

**Opening Statement  
Recreational Access Oversight Hearing  
June 22, 2011**

**The purpose of today's hearing is to make a case for opening large, new areas of public lands to off-road vehicles. In contrast, the last hearing in this subcommittee on this issue, in 2008, clearly demonstrated that, as a result of budget cuts and lack of personnel, the federal government is unable to enforce *existing* laws governing OHVs on *existing* roads and trails.**

**Ranchers, sportsmen, law enforcement agents, private property owners, and tribal leaders, have all raised alarms about the damage caused by the *existing* level of unchecked ORV activity. To propose to expand this activity will only expand these harms.**

**To be clear, many Americans enjoy using ORVs responsibly. Unfortunately, the negligent use of ORVs is rising rapidly and with troubling results: damaged cultural sites, disturbed wildlife habitat, destroyed private property, and serious injuries.**

**The rapid growth of this recreational activity – which is documented in much of the testimony submitted for today’s hearing -- has resulted in levels of use that overburden law enforcement and local communities and tarnish the recreational experience for those off-road users who respect the land.**

**What’s more, the justification for taking such action is the claim that expanded ORV use is needed to create jobs. As will be clearly demonstrated by witness testimony today, the ORV economy is already booming**

and, if we are not careful, could begin to hamper the equally important *non-motorized* recreation economy.

We agree that the current balance between the competing, multiple uses on our public land needs adjustment. But rather than *more* OHV use, we need more resources to manage the *current* levels of use and to mitigate the harmful impacts that use can cause.

We appreciate the time and the effort of our witnesses to be here today and look forward to their testimony.

I yield back.