



GETTING INVOLVED IN LAND USE AND ACCESS ISSUES

By Del Albright

Are you looking for information on land use, conservation, closures, and/or getting involved in keeping our public lands open to public access? Are you trying to figure out what clubs/groups you should join or support? You came to the right spot.

Step 1: Join your local club (four-wheel drive, snowmobile, ATV, motorcycle, equestrian, whatever your interest may be), join your regional/state club (in AZ such as ASA4WDC), and/or join a national organization like the [BlueRibbon Coalition](#).

Get the point? Join! Pay your dues to an organization that fits what you think is doing the right thing. Support them with money and your volunteer time. It takes dues and membership to make something happen. That's where it all begins. Honestly, if you can't go to meetings, just send money (dues, contributions, etc.). Be part of organized multiple-use organizations to show the public what we're really made of.

It'll be those of us in organized recreation that eventually gives us a credible image.

Step 2: Advocate for your sport. Do things like speak up to your family and friends. Even do more than just talk: "Adopt" your local Fed (USFS Ranger or BLM Manager).

The "Adopt-a-Ranger" idea comes from my friend and compadre, Tom Crimmins (USFS retired). Tom is a trails consultant who used to work in the OHV efforts of the Forest Service. He tells me that recreationists are out-numbered by far when it comes to being a familiar face around federal office buildings. Environmental proponents, however, are well known.

So that means we've got to get our faces in the offices of our local federal land managers and get to know them on a first name basis. Take them on club runs. Take them on rides. Go with them on field trips.

Get on their mailing list. Schedule coffee or morning break informal meetings with them. Make a "friend" in the office who can keep you posted on office activities that might be appropriate for you to be a part of (somebody's retirement or a building dedication or luncheon or whatever). Go on field trips where possible, such as OHV grant proposal projects. Be part of their local list of contacts when "input" is needed to a decision. "Adopt" them as one of your own.

Step 3: Recruit and include others to do the same things you're doing.

We've got to re-establish our image (motorized recreationists of all types), so the public sees that we're really the good guys. We are the true conservationists and environmentalists. The opponents to off-highway motorized recreation have developed our image for us: they make us look like we're bad guys. We've got to change that. We've also got to police ourselves.

It takes all of us working together and doing our part. We need to build membership in organized recreation by recruiting anyone and everyone who has an interest in keeping public lands open to the public. Get others to write letters, adopt their local fed, and reach out to recruit even more folks.

Step 4: Do your part when it comes to expressing your opinion in writing to anyone and everyone that will listen. Write letters - handwritten works just fine. Be sure to tell your elected officials what you believe in. Write them once a year at least. For every time you go on a ride, write one letter (or make one phone call).

It boils down to this: JOIN, ADVOCATE, INCLUDE OTHERS, and WRITE LETTERS! If you're an acronym kind of person, you'll have noticed that the above steps spell out "JAIL." Our public lands don't belong in jail, behind bars! They belong to you, me, and all fellow off-highway enthusiasts.