

# Committee on Resources

## Subcommittee on Forests & Forest Health

### Statement

---

My name is Danny Hottinger. I am 34 years old and I live in Russellville, Arkansas. I have been hearing from various people about the possibilities of roads being closed in the area that my family and I have camped and hunted for years. I thought this was probably just rumors and nothing to be concerned about. I didn't think any one could close the roads that I always thought belonged to the public. But here we are today having a hearing on that very thing.

When I found out I would get a chance to testify I was excited and very nervous. I knew there would be people depending on me to tell you why roads in the National Forest should not be closed. I know many people that spend close to half of their lives camping and hunting in these areas. They have also grown up enjoying the outdoors and I can not understand why any one would want to take this away from so many people.

I am going to tell you a little bit about myself. As you can tell I am disabled. I was in a swimming accident 13 years ago. This left me a quadriplegic for quite some time. After several months I started getting some return back. After a few years I ended up with partial use of my left side. My right side is still paralyzed. I can walk with the aid of an arm crutch and a leg brace as long as I am on a level surface with nothing in my way, and even then it is hard to do. So if I leave home I usually use my wheelchair. that is, unless I am going hunting or camping, then a wheelchair would not get me very far, so I take my 4-wheeler.

I was an avid hunter before my accident. Afterwards, I was very depressed for some time until I found that with the help of my 4-wheeler I could still do a few of the things I used to do. Now there is a chance that I may not be able to enjoy that. All my life I have hunted and camped in these areas. My father and my grandfather enjoyed these areas when they were growing up. Now I have been raising my son to enjoy and appreciate the outdoors and my brother has done the same with his two sons.

I received a letter asking me for professional licenses, certifications, elected positions, etc, that would relate to my qualifications to testify. I do not have any of these credentials you have asked me for.

I consider myself qualified to testify because I have spent so much of my life in the National Forest while hunting and camping. I have probably spent more time there than a lot of the people that are trying to close the roads.

I am speaking not only for myself but many others that are disabled that enjoy the outdoors. If it were not for my 4-wheeler there is no way I could even attempt to hunt or do many other things I enjoy. If I had a choice to walk to my deer stand or ride a 4-wheeler I would definitely walk. If any of you have ever been hunting you know that a noisy 4-wheeler will run animals off quick. But I do not have a choice.

Over the years I have learned to live with my disability just like so many other people have learned to live with theirs. But now it may be impossible to do one of the few things we enjoy so much. Without the full use of these roads, many others and I would stand to lose a lot. Even if the roads were open to disabled

people (with motorized vehicles) most of us still have to have help. We can not go out alone.

The roads in our camping area (Piney Creek) have never been maintained with the exception of the main dirt road leading in the it. That road is only graded once every year or two the best I can tell. A lot of people like it this way. There is very little traffic and it is very peaceful and secluded. It is not like the camping grounds with all the hook-ups and all the people that are crowded into one big area. That is what we like to get away from.

In my opinion any one that has never been in the National Forest to camp, hike, hunt or just to go swimming for the day has no qualifications to make a decision on this. You would have no idea how much enjoyment people get out of doing these very things. Especially the people who were raised in these areas.

Please take this into consideration before you make any decisions because the decision that is made could deeply affect many people, our generation and the next generation and so on. I trust that you will make the right decision. Thank you for letting me speak today.

Thank you,

Danny Ray Hottinger

# # #