

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the Legislative Committee on Public Lands regarding potential Off-Highway Vehicle legislation in Nevada.

My name is Meghan Wereley. I am Executive Director of Nevada Cattlemen's. I live in Elko Nevada. We are a member of The Nevada Responsible Trails Alliance . We are a broad coalition consisting of the Nevada Cattlemen, Nevada Woolgrowers, Nevada farmers, Nevada law enforcement officers, Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife , Nevada Association of Counties, the Rural Nevada Alliance, much of Nevada's conservation community, and ordinary outdoorsmen. Many, if not most of us, are responsible OHV enthusiasts, and concerned citizens who live in Nevada and enjoy our backcountry. We believe we have a problem in Nevada with a few reckless, inconsiderate people who happen to ride ATVs. These riders are causing damage to our precious natural resources, damage to private property, and conflicts with other people. In our view, we need a simple OHV law for Nevada that addresses these issues.

As a group, we have a long history of fighting for meaningful access to our public lands. We understand that there are some places meant to be enjoyed by vehicle and there are other places and times when vehicles are not appropriate. We have great respect for the OHV clubs and organizations present here today. We wish that everyone who entered the backcountry of Nevada on an ATV was as careful and considerate as are the members of these clubs. We believe their vehicular access is as much at risk as is ours.

We were fortunate to hear Mr. Claycomb present Idaho's OHV program during the last legislative session. We believe Mr. Claycomb is doing a remarkable job of implementing Idaho's program. He is a wonderful ambassador for the state of Idaho.

But there is no doubt that Idaho's program does not adequately address Nevada's problems. For far too long, careless ATV riders have been blazing new roads and trails in Nevada's backcountry. This proliferation of trails has adversely affected important habitat for wildlife and livestock. Sadly, in some cases this situation has begun to affect the health of entire watersheds. The single most important action we can take today is to develop an OHV program in Nevada that brings this behavior to a halt. We need to be able to hold these vandals accountable for their actions. They need to clean up their own mess. They need to reclaim the damage they have already caused to watersheds, to livestock, to wildlife, to private property and to other users of the public's lands. The only way to begin to hold these people accountable is to have an identifiable tag or plate so that they can be reported by other users in the field or, better yet, apprehended by law enforcement.

Our program needs to focus on finding areas already damaged by irresponsible riders. We also need to identify areas where reckless, inconsiderate riders are causing conflicts with private property owners or with others who use the public lands. Those conflicts need to be resolved. After we have cleaned up this mess, we can look towards identifying areas where trail systems could be developed without causing unnecessary conflicts or resource damage. Areas where riders could be dispersed and where we can enjoy the experience of Nevada's vast, open landscapes.

We are concerned that if we do not help to solve these problems and make this job one, then one day the Forest Service or the Bureau of Land Management will find it necessary to close our public lands to vehicular use as the only means to protect the land from unmanaged OHV abuse. We are concerned about this because that is exactly what has happened in state after state that has waited too long to deal with these irresponsible riders and the problems they bring.

Our membership owns and uses ATVs and OHVs for work and for play. We honestly don't know how many we have but one can imagine how many of the 300,000 or 400,000 OHVs in the State of Nevada are owned and operated by sportsmen, farmers, ranchers, and the other outdoorsmen and OHV riders represented by the Nevada Responsible Trails Alliance.

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We are all willing to pay a fee to register, title, and place an identifiable plate or tag on our ATV, as a means to resolve problems before they get entirely out of hand and cause a serious backlash from public land management agencies. If we focus on curbing the proliferation of trails and curbing the conflicts caused by these reckless riders we stand a good chance of retaining our access. That access in our opinion is the single most important benefit we all can realize by agreeing, as riders, to pay our way and register, title and tag our ATVs.

Thank you.