

MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL USE ON PUBLIC LANDS

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT HEARING

July 13, 2005

1324 Longworth House Office Building

Testimony Submittal

by

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TEXT OF VERBAL TESTIMONY BY:

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I. INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon – my name is Roy Denner. I am the President and CEO of the Off-Road Business Association – a national non-profit trade association promoting the motorized off-highway vehicle recreation industry. As Co-Chairman of the National Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Summit, taking place in Washington at this time, I am speaking today on behalf of motorized off-highway recreation groups from across the country – many of whom are represented here today.

II. ECONOMIC BOOST FROM MOTORIZED RECREATION

Many of our representatives in Washington are unaware of the economic importance of motorized off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation on public lands throughout the U.S. – particularly in the western states.

A study of the economic impact of OHV recreation in California completed in 1993 showed the contribution to the California economy at that time to be over \$3billion – with a “b.” Since that time the off-road recreation enthusiasts have increased enormously and the price of the off-road vehicles has escalated drastically. Current economic contribution estimates are in the \$9 to \$10 billion range.

A 2002 study in Arizona showed that Off-Highway Vehicle recreation for that year “Created a statewide economic impact of \$4.25 billion and supported 36,951 jobs.”

The Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Tennessee reports that the “Economic Impact of Off-Highway Vehicles is a \$3.4 Billion Industry.”

The Institute for New Hampshire Studies, Plymouth State University, reports that “the impact of spending by ATV/Trailbike travel parties on New Hampshire’s Economy during July 2002 to June 2003 was approximately \$318 million.”

These figures are representative of the dollars spent by OHV enthusiasts across the United States. Copies of the referenced reports are included with the written testimony submitted for this hearing.

Unfortunately – in spite of the power of this huge economic engine – motorized recreation on public lands has always taken a back seat to issues that are perceived to be more important. Congress always seems to be able to find funding to create National Monuments, buy up wilderness areas, and support the extensive requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). I don't know of any new motorized recreation areas that have been opened in recent history on public lands anywhere in the U.S. In fact, expenditures on the other issues inevitably leads to the loss of motorized recreation opportunities. As the number of OHV enthusiasts in this country continues to grow and the economic engine gets bigger and bigger, motorized recreationists on public lands are forced into smaller and smaller areas. What ever happened to the age-old economic principle of supply and demand? It seems that the federal government does not recognize the need to follow good economic rules.

III. IMPACT OF ESA ON MOTORIZED RECREATION

Since the introduction of the Endangered Species Act, millions of acres of public lands have been closed to motorized vehicle access in this country. Nothing has been done by Congress to mitigate this loss of motorized recreation opportunities.

At the same time, since the ESA was introduced 30 years ago, hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent by the federal government to protect species that have been listed as “endangered” or “threatened” under the ESA. Millions more have been spent on species considered “species of concern” or “special status species” to presumably prevent them from becoming listed. Many actions have been taken with little or no proven scientific data to support those actions. Millions of acres of public land suspected to be habitat for various species have been closed to vehicle access on those suspicions. During the reign of the ESA control, some 1300 species have been listed under the Act. Only 10 of those have ever been removed from the list and, in many cases, they were removed because the data originally used to list them was found to be faulty.

A few examples:

The Mojave Desert Tortoise: A recent GAO report stated that over \$100 million has been spent on efforts to protect the Desert Tortoise – mostly to close public lands to vehicle access. The report indicates that there is no evidence that actions taken to save the tortoise under the requirements of the ESA can be shown to have “saved” a single tortoise.

While federal agencies are busy closing public lands to vehicle access, tortoises are dying rapidly from an upper respiratory tract disease and baby tortoises are being gobbled up by ravens. Since the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan was developed 10 years ago, millions of dollars have been spent to close federal lands to vehicle access and almost nothing has been spent on disease problems or raven predation.

The Delhi Sands Flower-Loving Fly: This is a fly that lives underground 9 months out of the year. It surfaces for 3 months to breed then returns underground.

Badly needed freeway interchanges in severely congested areas in Southern California have been held up for several years because they will disturb suspected fly habitat.

A community hospital under construction had to be stopped and moved to a different location when a fly was found at the construction site.

Peirson MilkVetch Plant: More than half of what may be the most popular federal motorized off-highway vehicle recreation area in the universe has been closed for years because of a plant called the “Peirson MilkVetch” plant. Some federal biologists believe that this plant is endemic to the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA) in Southern California. No studies had been done to analyze this plant prior to its listing.

The communities of El Centro and Brawley in California, as well as Yuma, Arizona enjoy a huge boost to their economies from out-of-town off-road enthusiasts visiting the ISDRA. Constant attacks by anti-motorized-recreation groups attempt to close the area to vehicle use permanently. Lawsuits by these groups led to the existing closures and threats of more lawsuits have federal agencies jumping through hoops to satisfy their demands. Monitoring studies costing almost \$1 million each year are being conducted to evaluate the status of the MilkVetch and other “species of concern.” At the same time the total appropriated budget to this area that sees over a million visitors each year is only \$200,000. Almost no funding is available to improve the facilities at this recreation area in spite of the fact that the visitation grows significantly every year.

For the past five years, Southern California off-highway vehicle recreation groups have been funding annual studies of the Peirson MilkVetch by an independent biological firm. Those studies show that the plant is thriving in spite of vehicle activity and there are indications that the vehicles may actually help spread the seeds. This is an example showing a case where local recreation groups took the bull by the horns and funded an independent study to provide good science upon which future decisions can be made. Without that action it is very likely that the ISDRA would be another victim of closure of public lands to vehicle access to protect a species that is thriving. By the way, the same anti-access groups have petitioned USFWS to list 16 new species that they say only live at the ISDRA.

