

miles of which are designated as motorized recreational trails. It is not the 'acres' of open ORV areas that is important. It is the miles of roads accessible that are important to vehicular recreationists. Most vehicular recreationists do not want unroaded pristine wilderness areas opened up by bulldozing new roads for motorized use. They want existing 'roaded' areas left for 'semi-primitive motorized' recreational use.

Except for some designated "play" areas such as beaches, dunes, etc., ORV use is confined to "existing and designated roadways." Off-road vehicle use involves leaving the paved, improved roads for access to the public lands to hunt, fish, sightsee, or access wilderness and hiking trails. Approximately 60% of vehicular recreationists are family groups using their vehicles to get close to nature.

This dedicated attitude is reflected by vehicular recreationists' willingness to volunteer their time and efforts to protect, improve, and enhance the natural resource areas. In these days of extremely constrained budgets, this becomes a major economic factor for land management agencies. In 1984, 42,000 volunteers working the National Forests accomplished \$15 million worth of work. Much of this work is done by vehicular recreationists. A recent study indicated that more than 156,000 manhours have been donated by vehicular recreationists. In the past 2 years, over 48,000 manhours have been volunteered to programs such as "Adopt-A-Trail" and "Forest Watch." Vehicular recreationists are involved in other volunteer programs such as litter patrols, reforestation, historical restoration, fencing and wildlife habitat improvement.

Vehicular recreationists make up a large portion of the American recreational public. Just because a very few "ORV" recreationists are natural resource *vandals* and *bandits*, disobeying rules, regulations and common sense, does not mean that all

ORV recreationists should be punished and banned from public lands. This would be equivalent to closing all highways because some drivers exceed 55 MPH.

Vehicular recreationists are not opposed to fair regulation and will support 'special registration and fees' within reasonable and logical limits, if the fees are used to further enhance the resources of the ORV use areas. All user groups should be fairly 'taxed' for the use of the recreational areas. Arbitrary regulation and inequitable fee structuring to the detriment of vehicle recreationists to subsidize and favor other recreational groups is unjust.

Local ORV recreational groups are anxious to develop satisfactory and agreeable land management plans and regulations. All it takes is a little cooperative effort on the part of all interested parties. This would reduce the controversy and problems of vehicular recreational use on public lands.

### Cited References and Notes

- Bengson, Stu.** "Recreational Four-Wheeling Use on Public Lands", presented at Outdoors Unlimited Inc. National Symposium "It's Your Land"—Public Land Use is Everybody's Business—Salt Lake City, Utah, Aug. 1985.
- Bengson, Stu.** "Desert Recreational 4-Wheeling", presented at President's Commission on American's Outdoor; Public Hearing, Phoenix, Arizona, Feb. 20, 1986.
- Hastey, Ed.** Comments to President's Commission on America's Outdoors, San Francisco, California. Jan. 1986.
- Sheridan, David, and Allen Carroll.** ORV's on Public Land", CEQ Report. 1979.
- Webb, Robert, and Howard Wilshire.** "Environmental Effects of Off-Road Vehicles", Springer-Verlag, N.Y. 1983.
- "Public Provision of Off-Road Vehicle Areas and Facilities",** Leisure Research Institute, Department of Recreation, Indiana University. Nov. 1982.
- Newsletter,** Colorado BLM. Feb. 1986.
- News Release.** AMC Jeep Corporation. Mar. 1986.

## Viewpoint: Off-Road Vehicle Damage to Public Lands

**Sid Goodloe**

Lack of understanding of the fragility our Western range and forest lands combined with unenforced regulations have resulted in serious damage to our public lands by off-road vehicles (ORVs). In Wyoming alone 75% of the public lands are impacted by ORV use. Anyone who has driven across southern California in the last few years can attest to the numbers of ORV's using public lands there.

There are more than 400 million acres of public lands in the United States. These include watersheds affecting rivers, streams, lakes, and underground water supplies that are vital to all of us. Although legislation guarantees the public a right of access to these priceless lands, the framers of such legislation did not intend, I believe, for **use** to constitute **misuse**.

In the past 30 years, ORV traffic on public lands has gone from almost none at all to overwhelming. While other uses

such as timber and fuel wood harvest, energy exploration, grazing and game harvest have reasonably adequate restrictions, regulations for ORV use on these lands go virtually unenforced.

Over 6 million 4-wheel-drive vehicles were built and sold by American auto makers during the past decade. Many of these vehicles, plus uncounted Japanese 4 × 4's, dirt bikes and three-wheelers, are being driven on public lands causing erosion, asthetic deterioration and wildlife habitat damage.

Despite Executive Order 11644 signed by President Nixon on February 8, 1972, off-road vehicles are basically uncontrolled while using our public lands. This Executive Order requires Federal agencies to develop regulations and procedures for control of ORVs on public lands to minimize resource damage. In 1977, yet another Executive Order (11899) issued by

President Carter gave public land managers the authority to immediately close areas and trails where ORV's were causing considerable adverse effects. We have regulations, but only minimal enforcement by public land managers who are slow to grapple with the problem.

