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Politics

County seeks to amend restrictions on off-road vehicles in **Factory Butte**

Joe Baird The Salt Lake Tribune

Wayne County commissioners are expected to adopt a resolution tonight in Loa that calls for amending the county's general plan to allow cross-country use of off-highway vehicles in the popular **Factory Butte** area. But the attorney who crafted the resolution says it is not the opening shot of a confrontation between the county and the Bureau of Land Management, which last fall imposed emergency restrictions on OHV use in **Factory Butte**.

Rather, the county declaration is to be delivered to the BLM as its position on **Factory Butte** while the agency's Richfield Field Office goes forward with its resource management plan for the area. A draft of that plan is expected to be delivered by spring.

"A planning document doesn't have the force of law, but the Federal Land Policy and Management Act directs the BLM to conform its plans to the maximum extent possible to the plans of state and local government," said Mark Ward, an attorney with the Utah Association of Counties. "If and when Wayne County consummates this, the county commissioners will sit down with the field office manager to see about reconciling their plan with the [BLM] plan."

The translation, Ward noted, is that there will be no county insurrection at **Factory Butte**

"Does this mean Wayne County will disregard the [**Factory Butte**] closures? No. But it's a statement of policy. The dialogue can now begin. Hopefully, it will be a fruitful dialogue," he said.

Citing threats to two endangered cactus species from continued unrestricted OHV use, the BLM imposed new off-road rules for **Factory Butte** and limited OHVs to 220 miles of designated trails and to a 2,600-acre "play area" known as Swing Arm City, located northeast of Caineville. The entire **Factory Butte** area comprises nearly 200,000 acres.

BLM officials call the new OHV rules a temporary fix until the new land-use plan is completed.

But the county, with its **Factory Butte** resolution, is seeking a return to the old rules, citing tradition and the tourist dollars that are generated by OHV users.

The county's intent "is to preserve the open and unrestricted nature of cross-country travel that existed historically in the **Factory Butte** area," a draft of the resolution said.

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