American Sand Association Inc.
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American Sand Association
"IN THE DUNES"

Volume 6 Issue 2
May 2006

Unite, Inform, and Mobilize

THE JUDGE RULES ON THE CLOSURES

The long-awaited ruling on the Biological Opinion and management plan for the Imperial Dunes has been issued. Here's the ASA press release followed by what it all means:

"On March 13, 2006, Judge Susan Illston of the United States District Court, Northern District of California, San Francisco Division, issued her ruling in the case brought by the Center for Biological Diversity challenging the Biological Opinion (BO) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP). In her Order, Judge Illston identified a number of areas where the BO and EIS are deficient and need to be corrected before the RAMP can be implemented. The interim closures will remain in place until the USFWS and BLM remedy the errors described in the Court Order.

Judge Illston's ruling provides a blue-print for developing a legally sound RAMP - one that will withstand future challenges and ensure a proper balance between recreational opportunities and resource protection. We now look forward to providing input to BLM and USFWS as they go through the process of addressing the Court's concerns."

What this means is that the court has clearly identified where the BLM and FWS were errant in formulating the BO and RAMP and arriving at the preferred alternative that reopens some of the temporary closures without restrictions and, among other things, creates the AMA. The lawsuit challenged only the way the decisions were made by FWS and BLM, not the actual decisions themselves. In other words, they sued and won, as usual, on technicalities. Once the deficiencies are corrected by both agencies, the only complaint the CBD will have is that they simply don't like the decisions: something that a suit cannot be based upon.

Here's the good part: Now the FWS knows exactly what to do in order to produce a BO that is litigation proof and BLM knows exactly what they have to do to get the RAMP implemented. Had they this knowledge from the start and complied with those requirements, there never would have been a suit: there would have been no grounds. What is even more to our advantage is that now all the PMV studies can be brought before the court: including the BLM study that counted the 1.8 million last year that were the result of rainfall. It can now be argued that rainfall is the largest factor that determines PMV numbers. All of Dr. Phillips' studies can now also be included.

Notwithstanding the listing of more species in the ISDRA, eventually, the RAMP will be implemented. How long from now is a matter of how soon the legal deficiencies can be remedied and for the judge to acknowledge and accept the remedies.

Your continued contributions of time and dollars will enable us to monitor and assist the FWS and BLM as they go through the steps necessary to bring balanced management back to the ISDRA.

Dunes Outreach Program Expands To The South Dunes

Tim Gantz, a Glamis resident and the Dunes Outreach Team Leader with his yellow Ford Ranger has been carrying the "LEO" message throughout the north dunes at the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area. Tim has handed out over **40,000 bags** at popular locations such as Oldsmobile Hill. Bags with the slogan **"If You Want to Stay and Play, Take Your Trash Away"** are showing up everywhere. American Honda has provided bags with the Tread Lightly! message "Leaving a Good Impression." Bags provided by Four Wheel Parts and Performance Centers have added to the success of this "Litter Education" outreach program.

Recently Tim and his truck have been showing up at the very successful "Mini Clean Ups" which have been organized by members Steve and Cathi Brooks for the past several years. BLM and the United Desert Gateway (UDG) have more recently joined and provided refreshments for the volunteers. Scott Swenka, ASA Checkered Flag Chairman, has been at the cleanups handing out checkered flags emphasizing public safety and responsible duning.

Looking ahead to next season you can expect to see the program expand. Tee shirts with "LEO the Lizard's" message will be given out to those

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FIND MORE INFORMATION AND STORIES IN OUR ONLINE VERSION OF THE NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT

Grant George

Contact:
asaboard@ASAsand.org

Mailing Address:
1911 Foothill Blvd. PMB 108
La Verne, CA 91750-3511
Phone: 619-448-8078

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Editor:
Jim Colln
newsletters@ASAsand.org

President's Message

By Grant George

Why are we here? What good is the ASA?

That's what some people ask. It is true that the temporary closures are still in place. It is true the milk vetch still gets protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and it is true that we have a long way to go.

But still, deep in my heart, I know that without a fight from the ASA and our partner organizations, the closures at the Imperial Dunes (ISDRA) would never have a chance of coming down. Thanks to our efforts, there is not one person in any agency that views the ISDRA closures as anything but temporary. I firmly believe that without our efforts they would now be considered permanent whether the milk vetch was ever delisted or not.

Because of our efforts, we have a chance to right the wrong. We have a choice. We could go away and admit total failure, or we can hang tough and admit that there will be a failure or 2 along the way. No one ever said this would be quick or easy.

Anti-access organizations say they want "balanced" land management, but their idea of balance does not include you and me and motorized recreation – period. A few days ago, they initiated yet another lawsuit aimed squarely at severely limiting, if not eliminating altogether, OHV use in all of the California deserts: over 10,000,000 acres! They are using the recent ruling in our case as a platform from which to wage war on all of the new California Desert District Management Plans. A recent press release tells us they are stepping up their efforts to close the Dumont dunes. As you can see, there is much more at stake than the ISDRA.

"Conservation", "Environmentalism", or whatever name they are using this week, is a multi-billion dollar business. Closing land to motorized recreation is not a hobby for these radical fanatics. Some of their top leaders make six-figure incomes: some of that income comes out of your pocket as reimbursement under the ESA every time they win a suit. They have full-time attorneys on staff. For 30 years, they have had their way without much opposition from the off-road community. Look where it got us and where the next 30 years of saying nothing will get us.

I am choosing to hang tough and take a setback now and then. I encourage anyone asking, "Why are we here?" to do the same.

Chairman's Report

By Bob Mason

Volunteers are the Foundation

The ASA's future success depends on effective involvement of our VOLUNTEERS. A commitment of members to the work of the organization is essential to our success. Well-managed volunteer systems don't just happen. A clear cut definition of the tasks to be accomplished must come first. Recognizing this, the ASA Board of Directors has developed "Job Descriptions" for several important tasks.

We now have job descriptions for nearly every volunteer opportunity. Please take a few minutes to learn more about how you too can help. Go to the ASA website at:

http://www.americansandassociation.org/documents/

As you read this issue you will note that radical environmental activists have served notice that they intend to sue the federal agencies with the intent of denying OHV access to public land throughout the California desert area. Their goal is to render your recreation vehicles worthless!

You can help! No offer to help is too small. Making a few phone calls to round up other volunteers for a specific project, entering data in the membership records, helping at a specific function, the list is endless.

Please call or email the ASA Volunteer Coordinator Lloyd Misner at 619-448-8078 to offer to help.

Email: volunteers@AmericanSandAssociation.org

Working together we will protect our right to ride for our future generations.

As Always, thanks for your support,

Chairman of the Board

WHAT IS THE ASA?

The ASA is the lead group fighting to keep the Imperial Sands Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA) open to OHV use. We are a nonprofit California corporation under the IRS Tax Code known as 501(c)(4). The leadership of the ASA are volunteers.

Working in concert with the Off Road Business Association (ORBA), San Diego Off-Road Coalition (SDORC), and others, the ASA has filed eight lawsuits against the Bureau of Land Management and the Fish and Wildlife Service. We have standing in several legal actions that could well be used to close the entire dunes. We stand poised to oppose any legal actions brought by any anti-access groups that would prevent the new Recreation Area Management Plan from being implemented. This plan would remove some of the closures entirely and grant conditional access to others.

In addition to our legal actions to preserve our right to ride, we filed a precedent-setting delisting petition to remove the Peirson's Milk Vetch from the Endangered Species List. This plant was used to create the closures put in place in 2000. These closures total over 49,000 acres of sand dunes and are located south of Highway 78, south of Highway 8, and at Mammoth Wash.

