

Testimony of Dan Heinz

before a joint meeting of Forests and forest health and National Parks subcommittees of the House Committee on Natural Resources.

First, I'd like to introduce myself briefly. I seem to have been born with a passion for hunting and fishing. Indeed it was this passion that motivated my choice of a career. I graduated from Colorado State University in 1958 with a degree in Wildlife Management and went to work for the US Forest Service. At one time or another I worked at most everything the Forest Service does over the whole spectrum of Multiple Uses. Much of that career was spent on Ranger Districts in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado and Montana.

I have spent my whole life working to enhance or protect wildlife habitat and preserve the hunting tradition. I not only have hunted big game every year since I turned 14 but I have spent wonderful times guiding or otherwise serving people who were just beginning to appreciate hunting wild game in wild places.

I retired in 1983 from my post as grazing, recreation, wildlife staff officer for the Deerlodge National Forest in Butte Montana and immediately became active with various conservation organizations continuing my efforts to assure good wildlife habitats and hunter opportunities on public lands. That work has either been as a volunteer or at minimum wage and continues to this day. Whenever the piggy bank needed help I worked as a guide, packer, and camp jack for hunting outfitters in British Columbia, Montana, Colorado, and Nevada.

I could probably be best described as a sportsman conservationist available to help on public land issues wherever I have something to offer. My wife and I now live in remote rural Nevada.

I am here today as an individual with long experience iterating what I see as basic principals and facts. I will also be expressing my own views.

My testimony will be divided into two segments. First, speaking from experience, and I would like to think, a little wisdom gained as a public land manager I will lay out some principles for ORV management. I have been deeply involved in this issue since the early 70s so I am more than a little excited at this opportunity. Separately, I will speak to experience gained as a lifelong fisherman and hunter.

My most intensive professional involvement with off road vehicle management occurred when I was Acting District Ranger on the South Platte District out of Denver Colorado, District Ranger on the Leadville Ranger District in Colorado, and as Wildlife and Recreation Staff Officer on the Deerlodge National Forest in Montana.

I have limited the following statements to basic facts, effects, and perceptions as I see them. I think any land manager or member of Congress must consider all of these when dealing with ORV issues on public lands.

PEOPLE

- A significant number of the public enjoy riding machines on their National Forest and BLM lands.
- Many hunters perceive the need for machines to facilitate quick access to hunting and for game retrieval
- Many dirt bike, ATV and jeep recreationists relish the natural values of our public lands and practice responsible riding.
- I think most public land managers will tell you motor recreation advocates are some of the most pleasant people they ever deal with. These same managers may also tell you environmentalists come off as self righteous and arrogant.
- Too many ORV users drive off of designated trails creating damaging renegade routes. Several National Forests have found it necessary to ban or are now proposing bans on ORV recreation. Long attempts to manage use have failed because of renegade riders. (Hoosier, Shawnee, Green Mountain, White Mountain, Monogahela)
- The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, from their intensive study of access in Colorado, found "in general, hunters favor more non-motorized access over motorized access. This suggests that for hunters the access issue is not about having "all access to all places." It is more about having "the right access to the right places,"
- Off road vehicle enthusiasts rarely understand the impacts and disruption they cause to non-motorized users and thus propose shared trails. The analogy of smokers and non-smokers is appropriate. Smokers in a room perceive no conflict while the non-smokers find second hand smoke most unpleasant.
- Motorized use completely displaces the traditional non-motorized users. Motorized and non-motorized recreationists simply do not mix. For instance, the Rampart Range immediately west of Denver and Colorado Springs was once a very popular

hiking area. No more, hikers must now all go much further west. The Rampart Range has become very popular with dirt bikers.

Dirt bikes and ATVs have completely displaced hikers from the Virginia Mountains and Dog Skin Mountains near Reno, with their tracks cutting the soil every which direction. This is an area where the BLM supposedly limited ORV travel to existing routes years ago. The ORVers pay no attention and go where they wish while the BLM does nothing.

