

# Survey of Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Federal Lands

## U.S. Government Accountability Office

### Summary Statistics

#### Summary of responses for Mike Murray.

(User name: gao273, Record: 340).

Total cases: 1

Thursday, 11:31:33 11-13-2008

### Introduction

Welcome to the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) survey of off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on federal lands. The House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands has asked GAO to examine OHV use on federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), and Forest Service. Specifically, GAO was asked to identify trends in the amount of OHV use, potential environmental and human health and safety impacts, and how these agencies are managing OHV use and enforcing OHV regulations. Executive Order 11644 (Feb. 8, 1972, as amended) requires these land management agencies to monitor the effects of OHV use, and to manage OHV use in a manner that protects resources, promotes safety, minimizes user conflicts, and ensures compliance with regulations. We are therefore seeking manager perspectives from all BLM and Forest Service management units, and selected NPS units that have had any OHV use during fiscal years 2004 through 2008 (October 1, 2003, through September 30, 2008).

**Your responses will be used, together with the responses of other units, to develop aggregate information and observations. GAO will report summary responses and may use some responses as case examples; however, we will not report survey information that identifies any specific unit.**

If you need instructions for navigating this survey, please click [here](#).

Thank you for your time and effort in completing this survey.

### Contacts

If you have any questions about this survey as you proceed, please click on the "?" button at the bottom of each screen to reveal the contact names listed below:

For Forest Service:

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If the contact for your agency is unavailable, please call the GAO contact for another agency.

## General Information

1. Name (Please correct if this is in error.)

(gao273) Michael B. Murray

2. Title

(gao273) Superintendent

3. E-mail (Please correct if this is in error.)

(gao273) Mike\_Murray@nps.gov

4. Telephone (Please correct if this is in error.)

(gao273) 252-473-2111 x 148

H1. Name of your unit (prepopulated- hidden)

(gao273) Cape Hatteras National Seashore

Please base your survey responses on your experiences in \_\_\_\_\_

5. How many years have you worked at \_\_\_\_\_ (in your current position or others)?

(gao273) 3

6. What is the primary state in which \_\_\_\_\_ is located?

(gao273) NC

7. Does \_\_\_\_\_ cross state lines?

No

7a. If yes, in what other state(s) is \_\_\_\_\_ located?

## Definitions

We realize that units within BLM, NPS, and Forest Service understand some of the terms related to OHV use in different ways. For purposes of this survey, please follow these guidelines. (We suggest that you print this section and keep it handy when answering the survey questions.)

An **off-highway vehicle (OHV)**, also commonly referred to as an off-road vehicle (ORV) or over-sand vehicle (OSV), is any motorized vehicle capable of, or designed for, cross-country travel or travel immediately on or over land. Examples of OHVs include, but are not limited to 4 x 4 street-legal vehicles; all-terrain vehicles such as three-wheelers, four-wheelers, and side-by-sides; rock crawlers; sand rails; dune buggies; swamp buggies; and off-road motorcycles.

**Do NOT include personal watercraft, snowmobiles, or aircraft.**

**Do NOT include official agency use of OHVs.**

**Do NOT include street legal vehicles used on paved roads.**

**OHV management**, as defined by Executive Order 11644, includes protecting natural resources, promoting safety, minimizing user conflicts, ensuring compliance with regulations, and conducting monitoring activities.

A designated **open area** is any area where cross-country OHV use is allowed.

A **designated route** is a specific path authorized by an agency where some type of OHV use is allowed.

An **existing route** is a path that currently exists where OHV use is not specifically prohibited.

A **closed area** is a designated area where the use of OHVs is permanently or temporarily prohibited.

**Authorized OHV use** is the operation of an OHV on a route or in an area that is in compliance with current agency guidelines.

**Unauthorized OHV use** is the operation of an OHV on a route or in an area where OHV use is prohibited.

**Appropriated dollars** includes funding authority received through the annual appropriations process, including funding used to pay for agency employees' salaries.

A **bail or collateral schedule** identifies the minimum fine amounts set by U.S. District Courts for violations of federal regulations.

