

Measure would dramatically change OHV use in Arizona

Thanks to the efforts, dedication and continued support of the Off-highway vehicle community, the Arizona Senate Appropriations Committee passed House Bill 2443 on April 3, by a vote of 10-0. The bill will now move to the full Senate for consideration. As the bill continues to gain momentum through the legislature, it is important for OHV users to continue their support of HB2443.

If passed, this bill would not only cut costs for off-highway vehicle users, but it would also increase resources for trail development, safety,

law enforcement and management of off-highway vehicles in the state.

The Off-highway Vehicle Legislative Workgroup, comprised of OHV recreationists and outdoor user groups, land management agencies, county and local governments, sportsmen, and Arizona Game and Fish Department, worked together with Rep. Jerry Weiers, R-Glendale, to develop House Bill 2443 to improve OHV recreation and management in Arizona.

The reason for the proposed legislation is the

expanding popularity of OHV activities in the state. Off-highway vehicle recreational use has increased by roughly 350 percent, or nearly 39 percent per year since 1998. During this time, funding for off-highway vehicle recreation has grown by an average of approximately 4 percent, not keeping pace with the dramatic increase in OHV recreation in Arizona.

House Bill 2443 provisions include:

Would dramatically reduce the Vehicle License Tax to just \$3. This tax allows properly equipped all-terrain cycles (dirt bikes), all-

terrain vehicles (quads), and utility vehicles on streets and highways.

Would create a small, annual flat fee for an off-highway vehicle license plate.

Would bolster resources for OHV management, including trails and facilities, access, law enforcement, education, safety and mitigation for damage.

Would enact new laws that will better protect Arizona's natural resources from inappropriate use of OHVs.

Would expand safety standards, including a requirement for individuals younger than 18 to wear appropriate headgear.

Would improve equipment standards, such as muffler and sound requirements.

To read the full text of House Bill 2443, visit the Arizona State Legislature Web site at azleg.gov. Also, visit the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Web site, azgfd.gov/ohv, for more information on the bill.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Awards more than \$800,000 in international grants

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will award more than \$861,000 in international conservation grants that will assist more than 15 species of animals in 18 countries, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne announced recently.

Matching funds and in-kind contributions of more than \$2.5 million from international and in-country partners will raise the total devoted to the efforts to more than \$3.3 million.

"For a wide variety of species, ranging from black rhinos to leatherback turtles, we are working in partnership with other countries to ensure the conservation of imperiled animals," Kempthorne said. "The grants will empower these countries to reduce the threats to their wildlife and its habitat and ensure that cherished species do not become extinct."

The grants will help support a wide range of projects and activities including better law enforcement and training, wildlife management courses, anti-poaching programs, research, species reintroduction and relocation, threat assessments, population and habitat surveys and seminars and regional wildlife conferences.

Species that will benefit include African elephants and rhinoceros, chimpanzees and Cross River gorillas, 5 species of sea turtles, and the quetzal, puma, jaguar, Bahamian parrot, maned wolf and bats.

Countries receiving the grants include Sudan, Nigeria, Cameroon, Namibia, Kenya, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia and Gabon in Africa; Vietnam and Indonesia in Asia; Panama, Nicaragua, Brazil, Argentina and Costa Rica in South America and the West Indies and Bahamas in the Caribbean.

A few examples of the diverse projects include:

- Relocating 34 black rhinoceros from an overstocked private reserve in Kenya to another reserve to increase the population growth rate while broadening the animals' gene pool.

- Monitoring and nest protection to conserve the major leatherback turtle nesting population in South Bioko, Equatorial Guinea, and to establish new monitoring and nest protection programs for leatherback and green turtles in the Rio Campo Natural Reserve on the Equatorial Guinea mainland.

- Helping complete and distribute a training film for enforcement officers designed to curb elephant poaching and the illegal trade in ivory in Africa.

- Developing an incentive program to persuade ranchers in Costa Rica to help preserve wild cats, including jaguar, and puma and their prey.

- Surveys and related work to help conserve the Cross River gorillas of Cameroon and Nigeria.

The SCI Record Book of Trophy Animals is now Virtual!

The Virtual Record Book is real data in real time. Now members can easily access the 132,036 record book entries. Search the SCI Record Book by member name, by outfitter and guides name, by species and by location. With the annual subscription to the SCI Virtual Record Book score sheets may be viewed in their entirety on each entry.

Take a moment and click on the following link <http://www.scirecordbook.org/demo>

for a three minute presentation and demonstration of the Virtual Record Book.

