

James Strenfel

LAO Timekeepers MC

1427 Sprucewood Dr.
San Jose, CA 95118

408 4451902

strens@att.net

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BLM Hollister Field Office

20 Hamilton Court

Hollister, CA 95023

Response to CCMA Draft EIS 2009

Social Benefits of OHV recreation in the CCMA

CEQ regulation 1508.14 Human Environment in part reads "When an environmental impact statement is prepared and economic or social and natural or physical environmental effects are interrelated, then the environmental impact statement will discuss all of these effects on the human environment.

Social benefits related to OHV use is not addressed adequately in the EIS. Please add the following to correct this deficiency.

In sociological terms, OHV use qualifies among the most complex forms of serious leisure. Therefore, there is a compelling case to be made for genuine consideration of motorized trail recreation on an equal footing as all other serious leisure activities occurring in CCMA.

Recreation research reveals that leisure activities can be rated according to quality, which is defined as an overarching quality-of-life benefit to the participant. Very high quality activities, called "serious leisure" by researchers in the field, require a considerable number of complex factors which, in combination, provide satisfaction, personal growth and fulfillment to the participant. (Stebbins, R.A. 1982 "Serious Leisure, A Conceptual Statement," *Pacific Sociological Review*)

Since Stebbins' early conceptual statement, the ideas around "serious leisure" and the associated improvements in quality of life and health, has been extensively explored by the leisure academy, resulting in a large body of literature on the sociology of complex hobbies.

Another apt description of serious leisure activities is " a social and emotional interactive process which deconstructs the social and historical biographical inequalities of lived experience to create with-equal other social human bond" (Podichak W. 1991)

In reviewing the literature there are a number of essential qualities which identify serious leisure:

1. High levels of emotional commitment
2. Complex planning and advance preparation
3. Learning new skills
4. Self-discipline to practice skills, with the goal of steadily improving performance
5. Operating within relationships with others (social reference point)
6. Success in familiar and in unfamiliar social settings
7. Problem solving, ranging from very simple to highly complex and potentially life saving.
8. Goal oriented challenge, and a moderate degree of personal risk
9. Pro-active interest in physical condition
10. A sense of accomplishment when the adventure is completed

The above list perfectly describes the total OHV trail-riding experience. This is why OHV use falls directly into the most complex forms of serious leisure. Examples of some other forms of serious leisure that are pursued on public lands include all types of skiing, mountain biking, mountaineering, rock climbing and kayaking. Therefore, there is a compelling case to be made for closely examining the perceived negative impacts and correcting inaccuracies. There is also compelling case to be made that the "err on the side of caution" policy, in matters of speculative negative impacts, is counterproductive to the BLM's purpose and mission of offering multiple use recreation opportunities on public lands.

There is also a case to be made in favor of reasonable trade-offs between the significant social benefits of OHV use and any measured negative resource impacts that may be noted.

To illustrate further, described here are some of the specific recreational experiences associated with single track, double track and fire road OHV usage.

- Riding difficult trails requires skill. It is a challenge to negotiate trail sections at speeds that maximize skill development, much like skiing difficult terrain or rock climbing. It is very satisfying to increase one's skills by riding more difficult trails with fewer mistakes, falls, engine stalls, etc. These riding skills involve dexterity, balance, hand-eye coordination, throttle control and mental preparedness.
- OHV users enjoy getting away from cities and jobs to the scenery, solitude, rugged terrain and wildlife of the CCMA. Riding trails allows us to experience much more of the environment than possible than other modes of transportation. Off-road riding yields a strong sense of accomplishment and relaxation and is an excellent way to refresh ourselves and relieve the tensions of everyday life and work.
- A wide variety of trails types challenges the different abilities of the riders.
- OHV users enjoy the comradeship with our fellow riders. The trail rides are often the only time we see each other. During the rides, time spent resting, eating and talking build social bonds.
- Trail riding is physically demanding.
- OHV use is often combined with other activities, such as camping and rock hounding.
- OHV use in the last ten years has seen tremendous growth in families recreating together.
- Children are exposed early in their lifetimes to the qualities listed above. (1 thru 10)

It is important to note that the quality of the CCMA experience is measured in hours, and the average speed of an OHV on easy single track could be as fast as fifteen mph and on a difficult trail as slow as three mph. Thus, mileage by itself is not the sole indicator of a quality experience. Rides can vary from as little as 20 miles to over 80 miles depending on the skill of the rider, the difficulty of the trails and the destination points along the way.

Regards,



James Strenfel