

President Trump Signs Historic Executive Order Restoring Access to America's Public Lands

Yesterday, President Donald J. Trump signed the [Executive Order, Removing Unnecessary and Counterproductive Restrictions on Access to Federal Lands](#), marking what may be the most significant federal action in decades affecting motorized recreation and public land access.

For the first time in modern history, a sitting President has not only recognized the importance of off-highway vehicle recreation on public lands but has taken direct action to dismantle the regulatory framework that has been used for decades to justify route closures across the country.

The Executive Order specifically rescinds Executive Orders 11644 and 11989, the Nixon and Carter-era directives that created the foundation for what became known as the "Minimization Criteria." Those directives ultimately led to the adoption of 43 CFR 8342.1, the regulation that has governed travel management decisions on Bureau of Land Management lands for nearly fifty years.

Even more remarkably, the White House Fact Sheet repeatedly references off-road vehicle recreation and access, making it clear that motorized recreation was one of the primary issues being addressed by the Executive Order. The White House specifically acknowledged that the minimization criteria created barriers to recreation, tourism, organized motorsports, volunteer stewardship, rural economies, and public confidence in federal land access planning.

For years, BlueRibbon Coalition (BRC) and Utah Public Lands Alliance (UPLA) have argued that the minimization criteria were the single most important factor driving both Travel Management Plan closures and the endless cycle of litigation that followed. What began as a requirement to "minimize" impacts gradually evolved into a process that often demanded agencies justify every route that remained open rather than every route proposed for closure.

The problem became dramatically worse on January 17, 2025, when then-Acting BLM Director Nada Culver issued a [113-page policy memorandum](#) expanding how the minimization criteria should be applied. The memorandum was largely driven by a preliminary ruling issued by Judge Susan Illston in the Western Mojave (WEMO) litigation, which concluded that BLM must demonstrate, often on a route-by-route basis, how every route designation satisfies the minimization criteria.

The consequences were immediate and alarming. The WEMO decision ultimately resulted in the closure of approximately 2,200 miles of routes in California and established a

precedent that threatened to spread across the West. Rather than providing clarity, the Culver Memo transformed a relatively brief 232-word regulation into a 113-page administrative framework requiring extensive route-by-route analysis, documentation, and procedural hurdles before routes could remain open.

The memo was first identified by UPLA shortly after its release. While reviewing recent federal land management actions, UPLA discovered the memorandum and immediately recognized the threat it posed to future travel management decisions throughout the West. After a detailed review, UPLA brought the memo to the attention of BlueRibbon Coalition leadership.

Both organizations quickly concluded that the memo represented a major escalation in the application of the minimization criteria and would almost certainly accelerate route closures and litigation nationwide. Together, UPLA and BRC began sounding the alarm.

The Culver Memo effectively transformed the minimization criteria from a planning consideration into a substantive legal standard that could be used to challenge nearly every travel management decision. The result was exactly what we feared: more closures, more litigation, more delays, and less access.

Our concerns were not theoretical. In Utah alone, nearly 3,000 miles of motorized routes had already been closed or severely restricted in recent years through Travel Management Plans, National Monument Resource Management Plans, ACEC designations, and other federal land use actions. We believed the minimization criteria had become the central mechanism driving many of those decisions.

In response, UPLA and BRC launched a coordinated campaign to eliminate the underlying problem.

On January 28, 2025, UPLA formally wrote President Donald Trump, Vice President J.D. Vance, and senior Department of the Interior officials outlining the devastating impacts that restrictive federal land management policies were having on access, recreation, local economies, and the multiple-use mandate established by Congress.

Just days later, on February 3, 2025, UPLA submitted a detailed letter to Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum requesting immediate action to restore balanced public land management policies and reverse the widespread loss of access occurring across Utah and throughout the West.

Our efforts continued throughout the year.

On June 15, 2025, UPLA submitted formal recommendations to Secretary Burgum identifying 43 CFR 8342.1 and the minimization criteria as among the most burdensome

and damaging regulations affecting public land access. We specifically highlighted how the regulation had been weaponized to close roads and trails across the West and warned that the Culver Memo would only accelerate those losses.

[The campaign culminated on June 27, 2025, when BRC and UPLA jointly filed a formal Administrative Petition seeking the complete rescission of 43 CFR 8342.1.](#)

The petition argued that the regulation had become "a systemic barrier to public access on federal lands, leading to widespread closures of historically accessible routes and perpetual litigation." It documented how the minimization criteria had distorted the multiple-use mandate established by Congress, contributed to thousands of miles of route closures, and created a regulatory framework that encouraged litigation rather than balanced land management.

The petition further argued that the Culver Memo transformed an already problematic regulation into an unworkable administrative burden that would continue to fuel closures and lawsuits indefinitely.

Throughout this process, UPLA and BRC worked directly with senior officials throughout the Department of the Interior, the White House, Congress, and numerous federal decision-makers to explain why reform was necessary. We consistently emphasized that public lands should be managed under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield—not through a regulatory framework that increasingly functioned as a tool for eliminating access.

By early spring, we knew we were making progress. Conversations with federal officials increasingly reflected many of the concerns UPLA and BRC had raised regarding the minimization criteria, excessive litigation, and the need to restore balanced multiple-use management.

As discussions continued, we learned that the Administration was seriously considering action. We were also informed that the White House wanted to see evidence that the public supported reform before final action was taken.

BRC responded by launching a nationwide support campaign. The effort first focused on organized clubs, associations, and recreation groups before expanding directly to individual recreationists across the country.

You responded in a massive way.

Thousands of riders, wheelers, overlanders, snowmobilers, hunters, campers, and public land users stepped forward to support this effort. Your voices demonstrated that access to public lands remains important to Americans across the country.

That response mattered.

The overwhelming support generated by the recreation community helped demonstrate to decision-makers that reform of the minimization criteria was not merely an organizational priority—it was a priority shared by the public.

As a result of those efforts, UPLA and BRC have been invited to the White House next week to present the results of that campaign and discuss the future of public land access.

While we were not present for the signing itself, we will be in Washington to celebrate this historic achievement and continue the work that remains ahead.

The Executive Order is a major victory, but it is only one step toward restoring balanced, multiple-use management on America's public lands.

Our agenda in Washington extends well beyond this issue. Our trip is filled with meetings with high-level officials throughout the Executive Branch, Congress, and federal agencies. We will continue advocating for meaningful reforms that protect responsible access, reduce unnecessary regulatory barriers, and ensure that motorized recreation maintains a secure and permanent place in public land management.

This Executive Order demonstrates what can happen when dedicated organizations, committed volunteers, and engaged citizens work together toward a common goal.

To everyone who submitted comments, signed petitions, contacted elected officials, attended meetings, donated to support advocacy efforts, or simply helped spread the word: thank you.

This accomplishment is my proudest moment to have achieved this win, but the victory belongs to all of you.

The fight for access continues, but yesterday we witnessed a historic step toward restoring balance on America's public lands.

We Fight. We Win. We Ride.

Loren Campbell

President

Utah Public Lands Alliance