

## Final Rule on Nabesna Off-Road Vehicle EIS

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park/Preserve **News Release**, Mark Keogh - Release Date: **August 20, 2014**

Copper Center, AK – The National Park Service (NPS) has published in the Federal Register a final rule for the management of off-road vehicle (ORV) use in the Nabesna District of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve (WRST). The rule is effective September 19, 2014. The final rule is supported by the Nabesna Off-Road Vehicle Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD was signed on December 14, 2011.

The Record of Decision followed a 4-year planning process that included intensive public involvement. During the planning process, NPS held and attended public meetings with other federal agencies, state agencies, Native corporations, tribal councils, environmental organizations, citizens groups, and subsistence advisory bodies to discuss the ORV Management Plan/EIS. Following the Record of Decision in late 2011, WRST has continued to inform involved stakeholders regarding the status of the final rule.

A proposed rule was published in the Federal Register on January 15, 2014 and was open for comments for 60 days. Eight comments were received. The final rule includes NPS responses to substantive comments. No substantial changes were made to the proposed rule as a result of comments received.

The final rule includes the following:

1. Designation of trails in the Nabesna District of the National Preserve where ORVs may be used off park roads for recreational purposes. At this time, this includes the following trails:

- Lost Creek trail
- Trail Creek trail
- Soda Lake trail

As trails are improved in the national preserve portion of the Nabesna district, they will be designated for recreational ORV use. These include the Reeve's Field trail, the Caribou Creek trail, and the Suslota trail.

2. Prohibition of the use of certain types of vehicles based upon size and weight. The following types of vehicles may not be used for recreational uses or subsistence uses in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve:

- Tracked rigs greater than 5.5 feet in width or 4,000 lbs. curb weight.
- Street legal highway vehicles.
- Custom 4x4 jeeps, SUVs, or trucks designed for off-road use.
- Original or modified "deuce and a half" cargo trucks.
- Dozers, skid-steer loaders, excavators, or other construction equipment.
- Motorcycles or dirt bikes.
- Log skidders.
- Wheeled vehicles (including all-terrain vehicles, utility vehicles, and Argos) exceeding 1,500 lbs. curb weight, not including trailers.

3. For trails in the FEIS Wilderness Area (Black Mountain trails and the southern portions of the Tanada Lake trail), the rule requires that subsistence ORV users stay on trails or within identified trail corridors. The trail corridors consist of 0.5 miles on either side of the trail, and ORV use in areas outside of the

established trail will be solely for purposes of game retrieval. ORV travel outside of these designated trail corridors in the FEIS Wilderness Area will be prohibited. Trails and trail corridors in the FEIS Wilderness Area, and the boundaries of the FEIS Wilderness Area, are identified on a map available at the Slana Ranger Station and the Main Park Visitor Center, and on the park's website at <http://www.nps.gov/wrst/parkmgmt/planning.htm>. They will also be identified at the Tanada and Copper Lake trailheads.

You can access the Federal Register notice by going to the following website:  
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-08-20/pdf/2014-19740.pdf>

Any questions can be directed to Bruce Rogers, park planner, at 907-822-7276 or Rick Obernesser, Superintendent, at 907-822-7202.