Our delisting petition is based on good, solid science derived from biological studies paid for by the ASA, ORBA, and SDORC. This science cost over $100,000.00 so far and we are budgeting for more. Our efforts don't stop there. We have two lobbyists on retainer: one in Washington D. C. and the other in Sacramento.

We have made several trips to Washington D.C. and Sacramento to present our case and plan to make several more. Our Public Safety and Education makes us known as a group that is not only interested in a World Class duning experience, but Stewards of the land and its resources: a very good connection with the current administration.

The ASA has received the US Dept. of Interior's 4C's Award, recognizing our organization's commitment to working with the Bureau and others to enhance recreational conservation on public lands in Southern California.

New BLM Desert District Manager Having an Impact

Recently appointed BLM Desert District Manager, Steven J. Borchard, has already made his presence known across the California Desert. On-board since January, he has impressed us with his candor, friendliness and commitment to doing what's best for the public land user.

Steve's management style is rooted in his leadership priorities which are: being a team player, providing leadership, and setting the tone. "I believe if we recognize the value of our organization, we can open up the communications internally and externally with a little more compassion and decisiveness," Steve says. "I feel that I am open-minded and not beyond taking risks for the good of the order."

He believes the road to success consists of 1) strong partnerships 2) sound defensible decisions 3) focusing on what BLM does best and 4) delegation of authority. "I am so impressed with the strong partnerships we enjoy across the desert district and I look forward to strengthening them and also developing others."

With all the challenges of managing over 10 million acres of public land across the California Desert, Steve's priorities do help set the tone for the BLM staff. Steve wants to: implement the management plans, be accountable, exhibit integrity in everything BLM does and says, and leave things in better shape then he found them.

Steve is a 1976 graduate of the University of California at Davis with a degree in soil and water science. Upon graduation, he went to work as a soil scientist in Idaho and then moved to BLM's Winnemucca, Nevada office. He transferred to the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Northern California in 1977 to work with a variety of state and federal agencies on soil surveys, wetland mapping and conservation planning.

Steve returned to BLM in 1993 as a Natural Resource Specialist in BLM's Redding office. He was the BLM project manager for the Trinity River Restoration Project, serving as the vice-chair of the Trinity River Technical Coordinating Committee, a 19-member multi-agency, multi-government, multi-tribal group that planned and directed the restoration program.

He was appointed the Riparian and Wetlands Program Leader for BLM in Washington D.C. in 1998 and was promoted to the Deputy Group Manager for Rangeland Resources in 2001. Prior to his current assignment, Steve completed an appointment as a BLM Congressional Fellow assigned to the U.S. Senate to work on public land policy issues.

"The California Desert can be ground zero for very contentious public land issues. I look forward to working through these challenges with the help of our many partners that respect and cherish their public lands and my very talented BLM staff."

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

volunteers that help. LEO will be joined by the "Safety Bug" with safety messages on the other side of the bags. A second truck sponsored by Sand Limo and by Sunrise Ford will be showing up in the south dunes next season.

Business Sponsors are welcome to help support the litter bags. Please call Michele Garnett at 800-500-9914 extension 157 to get your logo on the LEO bags for next season. Don't delay, the deadline is June 1st.

Support the ASA and win this car

By TATUM Motor Sports

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All proceeds to benefit the ASA General Fund

*Visit the ASA website at **www.asasand.com** for more information*

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Drawings will be held at the 2006 Sand Sports Super Show

Tickets are $20 each (only 15,000 will be sold). Must be 18 years of age to enter and win. Purchaser of ticket subject to all terms and conditions of raffle; available upon request.

For mail orders send check or money order to:
ASA/Tatum Buggy Raffle, 11487 Woodside Ave., Ste 110, Santee, CA 92071
Or Call: 619.448.8078

Winners need not be present!

A Question for All

(from a post on our website bulletin board)

by Bill Jones (aka Sand Commander)

Those of us who have been duning for decades have seen a steady deterioration of public land available for us to recreate the way we have chosen to recreate. There is no doubt in anybody's mind that we were betrayed by high government officials on the PMV issue. The hatred of back room politics is what created the ASA and many other organizations to fight for our cause. We will always have a difficult fight for our right to public lands. The general public is easily misdirected to think we destroy and scar the lands we love. Public opinion is still strongly against us, but we are gaining ground. The number of recreational vehicles keeps increasing and hopefully eventually we will get the political clout to change things.

I think the biggest barrier for us reaching our goals is the simple fact that after all that has happened to us, after we have been thrown off our pubic lands that we have enjoyed for generations, after we have been regulated to death with camping fees, license and noise regulations that WILL continue to get worse- we are still largely unorganized and politically unmotivated to change our elected officials.

I am guessing 50% of duners do not know who the ASA is or what they do. I get asked all the time when I wear an ASA shirt what is the ASA? Yes, by duners! Most people who love to go duning do not want to get involved and try to save our public lands from being locked up. We as a whole can not get ourselves organized to become a VOTING political powerhouse. IF everyone who owns a recreational vehicle voted a certain way we would own this state (CA). But we don't vote, we don't even register to vote. Off-roaders have had political action committees for years who actively seek support for candidates sympatric to our plight and have come up empty handed. We have not been able to tip the political scale in our favor. We also have CLORV. (California League of Off-Road Voters) Does anybody follow their recommendations? Nope.

We have a variety of interest groups with the same interest. Duners, desert racers (2,3, and 4 wheel variety), rock hounds, boaters snowmobilers, rock climbers, mountain bikers, personal watercraft, kayakers, wind surfers, landsailers, hunters, fishermen, scuba divers, horseback riders and many more that have all had their rights taken away from them and they still do nothing or very little. Why do all of these people allow these things to happen to them? Why don't they unite? Are the current political leaders too powerful and seem invincible? I don't know.

Don't blame the BLM for our fate. We did it to ourselves! We allowed the environmentalists to beat us in the game of public opinion. We didn't know we were being attacked until it was too late. We stayed quiet too long and we lost the battle. We mobilize thousands at our clean-ups , a feat the green nuts can not do and we have to struggle for local news coverage. If a hundred people show up to clean a beach it is front page news. We lost many battles in the past. The war is not over yet! The battle against the biased ESA is gaining momentum and reform is being sought. We have organizations in place and dedicated individuals to fight for us, but they need our continued support. Don't forget to keep your memberships active in OUR organizations that fight for US. These organizations need more than our memberships. They need money and volunteers to be effective. Spread the word to every off roader, to your neighbors, friends and relatives. I have had many heated discussions with my relatives on off road rights. I have a neice who is thinking about being, get this- an environmental lawyer. We don't see eye to eye on many issues. Don't let our rights be beaten in the relm of public opinion. Speak out when you hear about our issues being twisted out of context.

Do you think a Federal Judge would have stopped the temporary closures from happening? No, not one. Why? Because our enemies have political muscle and they get their way. Our enemies win every time off-roaders get hacked in the press and somebody, who doesn't know anything about the issue thinks, "That's right, we need to protect the land from being destroyed by off road vehicles." That same person does vote and will remember that article about renegade off roaders and they will vote one of our enemies into office.

We can not fight the system and be effective until we have public support of the issues and we don't have that right now. We have to CHANGE the system. Elections are not that far off. How will you choose who to vote for? Will you even bother to vote? If you stay home, out of the polls, our enemies will win another battle. We have the numbers to change things. We don't have the motivation to change things, however. Someday, there won't be any more battles and the war will be over.

http://www.americansandassociation.org/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=198&highlight

CALIFORNIA LEAUGE OF OFF-ROAD VOTERS (CLORV)

CLORV is a coordinating umbrella organization. They are dedicated to keeping existing off-road motorized recreation opportunities open during this period, when environmental extremists are attempting to close down motorized recreation in California at both the federal and state levels. On our website, politically active off-roaders in California will find information on legislation, legislators, or candidates that affect the future of off-road motorized recreation in California. ***http://www.clorv.org/***

President's Day ISDRA Visit by Bob Ratcliffe of BLM

On President's Day weekend representatives of ASA, United Desert Gateway (UDG), Technical Review Team (TRT) and the Imperial County Board of Supervisors were afforded an opportunity to meet with Bob Ratcliffe, BLM Washington Division Chief for Recreation and Visitor Services.

