

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. Why is this news? There have been a number of past reports of ORVs disrupting hunting and fishing and damaging lands?

From what we can tell, this is the first of its kind survey to determine the views of wildlife and fishery managers across the country. This is the first time an organization has compiled data in this way in a comprehensive manner.

In addition, on the eve of hunting season, we felt it was critical that we educate the public now about this growing, reckless behavior occurring on our lands, before we go through another season witnessing more irresponsible behavior. We also felt this was an important time to raise awareness in Congress about the need for common sense steps to address this problem.

2. What states did you survey?

That information is confidential, but I can tell you that the survey, which was conducted in July and August of 2007, contacted each of the 50 state wildlife managers and each of the 50 state fisheries managers. I can also tell you that a total of 34 agencies, representing 27 different states from all regions of the country responded to the survey.

3. ORV user groups say it's just a small minority of riders who are causing all of the problems.

Whether it is a minority has been debated for a long time. There are nine million off-road vehicles in the country today and a million sold annually – so even a very small minority is hundreds of thousands of riders. What is certain is that the reckless behavior is impacting the MAJORITY of everyone else, including responsible riders. And the damage to the backcountry, the burden on law enforcement and dangers to children has reached crisis stage.

4. ORV users argue that the reason we have so many law enforcement problems with ORVs is because there are less and less places to ride. How would you respond?

Nonsense. There are more than 313,000 miles of inventoried roads and trails open to motorized vehicles in the national forests ALONE – that's enough to ride around the earth 12 times and is twice as many miles as the National Highway System.

5. Some say we will never be able to have enough law enforcement personnel to adequately patrol our public lands. What is your view?

Because the problem is tough and challenging isn't a reason not to work on it. Right now, we have no meaningful deterrence. We have no idea what even a little deterrence would

do. We need for Congress to conduct oversight hearings to see how concentrated the problem is, identify violation hotspots and direct law enforcement there.

The problem is so bad, people are starting to take matters into their own hands. For example, hunters from Oregon and other states have established rewards and hotlines to report reckless riding. That is why we want to work with Congress to solve this problem in a common sense and affordable way.

6. ORV users also say peer-to-peer enforcement is the most effective way to address this issue. What do you think about this approach?

Peer-to-peer enforcement is a critical component but the problem is clearly out of control and we need the government's help. Riding accounts for about 10% of all visits to lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management but reckless riding accounted for nearly 50% of all law enforcement incidents recorded by the agency.

7. Some have made the argument that it is not the fault of the ORV community, but the land agencies that have not made this issue a priority. How would you respond to this?

We should be looking for ways to help the men and women of our public lands agencies get the support they need, not blaming them for the reckless behavior of some off-roaders.

8. ORV users say other users of public lands like hikers and mountain bikers cause just as much damage and that they are being singled out. How do you respond to this?

To try and equate the damage caused from a 600-pound plus motorized machine blazing a new trail to a hiker or a mountain biker is crazy. The only people who should be singled out are the reckless riders who are ruining the fun for the rest of use and causing a public backlash to riding in general.

9. ORVers already pay to improve public lands through state registration fees and our federal gas taxes – i.e. the Recreation Trails Program. How do you respond to this?

Some states have registration programs that the ORV industry has turned into private slush funds used to build more trails and make current problems worse. The funds are not used to address the COSTS associated with reckless off-roading like enforcement and restoration. The same is true for the national trails program. Besides, ORVs only account for a small percentage of off-road vehicle fuel use in the country – the majority of the fuel use comes from light trucks.

10. ORVers are said to provide a huge boost to local economies, providing jobs and needed revenue.

We think responsible ORV riding on designated routes should be allowed and encouraged – both for outdoor enjoyment and for local economies. But riders are not the only outdoor recreationalists who contribute to local economies. A recent Forest Service study found that the average off-road vehicle rider spends less on a typical visit than backpackers, hunters, fishermen and skiers. Moreover, the costs associated with reckless riding are astronomical, including damage to the land, increased law enforcement burden, destruction of private property, noise, and medical treatment due to the growing number of hospitalizations.

11. Education and outreach is cited as one solution to this problem. ORV clubs say they do a lot of community service and restoration work, and benefit their local communities. How would you respond?

The restoration work that community groups is necessary, but the overall problem is beyond their or any other individual group's control – that is why we need our elected officials in Congress to address it.

12. A group called Rangers for Responsible Recreation released FOIA data from land management agencies a few months ago showing the impact of ORVs on public lands. Are you working with them?

Currently we are not, but we are aware of their work. There are a whole host of groups working on this issue, from rangers to conservation groups to other sportsmen groups.