

TALKING POINTS

Writing a letter is the most effective action you can take to ensure that you, and future generations, will have quiet areas in which to hike, birdwatch, relax, and "get away from it all."

The most effective letters are those that use your own words. Letters don't have to be lengthy or eloquent (or even spelled correctly!). You don't have to be an expert on ORVs or natural resources to qualify as a letter-writer. Remember: the Gila National Forest is YOUR public land, and the Forest Service works for YOU!

In your letter, please share personal experiences and stories that demonstrate why you value wildlands protection, and why management of ORVs is so critical (including horror stories, such as examples of how ORVs have disturbed a quiet hike or ruined a favorite trail). Land managers are human, and human stories inspire them to be more sympathetic to our cause. And, of course, remember to keep your comments polite and respectful.

If you have them, please submit photos to complement your stories. Submit photos both of places that should be protected from ORV damage, and of ORV abuse that you've witnessed. Site-specific information is always welcomed.

Below are some suggestions of what to say, but please use your own words.

Adverse impacts of Off-Road Vehicles:

- ORVs cause damage to riparian habitat, the most productive ecosystem in the arid Southwest.
- ORVs have serious negative impacts on native vegetation, and tires of ORVs spread invasive weed seeds into previously remote areas.
- ORV use in streams and rivers causes decreased water quality, due to increased sedimentation and turbidity.
- ORVs adversely affect wildlife, by causing habitat fragmentation and loss.
- ORVs contribute to air and noise pollution.
- ORVs cause severe soil loss, erosion and compaction.
- Irresponsible ORV use may cause damage to cultural resources.
- Irresponsible ORV users leave trash in the forest, drive at dangerous speeds, and contribute to user conflicts.

A few of the outcomes we need to ask for:

- ORVs must be required to stay on designated routes
- Extremely limited designation of user-created routes (i.e., only in situations where there is a trade-off/closure in exchange for designation of user-created routes, or an ecologically compelling reason to do so)
- Cross-country travel (driving off roads) should be prohibited
- Riparian areas (including dry washes with restoration potential) should be off-limits to ORVs
- We request a road density standard of no more than one mile of road per square mile of Forest (NOT including the Wilderness areas, where motorized vehicles are prohibited)
- Road density calculations should include all motorized routes – whether classified as “road” or “trail,” and whether “authorized” or “unauthorized”
- The Gila National Forest should institute a route system consistent with their declining road maintenance and law enforcement budgets
- All routes that degrade wildlife habitat, water quality, riparian areas, habitat for threatened and endangered species, or archaeological sites should be closed
- Institute an ORV buffer zone around Gila NF inholdings or adjacent neighbors to minimize user conflicts
- Close roads that are currently found in Inventoried Roadless Areas
- Commitment from the Gila National Forest to cooperate with conservation groups and citizens to decommission closed roads
- The Gila National Forest should create a plan – not just a map – for implementing Travel Management decisions, including:
 - science-based adaptive management system that protect resources
 - identification and prioritization of route closures and reclamation
 - providing the public with notice of consequences for violations of designation decisions
- Large areas, without ORV routes, where wildlife thrive and natural quiet prevails

Everyone has the right to enjoy our public lands, but no one has the right to abuse them.