ASA's first involvement with Bob was in DC when the UDG partnership was proposed. Ratcliffe and his staff were involved in the DC review and approval of the Dune Smart publication. Grant George, Nicole Gilles, Ken Rosevear and Wally Leimgruber met Bob during the DC visits. More recently, Ratcliffe joined Steve Razo and Bob Mason as guest speakers at the National Sheriff's conference hosted by BLM in Washington. Ratcliffe has a major influence on ISDRA funding and UDG partnership activities.

Ratcliffe's Duties Include: Responsible for the overall management of the Recreation and Visitor Services Division of the Renewable Resources Directorate.

Everything that deals with people on BLM public land ranging from accessibility to visual resources. OHV travel plans, recreation concessions and fee permits.

Budget and policy formulation including field guidance. Participates in the crafting of Dept of Interior/Dept of Agriculture joint policy for consistent administration of the National Lands Recreation Enhancement Act including enhancement of recreation facilities and fee collection.

Tour objectives as stated by Ratcliffe:

See a high use weekend and learn about operational issues.
Observe how the fee plans are working and identify future improvements.
Observe level of law enforcement, how is funding being used, how BLM is coordinating?
Gain a general sense of operational challenges, safety measures, DUI campaign.
Learn what is going on at the largest BLM visitor site for OHVs.
Identify how we can help from the Washington end to make things work better.

BLM Tour Participants:	Bob Ratcliffe,	Chief, Recreation and Visitor Services Division, Washington, DC
	Troy Bolen	Special Agent in Charge, Sacramento, CA
	Jim Keeler	OHV Coordinator, Sacramento, CA
	Steve Borchard	Manager, California Desert District, Moreno Valley, CA
	Steve Razo	Director of External Affairs, Moreno Valley, CA
	Vicki Wood	Manager, El Centro Field Office
	Neil Hamada	Dunes Manager, ISDRA
	Bernadette LaVato	Lake Havasu Office
Imperial County:	Gary Wyatt,	Supervisor, District # 7
UDG:	Nicole Gilles,	UDG President & TRT Member
ASA:	Grant George, President; Dick Holliday, Secretary//Treasurer; Gary Jordan, Board Member; Bob Mason, Chairman Glenn Montgomery, Communications Committee & TRT Member; Tim Gantz, Dunes Outreach Team Leader	

The following summarizes the observations that were made during the tour with the BLM representatives:

Fee Collection: BLM management and staff are cognizant of the deficiencies in the current fee collection process. Modifications to the Assistance Agreement may be required to improve marketing techniques. ISDRA visitors must be afforded multiple alternatives to purchase a permit. Permit sales incentives may be warranted to broaden the sales opportunities. This may mean that ICSO may be required to share a portion of their 30% commission with permit vendors. The permit sale process must be visitor friendly. Performance measures warrant reconsideration. UDG and OHV organizations should be considered for a more significant role in permit marketing. The observations of Imperial County Supervisor Gary Wyatt warrant further discussion and consideration. Plans for the 2006-07 season will include a fall back option in the event that the RFID technology is not available. Recreation Enhancement Act permit revenue represents a major source of ISDRA operating funds. BLM was receptive to the need for more on-the-ground improvements. During discussions with Vicky Wood and Bob Ratcliffe the point was made that fire rings and picnic tables are not required. Additional had surface camping areas and maintenance of the existing facilities is the preferred option.

Public Safety: Spectator safety at the impromptu drags was noted as a significant concern. NASCAR driver Greg Biffle has offered to participate in the preparation of a Public Service Announcement (PSA) on the weekend of March 5th. BLM and ASA will collaborate in the development of the content. The proposed "BLM Visiting Staff Orientation" DVD concept was well received. The general consensus was to proceed with the DVD for next season. It was suggested by BLM that a similar DVD be produced for viewing by dune visitors. Bob Ratcliffe suggested the involvement of the BLM Phoenix Training Facility staff in the development of the DVD's. Wally Cahill Motorsports Mania involvement was also suggested.

Partnership Activities: Several of the UDG partnership activities were discussed throughout the two days. BLM on several occasions made the point that ISDRA and the UDG partnership activities have been identified as a template for other BLM partnership activities elsewhere.

I.S.D.R.A. Technical Review Team / T.R.T.

The Imperial Sand Dunes Recreational Area TRT has their own web site found at: http://www.isdratrt.org In January, member Glenn Montgomery made audio recordings of 1/24/06 TRT meeting. Glenn broke the meeting down into 18 audio tracks covering the all the topics of the day that you can selectively listen to online. Listening is like being there without having to take the time off work and driving to El Centro. Thank you Glenn for your time in helping to keep **ALL** informed on the dune issues at the ISDRA.

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>>> BIOLOGICAL UPDATE <<<

Once again the ASA funded Dr. Art Phillips for the fifth year to do Pierson's Milk-vetch (PMV) studies. These ongoing studies are used to gather scientific data on the PMV. Before the ASA hired Dr. Phillips very little was known about the life cycle of the PMV. The little data that was known was used as the basis for the listing of the PMV as an Endangered species. After last years exceptional rain fall and the explosion of PMV plants, the BLM counted 1.8 million in their own study. This years extremely light rain fall of only .3 inches, has shown just how dependent the PMV is to rain. Dr. Phillips has counted zero new seedlings this year due directly to the lack of rain.

To verify that there are still many seeds in the sand waiting for the next rain, Dr. Phillips has done what is called a seed bank study. This is a procedure where a random site is selected and a number of samples are taken and the number of seeds in that sample are counted. The number of seeds that are found are then extrapolated for the whole site and from that data an estimate of the total number of seeds in the ground across the whole dunes can be estimated.

This is a very time consuming process and many volunteers donated their time to help with these studies. If it were not for these volunteers giving up one of their dune days we would not have been able to complete all these studies.

The hope is that this data will be used to show that the PMV is not endangered from OHV's as claimed and is totally dependent on rainfall for it to prosper. This plant has been successful in thriving in a very inhospitable environment for thousands of years and will continue to thrive as long as it gets rain.

The ASA will use the data collected from Dr. Phillips work to augment our delisting petition and other litigation surrounding the dunes.

We want to thank again our members for their valuable time.
(more photos and info in the online version)

New Board Members Selected

We are pleased to announce that at the Board of Directors (BOD) meeting on April 3rd, 2006 the board elected 2 new members to serve on the board. Bill Jones of Huntington Beach, CA was elected as a member of the BOD that will start immediately, to fill a vacant position. The BOD also elected Bob Gagliano of Lancaster, CA to fill Vince Brunasso's position when his term expires at the end of June. Vince will continue to serve on the ASA Advisory Committee with past board member Jerry Seaver.

Both of these gentlemen have been working on various projects for the ASA for the past several months. Bill is working on the development of a DVD about safety in the dunes. We anticipate using this DVD as a outreach tool to help promote safe practices. Bob is working on the development of an ISDRA Visiting Staff Orientation DVD. Both the BLM and ICSO are participating in the DVD development stage now. Both DVD's should be available before next season and plans are to premier them at the Sand Sports Super Show in September.

Now Accepting Nominations

We are now looking to recognize those of our volunteers that give freely of their time and talent in the pursuit of the goals and ideals of the ASA. **The Jerry R. Seaver Award**, established by the ASA Board of Directors, commends and recognizes extraordinary volunteer efforts of ASA members.

