



Arizona Coalition of Conservationists

Our Concerns about the Destruction of Public Lands by Off-road Vehicle Recreation

1. **March 2008 Congressional Oversight Hearing** in House of Representatives to investigate the rampant abuse of public lands by off-road vehicles, the proliferation of roads on public lands as a result of off-road vehicle use and the USFS Travel Management Plan as it is being implemented.

Read the hearing testimony:

http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/index.php?option=com_jcalpro&Itemid=58&extmode=view&extid=151

2. **GAO oversight** is needed to investigate the full cost of off-road vehicle recreation on public lands as well as the global warming impacts of motorized recreation authorized by federal agencies.

3. **The intent of limiting ORVs on public lands** is to reduce costs associated with route maintenance, restoring damaged areas, and to protect natural, historical and cultural resources.

4. **Intrusions into Roadless and Wilderness** areas are facilitated when new routes are allowed in these areas or when routes bordering these areas have wide corridors (up to 600') for driving to dispersed camp sites. Off-road vehicle technology is increasing, allowing incursions into areas previously protected by their remote location.

5. **The impacts of off-road vehicles on wildlife and natural resources** are numerous and increasing in intensity. Erosion, habitat destruction, water, air and noise pollution, soil compaction, as well as increased stress on threatened and endangered animal populations all result from off-road vehicle use on our public lands.

6. Every forest has a **backlog of road and trail maintenance** that is impossible to meet given current funding levels. Any addition of routes or trails to our public lands will increase this backlog, increasing the damage to natural resources as well as increasing the risks to the public using unsafe roads.

7. **A survey of USFS and BLM rangers** and managers in the Southwest is available at http://www.peer.org/news/news_id.php?row_id=958. The Rangers for Responsible Recreation campaign has focused on off-road vehicle related crime on public lands. There is a need for stiffer penalties for crime related to off-road vehicles as well as an increased law enforcement presence on public lands, focused on environmental resource violations.

8. **Media attention** is needed to counteract the effective advertising campaign off-road vehicle advocates and organizations have utilized to encourage off-road travel on public lands. We all have a right to use our public lands, but none has a right to abuse them.

9. **Regional Guidance** allows for exceptions to the ban on motorized cross-country travel for driving to dispersed camping sites and game retrieval. The result? Some forests in Arizona are banning driving off-road to retrieve game while adjacent forests are allowing it for up to one mile; some forests allow driving to camp sites for up to 300' off the road, some don't allow it at all. The need? Regional consistency to allow for better public understanding of the rules, better enforcement, better protection of natural resources.

10. **Agencies need guidance** to ensure the process moves through the NEPA process appropriately. One example of a process gone awry is the Apache-Sitgreaves. The public must be given a way to participate in the process that is clear and fair. The public also has a right to the information the Forest Service is using to make its decisions before the public meetings on these decisions are held.