

Oddball Ways to Close More Public Lands

By Del & Stacie Albright

We are sick of the continuous attempts to close public lands for every reason imaginable, from hairballs to headaches. Enough is enough. Let's stop this madness and put some common sense back into public lands management – keeping public lands FOR the public; not FROM the public. Check out this new list of junk being used to restrict or shut us out more.

Soundscapes, viewsheds, scenic corridors and vistas, and perhaps next a “smellzone” are the new additions to closing public lands to motorized recreation. Where does it end? Natural sound; peace and quiet; insults to olfactory glands; energy development sounds and sights; OHV use; hunters; you name it – they all make noise (sound). Some interfere with sights and views....like your neighbor planting a tall tree in front of your ocean view. Will the anti-access wackos never run out of ways to curtail motorized recreation and energy development?

We think the radical closurists will never run out of tricks to shut us out. We have to take these things seriously even though it seems silly to us in many cases. Recently we spotted an article in one of our local small town USA newspapers about a certain “smell” problem in a particular area of the city and how it was finally found and resolved. A neighborhood could detect frequent sewer smells coming from “somewhere.” It caused major issues to the local community (let alone the homeowners). There were threats and disputes.

This article made us realize that the buck might not just stop there and it could spill over into our off-road recreation sports of choice. We cannot think that junk science or radical closurists won't find ways to mess with our fun. Here are our suggestions for what WE can do about it.

TUNE YOUR JUNK: Maintenance and sound levels (as in mufflers) are critical to keeping our off-road trails and riding areas open. Get your stuff up to snuff. Give a hoot; don't pollute. Don't leak or drip. Be the example for others to follow and for no one to criticize.

FOLLOW THE RULES: This goes without saying; know the game and follow the rules of the trail. This is our first method of holding the high ground in motorized recreation. We can ask for more when we follow the rules. Whether you're a rock hound, hunter, wheeler, dirt biker, or sand-duner, whatever, there are rules for all of us to follow. Be considerate of others; we would get a bit irritated too while out hiking with our family only to find a motorized user fly by us revving up the motor, acting aggressive and being inconsiderate. Remember the old adage about walking a mile in someone else's shoes, get it? Walking a mile, ha ha ha!

Know before you go and be aware of others who may be out there using the same areas or trails; a lot of our public lands are multiple use areas. Follow the rules, have some trail ethics like those upheld by BlueRibbon Coalition here: <http://www.sharetrails.org/about/ethics>.

JOIN THE WINNERS: Join groups like BlueRibbon Coalition making a difference on a national level. Join your state and regional clubs/groups as well. It's all about numbers and members – our voices have to be heard and we need a bigger choir. When the time comes to write a letter about an energy development or change in land designation (such as a smellzone or view shed), get your voice heard.

STAY ALERT: Watch for unusual or new developments in and around your recreation areas, like energy pipelines, and learn what you can do to be part of the solution. Sign up for BlueRibbon Coalition News and Alerts so you know BEFORE it's too late. Listen to those full time landuse pro's in your organizations that know what we should be doing when it comes to energy vs. recreation situations, for example.

WHEN IN DOUBT, WHIP IT OUT (your keyboard or cell phone): Do not be afraid to ask the landuse gurus on forums and websites about issues in your area. Don't sit back and think someone else will take care of things. Closures are everyone's business. Do your part; don't let them start.

SUMMARY: These oddball ways of closing and restricting public lands have to do with our supposed impact miles away from our recreation areas. These are all things that most of us do anyway but sometimes we need a little reminder as a "Smellzone" just might one day be added to the anti-access whacko's war chest of threats against us.

If they can see us, smell us, or hear us, there will those that don't like us. It's too bad that they don't like us. They have no right to close us out or shut us down for their own exclusionary elitist attitudes.

