

Movies, Madness and My Backyard What to do in this trying economy?

By Del Albright, BlueRibbon Ambassador

Fuel prices are killing us. Everything is costing more than ever before. Event attendance is down. Off-road businesses are going under. Folks are withdrawing into different (new) ways of recreating. What does this mean, and how do we cope with this trying economy and still pursue our recreational activities?

I'd like to offer a few ideas and suggestions to help during these tough times. First of all, we can't lose sight of the fact that we need to recreate or we'll go nuts. Second, we can't let our favorite off-road businesses go under without trying to help them. And third, there are things we can do and still consider it recreating – maybe a bit closer to home.

Recreate or Break:

One definition of "recreate" is to restore, add new life, refresh, and to create anew in body and mind. If you break the word into syllables, you see that it means to re-create something – us! It's easy to see how someone can "break" if they work too much and play too little. We all have a need to do something fun – recreational – in order to keep our head about us.

So I suggest that even during these trying times, we keep recreation on our list of things to do – daily. Even just a walk in the park will help. Something fun should be part of your day and your weekend.

OHV Businesses Need Us:

A thriving OHV business helps us keep our sports alive and our rigs running. In many cases, businesses are big contributors to our land use and access fights as well. We need them and they need us. So if they start to fail because we're not buying parts, then we jeopardize our future to some extent. We need to find that middle ground and help folks stay afloat that are helping us keep our recreation alive.

Yes, many Americans are cutting back – on everything. And that's a smart thing to do when you have to have a loan officer to buy a tank of diesel. But I suggest we cutback carefully, and still help those businesses that we can. We still need parts and we still want to make some mods and repairs to our rigs. If businesses lose too much business, then they will drop out of organizations – our organizations that help us keep our trails and riding areas open. We should not let that happen. If our organizations lose too

many members and businesses, then they too will have a hard time staying afloat. Then what?

So I suggest you pick your battles carefully and you spend your money judiciously, yet still help keep our OHV businesses and organizations alive. Keep your memberships to your favorite local, state, regional and national groups. Buy from those that support us and make sense to you.

Visit bulletin boards such as www.pirate4x4.com to find out who is having troubles and who might be going under. Visit the Land Use section of any OHV web site and keep up with the issues. Chime in where you can and buy from those folks who need our help.

Keep Playing – Even if Closer to Home:

If your favorite event is not in your budget, spend your recreating time and money closer to home. Crank up your club to do more in your own backyard. Buy/rent movies that appeal to your OHV side. Visit and buy from websites like www.outbackusa.com that have a nice selection of videos, maps and guidebooks. Use these to plan your future recreation. Sometimes the planning is as much fun as the doing.

Watch your favorite TV show about motorsports. Invite friends over of a like mind and enjoy outdoor recreation in the comfort of your own home. Have them bring their rigs over. Do a show and shine. Heck, just wash them as a group. Make a fun day of it. Just don't park it and forget it. Get out there and do something. Be creative. Have a parade close to home. Go park and cruise like we did back in the American Graffiti days -- but include your OHV toys.

In Closing:

Don't slip into a workaholic (all work and no play) attitude when money is tight. Rather consider your options and find new things to do; or new ways to do old things. Get out there. Do something to help us keep our sport alive, even when the tide is ripping at us. Tides change; as will this one. Our future is still good. Our sports are critical to our sanity. Keep them alive. Keep yourself healthy.

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The BlueRibbon Coalition and several off-road businesses sponsor Del Albright, 4x4 Ambassador. BRC is a national recreation group that champions responsible use of public and private lands, and encourages individual environmental stewardship. It represents over 10,000 individual members and 1200 organization and business members, for a combined total of over 600,000 recreationists nationwide. Call 1-800-258-3742 and visit BRC online at www.sharetrails.org. Also visit Del's website at www.delalbright.com.