

## **Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility News Release ([www.peer.org](http://www.peer.org))**

For Immediate Release: July 11, 2007  
Contact: Carol Goldberg (202) 265-7337

### **OFF-ROADING BECOMING MONSTROUS LAW ENFORCEMENT HEADACHE — Off-Road Crime Outstripping All Other Violations Combined on Public Lands**

Tucson— Off-roading violations account for the lion's share of law enforcement problems on federal lands, according to official crime statistics released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). Figures from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) indicate that incidents involving off-road vehicles are not only the biggest drain on rangers' resources but, nationally and in the Western U.S., generate more law enforcement citations than all other criminal activity combined.

"Off-roading is the biggest law enforcement problem on public lands today," said Ed Patrovsky, a retired 25-year National Park Service and BLM Law Enforcement Ranger and a member of a new coalition called Rangers for Responsible Recreation organized by PEER. "Lawless and inappropriate off-roading causes significant environmental damage, as well as reducing recreational opportunities."

BLM statistics obtained by PEER under the Freedom of Information Act indicate that off-roading is now the predominant demand on law enforcement time, particularly in the West. For the five-state area of California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah, BLM numbers for 2004-07 show –

- More than 6,600 off-road violations for hit and run, reckless driving, and other crimes;
- More than twice the number of DUI incidents involving off-road vehicles than for autos; and
- More than 2,300 incidents of illegal off-roading on closed trails or off-limit areas;

Nationally, there were more than 5,400 law enforcement incidents involving off-road vehicles on BLM lands compared to roughly 900 incidents involving drug enforcement – the next highest category, during 2005, the latest year for which national numbers are available.

"The irresponsible use of off-road vehicles on our public lands is one of the greatest challenges facing land managers today," commented Bob Abbey, the retired BLM -Nevada Director. "There appears to be a total disregard by many off-roaders of the impacts from their actions."

In addition to thousands of off-roaders plowing through restricted areas or ignoring trail markers, off-roaders pose an increasing fire danger in the drought-stricken West. For example, the five-state BLM statistics show more than 100 spark arrestor violations, which increase the chance of wildfires

"It is clear that the off-road community has no capacity for self-policing because irresponsible off-roading is now totally out of control," stated Southwest PEER Director Daniel Patterson, an ecologist who formerly worked with BLM. "Off-road vehicle problems cannot simply be blamed on

just a ‘few bad apples’ – as industry apologists try to do. America needs stronger penalties to deter reckless off-roading.”

Rangers for Responsible Recreation are urging much tougher penalties for off-road violations, as well as law enforcement funding devoted to stemming the avalanche of problems occasioned by reckless off-roading. In addition, the coalition is urging Congress to conduct reviews aimed at establishing the true financial and environmental tolls that off-roading is wreaking on America’s public lands.

###

[See the combined statistics for California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah](#)

[View the national BLM numbers for 2005](#)

[Examine the year-by-year numbers for California, Arizona, Nevada,  
New Mexico and Utah](#)

[Meet the Rangers for Responsible Recreation and look at their plan](#)