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Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1776, Clear Creek National Recreation Area and Conservation Act
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Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today in support of H.R. 1776, the Clear Creek National Recreation Area and Conservation Act.

The Clear Creek Management Area (CCMA) is of vital importance to the off-highway-vehicle community in the West. The 75,000 acres of the CCMA have been ranked as one of the top 10 places to ride by *Dirt Rider* magazine – the most popular motorcycle magazine of its type -- and formerly hosted the Quicksilver Enduro, a nationally recognized event for over 30 years. From 1983 until 2007, the event was designated a National Enduro by the AMA.

As you are aware, this bill would create the country's first national OHV area, guaranteeing future access for off-highway-vehicle enthusiasts who visit Central California to ride in the management area. Rep. Paul Cook's bill, H.R. 1676, would also create a similar national OHV area to guarantee permanent access to Johnson Valley in Southern California.

If this bill is not passed, the Bureau of Land Management's Record of Decision, issued in February of this year, will stand.

Under the current record of decision, the Serpentine Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), would be closed to all off-highway-vehicles and be open only to street legal, registered vehicles for five days per year.

The result of this closure would severely limit OHV access in the entire management area in several important ways.

First, many staging areas are located in the Serpentine ACEC, because it is one of the largest open areas that can accommodate riders, their on-highway vehicles and OHVs – which generally require trailers and trucks to transport. As a result, under the current management plan, OHV enthusiasts are able to camp at the Jade Mill campsite, which resides in the Serpentine ACEC, but are unable to use the campsite as a staging area, since no OHVs are permitted on trails or roads within the Serpentine ACEC.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the Serpentine area sits in the middle of the management area. Many trails run through the Serpentine area, and restricting access would fragment or eliminate many of these historically used OHV routes.

Third, under the current ROD, visitors taking part in motorized recreation are allowed to enter the CCMA only five days per year, while non-motorized visitors can enter 12 days.

Thus, riders are limited to potentially less than two weekends of visitation. This is an especially difficult pill to swallow not only because it is discriminatory, but also because many riders travel long distances and arrive late on Friday and leave on Sunday.

Finally, the ROD has the potential to limit the total overall number of visitors. It gives the BLM state director the ability to limit the total number of daily visitors to the area. Thus, with the administrative swipe of a pen, access can be denied to one of the best places to ride in the country.

Rep. Farr's H.R. 1776 would fix all of these shortcomings.

Reverting to the 2005 Clear Creek Management Area Travel Management Plan would still close some historical OHV trails. It would still establish a designated system of trails in the CCMA.

However, the 2005 plan would ensure access to a network of routes 218 miles long. According to the 2005 plan, the routes "would offer a variety of course combinations that can be varied from year to year."

Competitive events would be allowed to return to the CCMA.

Importantly, the Serpentine ACEC would remain open to OHVs.

This would allow riders to use the Jade Mill campsite as a staging area and access longer and more challenging trails directly from camp. Additionally, it would relieve other trails from the possibility of over use.

The largest change from the 2005 plan is that the BLM would be required to charge fees to access the area. These fees would be used to maintain and improve the Clear Creek Management area. By creating a special account for the fees, H.R. 1776 ensures the fees will be used at the recreation area for needed maintenance and enhancement and not on projects across the country.

Even in 2005, the BLM recognized that areas for OHV recreation were decreasing – even as the popularity of OHV riding has increased.

I hope we can move this legislation, so that the 50,000 riders that enjoyed the Clear Creek Management Area in 2003 can do so again in 2014.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.