



news releases

NJ DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION NEWS RELEASE

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DEP ENFORCES BAN OF OFF-ROAD VEHICLE USE ON PUBLIC LANDS

(02/54) TRENTON - New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell today warned potential violators that regulations prohibiting off-road vehicle (ORV) use on public lands are being strictly enforced statewide.

More than 950 summonses, resulting in fines of up to \$1,000 per violation, have been issued by conservation officers and park rangers on lands administered by the DEP between January and June 1, 2002. A total of 47 vehicles were impounded over the same time period.

"Natural resources are being severely degraded and we will not hesitate to take enforcement action against the illicit use of off-road vehicles in our parks and wildlife management areas," said Commissioner Campbell. "The number of ORV incidents on public lands is mounting and the state's limited resources are being increasingly diverted to address these damaging occurrences."

The illegal use of ORVs on both public and private lands within the state of New Jersey has grown dramatically over the past five years, causing extensive statewide environmental damage. These negative impacts include pollution, soil erosion, damage and destruction of sensitive natural resources such as forest, streams and wetlands, and the harm and destruction of plant and animal species and their habitats. In many cases, these resources are destroyed and can not be restored.

In addition to the negative environmental impacts resulting from inappropriate and unlawful use of ORVs, the safety of department personnel has been at risk. Conservation officers and park rangers have been threatened and, in some cases injured, by off-road vehicle users while responding to illegal ORV activities. Increased noise pollution has also resulted, and expenditures for restoration, maintenance and enforcement have risen.

Addressing the growing number of incidents, the DEP has enhanced enforcement efforts to apprehend and summons all violators of current ORV regulations, which ban the use of all-terrain and off-road vehicles on public lands.

While the DEP acknowledges that proper ORV operation has a recreational value to a growing number of residents in the state, its responsibility to provide recreational opportunities must be consistent with its mandate to protect and conserve natural resources. To address conflicts and growing concerns, the department is currently developing a comprehensive policy for ORV use on all lands that are owned, managed, maintained or under DEP jurisdiction.

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