



news releases

NJ DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION NEWS RELEASE

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DEP Commissioner Campbell Announces Off-Road Vehicle Policy

Reinforces Ban on Public Lands; Seeks Maximum Fines, Additional Sanctions for Illegal Use

(02/95) TRENTON -New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell today announced a new policy regarding Off Road Vehicle (ORV) activities on DEP-administered lands that calls for strict enforcement of laws prohibiting ORV use on state property and seeks the maximum \$1,000 penalty for all potential violators.

"Public safety and natural resource protection continue to be at risk as a result of rampant, unlawful ORV use in our parks, forests and wilderness areas," said Commissioner Campbell. "This policy reinforces the DEP's zero tolerance for illegal ORV use. It also directs the department to work cooperatively with the state Department of Transportation to establish new regulations and sanctions to deter ORV violators."

Since January 2002, DEP conservation officers and park rangers have issued more than 1,400 summonses against individuals participating in illegal ORV activities, resulting in fines of up to \$1,000 per violation. A total of 67 vehicles were impounded over the same time period. As a result of these illegal activities, approximately 343,000 acres of state park, forest and wilderness land have been damaged.

Under the new DEP policy, Commissioner Campbell sets forth strict enforcement of current ORV regulations, which ban the use of all-terrain and off-road vehicles on public lands. The new policy addresses the need for additional sanctions for ORV violators, including natural resource damage fines. Working with the state Department of Transportation, the DEP also will make recommendations for a comprehensive licensing, registration and training program for all ORV operators.

Acknowledging that proper ORV operation has a recreational value to a growing number of residents in the state, the DEP's new policy calls for its Office of Natural and Historic Resources to develop appropriate recreational areas for lawful ORV use - while meeting the policy's safety and natural resource protection requirements. DEP's goal is to have two such

facilities established and in operation by 2005.

To accomplish this goal, the New Jersey Trails Council will organize an ORV subcommittee representing a cross-section of interested environmental, recreational, ORV industry and ORV user groups. No current state park, wildlife management area or other environmentally sensitive area will be considered in this review and selection process.

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.

Responding to these concerns, the new policy requires all applications for new or expanded areas for authorized ORV use to be approved only where no adverse environmental or natural resource impacts result from the proposed use. Proposed activities can not compromise safety or interfere with the use or enjoyment of natural resources by other groups or affected local communities.

Each applicant proposing new or expanded areas for ORV use also must present satisfactory documentation that all participants have been trained in safe and appropriate ORV use. Any application to establish a new or expanded ORV-user area must be supported by an environmental review or assessment by the DEP to conclude that the requirements of the policy are being met.

In addition, the DEP will reasonably assess damages to state property in Wildlife Management Areas caused by illegal ORV use, including damages to natural resources, and will impose a damage fine three times the value of the assessed damages - when damages (as measured by the cost of restoration) exceed \$100. The DEP Office of Natural and Historic Resources will develop a damages table that will allow for expedited calculation of natural resource damage of the types typical of unlawful ORV use.

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 state expenditures for restoration, maintenance and enforcement have exceeded more than \$900,000 annually.

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[NJDEP Off-Road Vehicle Policy](#)

News outlets interested in sending photographers to view ORV damage on state lands should contact the following three areas to arrange for assistance.

Wharton State Forest - 609-561-0024

Brendan Byrne State Forest - 609-726-1191

Wawayanda State Park - 973-853-4462

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