Western Snowy Plover: Oceano Dunes – the last California Beach area where motorized off-highway vehicle recreation is allowed - was once a large popular recreation site. Federal biologists have been convinced that the Western Snowy Plover – a unique species – lives only at Oceano Dunes. Over the years, the popular motorized recreation site has seen continuous closures to protect this

Plover. Now, only 3 miles of beach remain open to vehicle access in the entire State of California.

A well-known geneticist with the Denver Museum testified that the Pacific Coast population of the Snowy Plover is not “distinct” from the inland population – which can be found in the tens of thousands. Furthermore, a similar sized population exists in Mexico.

This is just another example of how motorized recreation on public lands has been readily sacrificed to accommodate the extreme provisions of the Endangered Species Act without relying on good proven scientific data to support decisions to close public lands to vehicle access.

IV. CONCLUSION

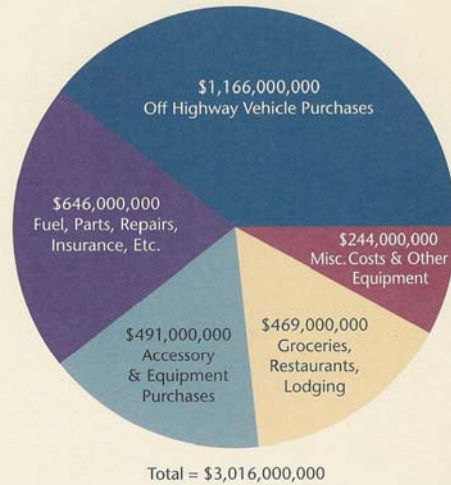
My testimony today is intended to call attention to a very out-of-balance situation that exists in our country. Private enterprise has always been the backbone of the success of this country as a nation – until the ESA. Now, many industries involved with the use of public lands – in addition to the motorized off-highway recreation industry – are being stifled by unreasonable, overbearing, illogical mandates placed on them by laws like the Endangered Species Act. I believe that every conscientious person agrees that significant endangered species need to be protected. But – does that include flies, ants, beetles and weeds that are used to shut down access to public lands for family oriented recreation? I invite everyone participating in this hearing to take a closer look at the positive family-oriented aspects associated with motorized off-highway vehicle recreation on our country’s public lands. Try it – You Might Like It!

Economic Impact

Annual Economic Impact of OHV Recreation in California: \$3,049,000,000

Until the first comprehensive statewide economic survey was commissioned in 1993, the economic impact of OHV recreation in California was unknown. The 1993 survey, prepared by Sacramento State University's Institute for Social Research, documented that OHV recreation annually generates more than \$3 billion in economic activity statewide. The survey also found that OHV recreation generates roughly \$1.6 billion in personal income and affects 43,000 jobs within California.

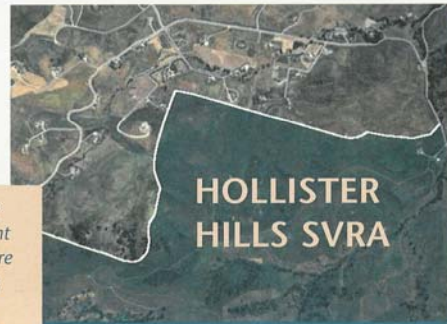
ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OHV RECREATION



Urbanization Trends

According to the American Farmland Trust, urbanization claims approximately two acres of farmland per minute in the United States. California is currently the second most urbanized state in the nation. As development progresses, many rural OHV areas are struggling to hold the line against urban encroachment. Likewise, as local communities struggle to maintain their open space, state, local, and federal OHV recreation areas provide managed park areas and open space near these communities for the enjoyment of OHV enthusiasts and the general public.

Hollister Hills SVRA is located in San Benito County, the fastest growing county in California. Nearly 24 percent of the SVRA's 6,627 acres are closed to OHV use, yet are open to non-motorized forms of recreation, including mountain biking and day hiking. The SVRA provides a buffer to development, which is beginning to occur along its periphery, as shown in this aerial photograph.



ACCORDING TO THE AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST, URBANIZATION CLAIMS APPROXIMATELY TWO ACRES OF FARMLAND PER MINUTE IN THE UNITED STATES WHICH HAS RESULTED IN INCREASED URBAN INTERFACE OHV CONFLICTS.

California OHV Recreation: \$3 Billion a Year Business from Users Alone

In California, Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) recreation is big business. Expenditures of OHV users for equipment, activities and events in 1992 generated about \$3 billion in

When economic multipliers² were factored in, another \$1.6 billion in personal income was generated statewide.

"This is particularly impressive," says OHMVR's Deputy Director Gerald J. Johnson, "when you consider that OHV activity is totally funded by OHV users. No money comes from the state's general fund."

OHMVR, with a budget of approximately \$25 million annually, provides the foundation for this \$3 billion recreation industry.

Users themselves raise funds to support their pleasures through taxes paid on fuel that is consumed off-highways for recreation, and

"...This is particularly impressive when you consider that...no money comes from the state's general fund"

economic activity statewide, and supported 43,000 jobs. Users spent an estimated \$1.2 billion directly through the purchase of vehicles and equipment and through money spent on trips, entrance fees, permits, gas, food, lodging and souvenirs. These figures are findings from user surveys made during Fiscal 1992 to 1993.