- The 2002 National Visitor Monitoring Report produced by the US Forest Service shows that 10 times as many people go to the Humboldt and Toiyabe National Forests in Nevada to hike, backpack or horseback ride as those who go to the Forest for ATV, Dirt bike or jeep recreation. According to that same survey, nationally, 32,533,500 go to their National Forest to hike/walk while the number for OHV use (which does not include snowmobiles) would be 6,170,500. In other words approximately 4 or 5 times as many times as many go to the National Forest to hike, backpack as those who go for motorized recreation.
- Our population is booming. Crowding is becoming significant even in Nevada. It is basic. The land can accommodate far more people on foot. A hiker needs 4 to 10 miles of trail for a days recreation, someone on a machine requires 30, 40, up to 100 miles of trail to provide a days outing. In addition, the noise produced by motorized users invades a large space wherever they go.
- Many, if not most backcountry ranchers are finding the current invasion of ATVs into their grazing allotments intolerable.

Management Factors

- Non-motorized recreation in undeveloped areas is far cheaper to administer than motorized recreation.
- Motor vehicles are a major factor in the spread of noxious weeds.
- All types of recreation can have detrimental disturbance effects on wildlife. (Montana Wildlife Society) However, ORV recreation has disproportionate effects because each individual user covers so much ground producing noise all the way.
- Motorized recreation displaces wildlife, especially deer and elk. Elk are often forced from public lands onto private when motor vehicle use by hunters is excessive. I have personally witnessed this near Leadville, Colorado and Butte Montana. A serious elk displacement problem caused by motorized hunters on the Routt National Forest In Colorado is documented in Bugle Magazine Sept.- Oct 2002.
- Two miles of road per square mile will reduce elk use by 50%. Six miles of road per square mile will virtually eliminate elk use. (Montana Cooperative Elk Logging Study)
- Hunter satisfaction and success often increase when hunting areas are declared off limits to vehicles. (Montana Cooperative Elk-Logging Study)
- A study of public land in Colorado by the Congressional Sportsmen' foundation showed that between 91 and 97% of all lands were within 1 mile of a mapped road or trail on public lands in Colorado.
- Impacts to the land and other uses by ORVs which are well within acceptable levels at one or two vehicles per day become completely unacceptable at use levels of 20 or 30 vehicles per day.
- With the advent of dirt bikes and ATVs people who have never gotten beyond constructed roads suddenly can and do go everywhere. Too many of these people are backcountry neophytes, causing a great deal of unwarranted damage to the land and conflicts with the traditional hiker or hunter who walked long and hard to get there. ORVs have cost us most of our natural allocation of space to quiet users.
- ORVs are tracking, ripping, domesticating and taming the last of our wild country at breakneck speed, recklessly and destructively without proper thought. The Humboldt and Toiyabe National Forests in Nevada estimate there are six to nine thousand miles of renegade routes that have been created on those Forests by irresponsible ORV users.

Management Suggestions

- Ron Moody, A blue collar sort of a guy with the Montana Wildlife Federation has spent a great deal of time thinking through an appropriate allocation of motor access to hunt. I think he has it right.

“ As an arbitrary starting point for discussing road density on public lands I suggest the following: In typical roaded areas of western National Forests and BLM lands, the needs of hunters usually can be served with an average motor vehicle road density of 3-miles to 5-miles between roads. Ninety percent of roaded public lands should be within three miles of a motor vehicle road. Be aware that this density usually means closing a lot

of established two-track 'resource roads.' With five miles between roads in most rugged western landscapes people can obtain both practical access and wild solitude within the same management scheme.”

- The Ely BLM Field Office here in Nevada is carefully laying out designated ATV touring routes by consulting with every potentially affected interest such as non-motorized recreationist, ranchers, outfitters, soil scientists, wildlife biologists, etc. before any designations take place. They demonstrate that such planning can be done. Sadly they are the exception and it remains to be seen if ATV users to keep to those designated routes. They do not have a very good record of doing this.

- I so often hear that only a few bad apples cause the problems. I can assure you if it is only a few then I do not want to see what happens if there are a lot. The Duck Creek Basin near Ely NV is a mess of renegade routes, displacing elk, ruining the hunt, hiking opportunities, and causing severe erosion. I do not go there any more. I have long hunted the Missouri River Breaks in Montana. ATV use is intruding everywhere. There is no point going to many of our former “favorite spots” which we once shared with others who had walked in like we had. One thoughtless individual intruding into such an area on a machine ruins it for everybody. Now it is usually more that just one machine born “hunter” invading such areas.