**Sustainable management** includes having the necessary human and financial resources available to ensure compliance with regulations, educate users, maintain OHV use areas, and evaluate the existing OHV program.

To see these definitions on any page in the survey, click the [Definitions](#) link on the page.

## OHV Use in Your Unit, Part I

**For all questions in this survey**, an OHV is any motorized vehicle capable of, or designed for, cross-country travel or travel immediately on or over land. Examples of OHVs include, but are not limited to, 4 x 4 street-legal vehicles; all-terrain vehicles such as three-wheelers, four-wheelers, and side-by-sides; rock crawlers; sand rails; dune buggies; and off-road motorcycles.

**Do NOT include personal watercraft, snowmobiles, or aircraft.**

**Do NOT include official agency use of OHVs.**

**Do NOT include street legal vehicles used on paved roads.**

8. Did you have any OHV use, whether authorized or unauthorized, in \_\_\_\_\_ in the past 5 years (fiscal years 2004 through 2008)?

Yes

9. How often are OHVs used (authorized or unauthorized) in \_\_\_\_\_?

Very often

10. Please check the types of areas in which OHVs are currently used in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Please check all that apply.)

10.1. Open areas

Checked

10.2. Existing routes

Checked

10.3. Designated routes

Not checked

10.4. Closed areas (OHV use not permitted, but some use occurs anyway)
Checked
10.5. Other
Checked
If you answered "Other" for Q10, please describe here.
(gao273) OHV routes have not yet been officially designated by regulation

## OHV Use in Your Unit, Part II

<a href="#">Definitions</a>
11. Thinking of the average year, how often are OHVs used in _____ for the following activities?
11a. OHV recreation (e.g., trail and open area riding, rock crawling, competitions, etc.)
Rarely
11b. Hunting (e.g., using OHVs for hunting and game retrieval)
Rarely
11c. Access to a particular area (e.g., transportation to beaches, lakeshores, inholdings, etc.)
Very often
11d. Permitted activities (e.g., geophysical exploration, ranching, or subsistence hunting and fishing, etc.)
Occasionally
11e. Other
Often
If you answered "Other" for q11, please describe here.
(gao273) unlawful entry into areas closed to ORV use
12. Of the categories of OHV activity listed above, which one represents the <b>predominant</b> way OHVs are used in _____ in an average year?
Access to a particular area (e.g., transportation to beaches, lakeshores, inholdings, etc.)

	13. Taking into account <b>all recreational</b> activities (e.g., hunting, hiking, fishing, camping, etc.) in _____, what proportion would you estimate involves OHV use?
	Moderate (20- 49%)
	13a. If you would like to indicate the actual/estimated proportion of recreational activity that involves OHV use, or provide detail for your answer to question 13, please do so here.
	(gao273) We estimate that up to 50% of park visitors use OHVs to access beaches during some portion of their visit

## Trends in OHV Use

	<a href="#">Definitions</a>
	<p>14. Which of the following best describes the overall trend in the amount of authorized and unauthorized OHV use in _____ over the past 5 fiscal years (2004 - 2008)?</p> <p><i>If your unit has had no authorized or unauthorized use, please check that option.</i></p>
	14a. <u>Authorized</u> use
	No use of this kind
	14b. <u>Unauthorized</u> use
	Somewhat increased
	15. To what, if anything, do you attribute these trends in authorized and unauthorized use?
	(gao273) Since the Seashore does not have an ORV management plan or regulation, no ORV use is "authorized" even though it has been allowed for many years by NPS. There has been an increase in ORV use due to the popularity of SUVs. There has been a slight decrease in ORV entry into closed areas (a sub-set of unauthorized use) due to the development and implementation of an interim plan in 2006 pending completion of an OHV management plan and regulation.
	16. Do you have any data regarding trends in OHV use in _____?
	Yes
	16a. If yes, please
	1) describe the type of data (e.g., permits issued, trail counters, citations, fees collected, etc.) and

2) how you maintain it (e.g., paper files or Excel spreadsheets, Access or Oracle databases, etc).