²**ECONOMIC MULTIPLIERS:** In addition to a direct economic impact, visitor expenditures have a secondary economic impact in the community when the money is re-spent locally. The level of secondary impact is measured by a factor called an "economic multiplier". The total economic impact on a community's economy is the sum of the original spending combined with the effects of the secondary economic activity. For more about "economic multipliers" used in OHV surveys, see page 20.

Economic Impacts At A Glance: (Table I)

Economic Impacts of Expenditures for OHV-related Equipment, Activities and Events in 1992. From User Surveys.

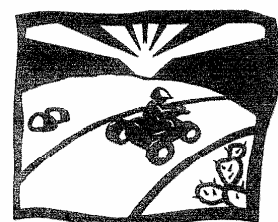
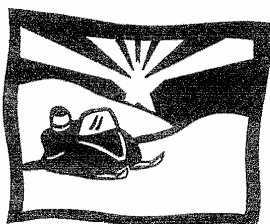
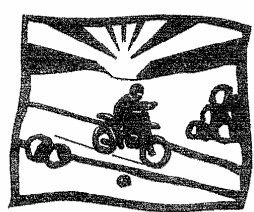
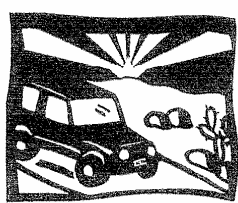
	Estimated Recreation-Use Expenditures	Output Multipliers	Income Multiplier	% of Total	Employment Multiplier
Off-Highway Vehicle Purchases	\$450,559,000	\$1,165,861,000	\$652,848,000	38%	17,054
Accessories & Equipment	198,653,000	491,042,000	270,616,000	17%	6,843
Operations	138,214,000	339,651,000	187,430,000	12%	4,730
Services	80,221,000	210,684,000	103,982,000	6%	2,383
Government	40,204,000	95,514,000	45,347,000	4%	1,102
Trips & Events	176,071,000	468,992,000	255,069,000	15%	7,161
Misc. Equipment	83,173,000	230,879,000	127,685,000	7%	3,594
Misc. Costs	12,298,000	13,189,000	8,037,000	1%	149
<u>TOTAL</u>	\$1,179,394,000	\$3,015,812,000	\$1,651,015,000	100%	43,000

ARIZONA

Off-highway vehicle recreation activity is an immensely powerful part of the Arizona collective economic fabric, generating nearly \$3 billion in retail sales during 2002. While this spending figure is impressive it becomes even more so through consideration of 'ripple' or multiplier effects. Each dollar spent by an individual engaged in off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation increases another person's income, enabling that person (or business) to spend more, which in turn increases income for someone else. The process continues to circulate throughout the economy until it is dissipated through 'leakages' in the form of savings or payments for goods and services from outside the local economy. In the end, the cumulative changes in spending, incomes and employment are a multiple of the initial retail sales spending.

The impact of the nearly \$3 billion in spending by Off-highway Vehicle recreation in Arizona during 2002 was shown to have:

➤ Created a statewide economic impact of \$ 4.25 billion.
➤ Supported 36,951 jobs in Arizona.
➤ Created household income (salaries and wages) for Arizona residents totaling \$1.1 billion.
➤ Added \$187 million to annual state tax revenues.



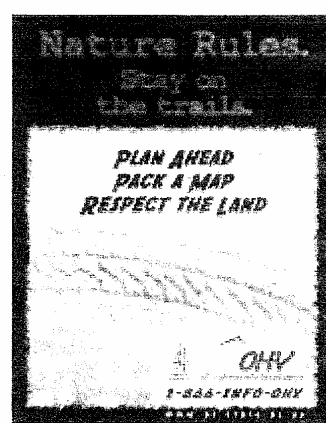
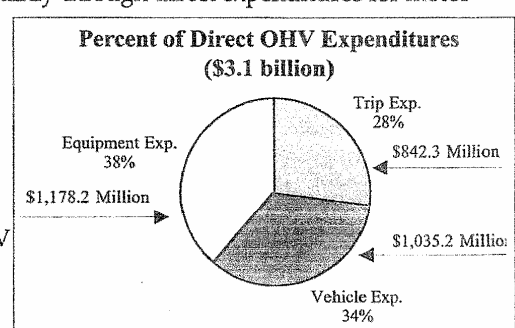
Economic Importance of Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation to Arizona

Whether you enjoy exploring Arizona's backcountry driving your truck, dirt bike or quad, or you prefer using your own muscle power to hike the trails, the following information may surprise you. In 2002, Arizona State University conducted a yearlong economic study of recreational off-highway vehicle (OHV) use in Arizona as part of the state's OHV Recreation Program. Completed surveys included 15,000 telephone surveys and 1,269 mail questionnaires from randomly selected Arizona households.

The study findings show that the **total economic impact to Arizona from recreational OHV use is more than \$4 billion a year.** OHV recreation activities provide an economic contribution to the state and its 15 counties mainly through direct expenditures for motorized vehicles, tow trailers, related equipment, accessories, insurance and maintenance costs.