The program provides an opportunity for all of us to honor the dedicated people who make a difference in our sport by uniting, informing and mobilizing Sand Sport enthusiasts. Our volunteers are the backbone of our organization and we appreciate the personal sacrifices made by our volunteers and their families--their efforts are what make our organization great. We thank those outstanding ASA members who give their time and talent unselfishly to protect public access to public lands.

Anyone can nominate any ASA member who they believe qualifies for this award, or apply for the award personally. Current ASA Board of Directors and their families are not eligible. Qualifications, rules, and forms are available on the ASA?s website at http://www.asasand.com/documents/JRS_Award or by contacting Gary Jordan at::602-571-3395 or email to: firewoodaz@cox.net

ACTION PROGRAM UNITES OUTDOOR RECREATIONISTS

A diverse coalition of manufacturers, consumers, outdoor recreational groups and stakeholder groups unite together in an effort to protect access to public lands across the country. The American Sand Association supports this organization.

The Action Program groups represent a very broad and diverse range of interests, including horseback riders, 4x4 vehicle users, motorcyclists, recreational miners, snowmobilers, dune buggy owners, and people with interests in camping, hiking and various forms of outdoor sports. The Action Program is an independent organization that represents millions of recreationists throughout the United States, and it is using its formidable resources to turn the current tide of indiscriminate land closures back to a balanced system.

Support those who are in the fight to protect your recreation!! Buy all of your trailers, gear and equipment from our Industry Investors.

ACTION INVESTORS

Weekend Warrior Trailers
Rage'n Inc.
Northwood Trailers
Extreme RVs
Coachmen Industries
Fleetwood Industries
Honda/Yamaha of Redlands
Progressive Trailers
Aluminum Trailer Company
T2K Trailers
Santek Trailers
Thor California

ACTION
ACCESS PUBLIC LANDS

www.actionprogram.info

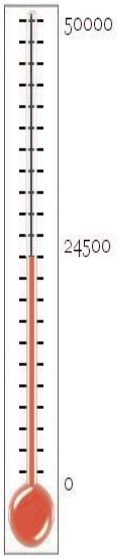
Here's how the Action Program works, and how you can help support the Program. Funding for the Action Program is raised by the sales of "ACTION" emblems to vehicle manufacturers and dealerships. The dealers and manufacturers purchase the emblems, and then they install them on each unit they sell. Currently most of the manufacturers that participate in the program are from the trailer industry. But it is not limited to just trailers, and can also include all types of recreational vehicles including buggies, ATVs, etc. You can support the Program by supporting businesses that participate in the Action Program.

To learn more about the Action Program, you can call (866) 215-2565, or visit the web-site at:

www.actionprogram.info

>>> *MEMBERSHIP NEWS* <<<

We still want to have **50,000+** voices to take with us to **Washington DC** and **WE NEED YOUR HELP!**
Yes our membership has increased but we really need ALL MEMBERS to sign up at least 2 people each.
We are still working toward our goal, have you signed up someone yet?



For our renewing Supporting Members, we now have a carbineer key chain that includes a LED light! New Supporting Members will still receive our Supporting Member license plate frames along with their membership card and sticker. We have been offering the ASA die cut sticker as an optional item to the license plate frames for renewals, but you can even have too many of those after awhile. So the key chain is our new item that renewing members can elect to receive. When you send in your renewal let us know if you want one of the key chains, they come in red or blue. If you renew on-line, just send a note to us at the email address:

membership@americansandassociation.org

and let us know your preference.

Thanks, Dick Holliday
ASA Membership Director

We would like to welcome all the new and renewing Supporting Members that have signed up or renewed since our last newsletter. Their commitment goes a long way in supporting the fight to keep our riding areas open now and for our future. Thank You

Juan Aceves
Dale Admire
Andrew Alcocer
Dan Alexander
Jamin Amond
Shaylene Anderson
Donna Armour
Lloyd Banning
Darlene Behie
Jim Bell
Tina Bell
David Bellhouse
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YOUR NAME HERE

ASA MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

OFFICIAL RULES for the ASA MEMBERSHIP DRIVE CONTEST
Specifically, the rules below are for the Contest

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN

How to Enter: Using a membership form or the ASA online Join page, sign up family members and friends for a membership or upgrade your own membership. Each new membership receives points (see below) that are credited to your name. Odds of winning depend on number of contestants.

By entering or participating in the ASA Membership Drive Contest you agree to all of the following rules:

ASA Membership Contest Rules:

Begins: Sept 19th, 2005 Ends on: June 1st, 2006

TOP PRIZE: The Winner will receive a 4-Night Stay at Terrible's Hotel & Casino - Las Vegas and includes meals and 1 night on the town with a limo!

Winner determined by points earned:

Each new individual membership = 1 Pt (free membership)
Each new paid Supporting Membership = 5 Pts ($25 annually)
Each new supporting Business Sponsor = 10 Pts (same for all 4 levels)

All new and existing members may participate (board members excluded)

One Random Prize: All that participated in the contest are eligible for a $250.00 gift certificate good for all merchandise in the ASA Online Store

Winners to be awarded at the 2006 Sand Sports Super Show
(need not be present to win)

ASA Membership Contest Rules for ASA Business Sponsors:

(Same rules as above; time frame and points earned)

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SAND CAR CHALLENGE, JUNE 23-24th, ORANGE SHOW SPEEDWAY
SOCAL SAND & DIRT EXPO, AUGUST 5-6th, ONTARIO CONVENTION CENTER
8th SAND SPORTS SUPER SHOW, SEPTEMBER 15-17th, ORANGE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

FOR UP-TO-DATE EVENTS, PLEASE SEE OUR WEBSITE

To help the ASA at the above events:

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PMV FINAL COUNTS FOR 2005/2006 SEASON

The PMV April trip went well, and we accomplished our goal of counting the total number of living plants. Almost all were "survivors" from 2004-05 or earlier; of the 1288 plants we counted, only 9 were 2005-06 seedlings.

Many of the perennial plants were healthy and had loads of pods which are just starting to shed seeds. This is only the second year of six that has had virtually no spring germination. The volunteers were great, helping with the counts and getting us around very well. The counts from this trip will serve as a baseline for assessing survival next fall.

Dr. Art Phillips

HOT ROD LADY

Your memory lays fresh upon my face, like the dew on morning grass.

He kicked his heels up high and said; at last I've found my lass.

She's kind of pretty, yet brazen, a wild cat tried and true.

She lights me up and fires my engines, hot flames with Chevy blue.

She'll be my Hot Rod Lady, built for speed, yet somewhat sane.

Loving every moment, she was his uptown dame.

When he finally took her, after waiting for so long.

It felt so warmly credible, like a dove had sang its song.

She makes him laugh and giggle like he's never known before.

It's been a long time for both of them with someone to adore.

She'll be his Hot Rod Lady, fueled with passion that's for sure.

Her tender kiss and warm embrace, a gesture that is pure.

It was no accident for these two to meet, the intensity fills the air.

Holding her in his embrace, a treat extremely rare.

Speeding around the track of life, so short it flashes by.

Good things come to those who wait and now they both know why.

ASA Volunteer
J. Maddalena, December, 2005 (c)

COURT DECISION JUST TIP OF THE ICEBERG!

by:

Roy Denner, President & CEO
Off-Road Business Association

Negative impacts on OHV recreation are running the gamut – from the Roadless Rule that is shutting down trails in many forest areas that have been used by off-roaders traditionally since the settling of the west – to the myriad of lawsuits filed nationally using the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as a weapon to curtail public access to public lands instead of a tool to protect endangered species. Federal land management agencies are spending a huge amount – in some cases all – of their federally appropriated budgets to respond to lawsuits. Very little is left to actually manage public lands for public use. OHV groups all over the country are fighting for the survival of their form of recreation.