Off-road vehicle users pay no fees for the use of public lands. The current administration, aware of this fee discrepancy, has directed our public land agencies to recover a minimum of 25 percent of the costs to the taxpayer of providing recreation on public lands.

Much has been said about the taxpayer subsidizing the livestock industry because grazing fees on public lands are lower than on private land. Grazing fees are paid, however, and regulations enforced. It seems rather inconsistent that ORV users are paying no fees to use our public lands and at the same time are damaging the resource.

Conservationists, environmentalists, graziers, sportsmen and sportswomen, public land managers, and others express concern over growing ORV use on public lands. They are frustrated in their attempts to halt the environmental destruction that is obviously accelerating. It is not easy to watch a vehicle grind up a muddy hill when you know a gully will appear after the first heavy shower.

Television and other media advertisements create the impression that ORV's are built to conquer any terrain. The only concern evident is the vehicle's ability to perform. No mention is made of using discretion or common sense as to where those vehicles are driven. In Arizona ORV users, stimulated by a nationally broadcast television ad depicting a Nissan truck destroying a ghost town, have begun to search out historical artifacts and archeological remnants for the same treatment. *Arizona Highways* magazine, an official publication of the Arizona Highway Department, has discontinued publishing locations of Arizona's historic mining sites because ORV damage has become a major concern.

Some public lands have deteriorated to a state of accelerated erosion. In most of the Western states, U.S. Forest Service land is generally higher in elevation than private land. Silt from erosion of these lands, in many cases, is deposited on privately owned land. Other areas have been disturbed to the point that vegetative cover is gone, and erosion from wind and water will begin if uncontrolled traffic continues.

Erosion of this magnitude not only depletes the public land but produces silt that affects the habitat of fish and other wildlife, destroys stock and wildlife watering ponds, can clog irrigation systems, and can harm downstream crops and hay lands. Exposed soil increases storm water runoff rates and

contributes to flooding and related damages. Soil erosion is not a local problem; it has widespread and costly consequences, many of which will last for decades—or longer.

In California's Dove Springs Canyon, after 10 years of use, ORV's had denuded 543 acres and heavily damaged another 960 acres. The Panoche Hills area was losing 6,400 tons of soil per square kilometer, 26 times the S.C.S. tolerance level. In the eastern Mojave, tracks made by General Patton's tanks over 40 years ago are still clearly visible, and will be for centuries to come.

Recreation must be managed. Motorized recreationists cannot continue to have license to choose whatever terrain they want to use. Some states have begun to accept the responsibility of protecting their own lands. The state of Washington generally prohibits cross-country ORV or snowmobile traffic on the 5 million acres of state-owned land and provides a special facilities such as abandoned gravel pits and roads paid for by ORV recreationists. Indiana has banned ORV's from all state lands since 1972.

In New Mexico, ORV damage to public lands reached the point where the State Department of Game and Fish, by authority of the State Legislature, is now issuing citations for off-road vehicular traffic on public lands during hunting season. This effort to overcome the lack of enforcement of ORV regulations on public lands has had some beneficial effect, but, without total commitment by the managers of these lands, will do little to solve the problem.

Too few of our Federal land managers are effectively representing the interests of the land, plants, and creatures who live upon it, not to mention those of us concerned with its future.

Roads that are to be used for vehicular travel should be designated by signs and maps, and most other areas should be closed. Ample areas should be designated for ORV recreation so that these users can be accommodated fairly and appropriately. No one, through ignorance or lack of concern, should be allowed to continue to destroy the land that belongs to all of us.

Solutions regarding misuse of ORVs are not complex nor expensive. Education is the key. The public and private sectors must recognize that ORV's destructive effect on our public lands is significant and accelerating. Research is needed to measure current damage levels and plan control measures for the overwhelming numbers of ORV's sure to come. Where appropriate, our Cooperative Extension Service should take the lead in providing the user and the general public with information pertaining to the public lands—ORV issue.

## Soil, Plant Water Conference

An International Conference on Measurement of Soil and Plant Water Status will be held at Logan, Utah, on July 6-10, 1987. Topics to be covered include: soil water content; soil water potential; plant water content; plant water potential and its components; and integration of soil and plant water measurements into water management systems.

This conference is sponsored by Utah State University as part of its Centennial Celebration. For more information contact: R.J. Hanks, Department of Soil Science and Biometology, Utah State University, Logan 84322-4840 -phone

(801) 750-2175.

## Time-controlled Grazing

Time-controlled grazing on the Kiowa and Rita Blanca national grasslands will be examined at a seminar and tour June 19 at Draper Community Center, 7 1/2 miles east of Texline, Texas. Topics include cells in Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico; electric fencing; and principles of holistic resource management. Reservations required prior to June 10. Contact Kiowa National Grassland, 16 No. Second St., Clayton, NM 88415; (505) 374-9652.