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Department of Natural Resources limits heavy vehicles on Rex Trail

Staff Report newsroom@newsminer.com Sep 3, 2015

FAIRBANKS—The Alaska Department of Natural Resources will again limit heavy “moose buggies” on the Eastern Rex Trail during the 2015 hunting season.

The department extended a permit system last week that’s been in place since 2009 for the popular 50-mile trail off the Parks Highway. The continued permit process came over the objection of statewide sportsmen’s group, the Alaska Outdoor Council, which wants the state to lift the vehicle restrictions.

Like previous permit systems, the 2015 Rex Trail permitting system doesn’t require permits for conventional ATVs, only off-road vehicles heavier than 1,500 pounds. Vehicles that are heavier than 1,500 pounds need a \$100 permit and must be no larger than the Nodwell 110 model. The permits are only available for tracked vehicles and do not allow vehicles to pull trailers. They authorize travel only along the trail and in designated pull-out areas. The state has given 78 permits since the permitting system started in 2009.

The Rex Trail system is different than the state’s normal system for travel on state land with heavy-duty vehicles. People who want to travel off trail throughout other state lands could potentially take a wheeled vehicle or a moose buggy larger than the Nodwell 100 if they obtain a land use permit.

The state began limiting large vehicle use on the trail in 2008, citing safety concerns about large ruts on the trail as large as 3 feet deep.

In one of two comments the state received about the rule extension, Alaska Outdoor Council Executive Director Rod Arno criticized the state for continuing to limit access without making noticeable improvements to the trail.

The department's northern region manager, Jeanne Proulx, responded in a formal record of decision about the trail that the state has identified four parts of the trail for repair. It has funding for two of the projects and has completed one, a side trail for small ATVs that avoids some of the most rutted parts of the main trail. Proulx also described the Rex Trail system as a benefit to public access because the department can often turn Rex Trail permits around in a day. Land use permits for taking moose buggies to other state lands can take months to obtain, she said.

The decision and required permit application is available on the Department of Natural Resources website at dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/rextrail.

For additional information related to the Rex Trail, call Proulx at 451-2711 or email jeanne.proulx@alaska.gov.

Contact the newsroom at 459-7572.

Clarification: *This article has been changed to reflect the fact that the state only has funding for two Rex Trail repair projects. It has identified two additional projects, but does not have funding for these.*