



Responsible Recreation: Roads, Trails, and OHV Areas

Going outdoors with the family is a great way to deal with the stresses of our times. Off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation is increasingly popular, as long as it's done responsibly. Understanding where OHV use is legal is an essential part of responsible recreation.

In New Mexico, most OHV recreation is done on public lands federally managed by the United States Forest Service (USFS) or by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Generally, OHV users are required to stay on existing roads and trails. The Forest Service has established three different kinds of routes where OHV use is allowed and publishes a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) as a guide for open riding for each forest or ranger district.

Motorized routes shown on an MVUM can be forest roads that are open to highway-legal vehicles only, roads that are open to all motorized vehicles including OHVs, trails that are open to vehicles such as ATVs narrower than 50 inches in width and single-track trails open only to motorcycles. While there are a few UTVs and ROVs like the Polaris Ace single-seater or the Honda Pioneer two-seater that are less than 50 inches wide, most side-by-sides are too wide for routes other than forest roads open to all vehicles.

Forest Service MVUMs are available for free from each forest or ranger district office. The maps can also be downloaded from the internet for display on a navigation device such as a GPS, tablet or smart phone. OHV operators are required to have a copy of the MVUM with them while riding. BLM doesn't publish MVUMs like the Forest Service does. Local BLM offices may have maps of trail networks on their properties. Some maps can be found on the web and downloaded.

Cross-country travel off of established roads or trails is only legal in OHV Open Areas. BLM-managed sites with portions open to cross-country travel include the Glade Run Recreation Area north of Farmington and the Mescalero Sands North Dune OHV Area southeast of Roswell. Mescalero Sands is a dune area suited to ATVs, dune buggies, sand rails and high-powered side-by-sides. Parts of the Glade Run feature extreme sandstone terrain popular with Jeep and 4WD enthusiasts and are home to rock-crawling competitions each year.

There are a few other public OHV areas around the state, such as Montessa Park, managed by the City of Albuquerque, south of Kirtland Air Force Base; Red Rock Motorsports Park, run by a local club for the City of Gallup; and Ned Houk Park north of Clovis. Motocross tracks such as Sandia MX near Moriarty and Tulie MX north of Tularosa are privately managed. Any OHV use on private land is strictly by permission of the land owner. Remember, responsible recreation means you know where you are and you are riding legally. For a comprehensive guide to public OHV riding areas, go to <http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/download/ohv/OHV-New-Mexico-Brochure.pdf>.

