



**MOTORCYCLE
INDUSTRY
COUNCIL**



Testimony of Duane Taylor, Director, Safe and Responsible Use Programs

House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Field Hearing on Improving Access and Opportunities for Hunting, Fishing, and Outdoor Recreation on America's Federal Lands

May 13, 2024

Chairman Tiffany and Members of the Subcommittee - On behalf of the Motorcycle Industry Council¹ (MIC), Specialty Vehicle Institute of America² (SVIA), and Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association³ (ROHVA) – together referenced as the Associations, I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony relevant to Improving Access and Opportunities for Hunting, Fishing, and Outdoor Recreation on America's Federal Lands.

The Associations have a long-standing interest in the protection of the values and natural resources found on public lands, including Forest Service lands, and we regularly work with land managers to provide recreation opportunities, sustain resources, and promote cooperation between public land visitors. The Associations also prioritize educating enthusiasts and the public about responsible off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation, including practicing Tread Lightly principals, wearing appropriate safety gear, and avoiding the on-road use of vehicles designed solely for off-highway use.

To open - The Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act is clear. It states (emphasis added):

...it is the policy of the Congress that the national forests are established and *shall* be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and

¹ The Motorcycle Industry Council (MIC) is a not-for-profit, national trade association representing several hundred manufacturers, distributors, dealers and retailers of motorcycles, scooters, motorcycle parts, accessories and related goods, and allied trades.

² The Specialty Vehicle Institute of America (SVIA) is the national not-for-profit trade association representing manufacturers, dealers, and distributors of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) in the United States. SVIA's primary goal is to promote safe and responsible use of ATVs.

³ The Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association (ROHVA) is a national, not-for-profit trade association formed to promote the safe and responsible use of recreational off-highway vehicles (ROVs – sometimes referred to as side-by-sides or UTVs) manufactured or distributed in North America. ROHVA is also accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) to serve as the Standards Developing Organization for ROVs. More information on the standard can be found at <https://rohva.org/ansi-standard/>.

fish purposes.

As a result, the Forest Service should implement its multiple use mission by ensuring that any policies it develops including managing for climate resilience and wildfire mitigation, integrate recreation and find ways to utilize the conservation ethic inherent in recreational activities to help the Forest Service meet its ecological, social, and economic goals.

There is no question recreation on Forest Service lands are in high demand and result in significant economic impact to the communities in which they are located The Forest Service's National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey Results state:

Outdoor recreation is the most popular activity supported by America's public lands. National forests average 150 million visits annually that contribute more than \$11 billion to the economy.

As for off-highway vehicle recreation - The powersports industry (motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and recreational off highway vehicles (ROVs or side-by-sides)) are a \$47.7 billion/year industry in the United States with a significant number of the vehicles being utilized off-road. This includes dual sport and adventure motorcycles which are the quickest growing segment of motorcycle sales in the U.S. As a result, the Associations strongly support ensuring sustainable off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation opportunities continue to be available on our public lands including National Forests as appropriate.

The Forest Service continues pushing new proposed rules, Environmental Impact Statements, and other regulations in accordance with its Climate Adaptation Plan, Wildfire Crisis Strategy and other plans and strategies. This concerns us as these strategies often ignore recreation, or worse yet, establish that providing for recreation is adversarial to other priorities, which is simply not the case. Consider this from the Climate Adaptation Plan (emphases added):

Climate change will affect the ability of the Nation's forests and grasslands to furnish important services to the public, including clean water and air, carbon storage and uptake, timber and nontimber forest products, productive grazing land, and recreation opportunities. These benefits may be lost or altered due to changes in wildfire, extreme events, and chronic stresses on watersheds and ecosystems.

It is important to note that recreation and other multiple uses are referred to as "benefits." This is just not accurate. Again, the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act established National Forests to provide for recreation and other multiple uses.

We assert that recreation can *help* the Forest Service become more resilient and able to respond to climate change and prepare for and mitigate wildfires. We urge the Forest Service to develop strategies that recognize recreation and other multiple uses are not distractions that must be provided for in some de minimis way. Instead, any new plans or proposed rules must carefully consider how recreation and recreationists can be preserved as assets to managing for resilience.

We encourage the Forest Service to follow the lead of the Federal Highway Administration which has already recognized the role that trails can play in helping to manage for resilience. We refer the Forest Service and other land management agencies to FHWA's 2023 [*Trails as Resilient Infrastructure*](#) guidebook:

This guidebook (“the Guide”) demonstrates how trails are part of resilient transportation infrastructure, how trails can be planned and designed to be resilient and sustainable, and how trails have a role in emergency planning and response. Trails of all kinds are places for recreation, exercise, and time outside. Trails are used for active transportation, whether for daily commuting or errand running, and also during unique events or emergencies. Trails are also a crucial tool for making communities more resilient in the face of climate change and other emergencies. This guidebook examines the ways in which trails can be made more resilient and how trails can serve as resilient infrastructure, providing information and guidance in support of these goals.

Trails as Resilient Infrastructure recognizes that trails (and by extension recreation) can, with proper research, benefit resilience, provide tools to respond to weather and fire events, and can be designed in such a way to mitigate impacts from climate change. We submit that this is where the Forest Service should start any rulemaking, policy, or guidance.

Trails as Resilient Infrastructure also includes a case study on the utility of OHV trails during a natural disaster:

In 2011 Tropical Storm Irene caused floods that damaged roadway bridges throughout Vermont. Residents used ATVs on trails to move people and supplies to and from isolated communities. Following the initial response effort, local officials decided to create trails more accommodating of ATV use to support future disaster response needs.

I would also like to note that *Trails as Resilient Infrastructure* highlights the Prison Hill Recreation Area in Carson City, Nevada. At the time, I served as Executive Director of the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council which led efforts to improve Prison Hill.

The Prison Hill Recreation Area was conveyed to Carson City by the Bureau of Land Management in 2015. NOHVCC was subsequently contracted to improve recreational opportunities while mitigating impacts from climate change and wildfires. NOHVCC's efforts were a huge success. *Trails as Resilient Infrastructure* notes:

A 100-year rain event in November 2021 tested the trails' design, with successful results. Culverts and trail grading improvements allowed the trail tread to shed water rather than convey it and contribute to erosion. Trails have been used to respond to wildland fires, including an incident where water was air dropped by helicopter directly onto a trail. The trail design and infrastructure performed well under the heavy load of water. Trails have also been used for search and rescue along the Carson River.

These are exactly the type of combined responses (using a recreational opportunity to address a broader resource issue) that should be inherent in the Forest Service's decision-making processes.

Finally, the Associations would like to call attention to recreationists who serve as volunteers helping in any number of ways with resilience and recovery. For example, we highlight the Post Wildfire OHV Recovery Alliance (PWORA), a national organization founded to protect and restore sustainable OHV recreation from the devastating effects of intense wildfires and other natural disasters. PWORA collaborates with a diverse array of multi-interest strategic partners to mobilize volunteers and deploy resources to mitigate post-disaster impacts to recreation areas. Any Forest Service rulemakings and strategies should include continued opportunities for motorized volunteers to help the USFS meet resilience and recovery goals.

Thank you for your consideration.