

BLM Extends Deadline on Off-Road Veh.

The Bureau of Land Management has extended until April 16 the deadline for receiving public comment on a proposal regarding possible restriction of off-road vehicles on lands administered by the BLM.

The draft regulations proposed administrative procedures to designate where off-road vehicles (such as snowmobiles) may or may not be permitted on such lands.

Curtis V. McVee, Alaska state director of the BLM, said the extension was made "due to nationwide public interest in the proposed regulations."

There is also a great deal of local interest, since numerous village residents use snowmobiles for routine transportation and hunting.

Most BLM lands in Alaska are now open to off-road vehicle use and "our policy is to keep these lands open unless there is extensive resource damage or public interest in restricting off-road vehicle use in specific areas," McVee said. Until final land regulations are in effect, designation of specific areas where off-road vehicles may be permitted can not be made.

The proposed regulations also make provisions for organized off-road vehicle events and attempt to set standards for vehicles and their operation on public lands. McVee said that BLM needs public help and comments to improve the proposed regulations "to make them as responsive as possible to public needs."

Copies of the proposed regulations can be obtained from the BLM district office at Anchorage, 4700 East 72nd Ave., Anchorage; or the BLM's Fairbanks district office, 1028 Aurora Dr., Fairbanks. Written comments on the proposed regulations should also be sent to these addresses by April 16.

For the purpose of the proposed regulations, an off-road vehicle is any vehicle deriving motive power from any source other than muscle and used off established roadways. "This includes snowmobiles, the family car, four-wheel drive vehicles, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, and hovercraft, to name a few," McVee said. "Not included are military, fire emergency or law enforcement vehicles or any vehicle whose use is expressly authorized under a BLM permit."