(gao273) We have limited data from periodic (i.e., several times a week) on-the-ground "spot counts" and occasional airplane overflight counts on busy holiday weekends. We have installed traffic counters at all ORV access points and are beginning to compile the data in an Excel spreadsheet. At this point we are still working through glitches in the reliability of traffic counters in a coastal environment.

## Potential Impacts of OHV Use: Environmental, Part I

### [Definitions](#)

17. What proportion of the lands in \_\_\_\_\_, if any, are affected by the following environmental impacts associated with OHV use?

17a. Soil damage or erosion

Small  
(1- 9%)

17b. Damage to vegetation

Some  
(10- 19%)

17c. Damage to riparian zones or wetlands

Small  
(1- 9%)

17d. Damage to water quality

Small  
(1- 9%)

17e. Damage to air quality

Small  
(1- 9%)

17f. Noise impacts

Small  
(1- 9%)

17g. Wildlife habitat fragmentation

Moderate  
(20- 49%)

17h. Harm to threatened and endangered species

Substantial (50- 79%)
17i. Spread of invasive species
Moderate (20- 49%)
17j. Damage to cultural or historic resources
Small (1- 9%)
17k. Damage to geologic resources
Some (10- 19%)
17l. Intrusion on research areas
Small (1- 9%)
17m. Other (please specify)
Not checked
If you answered "Other" for q17, please describe here.

## Potential Impacts of OHV Use: Environmental, Part II

<a href="#">Definitions</a>
18. How great a challenge, if any, have you had managing each of the following environmental impacts of OHV use in _____ over the past 5 years?  Management of environmental impacts includes: prevention, rehabilitation, and monitoring. Please respond based on these management aspects as a whole.  <i>If the impact is not an issue in your unit, please check that option.</i>
18a. Soil damage or erosion
Moderate challenge
18b. Damage to vegetation
Great challenge
18c. Damage to riparian zones or wetlands



	Moderate challenge
18d. Damage to water quality	Small challenge
18e. Damage to air quality	Small challenge
18f. Noise impacts	Small challenge
18g. Wildlife habitat fragmentation	Very great challenge
18h. Harm to threatened and endangered species	Very great challenge
18i. Spread of invasive species	Great challenge
18j. Damage to cultural or historic resources	Moderate challenge
18k. Damage to geologic resources	Moderate challenge
18l. Intrusion on research areas	Small challenge
18m. Other (please specify)	Not checked
	If you answered "Other" for q18, please describe here.
19. If you would like to make any comments about environmental impacts of OHV use in _____, please do so in the space below.	(gao273) Over the past 20 years there has been a clear decline in beach nesting bird species, including the federally listed piping plover, as OHV use has increased on Seashore beaches. User group acceptance of and compliance with management controls has been poor.

## Potential Impacts of OHV Use: Health and Safety, Part I

[Definitions](#)

20. Thinking of the average year, how often, if at all, do each of the following social and human health and safety issues occur as a result of OHV use in _____?
20a. Conflicts with other motorized users
Often
20b. Conflicts with non-motorized users
Often
20c. Conflicts with private land owners
Occasionally
20d. Displacement of/disturbance to non-motorized users
Often
20e. Reckless OHV operation
Occasionally
20f. OHV rider injuries
Rarely
20g. Noise impacts (social)
Occasionally
20h. Other (please specify)
Not checked
If you answered "Other" for q20, please describe here.

## Potential Impacts of OHV Use: Health and Safety, Part II

<a href="#">Definitions</a>
21. How great a challenge, if any, have you had managing each of the following social and human health and safety impacts of OHV use in _____?
Management of social impacts includes: prevention, education, enforcement, and mediation. Please respond based on these management aspects as a whole.
<i>If the impact is not an issue in your unit, please check that option.</i>

21a. Conflicts with other motorized users	Moderate challenge
21b. Conflicts with non-motorized users	Very great challenge
21c. Conflicts with private land owners	Moderate challenge
21d. Displacement of/disturbance to non-motorized users	Great challenge
21e. Reckless OHV operation	Great challenge
21f. OHV rider injuries	Small challenge
21g. Noise impacts (social)	Small challenge
21h. Other (please specify)	Not checked
If you answered "Other" for q21, please describe here.	
22. If you would like to make any comments about the health and safety impacts of OHV use in _____, please do so in the space below.	(gao273) Given the level of OHV use, we have had remarkably few accidents and injuries. Pedestrian advocates frequently express dissatisfaction with the high level of OHV use and the relative lack of OHV-free areas.

