

Hunting and ATVs

Responsibility or Regulation?

Issues with ATVs

ATVs provide many advantages to hunters, and as a result the use of ATVs during hunting season has increased dramatically in the last 10 years. While ATVs have made access to some backcountry areas and big game retrieval easier for many hunters, their increased use has created some problems:

HUNTER CONFLICT:

Conflict is occurring where ATVs have increased access into areas that were lightly used in the past.

NOISE:

The sound of an ATV may chase deer and elk away from other hunters. This creates hard feelings among hunters who used stealth and stalking skills to get into a prime spot only to have their efforts spoiled by an ATV.

CLOSED AREAS:

Operation of an ATV in areas where they are not allowed irritates other hunters who have specifically selected their hunting area to avoid motorized vehicles.

OFF-TRAIL USE:

Cross country travel on ATVs can create a network of new travelways that cause soil erosion and damage to fish and wildlife habitats.

FAIR CHASE:

Increasing numbers of hunters are actually hunting with their ATVs rather than on foot. This behavior raises concerns of "fair chase" and can reflect poorly on hunting and hunters.

Interesting Facts

- Since 1995, the number of All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) in Idaho has increased three-fold. There are now over 33,000 ATVs registered in the state.
- Studies have shown that the harvest of bull elk increases with increased hunter access. Eventually this can lead to reduced hunter opportunity.
- Elk use declines in areas adjacent to roads open to motorized vehicles.
- Slow-moving vehicles on primitive roads and trails are more disturbing to elk than fast-moving vehicles on highways.
- As motorized vehicle access increases, the quality and amount of elk habitat are degraded. An open road density of three linear miles of road per square mile of land seriously reduces the value of that area for elk. An open road density of six linear miles per square mile can reduce elk use to near zero.
- Hunter check station information has shown that hunters using ATVs are often less successful than other hunters.

What Can You Do to Reduce the Impact of ATVs During Hunting Season?



Here are a few tips:

- Know the vehicle use regulations for the area you are hunting. Contact the local BLM Field Office, Forest Service Ranger District or Idaho Department of Lands Area office for travel management information before you go. Respect road and area closures.
- Stay on existing roads or trails. Do not contribute to resource damage and habitat destruction by creating new travelways for others to follow.
- User created travelways are often poorly located within riparian zones or on steep slopes creating vegetation and soil impacts. Don't make the problem worse by continuing to use these routes.

- To increase your chances of success and cause less disturbance to hunters around you, access your hunting area before shooting hours and then hunt on foot.
- Retrieve harvested big game during the middle of the day (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.) to reduce conflicts with other hunters. Travel off trail only if travel regulations permit.
- Have respect for other users. Slow down or stop your ATV when you approach others on the trail. When meeting equestrians, approach slowly, pull over and stop, turn off your engine, remove your helmet and ask how best to proceed.
- Avoid the use of ATVs in wet areas or during wet conditions. Even though the lighter weight and low-pressure tires reduce impacts, ATVs can still do serious damage to wet areas.
- Keep your ATV properly tuned and muffled to reduce exhaust sounds and emissions.

- Don't widen single-track trails by forcing your ATV down the trail.
- When overtaking others, pass in a safe and courteous manner.
- Limit ATV use in and around campgrounds. Be respectful of other campers' desires for quiet and minimal disruption.

These are simple things, but they can go a long way toward reducing the impact of ATV use. They will protect the habitat and improve the Idaho hunting experience. Following these guidelines will reduce the need for more regulations and help retain the ATV opportunities that currently exist.

Responsibility or Regulation?

The Choice is Yours!

So what does this mean for the typical hunter with an ATV? It's simple. If ATV users are irresponsible with the use of their machines, then there will be increasing pressure on land and wildlife management agencies to restrict ATV use during hunting season. Already there are people, among them other hunters, who are asking for a total ban on ATV use during hunting season. Regulations are being considered that limit ATV use to certain times of the day and further restrict, or prohibit completely, off-trail travel.

Nobody likes regulations; but if irresponsible ATV use continues to cause unacceptable impacts, then regulations will become necessary to ensure protection of public lands. A better alternative would be for ATV users to recognize the impacts their activity can cause and voluntarily take steps to reduce those impacts. ATV users are not unique in this respect — as more and more people use public lands for recreation, the potential impacts of these activities are growing fast. Virtually all recreation users — jeepers, horse enthusiasts, rafters, snowmobilers, hikers, campers, rock climbers, motorcyclists, fishermen, and mountain bikers — are being asked to reduce the impact of their activities, so that public lands can be enjoyed by this and future generations.

Know Idaho Off Highway Vehicle Laws



- ATVs and trail bikes operated off public roadways must be registered with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation and the OHV registration sticker displayed prominently on the machine. Nonresident owners are exempt from registration requirements for up to 30 days.
- ATVs and trail bikes with a valid OHV registration sticker may be used on unpaved roads on state endowment or state and federal public lands (such as the Idaho Department of Lands, BLM or National Forest) when operated by an individual with a valid state driver's license. Licensed motorcycle operators under the age of 18 must wear a helmet on public roadways.
- Unlicensed ATVs and trail bikes, with or without an OHV registration sticker, may NOT be operated on paved or unpaved roads that are part of the state highway system, unless the road is specifically exempted by local ordinance. The state highway system includes all roads under the jurisdiction of the state, counties, highway districts or cities.
- It is illegal to hunt from any motorized vehicle, EXCEPT for holders of a valid handicapped persons Motor Vehicle Hunting Permit.

- It is unlawful to molest, stir up, rally or drive, in any manner, any game animals or game birds with a motorized vehicle.
- It is unlawful to shoot from or across the traveled portion, shoulders or embankments of any road maintained by a government entity.
- It is illegal to operate an ATV or trail bike off trail or on any trail closed to that specific type of vehicle as designated by the land management agency or land owner.
- Operating an ATV or trail bike off roads or trails in a manner that damages or unreasonably disturbs the land, wildlife or vegetative resources is prohibited.
- ATVs and trail bikes must be equipped with approved and operating spark arresting mufflers and comply with sound regulations.
- No person may enter private land that is cultivated or posted, to hunt, fish or trap, without permission.

Remember...

tread lightly!®

LEAVING A GOOD IMPRESSION



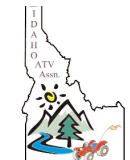
For more information regarding this and other hunting or motorized access subjects contact the following:

BLM/Forest Service Visitor Center
1387 S. Vinnell Way
Boise, Idaho 83709
(208) 373-4007

Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
P. O. Box 83720
Boise, Idaho 83720-0065
(208) 334-4199

Idaho Department of Fish and Game
600 S. Walnut Street
P. O. Box 25
Boise, Idaho 83707
(208) 334-3700

Idaho Department of Lands
954 W. Jefferson
Boise, Idaho 83702
(208) 334-0200



www.idahoatv.org