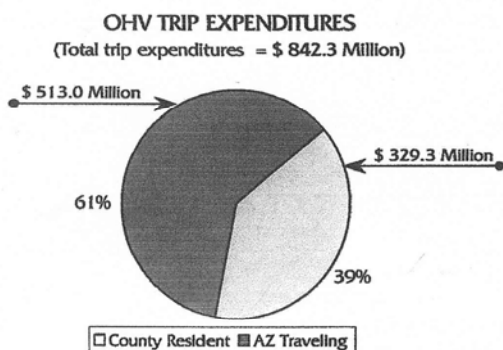
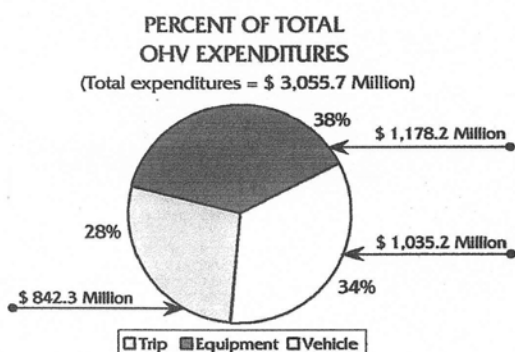
Additionally, an economic benefit is generated when OHV recreationists spend money in local communities close to areas they recreate in for items such as gasoline, food, lodging and souvenirs. These direct purchases provide indirect benefits by helping to pay for many people's salaries and wages, and contributing to local and state tax revenues. Specific information regarding these elements is available for Arizona and its 15 counties.

Arizona State Parks offers grant funding to assist in developing OHV facilities and signage, mitigating environmental damage and educating people about safe use of OHVs and about responsible and respectful behaviors to others and the environment.



STATE OF ARIZONA

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE	
OHV EXPENDITURES	\$ 3.1 Billion
TOTAL MULTIPLIER EFFECT	\$ 4.2 Billion
SALARIES AND WAGES	\$ 1.1 Billion
FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME JOBS	36,951
STATE TAX REVENUES	\$ 187 Million



OHV ACTIVITY DAYS	
TOTAL OHV DAYS	12,224,707
County Resident	5,499,797
AZ Resident Traveling to County	6,724,907
EXPENDITURES	
TOTAL OHV EXPENDITURES	\$3,055.7 Million
TOTAL TRIP RELATED	\$842.3 Million
Fuel	\$257.5 Million
Lodging	\$94.4 Million
Restaurant/ bars	\$156.8 Million
Groceries/ liquor	\$192.8 Million
Other	\$140.8 Million
TOTAL EQUIPMENT EXPENDITURES	\$1,178.2 Million
TOTAL VEHICLE EXPENDITURES	\$1,035.2 Million

MAJOR OHV RECREATION TRIP ACTIVITIES	
Driving back roads	75.1%
Sightseeing	52.1%
Hiking/ Walking	38.9%
Picnicking	35.7%
Camping	31.6%
OHV HOUSEHOLD DEMOGRAPHICS	
Married	74.1%
Income greater than \$75000	27.6%
Income less than \$25000	8.7%
Average age	47
Average years lived in AZ	26
College degree	32.2%

Estimated Statewide Economic Impacts of Off-Highway Vehicles: A \$3.4 Billion Industry



Burton C. English, Jamey Menard, and Kim Jensen
Department of Agricultural Economics
University of Tennessee

Have you ever wondered how much economic impact a trip by off-highway enthusiasts will have on the economy of the state or the region attended? There are five stages of costs involved — trip preparation, driving to the site, on-site costs, driving home from the site, and recovering from the trip. These costs include such items as meals, lodging, fuel, repairs, and other miscellaneous expenses. Once services and/or items are purchased, the money spent pays for salaries, increases tax collections, and increases profits. Money is then spent on other goods and services. This analysis attempts to quantify the economic impacts resulting from Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) activities.

Tennessee's state-wide economic impact analysis of the OHV industry is presented in Table 1. Per survey data, estimated economic impacts from OHV activities are close to \$3.43 billion in total economic activity, \$2.33 billion in value added, and over 52 thousand full- and part-time jobs. The estimated top ten sectors impacted as a result from OHV users and activities were *Vehicle Dealers & Service Stations, Miscellaneous Retail, Vehicle Repair & Services, Hotels & Lodging Places, Eating & Drinking, Wholesale Trade, Food Stores, Transportation Equipment, Real Estate, and Owner-Occupied Dwellings*.

The estimated average per trip expenditures for lodging, food & beverages, transportation to the OHV site, OHV (rental fees, repairs and service, trail use fees, plus fuel and oil), and other expenses are presented in Table 2. The food and beverages category has the largest average per trip expenditure followed by OHV, lodging, other expenses, and transportation to the OHV site.

Table 1. Estimated Economic Impacts from Off-Highway Vehicle Survey for Tennessee

	Direct	Total
	(\$ billion)	
Total Industry Output*	\$1.76	\$3.43
Total Value Added*	\$1.30	\$2.33
	(number)	
Jobs	29,800	52,300

*1998 Prices

Table 2. Average OHV per Trip Expenditure

Lodging	\$17.83
Food & Beverages	\$26.72
Transportation To OHV Site	\$13.82
Off-Highway Vehicle	\$19.96
Other Expenses	\$14.63

Within the food and beverages category (i.e., restaurant dining, food purchased at convenience stores, groceries purchased at food stores), restaurant dining has the largest average at close to \$35 per trip. Likewise, within the remaining categories the largest average per trip expenditures are \$50 for OHV repairs and services (OHV category), lodging at hotels, motels, etc., at \$34, hunting supplies at \$58 for the other expense category, and roughly \$37 dollars on fuel and oil for transportation to OHV sites.

DID You Know?

