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Idaho Land Use/Regulation & Off Road Highway Vehicle Use

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Abstract

In the last twenty-five years, Idaho has noticed a dramatic increase in the usage of motorized vehicles in Idaho's backcountry. This land has mass appeal for its remote wilderness qualities that include hiking, fishing, hunting, and other recreational activities. To accommodate the increased amount of off-road vehicles, Idaho's government agencies have found it difficult to designate cohesive usages of the land. With the expansion of ATV use in Idaho backcountry, ecological damages have progressively gotten worse. In order to address these damages, in 2005 travel management plans were implemented for future ATV usage. Because these restrictions were put in place, conflict has increased between special interests groups who are for open access, and those who are for the conservation and preservation of this land. Through research of environmental impact studies and cost benefit analyses, we have determined a value of both protecting and expanding usage of Idaho wilderness. Increase usages of this land from off-road vehicles will result in further ecological destruction. In order to avoid this dilemma, a comprehensive strategy must be designed that will benefit both the conservationists, off road enthusiasts, regulatory agencies, and the land itself. The most preferable solution to appease both parties is to allocate adequate opportunity equally for both motorized and non-motorized recreational users.

Keywords

environmental, economics, allterrain vehicles (ATV), conservation, forest

Disciplines

Other Economics

Idaho Land Use/Regulation & Off Road Highway Vehicle Use

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Introduction

Over the past 100 years the amount of Frontier land in the United States continues to decrease. Currently Idaho has the third highest wilderness acreage of all 50 states, only behind Alaska and California. There are several groups that are for and against the protection of federal lands. Some of these groups are advocates for stricter regulation and some support movements toward open access. We feel there are both positive and negative impacts for both parties. It is our hope to identify the most efficient method to distribute our public resource of land between these stakeholders



Analysis/Methodology

Congressional Law defines Wilderness in the 1964 Wilderness Act. This act created a way for Congress to protect wilderness throughout the country by establishing National Wilderness Preservation System. Idaho has the third largest wilderness acreage in the country, therefore multiple agencies, like the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Game, and Parks and Recreation help manage usage of this land. Because of the resourcefulness and amount of recreational activities that wilderness areas provide, many Idahoans have conflicting opinions over how this land should be accessed and used. While one side appreciates the peacefulness these areas of raw nature provides where one can hike and find solitude in, others enjoy the ability to use recreational vehicles to explore and access areas that might be implausible to hike to. This is where conflicts arise and each group has their own ideas on how to enjoy these primitive areas.

