

“Go Green” with Your Outdoor Recreation

By Del Albright, BlueRibbon Ambassador

Ok, don't shoot me, but I want to suggest a type of “Go Green” for four-wheeling and other types of motorized recreation. If you're a regular reader of Del Albright, you know I'm not anything related to a “greenie” or anti-access radical protectionist – in fact, I'm the opposite. But something has come over me lately. It's similar to nausea, but there may be something here worth suffering for.

Everywhere I look I see this “Go Green” stuff. Businesses, advertisements, magazines, TV commercials and our esteemed government agencies are constantly getting all warm and fuzzy with this trendy stuff. Heck if I believed all the brainwashing we're being lambasted with today, I might just fit in better with the trendy crowd. But I don't! And, I'm not sure I want to.

I drive an off-road rig that loves to spank rocks. Yea, for sure I stay on the trail and wheel conscientiously; but I'm not about to convert to some ultra radical type dude that claims to be saving the world when in fact they usually do more harm than good. I am an outdoor motorized recreationist who is responsible and ethical.

So what do I mean by “Go Green” with your outdoor recreation? It's really pretty simple; and truthfully, while I can't stand the trendy name, there's some merit here for all of us. But I am NOT talking about the kind of “Go Green” I just saw in a noteworthy 300 page monthly magazine with a movie star on the cover, standing on an iceberg with a baby polar bear looking up at him. How ludicrous is that? I consider it silly to the point of laughable. What kind of an idiot would pose in such a manner!?

Polar bears don't exist in Iceland where the scene was shot. Heck, movie stars don't exist in Iceland for all I know. And why would a polar bear look to a movie star for help? ☺ But this kiss-a-bug, hug-a-tree, don't eat turkeys because they're our friends kind of trendy mentality has a very strong foothold in our country. It's in our schools every day and some of the big media is on overtime to hype it. It makes me sick – but it's here to stay.

On the other hand, while the “Green” movement has some wacko, stupid stuff going on, there are several things that we can and do agree with. A lot of these things we were promoting before even they were. Perhaps we just need to capitalize on this naming the idea as “going green” the way the average citizen seems to be accepting it.

The concepts that DO make sense to me and that many responsible outdoor recreation groups have been promoting for years include: 1) conserving our resources; 2) cutting back on waste; 3) keeping our outdoors clean; 4) reducing air and water pollution; 5) keeping our watersheds, creeks and lakes clean; 6) curtailing outlaw behavior and illegal off-trail travel; and 7) leaving behind a legacy and sport that our children and grandchildren can enjoy.

Now let’s explore how this applies to motorized recreation. In the very first place, we insist on common sense in how we apply our sport to our changing world. We “ain’t going away” so the closure enthusiasts had best find more reasonable approaches to their radical agenda. And those approaches better be things we can wrap our arms around. We are here to stay, and our chosen form of outdoor recreation is just as viable and reasonable as any other. So I’d like to offer just three simple things we can all do

First, let’s get everyone to stay on the trails; get rid of the outlaws; and educate the uniformed to be respectful of our freedoms and opportunities. We can all learn to be more patient and for sure, to read the rule book before jumping into the game. Obey the law and be smart.

Second, let’s make sure our rigs are well-maintained and don’t pollute (land, water or air). Tighten up the leaks; fix the muffler; and clean up any fluid spills. Take special care when crossing creeks – make sure you’re not polluting with leaking lubricants. This has as much to do with being a good American as any “Green” propaganda.

Third, clean up your camp site, pack out your waste, and even pick up the trash of other idiots. Stop to pick up cans and trash when you see it. Respect our environment while enjoying your rig and the challenge of the trail. Leave it better than you found it.

This all boils down to adopting your own code of ethics – how you relate to your world while enjoying your sport. In no shape or form do I suggest we should not be able to slap the coals to the afterburner or spin a few tires here and there. But I do suggest that we must be cognizant of our scarce resources and how so many more of us are getting into off-road recreation every year. We can’t tear up the landscape and expect it to be there for those behind us.

So the idea of “Go Green” with your outdoor recreation to me is more about taking care of what we love to see and do. These are things that can make a difference in the big picture.

And heck, rather than fight them, why not show them how our code of ethics and common sense can keep motorized recreation alive and well forever?

The BlueRibbon Coalition 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 1,100 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.