



File Code: 2300
Date: July 21, 2021

Verde Valley Jeep/UTV/ATV Rental Companies

To Whom It May Concern:

The Coconino National Forest has noticed a significant increase in off-highway vehicle (OHV) use in the greater Sedona area over the last several years, and especially this last year (Jeep, UTV, ATV and other OHVs). Some of the increased use can be attributed to the global pandemic, however, there has been a trend in increased use and interest in off-road use over the last decade. Visitors participating in OHV recreation through the service of an OHV rental business has been the fastest growing sector of local OHV use. We need your help and commitment to ensure that we can continue to provide high quality OHV recreation opportunities on Forest lands surrounding Sedona and Cottonwood.

The Forest Service, the City of Sedona, Yavapai County, Arizona State Parks, Yavapai County Sheriff's Office, and the offices of Senator Mark Kelley and Congressman O'Halloran have been fielding concerns about speeding, reckless driving, driving off trail/road, excessive dust and noise, and natural resource damage to our fragile desert environment and rangeland resources. County Supervisor Michaels has convened a working group comprised of these agencies, stakeholders, and residents to collaborate to address these issues.

The Forest Service needs OHV rental companies in the Verde Valley to engage in this effort to reduce conflicts, mitigate issues and prevent resource damage. We strongly believe that with your help, we can develop strategies, tactics and partnerships that encourage safe and respectful OHV use on Forest lands. I would like to avoid a closure of OHV routes in the greater Sedona area, however, if we are unable to address these issues and demonstrate that OHV recreation can continue without unnecessary resource damage, I will take action to close access to these opportunities.



Chris Johansen is the Recreation Program Manager for the Red Rock Ranger District and will be the point of contact for OHV related issues on the District. Chris and his staff will reach out to all the OHV rental companies in the Verde Valley to organize a meeting to initiate a partnership with the Forest Service and the Sedona Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau to develop a responsible OHV recreation strategy. A meaningful, long-term commitment from local OHV businesses is necessary to protect access to the OHV routes that your customers demand.

If you have any questions or would like more information, contact Chris Johansen christopher.johansen@usda.gov or 928-203-7529.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Jo West". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

LAURA JO WEST
Forest Supervisor

cc: Candace Carr Strauss; Chris Johansen