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10 Ways to Minimize Your Impact with an ATV

With the number of all-terrain vehicle riders climbing past 16 million nationally, the sport of ATV riding is grabbing attention as land managers try to balance its popularity with the nation's natural resources.

"ATV riding can be a blast," said Patti Klein, National Stewardship Coordinator for the Bureau of Land Management. "But it can also be damaging to public lands if not done responsibly. As land managers, we encourage people to help protect the great outdoors by riding responsibly and practicing outdoor ethics, like those created by Tread Lightly!."

Tread Lightly!, a nonprofit organization that educates people to recreate responsibly, has issued some practical tips on minimizing environmental impact from ATVs.

- Stay only on roads, trails or other areas designated for ATV use.
- Try to stay in the middle of the trail to avoid widening it.
- Cross streams only at designated fording points, where the trail crosses the stream. Approach the stream slowly, crossing at a 90-degree angle.
- On switchbacks, avoid roosting around the apex of the turn when climbing or brake-sliding during descent, both of which gouge the trail.
- On slick trails, moderate the throttle and use the clutch to gain maximum traction with minimum wheel-spin.
- Try to avoid muddy trails, save them for future trips when they are dry.
- Pack out what you pack in. Carry a trash bag on your vehicle and pick up litter left by others.
- Following a ride, wash your ATV and support vehicle to avoid spreading noxious weeds the next time you ride.
- Observe proper human waste disposal. Bury your waste at least six inches deep and camouflage the hole or pack out your waste.
- Take an ATV training course to maximize safety. Always wear a helmet, eye protection and other safety gear.

To find places to ride, ATV enthusiasts should contact local land managers. Tread Lightly! provides additional tips and materials at www.treadlightly.org.

Tread Lightly!® is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower generations to enjoy the outdoors responsibly. Tread Lightly!'s strategic educational message, along with its training and restoration initiatives are designed to instill an ethic of responsibility in outdoor enthusiasts and the industries that serve them. The program is long-term in scope with a goal to balance the needs of the people who enjoy outdoor recreation with the needs of the environment. Tread Lightly! offers unique programs and services to help remedy current recreation issues. In 2003, the federal government recognized this by acknowledging Tread Lightly! as a sole-source service provider of education and training on how to be environmentally and socially responsible while using motorized and mechanized vehicles in off-highway settings.