At the Off-Road Business Association (ORBA), we often hear from company owners who are telling us that they are having the most profitable year in their history. Before these companies invest in new capital equipment or expand into that new facility they might want to consider some important signs of what is coming down the pike. The anti-access organizations have been working hard – and smart – behind the scenes to move all of their stars into alignment at the same time.

While the battle over the Roadless Rule is taking place state-by-state across the country, consider some recent developments in California.

For the last six or seven years the poster child land use issue nationally has been the battle to keep OHV access at the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area (ISDRA) in Southern California. The ISDRA is a BLM managed recreation area that is described in a BLM handout as one of the 12 top recreation areas in the country. The species of concern at the ISDRA is the Peirson's MilkVetch (PMV) plant – listed as "threatened" under the ESA. About half of the ISDRA has been closed to vehicle use presumably to protect the PMV from extinction. OHV organizations, under the lead of the American Sand Association, have contracted with a well-known biological firm to do studies on the PMV over the last five years. The studies show that the health of the PMV population is dependent on rainfall and not the level of OHV activity. Last year – a particularly good rainfall year – BLM biologists counted over 1.8 million healthy PMV plants at the ISDRA. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has reviewed the studies and agreed that the information is valid enough to consider removing the PMV from the endangered species list.

In spite of all evidence to the contrary, a recent ruling by a ninth circuit federal court judge in San Francisco supports the anti-access group litigants' claim that continuing OHV use in the ISDRA will lead to the demise of the PMV! As this article goes to press the BLM and OHV group interveners have 30 days to come up with a remedy or the court will decide on what action is necessary. While the PMV battle continues, the anti-access groups have filed another lawsuit against USFWS for not responding to their demand to list 16 other insects and plants that they say are endemic to the ISDRA and need protection under the ESA. Those organizations have vowed to close the entire ISDRA to vehicle access and are using their seemingly unlimited resources to make it happen.

Now the same anti-access groups have filed a notice of intent to sue the BLM and USFWS to stop implementation of all of the new California Desert District Management Plans – covering over 10 million acres of public lands. The notice cites the court decision on the ISDRA Plan and infers that the other plans are equally guilty of not providing appropriate protection for "sensitive, rare, threatened and endangered species" and their habitats. The plaintiffs in the notice and the previous lawsuits are the Center for Biological Diversity, The Sierra Club, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, and Desert Survivors.

You may ask how these anti-access organizations can fund the hundreds of lawsuits they have in process at any given time. The answer is that the litigation is "self-funding." Any litigation initiated under the Endangered Species Act entitles the winning plaintiffs to file for reimbursement from the federal government! They have been playing this game for a long time while the OHV community has typically tried to "work things out" without litigation. Of course they also enjoy the benefit of a huge donation revenue stream as well. A recently formed California OHV legal organization known as EcoLogic has been commissioned to fight fire with fire and take a hard line regarding litigation on behalf of the OHV community.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

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Adding fuel to the fire is the fact that plaintiffs in lawsuits can shop for the district court in which they want to file their litigation. ORBA has been encouraging Congress to pass legislation requiring suits to be filed in the district where the problem is located. The anti-access organizations like to file in the 9th district court in San Francisco. That court is famous for siding with environmental extremist groups on land use issues. It is also the most over-turned federal court in the country. Unfortunately it takes a lot of funds to appeal a federal court decision.

Sadly, most OHV enthusiasts are only interested in participating in off-road activities. They buy their hundred thousand dollar motor homes and their hundred thousand dollar off-road toys and use the lands available. When asked to participate with an organization that is fighting to keep riding areas open they are much too busy with their other problems. A small handful of volunteers in each off-road organization do an unbelievable amount of work. The loss of Harold Soens, President of the San Diego Off-Road Coalition and President of the California League of Off-Road Voters, who died on March 30th of a sudden heart attack, will represent a major reduction in the collective OHV effort to keep our sport alive. Will other OHV enthusiasts step up to the plate to cover all of the bases that Harold covered? Highly unlikely!

Maybe we just need to admit that the anti-access environmental extremist organizations are way too smart for us. They are well funded, have the courts on their side, and are much better organized. The 22% of California families that participate in OHV recreation can't possibly take on this well-organized attack. When the entire California desert becomes closed to OHV access we can always take up golf or tennis. I'm sure we can get kids, teenagers and grandfathers really excited about a weekend playing golf.

Oh yes – as California OHV recreation goes – so goes the country. Isn't it great to be pioneers in the movement to give our sport over to the smarter anti-access groups! Roy

TAKING PRIDE IN THE DUNES

Take Pride in America is a national partnership program that enables individuals, civic groups, corporations and others to volunteer in caring for the lands that we share. These partners work together to enhance and protect the special legacy all Americans share in our public lands that cover more than one in every three acres across the Nation. Our public parks, forests, wildlife refuges, cultural and historic sites, local playgrounds and other recreation areas, like the dunes of Arizona and California, belong to all Americans. And together, these partners work to instill an active sense of ownership and responsibility in all citizens to help care for these special resources.

Boasting Clint Eastwood as the national spokesman, together they spread the simple message of **Take Pride in America, It's Your Land, Lend A Hand.** Take Pride in America consists of: Federal, state, and local governments; conservation, youth, and recreation groups; national corporations, organizations; and individuals dedicated to instilling a sense of volunteerism and good stewardship in all public land users. Take Pride in America encourages individuals to take a more active role by volunteering. Take Pride's Mission is as follows; **Awareness**: increase the public's sense of responsibility for public resources. **Action**: invite the public to help maintain and enhance our shared spaces. **Awards**: honor individual and group volunteers for outstanding work in public lands. Take Pride's history began in 1985 when Interior Secretary Donald Hodel recognized a growing problem with vandalism and looting of historical artifacts on public lands. He knew that there was too much land for Federal enforcement personnel to combat the problem alone. Hodel developed Take Pride in America as the solution, turning the stewardship of public lands back to its owners: the public. Both President Ronald Reagan and President George W. Bush have echoed Hodel's belief that we are responsible for our lands.

Celebrity spokesmen such as Charles Bronson, Clint Eastwood, and Lou Gossett, Jr. also promoted this message. Recently, past Secretary of the Interior Gale A. Norton re-launched Take Pride In America in April 2003, under the USA Freedom Corps, a council for service opportunities. Take Pride is now established by the U.S. Department of the Interior as a national partnership program.

Across the country, states and communities are implementing the Take Pride initiative in ways that best suit local needs and interests, but the message is the same: We have a duty to care for the public lands we use and enjoy. Each of us can find a way to Take Pride in America by lending a hand. Isn't it time you Take Pride in America by taking pride in the way your recreate and maintain the sand dunes where you play on a regular basis?

Chairman's Report on the Desert Advisory Council (DAC) field trip and the meeting in El Centro on March 31 and April 1.

By Chairman Bob Mason

Jerry Seaver and I attended the Desert Advisory Council (DAC) field trip and the meeting in El Centro on March 31 and April 1. This was a highly productive opportunity to network with a broad spectrum of interests including the DAC members, the land managers and elected officials and/or their staff. Several significant commitments were made that are consistent with ASA objectives. Click on this link to view a profile of the DAC membership

DAC ISDRA Field Trip, Friday March 31

ASA Board member Gary Jordan coordinated the sand cars for the field trip. Eleven vehicles were on hand. Each driver was presented with an ASA shirt, cap and a complimentary one year "Supporting Membership' as a token of appreciation for taking a day off work to provide transportation for the DAC tour.

The field trip attendees included the DAC and several other interested parties. The BLM was represented by several members of management as well as El Centro Field Office staff members who participated in the briefings conducted along the field trip route. DAC member and Off Road Business Association (ORBA) President coordinated a very successful turnout of elected officials and their staff.