## Management - OHV Staffing

<a href="#">Definitions</a>
23. Does _____ have one or more full-time federal employees dedicated full-time to OHV management (e.g., planning, office work, site maintenance, volunteer collaboration, etc.)? (Please check all that apply.)
23.1. Yes - self
Not checked

23.2. Yes - someone else (please provide information requested below for that/those person(s))	
Not checked	
23.3. No	
Checked	
23.4. Don't know	
Not checked	
23a. Name(s)	
23b. Telephone number(s)	
23c. Email address(s)	
24. Does _____ have any federal employees managing OHV issues part-time? (Please check all that apply.)	
24.1. Yes - self	
Checked	
24.2. Yes - someone else	
Checked	
24.3. No	
Not checked	
24.4. Don't know	
Not checked	
24a. If yes, how many federal employees does _____ have managing OHV issues part-time?	
125	

## OHV Management Strategies

<a href="#">Definitions</a>	
25. Based on Executive Order 11644 (Feb. 8, 1972, as amended), OHV management shall include protecting resources, promoting safety, minimizing user conflicts, ensuring compliance with regulations, and	

conducting monitoring activities.

For each of the following strategies you have used for managing OHV use in \_\_\_\_\_, please indicate how effective or ineffective that strategy has been in meeting the goals of the Executive Order.

*If your unit has not used the strategy, or if the strategy does not apply to your unit, please indicate that by checking "NA/Have not used this strategy"*

### Management - Enforcement Strategies

25a. Conducting <b>occasional</b> patrols of routes and/or open areas	As effective as not
25b. Conducting <b>routine</b> patrols of routes and/or open areas	Somewhat <b>effective</b>
25c. Developing agreements with local and/or state law enforcement	NA /Have not used this strategy
25d. Issuing written warnings/citations for OHV violations	Very <b>effective</b>
25e. Arresting individuals for OHV violations	Very <b>effective</b>
25f. Revoking or suspending OHV use privileges (e.g., revoking an OHV use permit)	NA /Have not used this strategy

### Management - Partnership Strategies

25g. Developing cooperative agreements with other federal, state, and/or local land management agencies	NA /Have not used this strategy
25h. Attending OHV user group meetings	Somewhat <b>effective</b>
25i. Attending other user group meetings (e.g., environmental, friends, hiking, equestrian groups, etc.)	As effective as not

25j. Developing adopt-a-route programs	NA /Have not used this strategy
25k. Soliciting OHV user volunteers for peer enforcement activities	As effective as not
25l. Soliciting volunteers for maintenance and/or education	As effective as not
25m. Conducting workshops (such as for safety, route ethics, etc.)	NA /Have not used this strategy
25n. Conducting public message/ad campaigns (e.g., "Stay the trail," "Keep it green")	Somewhat <b>effective</b>
25o. Internet searches of local OHV outfitters to find photos or messages about OHV use in unauthorized areas	NA /Have not used this strategy

### Management - Monitoring, Trails, and Signage

25p. Monitoring the effects (e.g., noise, soil, water, air, and habitat impacts) of OHV use on lands in your unit	Somewhat <b>effective</b>
25q. OHV trail system design (to provide opportunities such as loops, varied terrain, practice/training areas, etc.)	Very <b>effective</b>
25r. Posting signs explaining the types of travel permitted	Somewhat <b>effective</b>
25s. Providing maps with clearly identified and easy to understand OHV routes or use areas	Somewhat <b>effective</b>
25t. Limiting and/or dispersing campsites	NA /Have not used this strategy
25u. Route maintenance such as reconstruction and/or regrading	Somewhat <b>effective</b>
25v. Permanently closing or re-locating problematic routes	

