2320 Wildernesses and Primitive Areas

November 21, 1983

Bicycle Use in Wilderness

Forest Supervisors

At the recent Recreation Staff Conference (November 7-9) the issue of bicycle use in wilderness was discussed. You also received a request recently from the National Off-Road Bicycle Association (NORBA concerning bicycle use in wilderness and on other trails. We told you that he C lef would respond to this question and that a reply to NORBA was not necessary.

The enclosed letter from the Chief gives the present policy on the use of bicycles in wilderness. Previous discussions and direction on this were confusing because of the ambiguity between the direction provided by the Wilderness Act, the definition of mechanical transport, and the prohibitions in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

The new CFR to be issued in 1984 will eliminate the requirement that a special order be issued to prohibit bicycles in wilderness. The CRF 261.16(b) prohibition will be the enforcement tool to meet the intent of the Wilderness Act. When the new regulations are out, Forests should rescind their prohibitions about bicycles in wilderness (CFR 261.57(h)).

If you have any questions or comments about this, Joe Higgins or Mike King will be glad to help you.

DAVID W. SCOTT Director of Recreation

Enclosure



Forest Service

Washington Office

125. 3. Independence . SW P.O Box 2417 Washington, DC 20013

(Rn)

Mr. Glenn Odell President, National Off-Road Ricycle Association 2175 Holly Lane Solveng, California 93463

Dear Mr. Odell:

On October 5 you sent a letter to our various Regional Foresters and Forest Supervisors concerning your organization and interest in allowing off-road bicycling within designated wilderness in the National Forest System. We are providing a Service-wide response to your letter.

We agree with you that off-road or trail bicycling is an excellent recreational use of National Forests. There are 191 million acres of National Forests with many miles of trails for various recreational opportunities including bicycles and some that do not lend themselves to this form of travel. Of the 191 million scres, about 25.2 million have been designated by Congress as units of the National Wilderness Preservation System. We direct our specific comments to the designated Wilderness Preservation System.

The Wilderness Act of 1964, Public Lew 88-577, provided some specific

Sec. 4(c) - ...there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of sircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area."

The legislative history of the Wilderness Act indicates that Congressintended that travel within these special areas be by primitive means, i.e., foot, horse, or canoe, except when otherwise permitted by specific legislation.

Based on the law, bicycles have always been prohibited in all National Forest wilderness units.

The Secretary's regulation 261.16(b) clearly states, "The following are prohibited in a National Forest wilderness: ...(b) possessing or using a hang glider or bicycle."

We plan to continue the same policy of prohibiting bicycle use in designated wilderness as directed by the Wilderness Act prohibiting mechanical transport, but will be very happy to work with your organization to enhance your use of trails outside wildernesses.

We urge you to stay involved with the National Forests in developing Forest plans that consider the management of trails suitable for bicycle use and the routing of trails around wilderness.

Sincerely,

Eluard H Stone