



January 4, 2010

Backcountry Horsemen of Idaho, Squaw Butte Chapter

Subject: Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Grant for Off-Road Enforcement

President and Membership:

We'd like to solicit your help in securing grant funds from the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation this year. We, the Emmett Ranger District, are applying for a grant to increase our presence within our district boundaries. It is becoming increasingly difficult to ensure compliance of Off-Highway Vehicle Rules and Regulations across the public lands due to the sheer number of OHVs being used these days. As you know, the number of OHVs has continued to increase annually in Idaho at an extremely high rate. This increase has caused a corresponding increase in resource damage on our public lands. Much of the resource damage is initiated from our current trail systems in the form of OHV-users traveling off the designated routes. Without increased presence, limiting access to motorized trails may be the only way ensure a level of compliance that protects our environmental resources. However, this only pushes the problem to new areas and does not consider the public's interest for a well-maintained system of routes that provides for a diversity of uses. The Emmett Ranger District has developed a strategy to meet the increased demand for OHV routes and part of that strategy is to increase our presence.

First, we are moving toward a more recreationally transparent district through our website and our goal to produce a Motorized Vehicle Use Map by 2009. Please go to our website to view all of the recreation opportunities on our district <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/boise/emmett/index-new.shtml>. The website and map, tied together with well-posted signs illustrating the type of use that is authorized for each route will create an environment that can be relied upon for a sustainable range of non-motorized and motorized opportunities. Second, we encourage organized volunteer labor to help us accomplish trail maintenance. We've even had horse-riding groups working on motorized trail systems! We fully support and encourage collaboration and honestly think that it will be the only way that we can proactively maintain our trail systems into the future. However, we must also work together to develop and support law enforcement to make sure that our well-maintained trails remain open and in good condition.

We would like to propose a strategy of law enforcement that educates the trail users through a very visible presence. This strategy would expand the districts current law enforcement and on-the-ground presence. Currently, we have the budget to employ 3 seasonal Forest Protection Officers (FPO). Each of our FPOs has the responsibility to monitor a third of the district's 350,000 acres, 18 campgrounds, over 250 known dispersed campsites, and over 167 miles of trail. This is a daunting task that cannot successfully meet the demand of 1,000s of visitors per weekend. The Silver Creek Plunge alone has no less than 60,000 visitors that camp near the resort annually! It is becoming next to impossible to monitor, educate, and enforce compliance on our system of trails because our FPOs are so busy just attending to visitor conflicts and resource damage near our main roads and in our campgrounds.

Because of our struggle, we plan to initiate a three-level strategy of enforcement (see diagram). Each level would be responsible for checking compliance, educating visitors, and enforcing rules and regulations. The first level will be newly hired FPOs that travel the authorized trail routes across the district checking for compliance trail regulations. The second level would consist of our current team of FPOs, who would be responsible for general recreation use on roads and in campgrounds. The third level would be support to our larger team of FPOs in the form of the County Sheriff, the Fish and Game



Conservation Officer, or Forest Service Law enforcement Officers, who would provide general presence and patrols during high-use times such as weekends. These law enforcement officers would be able to respond quickly to elevated threats to other visitors or our own FPOs. We are proposing to fund the FPOs in the first level for trail patrols and the county sheriff in the third level for increased presence during high-use times. The Forest Service and Fish and Game would provide supporting law enforcement as necessary. The Emmett Ranger District would provide the vehicles, motorcycles, and ATVs to support this proposed team approach.

We would like your support in a couple of different ways. Please provide a letter of support addressed to John Erickson. This will be attached to our grant application to the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation that is due on January 25, 2008. Also, we'd like to take this opportunity to initiate discussions about how we can move quickly in the direction of respecting resources, enhancing recreational enjoyment and diversity, and minimize trespass on adjacent lands. Please call TJ Clifford or Jim Ciardelli at 208-365-7000 with your thoughts.

Thanks,

TJ Clifford
Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist

