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Organization:

Title:

Comments: As a citizen who values public and planetary health, a retired medical professional who also had the privilege of working four years in a defense contractor's Washington Liaison Office across the Potomac from D.C., sometimes dealing with staff of members of Congress while my husband worked at the Department of the Navy following 24 years in that service, here we go once again: the noise, speed and dust brigades want to rule!

I'm old enough to have had extraordinary experiences in what was ONCE true wilderness areas in the 60's and 70's where one saw more wildlife than people, could leave camping gear 10-12 hours while on extended hikes with no fear of vandalism or theft. When one did meet people, they were others who truly appreciated the quiet, the wildlife, the inspiration of being in nature with natural sounds. Three instances stand out as being "spoilers" which made me very angry: the first, a motorcyclist on a hiking trail in Yosemite who nearly hit me at a spot where the trail was narrow, rocky and left me little room to maneuver. No apologies from him - I'd been observing a deer who of course scurried away.

Snowshoeing is one of my favorite activities and all such trips were fabulous with one exception: In Sequoia a small group of us were "walking through a Christmas Card" wonderland when machinery was heard then two snowmobiles came near us, making some circular moves, laughing then sped away! Their noise was heard for several minutes and not appreciated!

The third incident occurred in the Stanislaus NF in the 2000's when we were on a clearly marked hiking trail, at a fairly remote point having seen no others for a while when we heard gunshots from very close. Looking over a slight ridge I saw two off-road vehicles (where they should NOT have been) and guys just shooting into an embankment below and beyond us. My husband yelled for me to get back (I was going to tell them off) and said were leaving here right now! We never saw the formations we were hiking to see and never went back. I recall making a report to a local office once home but, of course, there was nothing to be done. No cell phones then and they may not have worked out there.

Why does it seem as though the less appreciative of the TRUE nature of wilder areas who, in the city, might be drag-racing, doing wheelies or other juvenile activities seem to hold sway when it comes to our vast public lands, supposedly to be preserved for the benefit of all of us for generations to come, safeguarding them as much as possible from physical damage, harm to plants and wildlife, pollution or other negatives? It appears to me that the ignorant attitude we should ALL have learned is totally wrong by now that "conquering" is the way to go. We must tolerate those who don't work WITH wilderness but must "conquer" it! How infantile, counter-productive, short-sighted and just plain wrong! The only entity benefitting from destructive "hobbies" such as off-roading are the companies selling the noisy equipment that does the damage. Yes, I've known TWO males who (as far as I know) DID try to minimize OHV damage as they claimed to care about our forests. My own observation of others, however, is that is NOT the norm and with a top-down attitude that exploiting everything for profit is the way to go over ALL COMMON SENSE at this point in time alarms me! This attitude is epidemic and spreading to those who do not think about the larger picture or their own actions.

It has always seemed to me that the less mature seem to lack even a basic concept of quiet beauty and natural sounds. I could insert a few comments about the connection between psychological conditions and this issue, however, choose not to go there at this time. Those who share the love of nature - all flora and fauna - have insight and respect for nature, understand the long-term picture and what genuine "stewardship" of our special places actually IS! I personally prefer to NEVER encounter machine

noise on my walking/hiking excursions, however, a sensible plan has been offered: ALTERNATIVE 3. I strongly oppose Alternative 5 which I feel dismisses those of us who treasure a TRULY genuine epic wilderness experience with its natural soundtrack! If it came down to it, I'd prefer to pay a fee even on public lands in order to avoid even the possibility of noisy machines anywhere in the scope of my outing!!!!