

Protecting the Ocala National Forest Integrated Approach Essential

In order to protect the vital resources of the Ocala National Forest, the Ocala Coalition recommends action be taken to provide Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) access to the forest only as a **comprehensive package** — Provide designated trails and trail heads, closure of non-designated travelways, a quota permit system, and carrying capacity for the system, and after establishing an ORV management plan that includes adequate law enforcement, user education and biological monitoring.

Regulate Motorized Use

- **Empower District Rangers.** Allow Rangers to close trails and areas damaged by irresponsible ORV users.
- **Establish effective law enforcement and fines.** This is the heart of the problem. Law enforcement must be increased and provided adequate equipment to address the growth of motorized recreation in our national forests. Fines must be raised to send the message that irresponsible behavior will not be tolerated.
- **Establish an ORV management program.** ORV designated trails and advertising will increase motorized use in certain areas. Establish monitoring intervals, criteria, practices, and standards against which the effects of ORV use will be measured. Establish quotas, carrying capacity, trail maintenance plans, and damage elimination measures. Establish an ORV permit system with identification decals and a toll-free hotline to report irresponsible behaviors.

Protect Ecologically Important Land

- **Develop a biological monitoring program.** Evaluate cumulative impacts of designated motorized travelways to specific forest resources, concentrating on sensitive species, and damage to plant communities and documenting rates of recovery back to reference areas plant cover and species composition. All biological monitoring should include a specific examination of motorized travelways as an impact in the data collection efforts.
- **Reduce Road Density.** Close travelways other than Forest Roads and designated trails. Restoring areas of non-fragmented contiguous wildlife habitat will maintain the viability of unique habitat and abundant wildlife in the region.
- **Reestablish Roadless Areas.** “Habitat in remote condition” means “roadless area”. In the past decades motorized travelway proliferation has degraded 14,242 acres of previously designated “roadless areas” in the Ocala (48,891 acres total for the three National Forests). Through motorized travelway closures, obliteration and restoration, these areas could be restored to their former biological condition and some serve potentially as hiking and horse paths but not motorized travelways.