Unplanned “play areas” are springing up in Nevada, The Pine Nut Range, Sand Mountain, Wilson Canyon, Fort Smith, and Moon Rocks are unplanned ORV play areas spawning destructive ORV riding into ever widening country. Land destruction seems to be a major recreation pursuit. Managers tell me a culture of deliberate regulation defiance is rampant. Efforts at a management fail miserably. Law enforcement is essentially absent. Limited personnel, a woefully inadequate fine system and most importantly a “can’t do” attitude handicap the agencies.

If I see any attempt at regulating use it usually amounts only to a wimpy carsonite sign off to the side of a track saying it is closed. There are a few success stories, very few I must say. The Pike and San Isabel National Forests in Colorado have had great success with steel signs set right in the middle of the road. The Charles Sheldon Refuge in Montana has a very successful, strictly enforced, and popular road management program.

- We need both direction and funding from congress that will assure the agencies first and foremost receive training in how to manage ORV use. They also need an updating of laws and regulations, fines, and of course some increase in enforcement funding.

- No, I did not say ORV development funding. I said enforcement funding. There are tens of thousands of suitable routes out there for touring the public lands. Education of users, enforcement of responsible riding regulations, and restoration of existing damage must have priority over to providing more ORV opportunity.

Personal Experiences and Philosophies

I now wish to hop back and sketch my personal experiences. I came of age in Colorado Springs just as surplus jeeps were becoming available. Neither my parents nor I could even begin to afford 4x4 of any sort. My buddies and I began backpacking in for our fishing trips, thanks to the cheap army surplus gear then available. Oh, how we envied those who had a 4x4. My best friend’s Dad finally was able to get a surplus jeep operating and we had the privilege of driving to many of the spots we had previously been walking to.

Even back in the late forty’s and fifties of Colorado, we soon found out the best hunting and fishing was always where it was necessary to walk. At too many areas accessible by jeep we found campsites trashed, the stream banks trampled, game displaced and wild trout simply could not hold up to the fishing pressure. Areas so impacted have increased exponentially over the 50 years since I left for school.

I still gape at the expense that must be involved when I see hunters in a large 6-passenger 4x4 pickup towing a trailer of 4 ATVs. Even a standard pickup with one ATV aboard represents more money than I ever earned in 3/4 a year. The cost of one ATV could cover the cost of an outfitted horse drop camp for several years

I cannot help but feel that recreation pursuits, which are extremely expensive to participate in, and by which even a few participants displace or degrade all other recreation uses are elitist by definition.

Not only is hunting on foot far less expensive than the motorized alternatives it is more productive besides.

I find it difficult to understand why some folks feel access is closed anywhere they are not allowed to take their machine.

Poets and philosophers have been telling us for millennia that obtaining any objective easily, devalues the success. I know from repeated personal experiences that game bagged close to a road and vehicle does not generate near the pleasure of success that game obtained in the out back using muscle power and woodsmanship skills provides.

I still walk to my hunting and fishing. The only areas that I find are free of intrusions by irresponsible ORV users are the Wilderness or roadless areas. I bone my big game on the spot and backpack it out. Not so tough as it sounds. Even a

big mule deer buck will provide only about 90 to 100 pounds of meat. Carrying out two loads of 40 pounds or so is not difficult.

I have only one year left to my allotted three score and ten. Reality is that my walking days are numbered. Rented horses will take up the gap for a while, and then there will be the fireside and photo albums. Nevertheless I will dedicate the remainder of my lucid life working to assure upcoming young folks will have the abundance of motor free wild country I have enjoyed through my whole life. Rest assured, you will not hear me asking for motor access to areas I can no longer walk to.

Our American characteristics of self-reliance and "can do attitude" can likely be traced to our recent history of wilderness living. The traditional hunter has carried those traditions to the present by using woodsmanship, self-reliance and physical fitness instead of modern machinery and gadgetry in the pursuit of game.

A quote from Teddy Roosevelt makes an appropriate conclusion.

No one, but he who has partaken thereof, can understand the keen delight of hunting in lonely lands. For him is the joy of the horse well ridden and the rifle well held: for him the long days of toil and hardship, resolutely endured, and crowned at the end with triumph." . . .

I appreciate the opportunity to testify and would be happy to answer any questions.

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