BLM ISDRA manager Neil Hamada lead briefings related to dunes management, fee collection, monitoring, interim closures, status of the RAMP and vendor permitting during several stops in the dunes.

DAC Dinner, Friday March 31

ORBA, Imperial County, UDG and ASA hosted a dinner for the DAC and other invited guests. This provided an informal opportunity to speak with the DAC, BLM Management, representatives of the Desert Protective Council and Roberta Burns, Imperial County Chief Executive Officer.

DAC Meeting, Saturday April 1

The entire meeting was recorded by a court recorder.Transcripts may be viewed on the BLM CA Desert District website. In addition to the published agenda Sheriff Carter was granted time to discuss law enforcement and fee compliance at ISDRA. He used a brief video and a PowerPoint to make the following observations:

Sheriff Carter described the law enforcement coalition role in returning the ISDRA to a safe place for family OHV recreation. He noted that a large segment of the lawless element has been removed.

He mentioned that it has been suggested that the "Break the Law, Go to Jail" signs be replaced with "Welcome Duners" signage.

Sheriff Carter closed his presentation with a review of fee collection, noting that revenue collection has been better than last year. In discussions with BLM he has learned that fee management changes are required that are not acceptable and therefore ICSO may not continue to collect fees in 2006-07.

Presentations by UDG and ASA were well received. The ASA presentation included the following observations:

Looking Ahead to Next Season:

ISDRA Public Safety Program:
- Increased Rule and Law Awareness
- Consistent Enforcement

Implementation:
- Visiting Staff Orientation DVD
- Responsible Duning Safety DVD
- Litter Bag Safety Message
- Celebrity Public Service Announcements

Improved Permit Fee Compliance
Continued Enforcement Emphasis

The DAC passed a motion requesting the CA Desert District (CDD) Manager to consider the following ASA recommendations:

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ACTION ITEM

Desert Advisory Council Support for ISDRA Public Safety Program

ASA recommends that the DAC consider the following:

Encourage Imperial county and BLM to maintain a high level of law enforcement presence
Development of consistent Field Office rules, i.e.
Grey water disposal
Metal in firewood
Consistent enforcement of rules
Warning citations – spirt vs. letter of the law
Visitor friendly community policing

CDD Manager Steve Borchard acknowledged the need to produce a DVD to indoctrinate visiting law enforcement coalition personnel about the rules and laws including consideration of the "spirit of the law" vs. "letter of law" warnings and citations.

The DAC members, without exception, voiced support of the UDG and ASA partnership involvement. It was clear that they all have a much better understanding of the value of sand sport recreation. The support of business sponsors was clearly evident in the UDG presentation which noted over $300,000 in cost matching contributions.

Meeting with Wally Leimguber, Chairman, Imperial County Board of Supervisors, Sat. April 1

Discussion topics included the March 29, 2006 letter from Charles Lucas, President of the Imperial County Deputy Sheriff's Association. Wally provided the Board of Supervisors (BOS) perspective regarding the staffing levels and associated funding. Wally also discussed the need for a workable solution to continue to involve Imperial County in the ISDRA fee program. We discussed several options and reinforced the following ASA position presented at the DAC meeting:

- ASA encourages the Imperial BOS and BLM to re think the terms and conditions of the ICSO fee collection Assistance Agreement with ICSO with increased emphasis on accountability.
- Consider involving the UDG in marketing both on the ground and offsite.
- Consider limiting the agreement with ICSO to fee compliance enforcement.
- An overall win-win for the BLM, Imperial County and the ISDRA visitors.

Wally indicated that he will participate in a meeting with Steve Borchard, Roberta Burns and Vicki Wood, El Centro Field Office Manager on Tuesday April 3 to develop a strategy to continue Imperial County's participation in the ISDRA permit process. The need for improved accountability was emphasized. Vicki Wood informed Jerry Seaver that she will be the point of contact for future fee collection discussion. Jerry noted that time is of the essence.

Other Observations:

BLM noted that crews will be assigned to restake the closure before the Easter holiday.

BLM is clearly committed to the production of the "Visiting Staff Orientation" DVD. Steve Razo plans to schedule the first meeting of the DVD Development Team during the week of April 3rd.

Ted Jones, El Centro Field Office Ranger has offered to participate in the April 20 Biffle/Gordon PSA photo shoot at the Phoenix NASCAR race. Steve Razo will arrange BLM approval for Jones to participate.

Ted Jones offered to distribute checkered flags during law enforcement contacts to educate ISDRA visitors. Tim Gantz will arrange for the delivery of the flags.

Tim Gantz has been encouraged to use checkered flags as an incentive in the litter education program.

Following the UDG presentation one of the DAC members asked if the UDG or ASA have considered partnering with an environmental advocacy organization. At the close of the ASA presentation ASA challenged the environmental community to "Partner Up" on gathering data (monitoring). After the DAC meeting DAC member Tom Scott, University of California Department of Earth Sciences approached Jerry on this topic.

During the Olds Hill briefing Ted Jones noted the need for signage at the ISDRA to educate visitors about the ISDRA rules and laws. Lee Banning, ASA member and tour driver spoke with Ted about his willingness to assist in a signage project. Neil Hamada offered that the dumpster contractor has approved the installation of signage on his dumpsters. Several business sponsors have offered to fund this program. Neil will coordinate the development of the text for the signs. BLM will consider posting signs similar to the Coral Pink Sand dunes signage (see attached).

With the exception of Dane King, of Sand Addiction Magazine no other media representatives were observed to be in attendance in this two day event. Dane participated in the field trip driving a sand car provided by DeJong Sand Cars.

The DAC meeting was not well attended. San Diego Road Coalition, ORBA and ASA were the only OHV organizations in attendance. Participation by the local community was limited to elected official staff members.

Again the ASA would like to thank all our volunteers that helped in this years PMV studies.

Holli Bechard
Ron Bechard
Larry Beck
Anthony Carnevale
Keith Carnevale
Andy Diamond
Bob Donahue
Becky Gauger
Chris Gauger
Mike Gertsen
Tim Giannelli
Rob Goodwin
Harold Gottschalk
Terry Guinn
Peter Haan
Mar-Elise Hill
Ty Hollimon
Dick Holliday
Larry Holvey
Cory Hove
Jenny Hove
Don Johnson
Fran Lazear
Greg Lazear
Linda Lehman
Sam Lehman
Wendell Long
Mike Martin
Tony McKinney
Mike Openshaw
Steven Openshaw
John Peterson
Otto Privette
Richard Pruett
Chad Riccio
Terry Romine
Darrick Sandwick
Cass Sandwick
Joella Sartin
Bill Schueler
Nanette Shallcross
Tom Townley
Brian Walker
Matthew Ware
Steven Ware
John Webber
Sdau Weiler

Only with volunteer efforts will the ASA be able to

Inform, Unite and Mobilize

to help

Keep Our Dunes Open

What does the "Roadless Rule" controversy mean to our industry?

Remote areas that do not have "constructed" roads are generally known as "Roadless Areas." Typically the routes of travel through these areas are nothing more than trails through undeveloped areas that have been blazed over time by travelers in vehicles designed for off-road use.

ORBA's Land Use Director, Bill Dart, has been involved with the "Roadless" issue for many years and – since there is considerable controversy over the ability to use Roadless Areas for OHV recreation - we asked Bill to give us a summary of what it's all about and how it might impact the OHV industry. Most of the following information was provided by him:

Areas officially designated as Roadless Areas by the US Forest Service have been the subject of extensive debate for over 20 years now but the debate is at a very important point in time today. Under the Clinton Administration, a new "Roadless Rule" was forced through the regulatory process in the last days of that administration with support from all of the major anti-OHV organizations. The Clinton era rule was a big step towards making these Roadless Areas quasi Wilderness with strict limits on development and recreation and an obvious long-term negative impact on companies that provide products or services for those activities. This rule was challenged with administrative appeals and subsequently with legal action by a variety of agencies and organizations including the State of Idaho, Indian tribes, and OHV groups led by the BlueRibbon Coalition. Eventually the courts ruled in favor of BlueRibbon and overturned the Clinton Roadless Rule. This was a major victory, but the story doesn't end there.