	Very <b>effective</b>
25w. Seasonally closing certain routes	Very <b>effective</b>
25x. Providing separate motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities	Very <b>effective</b>
25y. Requiring permits and/or fees for OHV access	NA /Have not used this strategy
25z. Instituting curfews for OHV use	Somewhat <b>effective</b>
25aa. Other (please specify)	Not checked
If you answered "Other" for q25, please describe here.	

## OHV Management and Funding, Part I

	<a href="#">Definitions</a>
26. Does _____ have <b>authorized</b> OHV use areas, routes and/or trails?	No
27. What proportion of the authorized OHV routes and/or OHV use areas in _____ have the following:	
27a. Signs explaining the types of travel permitted	Great (80- 89%)
27b. Maps with clearly identified and easy to understand OHV routes or use areas	Great (80- 89%)
28. How much funding from <b>appropriated dollars</b> did _____ spend on OHV management, including materials as well as employee salaries for planning, outreach, maintenance and enforcement in the following fiscal years?	

28a. FY2008 (number only)
3789361

Are the FY2008 figures actual or estimated expenditures?
Actual

28b. FY2007 (number only)
3660326

Are the FY2007 figures actual or estimated expenditures?
Estimated

28c. FY2006 (number only)
3500298

Are the FY2006 figures actual or estimated expenditures?
Estimated

28d. FY2005 (number only)
3636362

Are the FY2005 figures actual or estimated expenditures?
Estimated

28e. FY2004 (number only)
3312412

Are the FY2004 figures actual or estimated expenditures?
Estimated

28f. Please briefly describe how you determined the actual or estimated funding amounts listed above.
(gao273) Actual costs for FY2008 are based on detailed review of all ORV management related staff-time and expenditures. It included base-funded operating accounts as well as various project and emergency accounts. Estimated costs for prior years (2007-2004) were based on a pro rata estimate (% of total budget).

## OHV Management and Funding, Part II

<a href="#">Definitions</a>
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29. Have you supplemented appropriated dollars for OHV management with any of the following:
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	<i>(Please check all that apply. If you have not supplemented appropriated dollars, please check the last box below.)</i>
29.1. Grants from states	Not checked
29.2. Grants from other sources	Not checked
29.3. Partnerships with OHV user groups (including volunteer hours)	Checked
29.4. Partnerships with environmental and other groups (including volunteer hours)	Not checked
29.5. Federal user fees or permits	Not checked
29.6. Other	Not checked
29.7. Have not supplemented appropriated dollars	Not checked
	If you answered "Other" for q29, please describe here.
30. What proportion of ____'s OHV management is supplemented through non-appropriated sources such as those listed in Question 29?	Small (1- 9%)
31. Given existing resources from appropriated dollars and other sources, can you sustainably manage current OHV route systems and/or open areas in ____?	Definitely not
31a. Please explain why you believe you can or can not sustainably manage current OHV route systems and/or open areas in ____.	(gao273) The current OHV management operation is not base funded and depends heavily on non-recurring project funding and sometimes on emergency funding to provide for basic seasonal staffing. When the new OHV plan is completed, we cannot implement an effective plan without additional base funding and/or revenue generated by permits.

## OHV Enforcement

[Definitions](#)

32. How many full-time, permanent law enforcement officers (LEOs) do you currently have in \_\_\_\_\_? (Do **not** include seasonal staff. For the Forest Service, this does not include Forest Protection Officers.)

15

33. Are any of these LEOs shared with other units or federal agencies?

No

34. Has \_\_\_\_\_ developed special regulations for OHV safety, such as speed limits, helmet requirements, or age limits that go beyond state mandated requirements?

No

35. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following issues related to OHV use violations in \_\_\_\_\_?