Economists often use computerized input-output models to derive multipliers. These models are very helpful for understanding the inter-relationships in a local economy. An input-output model which can be used to estimate the impacts of outdoor recreation is IMPLAN developed initially by the USDA's Forest Service and currently developed by Minnesota IMPLAN Group (MIG). This model is used in this analysis. IMPLAN contains the relationships between industries in a particular local economy through a transactions table. This dollar flow table lists all the sales and purchases made by the different sectors of the economy over a period of time. Once the dollar flow table is constructed, another table is then constructed to derive multipliers. This final table shows the total dollar amount change in each economic sector caused by a \$1 change in output in any particular sector. When multipliers are used, they can clearly show how attracting new visitor dollars into a region can stimulate considerable economic growth.

The estimated number of households in Tennessee with an OHV user is 259,240. Approximately 60.1% of that value, or 155,803 households, are active users (i.e., actually used an OHV for recreation "off road" in the last twelve months). The estimated average number of users per household is 2.14. The median number of OHV trips taken is 12.

Table 3 contains the average annual OHV related expenditure categories ranked in order of magnitude for Tennessee. The total average annual OHV related expenditure was \$6,647. Off-highway vehicles purchased includes ATVs, four wheelers, dirt bikes, dual sport motorcycles, four wheel drive trucks and jeeps, sport utility vehicles and rail/dune buggies. Support vehicles refers to trailers, car carriers, etc. Special tires, mufflers, engines, etc., are included in the modification/upgrades category. Other support equipment includes air compressors, pressure washers, welders, etc.

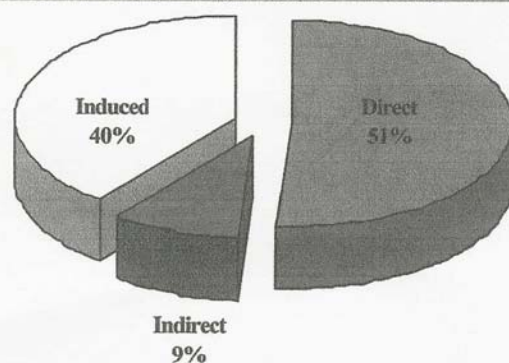
Table 3. Average OHV Expenditures in past 12 Months

OHVs Purchased	\$4,615
Support Vehicles Purchased	\$667
Repairs	\$366
Modification/Upgrades	\$321
Insurance	\$205
Routine Maintenance	\$194
Other Support Equipment	\$137
Riding Apparel	\$109
Club Membership	\$19
Other	\$14

Total Industry Output represents the estimated annual dollar value of production summed across all industries and is a measure of total economic activity. **Jobs** represent the estimated number of total wage and salary employees (both full and part-time) as well as self-employed. **Total Value Added** represents the estimated dollar value of wages and salaries including benefits, self-employed income, interest, rents, royalties, dividends, profits, plus excise and sales taxes.

Direct Impacts represent the estimated economic impacts of off-highway vehicle recreational activities from the surveys conducted at each event site. **Total Impacts** is the sum of the direct impacts, plus the estimated economic impacts from businesses (i.e., restaurants, retail stores, lodging, gasoline, etc.) providing goods and services (indirect impacts), and increased expenditures of new household income (induced impacts) as a result of the events taking place.

How much of the impact is induced?




One billion seven hundred thousand dollars are spent by those participating in off-highway activities. Initially these dollars are used to purchase inputs creating another \$300 million dollars of economic activity. However, another \$1.3 billion dollars of economic activity is induced through these expenditures. The top ten sectors impacted through induced effects include: *wholesale trade, owner-occupied dwellings, state and local government education and no education, real estate, doctors and dentists, eating and drinking, hospitals, new residential structures, and banking*. Jobs created also follow a similar pattern. Of the 52,000 jobs created in the state by the off-highway vehicle sector, 19,000 are through induced effects, with nearly 30,000 created directly.

OHV Economic Impact
New Hampshire

Nancy Denner

From: Roy Denner [RDenner@ORBA.biz]
Sent: Monday, April 04, 2005 9:36 AM
To: Tracy Hopper; Brian Juhnke; Cory Hove; Howard Hughes; Jim McGarvie; John Pederson; Loren Snyder; Nancy Denner; Scot Harden; 'Meg Grossglass'; 'Bill Dart'; 'Jim Ryan'; 'Kurt Miller'
Subject: OHV ECONOMIC IMPACT IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

 Resources and library

Off-Highway Vehicle economic impacts in New Hampshire

From "The Impact Of Spending By ATV/Trailbike Travel Parties On New Hampshire's Economy During July 2002 To June 2003." [Download the full document \(pdf 100 kb\)](#)

The Institute for New Hampshire Studies, Plymouth State University



Introduction

For the twelve month period between July 1, 2002 and June 30, 2003, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and trailbiking travel parties had direct spending within New Hampshire of about \$124 million, and direct and indirect spending of approximately \$176 million. The total impact on the state's economy (direct, indirect and induced impacts) of this traveler spending was approximately \$318 million. Total direct spending by ATV/ trailbiking travel parties was over 0.29 percent of the gross state product and was more than 2.3 percent of all traveler spending in the state.

The average spending per visitor day by ATV/ trailbiking travel parties was \$60.12 for in-state travel parties and \$46.40 for out-of-state travel parties. This average of these figures is lower than the \$70.32 spent during this same time period by all travel parties in the state. In addition to this spending during their trips, each in-state ATV/trailbike owner spent \$3,101 annually, and each out-of-state ATV/trailbike owner spent \$2,667 annually, within New Hampshire, to purchase equipment, clothing, insurance, club memberships and state license fees.

