



RANGERS FOR RESPONSIBLE RECREATION

A project of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER.org)

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April 17, 2008

Mr. James Connaughton
Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place, NW, Washington DC 20503

Mr. James Caswell
Director of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management
1849 C Street, NW, Washington DC 20240

Ms. Abigail Kimbell
Chief of the U.S. Forest Service
Sidney R. Yates Building
201 14th Street, NW, Washington DC 20250

Ms. Mary Bomar
Director of the National Park Service
1849 C Street, NW, Washington DC 20240

Mr. Dale Hall
Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW, Washington DC 20240

RE: Implementing Executive Order 13443

Rangers for Responsible Recreation (Rangers) is a network of America's most seasoned law enforcement and natural resource management specialists from every major public lands agency and several administrations working to end irresponsible off-road vehicle (ORV) use on US public lands. Many Rangers are themselves hunters and anglers, several are also ORV owners and all enjoy recreation on our public lands.

It is in that spirit that we call on you to begin implementation of the President's August 16, 2007 Executive Order (13443) with a priority on ending and mitigating the harm caused to hunting and fishing opportunities from illegal and reckless off-road vehicle use on national public lands.

A problem you must address is even when route/travel designation is done, often ORV harm to hunting, fishing and wildlife is largely overlooked, meaning impacts to hunting & fishing will be profound through these plans even if all off-roaders obeyed all the rules, which they won't.

As you are no doubt aware, there is a mounting body of evidence of the increasing conflict between irresponsible off-roading and hunting & fishing on public lands. A recent national survey of state wildlife managers from 34 agencies in 27 states by the pro-hunting & fishing Izaak Walton League of America found that:

- 61% of state wildlife managers agreed or strongly agreed ORVs negatively impacted hunting, fishing and habitat in their state;

- 83% reported ORV-caused resource damage to wildlife habitat;
- 72% reported ORV-caused disruption of hunters during hunting season;
- 61% reported ORV-caused disruption of game species during hunting season;
- 60% reported ORV-caused negative impacts to fishing and fishing habitat;
- 67% reported ORV-caused erosion and siltation in to lakes and streams.

These responses from state fish and game managers parallel the perceptions of resource managers and law enforcement officers on our federal lands. In 2007, the Rangers polled Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) rangers and land mangers in the five-state Southwest region. These survey results reinforce the fact that the negative effects of ORV on the ground are extremely serious and worsening:

- 91% agreed that “off-road vehicles present a significant law enforcement problem in my jurisdiction”;
- 53% said “off-road vehicle problems in my jurisdiction are out of control”; and
- 74% felt that off-road abuses “are worse than they were five years ago.”

We have had countless direct experiences of ORV-abuse damaging hunting and fishing opportunities.

- ORV noise and disturbance contributes to displacement of some species, such as elk, to areas where they are less accessible to hunters. (Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife , and Parks, Wildlife Division, *Montana Statewide Elk Management Plan*, at 132, 190, 197 (2004)
- Hunter complaints, combined with the damage to the environment and wildlife caused by ORVs, have prompted many state agencies to take action against ORV use by imposing severe restrictions on ORV accessible areas, and in some jurisdictions, there has been discussion on banning ORV use entirely. (Alaska Board of Game, *Spring 2008 Proposal Book, Interior Region*, at 28 (2007); Karissa Neely, *Ceder Hills ponders OHV ban*, Utah Daily Herald, Dec. 6, 2007
- ‘The department frequently receives complaints from hunters and other recreationists about disruption of their outdoor experiences by drivers of off-road vehicles who often seem oblivious to the effects of their machines on other outdoors users, (Jim) Harken (of Arizona Game & Fish) said.’ “From the game and fish perspective, our biggest concern is the damage to wildlife habitat,” he said. “We do have lots of hunters giving us anecdotes. We hear about that all the time.” (Lake Powell Chronicle, Apr. 9, 2008)
- In January 2006, the Arizona Dept. of Game & Fish released the results of a broad statewide survey of Arizona hunters, where 54% said ‘ORV disruption’ was a major ‘barrier’ to their ability to hunt.

It is clear reckless and poorly-managed ORV use is harming hunting and fishing opportunities in America. Simply ask any Ranger.

Executive Order 13443 speaks precisely to these issues which we raise. The President's Order provides, in relevant part, that:

“The purpose of this order is to direct Federal agencies...to facilitate the expansion and enhancement of hunting opportunities and the management of game species and their habitat.

Federal agencies shall, consistent with agency missions:

Evaluate the effect of agency actions on trends in hunting participation and, where appropriate to address declining trends, implement actions that expand and enhance hunting opportunities for the public...

Manage wildlife and wildlife habitats on public lands in a manner that expands and enhances hunting opportunities, including through the use of hunting in wildlife management planning...”

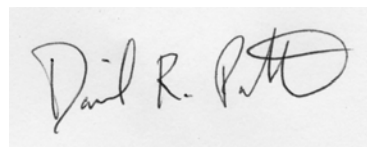
The EO also directs the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality to convene a White House Conference on North American Wildlife Policy to consider how to implement this order by August 16, 2008.

To that end, the Rangers for Responsible Recreation request –

1. Federal land management agencies in both the Interior and Agriculture departments prepare proposed plans for minimizing the effects of ORV-abuse on hunting and fishing within their jurisdictions and to present these plans to the public at the initial meeting of the White House Conference on North American Wildlife Policy;
2. These federal land management agencies begin immediately to evaluate whether current or proposed ORV route systems appropriate access, not excess, in a manner which facilitates “the expansion and enhancement of hunting opportunities and the management of game species and their habitat” (in the words of EO 13443);
3. These federal land management agencies evaluate their penalty and fine structures and practices in order to assess whether ORV-abuse which negatively impacts hunting and fishing is either deterred or remedied;
4. The Council on Environmental Quality review the law enforcement budget and staffing for applicable federal land management agencies relative to ORV offenses in order to determine whether these agencies have adequate resources to meet the intent of EO 13443; and
5. That Rangers for Responsible Recreation be invited to fully participate in the White House Conference on North American Wildlife Policy.

Please provide us with a response by May 9, 2008. Thank you.

Daniel R. Patterson, Director, Rangers for Responsible Recreation; AZ licensed hunter

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel R. Patterson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "P" at the end.