using ORVs.

FACT: A visitor survey conducted by the Moab BLM office reports that only 6 percent of visitors to the area's redrock country said their main activity on public lands was riding ORVs. Yet, the Bush Plans made 85 percent of public lands available for ORV use. In a 2005 poll conducted by Dan Jones and Associates, 78 percent said that ORV use should be more closely managed and 87 percent said that some lands should be completely off-limits to ORV use.

Miles of Route Available to ORVs in Southern and Eastern Utah if All Proposed Wilderness Lands Are Protected



The majority of Utahns want public lands managed for this ...



... not this.



Arch Canyon's riparian area has been assessed as "functioning at risk with a downward trend." "The primary cause for this alarming assessment is the ORV route that traverses the floodplain 60 times in 8.5 miles. . . . If the route remains, the downward trend will continue and the system will eventually degrade further." (Arch Canyon Condition Assessment and Management Recommendations, Charles Schelz, ECOS Consulting, August 2006)

FICTION: ORV use in streams does no resource damage since flash floods wash away the tracks, repairing any damage done by ORV use.

FACT: Riparian areas comprise only 1 percent of Utah's public lands, yet 80 percent of all wildlife depend on these rare desert streams. Scientists agree that ORV use in these scarce desert oases destroys lush vegetation and stream banks, causes increased sedimentation, damages fish and wildlife habitat, and leads to significant degradation of the stream channel. The Bush plans senselessly designated ORV routes in riparian areas, which are being destroyed by the fat churning tires of dirt bikes, ATVs and rock crawlers.

FICTION: Utah's archaeological treasures, a rich cultural heritage, will be protected by the Bush plans' ORV route designations

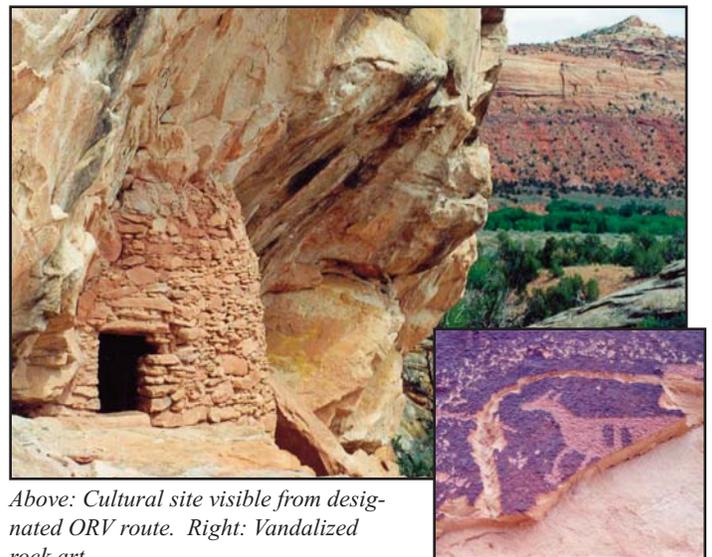
FACT: Research has indicated that cultural sites with the greatest evidence of vandalism and looting are those visible from ORV routes, yet the BLM did not survey cultural resources along the 20,000 miles of route the agency designated for ORV use. These ORV routes are in areas with some of the most aesthetically appealing and scientifically significant resources anywhere on the Colorado Plateau, including sites eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. In some instances, designated routes cross directly through cultural sites.

FICTION: The ORV routes designated in the Bush plans are necessary routes.

FACT: Many of the Bush plans' ORV routes are merely faint trails across the desert that do not go anywhere and receive little use, but they will soon turn into noticeable scars if the Bush plans are not fixed.

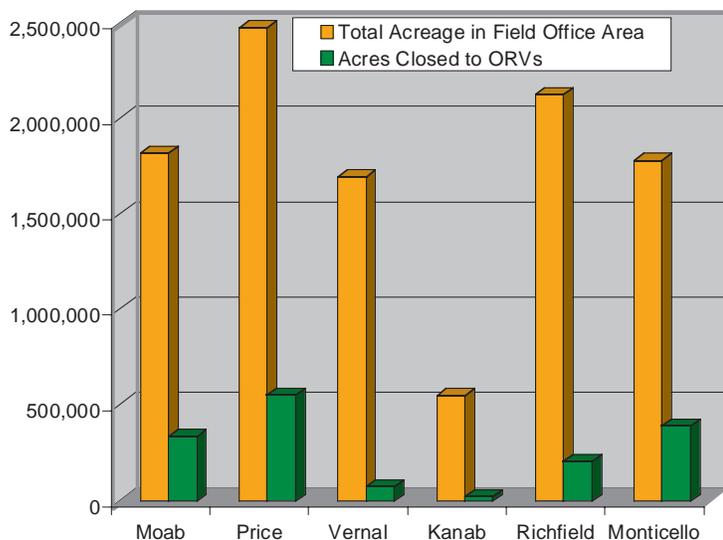
Obama Administration Must Fix the Bush Plans

The Obama administration must act decisively and fix the nearly two year-old Bush plans, as the plans fail to protect Utah's natural and cultural resources, ignore science, and are wildly out of balance.



Above: Cultural site visible from designated ORV route. Right: Vandalized rock art.

Acres Closed to ORV Use in BLM's 2008 Plans



One of many non-existent "ghost routes" designated in the Bush Plans.