"New Hampshire households spent an average of \$60.12 per visitor day while on the trip and non-resident households spent an average of \$46.40."

When the daily rates of spending were multiplied by the number of visitor days, then New Hampshire households spent an estimated \$71.9 million and non-resident households spent an estimated \$14.8 million in New Hampshire while on their trips. This was a total estimated trip spending of \$86.8 million. This trip spending is equal to about 2.3 percent of all visitor spending during this same twelve month period.

The \$123.8 million in total ATV and/or trailbiking traveler spending for the July 2002 to June 2003 period supported 1,995 direct full and part-time jobs on an annual basis, with payrolls and other earnings of \$45.5 million. The \$51.7 million in indirect spending by traveler-supported businesses sustained an additional 384 full and part-time jobs on an annual basis, with a total payroll and earnings of an additional \$15.2 million. These 2,379 direct and indirect jobs were about 0.35 percent of all employment in the state on an annualized basis. The direct and indirect payroll was 0.21 percent of the total state-wide payroll on an annual basis. Payroll and earnings for employees directly supported by ATV and/or trailbiking traveler spending was 36.8 percent of total sales. This was higher than the 33.2 percent found for all travelers during state fiscal year 2002.

Conclusions

Spending by ATV and/or trailbiking travel parties is an important source of revenues for State government, in terms of the percent of total spending by these travelers that end up in the State treasury. However, on a proportional spending basis, the impact on local government is not as great as for other travelers. One reason for this is, compared with other forms of vacation travel within New Hampshire, the state's residents account for a much greater proportion-- approximately 82 percent-- of total spending by ATV and/or trailbiking travel parties.

Non-residents account for only 18 percent of ATV and/or trailbiking travel party spending, as compared to 86 percent of overall traveler spending in the state. An increase in the number of out-of-state ATV and/or trailbiking travel parties would increase the number of overnight trips. This would lead to an increase in total visitor spending and an increase in revenues that the State would obtain from the rooms and meals taxes, the largest source of State government revenues from the typical traveler in the state. Therefore, our findings indicate that the overall economic impact from ATV and/or trailbiking travel parties within the state would be enhanced considerably by attracting substantially more out-of-state ATV and trailbiking travel parties to New Hampshire.

From "The Impact Of Spending By ATV/Tailbike Travel Parties On New Hampshire's Economy During July 2002 To June 2003." [Download the full document \(pdf 100 kb\)](#).

February 2004



Highlights of [GAO-03-23](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Resources, House of Representatives, and Senator Robert Bennett.

Why GAO Did This Study

Since the 1980s, biologists have been concerned about declines in the Mojave Desert Tortoise, which ranges through millions of acres in the western United States. The tortoise was first listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act in Utah in 1980; it was later listed as threatened rangewide in 1990. The listing and designation of critical habitat for the tortoise, as well as recommendations in the tortoise recovery plan, have been controversial. In our report, we evaluate—assisted by scientists identified by the National Academy of Sciences—the scientific basis for key decisions related to the tortoise, assess the effectiveness of actions taken to conserve desert tortoises, determine the status of the population, and identify costs and benefits associated with desert tortoise recovery actions.

What GAO Recommends

To ensure that the most effective actions are taken to protect the tortoise, we recommend that the Fish and Wildlife Service develop and implement a coordinated research strategy for linking land management decisions with research results and periodically reassess the recovery plan for the tortoise. We also recommend that the Secretary of the Interior identify and assess options for funding long-term rangewide population monitoring. The department concurred with our recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-23.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Barry T. Hill at (202) 512-3841, hills@gao.gov.

December 2002

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Research Strategy and Long-Term Monitoring Needed for the Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery Program

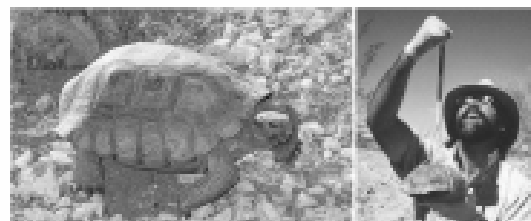
What GAO Found

The 1990 listing of the desert tortoise, the critical habitat designation, and recommendations in the recovery plan for the tortoise were reasonable, given the information available at the time. Under the Endangered Species Act, listing and critical habitat decisions must be based on the best available scientific and commercial data. These decisions and the recovery plan recommendations were based on sources that reflected existing knowledge about desert tortoises.

To protect the tortoise, government agencies have restricted grazing and off-road vehicle use and taken other protective actions in desert tortoise habitat, but the effectiveness of these actions is unknown. Research is underway in several areas, including tortoise disease, predation, and nutrition, but the research has not assessed the effectiveness of the protective actions. Furthermore, the status of desert tortoise populations is unclear because data are unavailable to demonstrate population trends. Before the tortoise may be delisted, populations must increase or remain stable for at least 25 years—one generation of desert tortoises. Determining the trends will cost an estimated \$7.5 million in the first 5 years, plus additional monitoring every 3 to 5 years at a cost of about \$1.5 million per year of monitoring. The Fish and Wildlife Service depends on other agencies and organizations to assist with funding and monitoring, but these agencies and organizations cannot guarantee assistance from year to year because of other priorities.

