

IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA NEWS RELEASE

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On Eve of Hunting Season, New Survey Shows State Fish and Wildlife Managers Across the Country Cite Negative Impacts on Hunting, Fishing from Off-Road Vehicles, Strong Support for More Enforcement to Protect Hunting and Fishing

Results Supported by Sportsmen Who Use ORVs Responsibly

ST. PAUL, MN – The Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA) today released a new survey of managers of state fisheries and wildlife agencies from around the nation, which clearly shows negative impacts on hunting and fishing from various types of off-road vehicles (ORVs). Furthermore, these agency managers strongly indicated that more enforcement of standards is needed to protect hunting and fishing from ORV impacts.

The survey, conducted in July and August of 2007, contacted each of the 50 state wildlife managers and each of the 50 state fisheries managers. A total of 34 agencies, representing 27 different states, responded to the survey.

The survey is part of a broader IWLA report, “[Collision Course? Off-Road Vehicle Impacts on Hunting and Fishing](#),” which was also released today.

“Off-road vehicles are important to many people’s lifestyles both for work and recreation, including many Izaak Walton League members who ride them responsibly everyday in states across the country. However, our survey of agency managers clearly indicates a reckless contingent of riders is harming fish and wildlife habitat and ruining hunting and fishing experiences for many people,” said Kevin Proescholdt, Director of IWLA’s Wilderness and Public Lands Program and the conductor of the study. “Our survey also points to the need for more enforcement to protect hunting and fishing – that is why we call on Congress to thoroughly investigate this growing problem.”

Among the key findings of the survey are:

- 83% of wildlife managers say that they have seen “resource damage to wildlife habitat” caused by ORVs, following closely behind by 72% who cited “disruption of hunters during hunting season” as another impact from ORVs.
- 61.1% of surveyed wildlife program managers agreed or strongly agreed that “ORVs negatively impact hunting and habitat in my state,” while 0% disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement.

- A total of 57.2% of state fisheries managers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that “ORVs negatively impact fishing and fishing habitat in my state.” Only 7.1% of survey respondents disagreed with that statement.
- A majority (53.3%) of state fisheries managers surveyed believe that existing standards do not adequately protect fishing from ORV impacts.
- A plurality (47.1%) of wildlife managers surveyed believe that existing standards and protections in their states do not adequately protect hunting from harmful ORV impacts.

“Significant damage to sensitive fish and wildlife habitats from reckless and irresponsible ORV users has united anglers, hunters and wildlife groups in calling for better management of ORV’s on public lands,” said Brad Powell, Trout Unlimited Public Lands Coordinator in Arizona. “A coalition of six wildlife groups, including many active ORV users in Arizona, recently requested that the U.S Forest Service and State Department of Game and Fish end cross country travel ORV’s and protect significant Fish and Wildlife habitats to prevent the destruction of this precious resource.”

IWLA believes this problem can be headed off by developing affordable, common-sense solutions that keep use of the outdoors responsible and safe for riders, sportsmen and others. In order to arrive at these solutions, IWLA calls on Congress to:

- 1) Conduct thorough oversight of current U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management efforts to designate and manage ORV routes and enforce lawlessness that is occurring as a result of reckless riding;
- 2) Assess if these agencies have what they need administratively and financially for enforcement, implementation and restoring and repairing past damage to public lands; and,
- 3) Determine if current rules, standards, and penalties serve as effective deterrents to reckless riding.

“There is a growing backlash in rural areas to reckless riding - even among responsible riders - that we believe will unfortunately only grow over time. We want to work with agency managers and Congress to prevent this from happening,” said Proescholdt.

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