

This Land is Your Land....

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...my land, his land, and our land. The United States of America and all her citizens own approximately 30% of the total land mass of our country. The majority of this land is located in the West, with Nevada, Alaska and Utah leading the way in percentage, and very little federal land located in the Eastern United States, (ironically where many of the decisions regarding the uses of these lands seem to be initiated and debated).

But are these really our lands? I hear this question repeatedly from frustrated recreation enthusiasts. It's more than just a rhetorical question, it goes back to the bond between Americans and our land. We want to be part of the decision-making process that determines the fate of these lands and it's difficult to get a handle on which agency is holding public meetings, or how a new planning rule will affect motorized access.

There are three new land planning initiatives at the forefront today:

1. Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Forest Planning Rule. Find out more information at www.fs.usda.gov/planningrule. In the words of the Forest Service, this rule; "would establish a new national framework to develop land management plans that protect water and wildlife and promote vibrant communities". This rule, when final, will create a 'snapshot' that will be used as a template for every subsequent individual forest plan. Congressman McClintock has asked motorized recreation enthusiast to write comments on this new draft rule, and specifically asked CA4WDC members for their comments, which will be presented in committee in Washington DC. Please forward a copy of your comments to me at amy@cal4wheel.com after submitting them to the Forest Service, and I will insure the Congressman receives our comments.
2. BLM Wild Lands policy. Announced in November, this policy directs BLM Field Office managers to determine "wilderness quality" tracts of land, and after taking public comment, to consider "wild lands" designation that would bar incompatible uses. This is a blatant attempt to circumvent the existing necessity of Congressional approval for new Wilderness designations. We, the public at large, come into play when public comments are being accepted. We also stand as monitors to watch what the BLM Field Office Managers are doing in your favorite areas. There have been indications that some managers are already managing some of these areas as wild lands without taking public comment.
3. America's Great Outdoors. President Obama launched the America's Great Outdoors Initiative in 2010, and many meetings and roundtable were subsequently conducted

throughout the country. Now the report has been issued, and can be read at <http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/report/>. The report calls for “reinvigorating” Americans’ connection to our public land. It is yet to be determined how this will affect motorized recreation, the best defense in this case may be a good offense.

Be Part of the Solution: Participation, Political Action and Positive PR

One of the biggest threats to motorized recreation has been the budget battles in our Sacramento, at the Capitol, after the funds that operate our State Vehicular Recreation Areas have been targeted by legislature members seeking to balance the state budget. As of this writing, the following figures have been released; a total of \$10 million will be taken from the OHV Division of State Parks, \$5 million from operations (which includes all staffing and operating cost of the division and the SVRAs) and \$5 million from the OHMVR grant program. The grant program helps with upkeep on OHV roads, trails and facilities on federal and county land, as well as fund law enforcement and restoration efforts. Compared to what was initially considered, this is a much smaller amount, but although it has not yet been finalized, there is an additional \$21 million that will be taken from OHV Division reserves.

Although these are dedicated funds, the members of the legislature have been tough to convince this is an inappropriate action. The off-road community has loaned the State of California over \$112,000 million dollars over the last 3 years, in excess of contributions of all other special funds combined. These funds are slated to be repaid in 2012, and many in the off-road community are carefully watching to make sure the state abides by their repayment agreements.

We are still awaiting a number of documents including:

- Clear Creek Final Environmental Impact Statement
- California State Water Control Board Water Quality Management Plan

Please watch for alerts for the release of these plans.

Ongoing legal issues for the Association include actions in the Stanislaus National Forest, and the Bridgeport Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. In both cases, we are working with coalitions of interest groups from the entire spectrum of outdoor recreation. In the Stanislaus action, we are intervening side by side with the Modesto Houndsmen, the California Outdoor Heritage Alliance, along with other motorized groups; BlueRibbon Coalition, CORVA, District 36 – AMA, and the Merced Dirt Riders. A coalition of this breadth shows the anti-access organizations that motorized access enjoys wide support from many different types of outdoor recreation enthusiasts. As an Association, we depend on the generosity of our members to support our legal actions, and thanks to all that have already contributed.

Help needed with trail information! The California Association of 4 Wheel Drive Clubs has been given an opportunity to participate in the Geo-tourism project being undertaken by the Sierra Business Council together with National Geographic. We have the opportunity to submit historic or scenic trails for consideration for inclusion to the geo-toursim program. Please check the website at <http://www.sierranevadageotourism.org/> for information about the program, and contact me for information about submission.

Remember, all land use decisions are political decisions. Political decisions are made by those we elect with our vote. Vote Smart!