35a. Bail or collateral schedules for OHV use violations

Very **satisfied**

35b. Responsiveness of the federal magistrate to hearing cases related to OHV violations

Very **satisfied**

35c. Responsiveness of U.S. attorney's office in prosecuting cases related to OHV violations

Very **satisfied**

36. Please explain your responses to the above issues related to OHV use violations in \_\_\_\_\_.

(gao273) The U.S. Attorney's Office and U.S. District Court have been very supportive of prosecution of OHV cases brought forward by park LE staff. The key issue is not enough LE staffing with too much area to cover, and a relatively low level of LE presence in OHV areas.

37. How do the fine amounts for OHV violations in \_\_\_\_\_ compare with fines for similar violations on nearby state lands?

About the same

38. Considering the average user, are fines for OHV violations sufficient to deter illegal or unsafe OHV activities in \_\_\_\_\_?

Probably yes

39. How many OHV related fatalities have occurred in \_\_\_\_\_ within the past 5 fiscal years (2004 - 2008)?

(gao273) 0

## Challenges in Managing OHV Use

### [Definitions](#)

40. How great a challenge, if at all, are the following issues in managing OHV use throughout \_\_\_\_\_?

Management includes protecting resources, promoting safety, minimizing user conflicts, ensuring compliance with regulations and conducting monitoring activities. Please respond based on these management aspects as a whole.

## Resource Challenges

40a. Financial resources

Very great challenge

40b. Staff resources for enforcement

Very great challenge

40c. Staff resources for management

Very great challenge

40d. Meeting increased capacity needs (parking, camping, facilities, use areas, etc.)

Very great challenge

40e. Rapid increase in OHV use

Great challenge

40f. Keeping up with OHV technological changes that could affect management/enforcement practices

Moderate challenge

## Social and Educational Challenges

40g. User conflicts

Great challenge

40h. Managing different beliefs about how federal lands should be used

	Very great challenge
40i. Changing historical OHV use patterns	Very great challenge
40j. Installing and maintaining signs that let OHV users know where they can/can't go	Very great challenge
40k. Education/Outreach	Great challenge

### Enforcement and Coordination Challenges

40l. Enforcement	Very great challenge
40m. Bail or collateral schedule / fines	Small challenge
40n. Interagency (e.g., FS, BLM, NPS) coordination	Small challenge
40o. Coordination/cooperation with state and local governments	Moderate challenge
40p. Managing fragmented public land areas (i.e., mixed federal, state, and private ownership)	Moderate challenge

### Other Challenges

40q. Human health and safety	Moderate challenge
40r. Environmental impacts	Very great challenge
40s. Collecting reliable data on the effects of OHV use	Very great challenge
40t. Determining an acceptable level of impact	Very great challenge

40u. Search and rescue
Small challenge
Other challenge #1.
(gao273) Peak breeding season for wildlife, when key areas to be protected, is also peak visitation season
Other challenge #2.
(gao273) After 30 yrs of unauthorized OHV use, user groups strongly resist regulation
Other challenge #3.
Other challenge #4.

### Other Comments on OHV Use

41. Please share any other comments you have regarding OHV use in ____.
(gao273) We are in the process of developing a new OHV management plan and engaged in negotiated rulemaking to develop a new OHV special regulation. Meanwhile, we are operating under a Consent Decree, which has benefits for wildlife but imposes operational requirements that are not financially sustainable. This issue dominates park management and park staff time, with no end in sight. Whatever the new management plan calls for, it needs to be effective in terms of minimizing environmental impacts and user conflicts, and needs to be operationally sustainable.

### Complete Opinion Survey

42. <b>If you have completed the questions in this survey, please move the check to the "Completed" button below. (Your answers will not be used until you have checked "Completed." We will not send follow-up emails to those who have marked the "Completed" option below.)</b>
Completed
If you would like to view and print your completed survey, continue to the next screen. Otherwise click on the "Exit" button below to exit the survey and send your responses to GAO.

### Getting a Copy of Your Responses

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**Thank you for your help.** [Click here](#) to view and print your completed survey. Click on the "Exit" button below to exit the survey and send your responses to GAO.