Under the Bush administration, the Forest Service withdrew the Clinton version of the Roadless Rule and re-wrote the Rule. The new Rule was finalized last year. One of the key components of the new Roadless Rule was to allow the Governor of each state to petition the Chief of the Forest Service with their ideas on how the Roadless Areas should be managed. This has produced a wide range of thinking all across the country. Some states, such as Oregon and Montana, have already petitioned the Chief to reinstate the Clinton Roadless Rule. As the court system has already rejected the Clinton version, and it was withdrawn and a new Rule put in place, that petition was rejected. Most states have not finalized their recommendations yet or filed their own petition. The deadline for petitions is later this summer. As you might expect the thinking of the different states is as diverse as it could be. Oregon is at one end of the scale wanting Roadless Areas to essentially become Wilderness areas without Congressional authorization. Neighboring Idaho, on the other hand, has invited each county to hold public hearings after which the county officials will submit their own recommendations to the Governor for Roadless Areas within their county. The Governor will then take the county input and develop a state-wide recommendation for Roadless Area management.

Many of you are probably wondering what this means to you and to the OHV industry. By the name it would appear that there aren't roads in these areas so OHV use might be minimal or non-existent. But the truth is that these areas are some of the most valuable recreational public lands left and there are lots of trails in Roadless Areas. Here is where the lawyers and word-smithing come into play. Many years ago anti-OHV groups were successful in changing the definition of what a road is. To be legally considered a "road" in regards to Roadless Areas, or potential Wilderness areas, a road has to have been mechanically constructed and regularly mechanically maintained. As anyone who travels in our vast back country areas knows, many of our favorite primitive roads and jeep trails were not mechanically constructed, and they don't see regular maintenance. We do NOT want to see these roads maintained or improved as we like their primitive nature.

The story gets much worse than just the fate of primitive roads in these Roadless Areas. Besides 4-wheel access roads there are thousands of miles of narrow trails in these Roadless Areas that are currently open to motorcycles and ATV's. Snowmobilers enjoy some of their most treasured open riding in Roadless Areas.

The general goal for Roadless Areas is to preserve them in their relatively undeveloped state. The OHV community has no problem with these goals. We are not asking for new high grade roads or new developments in these areas. These areas are extremely valuable to the OHV community because they contain some of the most scenic lands open to OHV recreation. They tend to be remote, with little sign of civilization, and offer the best opportunity to escape the modern world using an off-road vehicle. These are some of the "Crown Jewels" of the OHV world.

The problem is that anti-OHV groups see Roadless Areas as quasi Wilderness areas, or lands just waiting for Wilderness designation. As an indicator of this, almost all of the major anti-OHV organizations recently produced a joint letter to the Forest Service regarding the OHV Route Designation process that is underway all across the country. These anti groups are calling for no OHV routes in Roadless Areas.

The bottom line for the OHV industry is that we need to do everything we can to preserve and enhance our recreational opportunities in Forest Service Roadless Areas. OHV recreation is the fastest growing recreation activity on public lands. With more and more people wanting to play we need more play areas not less. These prize Roadless locations are also some of the most beautiful areas in the country that are open to OHV recreation. If your state has Forest Service Roadless areas you might want to check and see how your state Governor is handling the Roadless issue. You should encourage your Governor to preserve and enhance OHV recreation in Roadless areas and point out to him/her that over 25% of the American public has enjoyed OHV recreation in the last year. If you are interested in learning more about the issue, or about how you can get involved personally, don't hesitate to contact ORBA.

(Editor's Notes: If this doesn't upset you, nothing will!)

Distrust Stirs The Dust

Ideological splits plague group that governs off-roading

By Michael Gardner
COPLEY NEWS SERVICE

February 21, 2006

SACRAMENTO – When Gov.Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed Daphne Greene to manage the state's troubled off-road vehicle program, the first question she faced was whether she would be the new sheriff or the executioner.

Amid a dramatic surge in popularity, the sport's future has been clouded by a festering ideological feud. The state governing body that oversees grants and policies important to off-roading has split along lines loyal to either riders or environmentalists.

Lingering distrust has poisoned potential compromises that could benefit off-roaders, protect the environment and appease communities being invaded by the noise and pollution of the sport, say some of those involved.

"We can't come together on the simplest things," lamented Michael Prizmich, the sheriff of Amador County and a member of the state's off-road oversight commission.

Clashes have escalated just as the Schwarzenegger administration prepares to make critical decisions on how to restructure the program and shake up the seven-member commission.

The 35-year-old program could even dissolve, although that's considered unlikely.A 1971 law that authorized the off-road program expires at the end of this year. Schwarzenegger has yet to advance a renewal proposal, frustrating off-roaders.

Some of the discord can be traced to the program's structure. California splits the management responsibility between the commission and a division of the state Parks and Recreation Department. Greene is in charge of the division, but must work with the commission. The program's budget is $55.6 million.

Off-roading has long drawn criticism from many quarters. Rogue riders leave an impression of noisy, smoggy machines plowing roughshod through pristine forests and sand dunes. Television ads for ATVs and trucks promote the wild image.

Now the sport is booming. Over the past five years, the number of permits sold for off-road vehicles nearly doubled, from 479,178 in 2001 to 900,861 in 2005 in California. Four million riders enjoyed state-run off-road parks last year, and countless more journeyed to national forests and other getaways. Network television carries off-road competition and a recent one-night event in San Francisco drew 37,000 fans.

Officially known as the state's Off-Road Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission, the oversight panel is made up of political appointees – four selected by the Legislature; three by the governor – who determine how millions of dollars are spent across the state. The money comes from two primary sources: a share of the state gas tax and permits, which run $25 every two years.

Greene touched off the latest flare-up when she blocked 46 local grants worth $5.4 million that the commission had approved. Backed by legal counsel, Greene dismissed the grants as "arbitrary and capricious."

"How can the division go behind the backs of the appointed commission?" demanded Commissioner Harold Thomas, a Sacramento-area prosecutor who specializes in environmental law. "I can find no authority for what they've done. It's unprecedented."

The deadlock threatens to hold up the entire $18 million in grant funds available for rider safety, trail improvement and enforcement programs. It's also strained relationships with federal authorities who manage national land used for off-road recreation.

Greene, a former off-road commissioner, said the action reflects the governor's goal of restoring credibility and accountability to the grants process.

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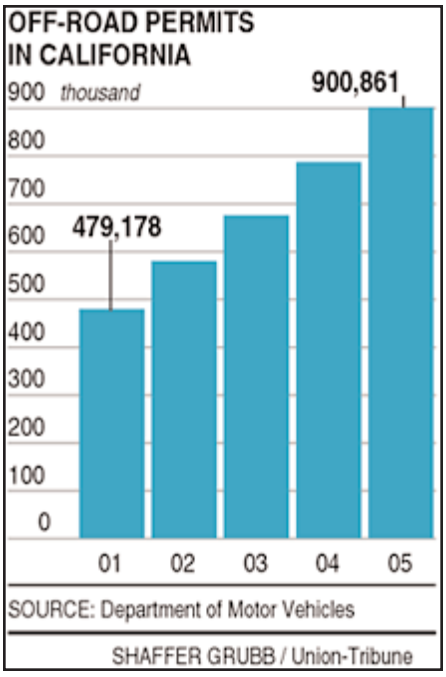

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For years, Greene said, "it was all about who's your friend" when it came time to dole out the money. "How fair is that?" she asked.