Expenditures on desert tortoise recovery since the species' first listing in 1980 exceed \$100 million, but the exact investment is unknown. The investment includes \$82 million in "reasonably identifiable" expenditures for the tortoise, plus staff time valued at about \$10.8 million. The overall economic impact of the tortoise recovery program—including benefits as well as the costs incurred by local governments, landowners, and developers as a result of restrictions—is unknown.

Left to right: desert tortoise; researcher weighing desert tortoise.



Source: GAO.

Subject: FW: a fly before people - Land set aside for unique fly

Do we need a **STRONGER ESA**?

How many more flys are out there that USFWS can "save", to stop the building of hospitals, schools, and on and on and on?

<http://www.sbsun.com/Stories/0,1413,208~12588~2941313,00.html>

Land set aside for unique fly

Developers' process for permits simplified

By Nikki Cobb, Staff Writer

COLTON - The tent was abuzz with happy clamor Monday at a party celebrating a step taken toward preserving the Delhi Sands flower-loving fly.

Vulcan Materials Co., The Riverside Land Conservancy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service teamed to set aside 150 acres of habitat for the endangered insect.

The purchase will not only provide habitat for the fly. It also may cut red tape for developers.

Regulations aimed at preserving the fly have caused area developers endless headaches, said Michael Linton, Vulcan vice president of properties and land development for the western division.

"A lot of people wish the fly wasn't here," Linton said. "We have to deal with reality."

Historically, the Delhi Sands flower-loving fly ranged over a 40-square-mile region known as the Colton Dunes in western San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

Now, though, only 2percent of the original expanse remains undeveloped, according to Fish and Wildlife officials.

The patch bought and set aside by Vulcan is the largest undeveloped piece remaining in the Colton Dunes ecosystem, according to Land Conservancy adviser and U.C. Riverside staff research associate Greg Ballmer.

"Hopefully, this is what the fly needs to survive," he said.

The fly is unique and elusive to researchers.

"We know very little about its biology, because it's underground nine months out of the year,' said Jim Bartel, field supervisor for the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife office.

Any developer wanting to build on Delhi Sands flower-loving fly habitat must buy habitat land somewhere else and set it aside for the fly. That earns the builder credits and, once they accumulate enough credits, they can build.

Vulcan has earned credits for setting aside this big chunk of land. The company can sell those credits to developers hoping to build on other areas of fly habitat.

"This will simplify the permitting process' for developers, said Mike Fris, the endangered species program manager in the California-Nevada office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"It's kind of one-stop shopping for them now.'

The credit system results in a patchy, scattered habitat, Fris said. One large block is better, he said.

Fifth District Supervisor Josie Gonzales attended Monday's event. She said she welcomes the ability for developers to buy credits there, rather than negotiate them piecemeal.

"The Fifth District has been severely impacted by the red tape involved now,' Gonzales said. "It costs the Inland Empire hundreds of millions of dollars in jobs, homes, commercial and industrial opportunities.'

Bartel said it's not just about the fly.

"It's about the whole ecological community,' he said. "There are butterflies and plants here that are found nowhere else.

"Besides that, it's terrible to eliminate one of God's creatures,' he said.

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Chief of Staff



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Resources
Washington, DC 20515

February 10, 2005

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James H. Dora
Democratic Staff Director

Mr. Craig Manson
Assistant Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Status Review of the Pacific Coast Population of Western Snowy Plover

Dear Assistant Secretary Manson,

We have become increasingly concerned that sound science does not support the current status of the western snowy plover (WSP) as a "threatened species" under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). We understand that you are presently reviewing the status of the pacific population of the WSP, and that you are evaluating whether the pacific coast population warrants listing as a "distinct population segment."

When Congress adopted the ESA, it did so with the understanding that "distinct population segments" of species would be listed separately only "sparingly," and never when the underlying science showed that it was unjustified.

Based on advances in genetics science, we do not believe that the continued listing of the pacific coast population of the WSP is warranted, particularly in light of the limited role Congress envisioned for the use of "distinct population segments" as an administrative management tool.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service listed the pacific coast population as threatened three years before the agency had issued its guidance for listing distinct population segments. More importantly, even the 1996 guidance on DPSs is now outdated given the tremendous advances in our understanding of genetics.

With respect to the WSP, genetic data has come to light demonstrating that the pacific coast population is identical to the inland population which can be found in the tens of thousands.

Moreover, even the pacific coast population has remained within a constant population range for more than three decades, and in fact, may have actually increased. That is significant given that for two of those decades the WSP received no ESA protection.

It is also significant that a pacific coast population of equal size to the US population exists directly across the border in Mexico.

In testimony recently submitted to Congress, Dr. Rob Roy Ramey, a well-known geneticist with the Denver Museum, cited the WSP as an example of the improper use of DPS since the pacific coast population is not "distinct" from the inland population.

We strongly encourage the Department of Interior and the Service to delist the WSP unless and until there is conclusive, demonstrative and sound scientific evidence that listing is truly warranted.

Sincerely,



RICHARD W. POMBO
Chairman


GREG WALDEN
Chairman, Subcommittee on Forests

DEVIN NUNES
Chairman, Subcommittee on Parks

Enclosures

Imperial Sand Dunes Funding Dilemma

The BLM has identified the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA) as “The most popular Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) area in the southwest United States.”¹ BLM also calls ISDRA “one of the premier OHV playgrounds.”² By all accounts, ISDRA is truly a “World Class OHV Recreation” opportunity. Cruising the topmost ridges of these massive dunes on motorcycles, in dune buggies, and on 4-wheeled vehicles provides this opportunity.