R. Douglas Yajko
Trophy Records Committee Chair

Littering can imperil your hunting privileges

Most of us who love the outdoors are taught at a young age to respect the land on which you hunt, fish and recreate. Sportsmen are typically conscientious about protecting our resources by not littering and by keeping a clean camp.

A small number of individuals, unfortunately, do litter. Some are egregious offenders; others are just momentarily careless. Either way, hunters who litter should be aware that a littering conviction could cost you the ability to legally hunt or fish for a long time.

"Arizona law makes littering while hunting or angling a class 2 misdemeanor," says Pat Barber, law enforcement branch chief for the Arizona Game and Fish Department. "Littering while hunting or fishing are revocable violations, so a conviction could cost you your license privileges for up to five years."

In fact, two individuals recently had their hunting and fishing privileges revoked for five years after a hearing at the February meeting of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission in Yuma. Their abandoned campsite in the White Mountains last August was documented to have had a noticeable amount of trash strewn about.

"I periodically hear stories from ranchers and hunters about the messes being left behind in the field," says Arizona Game and Fish Commissioner William McLean. "Sometimes it's hunters who are responsible, sometimes it's others. Unfortunately, hunters are often unfairly blamed for acts of littering and vandalism that are committed by other outdoor recreationists."

Regardless of who is doing it, it is the kind of practice that has to stop, says McLean. "It's bad for the land, bad for wildlife, and could ultimately cost us access from private landowners who are generous enough to allow outdoor recreationists to use their land."

Don't take a chance on losing your hunting and fishing enjoyment. Leave your camp area clean. Pick up shell casings and associated debris. Pack out everything you brought in.

By not littering, you will help keep wildlife habitat in good shape, help ensure continued hunting access from private landowners, and help keep your hunting privileges intact.

SCI Meets With Administration on Access and Shooting Ranges

SCI staff met recently with representatives from the Forest Service, BLM and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to discuss the issue of access for sportsmen and for the continued support of shooting ranges on public lands. The meeting was led by the NRA and included SCI, NWTF, Izaak Walton League and other NGO's from the Conservation Community. Discussions included getting pro-hunting policies down to the field level, liability issues and educating shooters not to leave behind their trash and spent casings.

Pronghorn relocated

In an effort to enhance existing populations of pronghorn antelope, the Arizona Game and Fish Department recently relocated a number of the animals from a Prescott area ranch to an area outside Winslow.

On Feb. 7, biologists captured 67 pronghorn (a 3-to-1 ratio of does-to-bucks) at Granite Dells Ranch outside of Prescott and moved the animals to an area near Meteor Crater east of Flagstaff.

"This was first, and foremost, a conservation effort," says Jeff Pebworth, a wildlife biologist with the department's Kingman office. "We took some pronghorn from an area where populations are doing well and moved them to an area where a population is recovering from decline."

Pebworth says the capture operation went smoothly and quickly, which enabled biologists to limit stress on the pronghorn by moving them the same day. Veterinarians at the capture site administered fluids, drew blood to test the herds' overall health, and conducted several ultrasounds on does to see which females were carrying fawns.

Two New Websites Focus on Wildlife

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has launched two new websites dedicated to wildlife. The www.wildlifeactionplans.org website provides detailed information on the state wildlife action plans and partnerships forming to ensure their implementation, and the revamped www.teaming.com will be the online home for the Teaming with Wildlife coalition and provide information on the need for new and greater funding to prevent wildlife from becoming endangered. Any questions or comments can be directed to teaming@fishwildlife.org.

Migratory Birds Funded

"Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne celebrated International Migratory Bird Day by announcing nearly \$3.9 million in federal grants to aid neotropical migratory bird conservation in the United States, Canada and 14 Latin American and Caribbean countries. The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide the grants to conservation partnerships in those countries. Partners will, in turn, match those funds with nearly \$18 million that will be used to conduct research, monitoring, and management programs for migratory bird populations, as well as related outreach and education.

There are 341 species of Neotropical migratory birds that breed in the United States and Canada and winter in Latin America. Examples of these birds include species of plovers, terns, hawks, cranes, warblers and sparrows. Many of these birds are presently in decline, and several species are protected as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 2000 established the matching grants program to fund projects promoting the conservation of Neotropical migratory birds in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Appropriations began in 2002 and the money is to be used to protect, research, monitor and manage bird populations and habitat, as well as to conduct law enforcement and community outreach and education.