Off-road enthusiasts also have filed a lawsuit claiming commissioners secretly met to determine grants and let personal bias influence their decision.

Commissioners have distributed $141 million in grants since 1996 and still have the $18 million for this year.

"It's a challenge," Greene said of trying to deal with the competing factions. "What we see now, unfortunately, is a situation where the individual opinions and agendas have clouded the greater responsibility."

Others are less judicious. "The commission should come to a screeching halt. It should end," said Commissioner Robert Chavez, an Encino resident aligned with off-roaders.

Commission Chairman Paul Spitler of Davis, a former director of the California Wilderness Coalition, said the commission justifiably changed course to become more environmentally friendly after years of domination by off-road users. "In the past year and a half you've seen unprecedented efforts to usurp the role of the commission and roll back a lot of the environmental protections the Legislature initiated," Spitler said. "It certainly appears this administration is trying to take us back to the bad old days."

But Chavez, who has not attended a meeting for a year, said environmental factions seem bent on banning off-road use from public lands.

"It will be a happy day for them" when that happens, he said.

The state auditor brought the infighting to light last August in a blistering report that found favoritism in awarding contracts and lax oversight, among other problems.

Sen. Bill Morrow, an Oceanside Republican who pushed for the audit, has accused the commission of ignoring the auditor's recommendations.

"They haven't done a lick," said Morrow, a candidate for San Diego's 50th Congressional District.

Morrow, an off-road enthusiast, has railed against certain state policies. In 1996 he was cited by a park ranger for doing "doughnuts" – driving in tight circles at high speed – in a four-wheel-drive vehicle that sported special legislative license plates. State parks Director Ruth Coleman has ordered Greene "to fix" the situation, parks spokesman Roy Stearns said. Purging the commission is one option, Stearns said.

"If the only way to get to where we're going is to change the commission, to put a more fair commission up there, that's OK with us," he said.

But some commissioners don't agree with the audit's findings. Being unpaid, part-time and busy in their private lives, they say, makes it difficult to respond rapidly.A meeting is planned later this year on the audit, 12 months after its public release.
The growing friction is evident to those who follow the commission.

"The commission is dysfunctional and divided," said Fred Wiley, executive director of the Off-Road Business Association, based in Santee.

Albert Llata of Los Angeles said off-road enthusiasts deserve commissioners who will work on their behalf.

"Does Oscar Mayer hire vegetarians?" he asked.

Others are more blunt. Dave Pickett, a Folsom off-roader speaking at a recent commission meeting, accused the pro-environment majority of being "obstructionists" and demanded their resignations.

The environmental camp writes off the complaints as sour grapes from off-roaders.

"The game has changed. For 30 years, they had it their way," said Karen Schambach, a community activist in the foothills north of Sacramento.

The Schwarzenegger administration itself has escalated tensions by raiding accounts meant for off-roading and spending the money on in-house office functions and parks that ban dune buggies, four-wheelers, ATVs and snowmobiles.

State officials justified the diversions, saying some helped create off-road opportunities. They couldn't explain, however, why Angel Island, in San Francisco Bay, received off-road revenues.

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Parks officials say the diversions of money have ended, although the account is still owed $21 million borrowed during former Gov. Pete Wilson's administration.

"Absolutely – they should be angry," Greene said of off-roaders frustrated over the use of funds earmarked for their sport.

However, there is talk within the administration of increasing registration fees on off-road vehicles, to perhaps $18 a year from the current $12.50.

In addition to registration fees, the program receives millions annually in gas taxes based on estimates of how much fuel is used by street-legal, four-wheel-drive and other vehicles when drivers go off paved surfaces.

A huge slice of the program's budget also subsidizes the federal government. Since 1996, commissioners have awarded $61.8 million to the Bureau of Land Management and an additional $59.3 million to the U.S. Forest Service.

Schwarzenegger brought in Greene when lawmakers were preparing to approve the audit that was expected to shake up things.

Greene has credentials as an off-roader and environmentalist. She was a world-class competitor in four-wheel-drive racing, is an avid rock climber and a mountaineer, having scaled daunting peaks like Kilimanjaro, Denali, Rainier and Shasta.

Greene said the disputes overshadow a broader issue. Given growth and environmental pressures, what is the state's commitment to the sport, she said, particularly as a new generation that has never heard of Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl puts keys in the ignition.

"Where's our land ethic?" she asked.

Find this article at:
http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/state/20060221-9999-1n21offroad.html

A member writes:

I just read the Feb. issue of the A S A publication. Most interesting was the article about Ted Jones BLM- ECFO. I had just ask him to write a recommendation letter for my friend Mike. This is what Ted Jones wrote back to me:

To whom it may concern: During the 2005 - 2006 dune season there were numerous vehicles that were left abandoned. Although there are several tow companies that operate in the area none were willing to retrieve these vehicles. Michael Fernandes using his own vehicle was more than willing to tow these vehicles out of the area. I would encourage you to consider Mr. Fernandes for his towing permit. Ted Jones BLM ECFO

This is the story about Mike, his love, concern and knowledge of the Dunes:

I met Mike 2 seasons ago and we both have the same passion, spending as much time in the dunes as possible. In fact this season we were 2 of the 18 full time Glamis residents. Until I met Mike I have always been the copilot in my friends sand rail. When my Mother came to visit from Turkey Mike wanted to take her on a "comfortable" ride in the dunes.

He picked us up from our camp at Cement Flats in his truck. OK I thought, this will be a nice ride for my Mother, to the Drags and down Sand Highway around the flats to the bottom of Olds. Our comfortable ride turned out to be the ride of my Mothers life! My Mother at age 65 has traveled in her van all over the world, but the day Mike took us into the dunes is a very special day that she will never forget.

Mike headed straight towards the dunes, soon they became bigger and steeper, one second we could only see the blue sky and the next second there was just sand in front of the windshield. I just knew, Mike was going to take us across the dunes, over the highest dunes into the deepest bowls until we would end up on top of Olds.

Now for those readers who have never been to the dunes, you have to understand that some of these dunes are 350 feet and higher and they go on and on for miles. The NORMAL way to travel through the dunes is on an off road bike, a quad, a sand rail, maybe a rhino, but not in a truck. Every time Mike's truck hood popped up over another dune, people stopped riding, started staring, and some even took pictures.

Ever since that day Mike and I have crossed the dunes countless times in his truck. East to west and all the way down south. Often we run into riders that were broken down and needed a tow out of the dunes. There where times we heard of people that had walked back to camp all night and had left there vehicles behind. Mike was the one driving around for hours until the lost vehicle was found and returned to the person who had left it behind, not remembering where they had leftit before they started walking.

Mike spends days to get burned and abandoned vehicles out of the dunes.

Not only does it take a lot of know how, but most important determination to get the vehicles back to the road. Tow company's can only pick up vehicles that are close to the road.

Many times people take there vehicles into the dunes without the understanding of driving in the sand. When they get stuck or break down in the dunes the cars are often just left abandoned. A lot of the times these vehicles are being burned down. Sounds like fun to set them on fire, for some people I'm sure it is a blast. But burned vehicles become a real hazard to others that are riding in the dunes, especially at night time as they can not been seen. Many of these vehicles that Mike recovered where so hidden behind dunes that it would have been just a matter of time for someone to ride into them.

Just 3 days ago we went back to a burned down jeep, Mike has been working on to get out of the dunes for a while. This time he almost got it to Gecko Loop, just one more dune and another sand hazard is gone.

If you need any help or know of people who do, you can find Mike behind the store at Glamis, (the Gearbox trailer is in the back part of the private compound), or just look out for his silver Dodge Ram in the dunes.

Sincerely,
Anja Childers

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER
REMEMBER TO CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR THE MOST CURRENT INFORMATION.
WWW.ASASAND.ORG