Located in the southeast-most portion of California bordering on Arizona and Mexico, it is common to find 80,000 to 100,000 people at the 156,000-acre ISDRA on any given weekend during the winter season when temperatures permit the sport that has come to be known as “duning”.

The monetary contribution to the local economy, **an economy with depression-era unemployment rates**, is estimated to be in the tens of millions of dollars. Duning is responsible for hundreds, probably thousands of jobs in the Imperial Valley.

The newly formed united Desert Gateway Communities is an association of the local chambers of commerce whose goal it is to promote duning and attract more visitors to the area. They appreciate the many values of sustained duning at the ISDRA. Many businesses would cease to exist if it were not for the ISDRA. In fact, many were built predicated on the cash flow that occurs every winter weekend in the Imperial Valley because of duning activities at the ISDRA.

Most importantly, the ISDRA is a multi-generation family outdoor experience unlike any available elsewhere on the planet. Family values, as well as cultural traditions and the American way of life, are passed from generation to generation during two to 10-day family trips to the dunes. It is very common to see 3 and even 4 generations of a family at the campfire after a day of experiencing one of nature’s most beautiful areas. This reason alone justifies that the ISDRA experience should be preserved for generations to come.

BUT WAIT.... ALL THESE BENEFITS TO SOCIETY COULD COME TO A CRASHING HALT IN A SPLIT SECOND! Federal appropriations for the ISDRA are inadequate to implement the new Recreation Area Management Plan this September.

The ISDRA has been under funded for years but up until now, has managed to squeak by on curtailed services and indefinitely postponed projects. This insanity cannot be allowed to continue. **We have a budget dilemma at the ISDRA!**

ISDRA will not break even based on current costs and projected income. The new management plan calls for even higher costs. Due to environmental concerns, trash on the ground, because of overflowing dumpsters, will cause closure of the entire dunes. There is not even enough money to take out the trash at the ISDRA!

¹ Summary of the recently approved Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP)

² In a BLM publication entitled “GREAT ESCAPES a dozen trips”

New facilities such as camping pads will not be built!, **Essential services such as emergency medical and law enforcement will be relegated to a lower priority than trash management** and natural resource monitoring.

The attached “Comparison of Appropriated Federal Funds” graph clearly shows that the ISDRA is under funded by every measure and every comparison; visitor attendance ranks third behind only Yellowstone and Yosemite while federal appropriations are the lowest – a paltry \$200,000.00 for the estimated 1.2 million annual visitors that frequent the ISDRA in only a 7-month season. All of the four other areas receive from \$3.00 to \$9.10 per visitor while ISDRA is allocated less than \$0.25 per visitor.

Twenty five cents per visitor per year?!?! This is an outrage – that won’t even buy each visitor a glass of water! Never mind a backboard or neck brace should one be needed: but without emergency medical teams on site, that is a mute point.

An unacceptable budget shortfall of \$x,xxx,xxx.00 dictates that user fees will go to pay for operations and maintenance instead of area improvements as intended: indeed, **as promised** to the visitors when the fees were introduced. Many essential services will be cut and others eliminated altogether.

Without proper funding, fees will continually be adjusted upwards in a vain attempt to maintain what is now a barely affordable family trip. That is if they can be raised fast enough to cover costs. The higher they are raised, the fewer people will visit the ISDRA. At first, it will be the lower income families who will be forced off these unique public lands until they are closed entirely to everyone. Another vital slice of the American way of life will be driven into extinction.

We are not asking for hot tubs. We are not asking for plush accommodations or tour guides. We are not asking for huge lodges or restaurant facilities. We are asking only for the bare necessities like trash collection, medical services, law enforcement, and a place to park. We will take care of the rest. We are Americans. We like roughing it. It is our culture and our way of life.

COMPARISON OF APPROPRIATED FEDERAL FUNDS **ISDRA vs OTHER FEDERAL RECREATION AREAS**

Yosemite National Park (761,266 acres) – in 2002 there were 3,361,867 visitors and fees collected totaled \$14,510,800. In FY 2002 the Federal Government appropriated \$23,142,000.

Yellowstone National Park (2.2 mil. acres) – 2002 had 2,973,677 visitors and fees collected totaled \$6,389,320. In FY 2002 the Federal Government appropriated \$27,069,000.

Imperial Sand Dunes (208,000 acres) – 2003 had 1,200,157 visitors and fees collected totaled \$823,704. In FY 2004 the Federal Government appropriated \$200,000.

Sand Flats Recreation Area (7,240 acres) – 2003 had 83,000 visitors and fees collected totaled \$223,592. In FY 2004 the Federal Government appropriated \$223,592.

Red Rock Canyon (197,000 acres) – 2003 had 803,451 visitors and fees collected totaled \$1,410,194. In FY 2004 the Federal Government appropriated \$2,450,000.

Location	Size	Attendance/year	Federal Appropriations
Yosemite National Park	761,266 acres	(2002) 3,361,867	(FY 2002) \$23,142,000
Yellowstone National Park	2.2 million acres	(2002) 2,973,677	(FY 2002) 27,069,000
Imperial Sand Dunes	208,000 acres	(2003) 1,200,157	(FY 2004) 200,000
Sand Flats Recreation Area	7,240 acres	(2003) 83,000	(FY 2004) 223,592
Red Rock Canyon	197,000 acres	(2003) 803,451	(FY 2004) 2,450,000