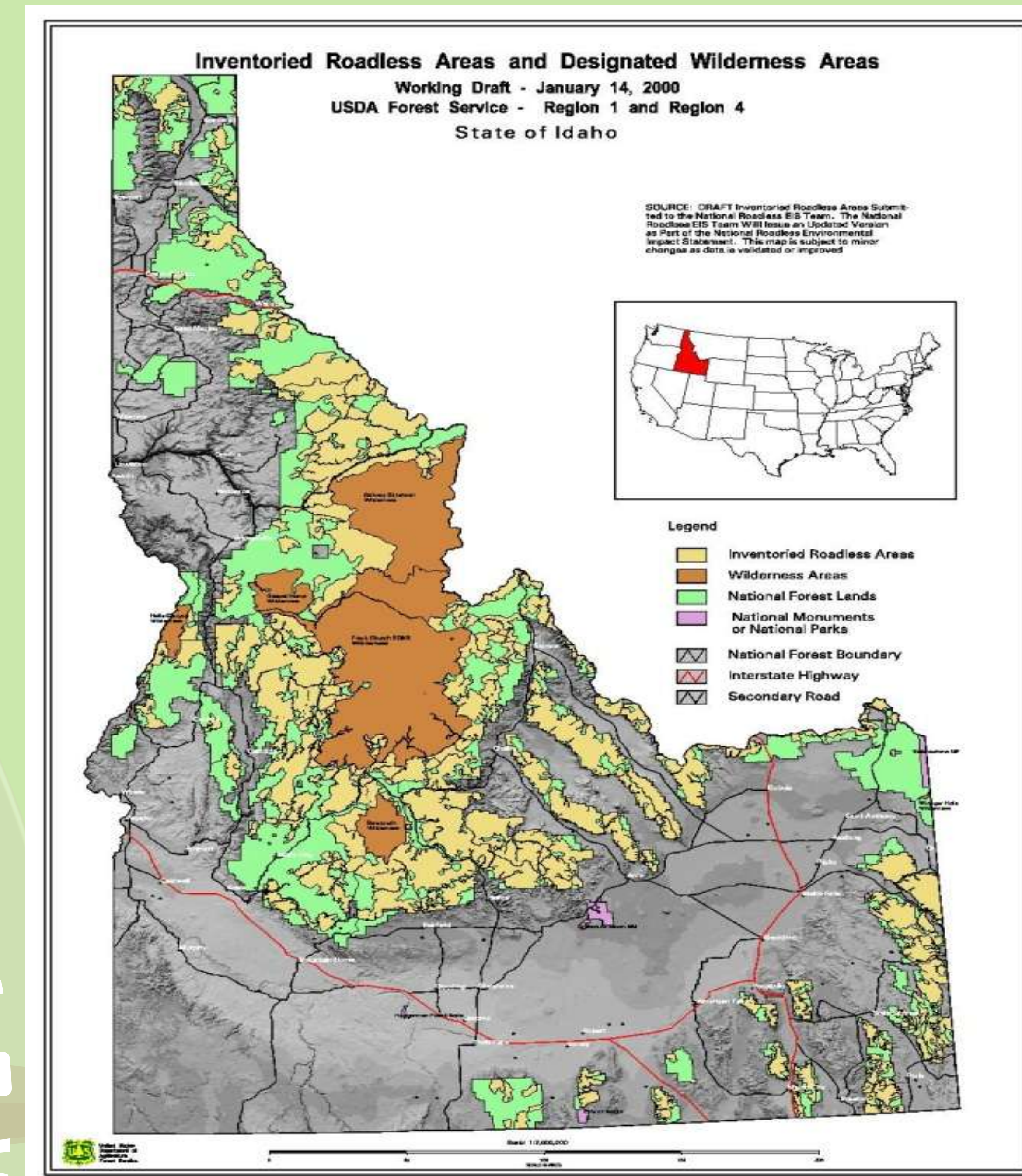
NORTH

Stakeholders

Open Access	Stricter Regulation
Hunters	Outdoor Enthusiasts, Hikers
Recreational Riders (Trail Enthusiasts)	Greater Yellowstone Coalition
Handicap	Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Highway Motorbike Riders	Bureau of Land Management
Agricultural/Snow Removal Use	U.S. Forest Service
Idaho Trail Machine Association	Idaho Conservation League
Idaho State ATV Association	The Wilderness Society
American Trails	
Nat. Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation	
Idaho Parks and Recreation	

WEST

EAST



Conclusion

After thorough research and discussions, we feel that there needs to be an adequate amount of land dedicated to both stakeholders. However it is in our state and countries best interest to preserve a substantial amount of land that is considered to be protected and therefore not accessible by off-road vehicles. These allocations will help us preserve our wilderness land areas while supporting critical environmental eco-systems.



Through our research, we have found that even with the most care possible, it is easy to damage these sensitive areas with the use of motorized vehicles. This not only causes physical damage to the landscape (erosion, compacting of soil and spreading of noxious weeds), it has a substantial impact on the wildlife and fish in these areas. We have to be mindful of our wildlife and fish because they create revenue for the state by attracting residents and non-residents alike into these remote areas. Most people who travel into these areas go into them to get away from the modern world and enjoy the tranquility that these areas provide. This tranquility is disturbed with “noise pollution” from motorized vehicles that also cause a safety concern for people that are hiking and are on foot. We also understand that a public area should not exclude anyone but the protection of these scarce areas are more important in a highly populated and developed country and world where these areas will be even more scarce and priceless in the oncoming future. That is why we think the Wilderness Act should continue to stay in place and keep motorized vehicles out and allow them only in places where they are currently allowed. Opening the wilderness to them will only give them a precedent and they will continue to want more and more areas for their use. We have also come up with a plan where users of off-road vehicles purchase a certain area and develop it for their type of use and away from areas that are sensitive to their use.