

---

## AMERICANS SPEAK OUT FOR BALANCE, BUT ARE THEY BEING HEARD?

---

Tens of millions of Americans visit public lands and waters every year for recreation, to enjoy the nation's scenic wonders, to learn more about our rich cultural heritage, and to experience the naturalness and solitude of some of our nation's last wilderness areas. To provide these varied opportunities, our country has developed the world's most diverse system of public lands that consist of: recreation areas that cater to outdoor activities; wildlife refuges to protect vital habitat and biological diversity; national parks with the fundamental mission of protecting resources for future generations while providing an incredible array of compatible uses; and wilderness areas that safeguard some of country's most spectacle resources in an undeveloped manner.

The American people understand that every possible activity is not suitable everywhere and that there should be a balance between different types of uses of their lands and waters. Unfortunately, we are losing that balance today. People who visit public lands and waters to experience natural settings, solitude and wilderness have fewer and fewer opportunities to do so as dirt bikes, snowmobiles, jet skis and other off-road vehicles expand further into the backcountry, cause conflicts with other users, and diminish the overall visitor experience.

---

### Off-Road Vehicles are Everywhere

By the most conservative estimates, there are at least 11 million dirt bikes, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), snowmobiles, and jet skis in the United States, and they can go almost everywhere on our nation's public lands and waters.

- The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages 264 million acres of public land across the west and in Alaska. Nearly 93 percent of this land in the continental U.S. is open in some form to off-road vehicles.
- In Utah, 94 percent of BLM land – more than 22 million acres – is open to dirt bikes, ATVs and jeeps. In Montana and Nevada, off-road vehicles can access 99 percent of all BLM land.
- America's National Forests are criss-crossed by more than 400,000 miles of roads and routes. At least 60,000 additional miles of "ghost roads" have been blazed, largely by off-road vehicles.
- In the entire National Forest system – covering more than 190 million acres in 155 forests, only 2 forests, the Hoosier in Indiana and the Monongahela in West Virginia, do not allow off-road vehicle use.

- According to the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association, there are 130,000 miles of "signed and maintained snowmobile trails" in the United States.

### American People Speak Out for Balance

The silent majority in America is beginning to speak out in support of restoring balance to public lands policy and protecting some of the country's most special places from the damage caused by off-road vehicles.

- In a nationwide poll conducted in May 2001, 67 percent of respondents believe that National Parks should be protected from the damage caused by snowmobiles, jet skis and other off-road vehicles. (Zogby International)
  - Sixty percent of Americans believe that jet ski use is incompatible with the fundamental purpose of National Parks. (Zogby International, May 2001)
  - In 1999, the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance asked residents of that state about their thoughts on off-road vehicle use on public land. Sixty-seven percent agreed that southern Utah's wilderness is put at risk by off-road vehicle use and 66 percent expressed the view that these vehicles detract from their outdoor experience.
-

### **The Public Supports Common Sense Limits**

Citizens across the country also strongly support policies designed to protect public lands and waters from off-road vehicle abuse.

- More than 96 percent of those who commented supported a decision by the National Park Service to permanently protect the 2-million acre wilderness core of Denali National Park in Alaska from snowmobiles.
- A clear majority of people who commented backed the Park Service's final decision to gradually phase-out snowmobiles from Yellowstone National Park.
- Even after learning that future snowmobiles could be cleaner and quieter than existing models, 70 percent of respondents still support the decision to phase-out snowmobiles from Yellowstone. (Zogby International, May 2001)

- In a February 2002 statewide survey, the Minneapolis Star-Tribune found that 72 percent of Minnesotans believe that ATV use should be limited to designated routes in State Forests.
- When the Park Service asked the public for comments about eliminating jet ski use on the Missouri National Recreation River, also known as the Missouri-Niobrara, 77 percent of citizens living in South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska – the states surrounding the river – supported the proposal.

Off-road vehicle use on public lands and waters will be one of the most pressing conservation issues in the decade ahead. Americans from Maine to California and Alaska to Florida are joining together to protect their natural heritage from the damage caused by off-road vehicles and to work to restore some badly needed balance to public lands management.