

## Off Road Vehicle (ORV) & Illegal Coastal Camping Management Workshop Outcomes Report

Workshop held at the Jurien Bay Recreation Centre on 6 September 2012

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**Apologies:** Bob Bower (Shire of Dandaragan), Brad Rushforth (DEC), Sue Hancock (DEC), Terry Goodlich (DEC), Jan Richards (Ledge Point Coastcare Group), Dave O'Meara (Drummonds Progress Assoc).

Organised and facilitated by: Mic Payne (NACC)

### Background

ORV ownership is increasing and unregulated use of ORVs is causing significant damage to sensitive coastal ecosystems, particularly close to regional communities. Illegal coastal camping is also placing increased pressure on these environments. Coastal managers across the region are required to commit increasing resources to managing ORVs and illegal camping. In response to this, the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC), with funding from Coastwest, convened a full day workshop to discuss ORV and coastal camping management.

### Stakeholders

- Coastal Local Governments
- State Government agencies; DEC, DoW, DoPlanning / WAPC (Coastwest)
- ORV user groups; Recreational Trailbike Riders Association (RTRA)
- Community groups
- Aboriginal representatives

### Workshop Objectives

- Bring together stakeholders in the region to share experiences and current strategies for ORV and coastal camping management;
- Create a network of coastal managers in the region to potentially collaborate on further action;
- Present an overview of the [WA State Trail Bike Strategy \(2008\)](#), including its recommendations and current status;
- Distribute a workshop outcomes report, summarising discussions, potential next steps and funding opportunities for coastal managers.



## Outcomes

The following workshop outcomes have been divided into three sections as follows:

1. Problems identified - a summary of the issues facing managers of ORVs and illegal coastal camping;
2. Management considerations – a summary of management practises currently in use and suggestions for improved management practises;
3. Presentations – summaries of presentations by two regional stakeholders currently engaged in strategic planning for ORV management.

Sections 1 and 2 are the results from a round-table discussion in which participants were provided the opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences on management of ORVs and illegal coastal camping in the region.

### 1. Problems identified

#### General concerns

- ORV use is rapidly increasing in the region, at least partly due to increased expendable income in WA;
- ORVs are increasing in power and diversity;
- Opening of the Indian Ocean Drive has increased access by ORV users and coastal campers to the coast;
- Many coastal campers also own ORVs, hence the problems are linked (eg Lucky Bay, Shire of Northampton);
- Restricting ORV use and coastal camping in one local government results in greater pressures placed on adjacent LGs, hence a regional management approach would be beneficial;
- Insufficient information is available to ORV users and coastal campers to enable them to plan their trips effectively.

#### Environmental damage

- Destruction of vegetation caused by indiscriminate ORV use, often with no regard for existing tracks;
- Destruction of vegetation caused by Illegal camping activities along the coast, through access, clearing of camp sites and collection of bush wood for camp fires;
- Increasing wind and rain erosion resulting from vegetation loss;
- Disturbance of fauna, particularly shorebirds, by close proximity of ORVs and coastal campsites, and the excessive noise produced by many ORVs;
- Decreasing coastal and riparian biodiversity resulting from vegetation loss and disturbance of fauna.

#### Damage to infrastructure and public nuisance

- Continuous and sometimes unrelenting damage to fences, gates and signs intended to restrict ORV and camping access to sensitive areas;
- Loss of amenity resulting from excessive noise of many ORVs, affecting local residents and visitors seeking a peaceful holiday;
- Considerable threat to public safety caused by ORVs, evidenced by increasing number of ORV related injuries and deaths within and outside of the region.





## Legislation/licensing

- ORV management hampered by the mixture of land tenures in the coastal zone, which is often a combination of local and state government administered land and Unallocated Crown Land (UCL). Local governments have no effective control on activities taking place on UCL;
- Quadbikes can't be registered, hence no capacity to identify vehicles;
- Current Off-Road license plates cause considerable confusion among ORV users as they think it allows them to go anywhere off road;
- LGIS Insurance Broking may provide insufficient cover for local governments in cases of ORV-related litigation;
- Local governments are poorly resourced to defend ORV-related law suit and even if a defence was successful the cost of legal representation would be a significant drain on resources;
- Local governments unwilling to establish and maintain designated ORV-use areas because of perceived litigation issues.

## Local/State Government Resources

- ORVs represent a high-risk activity hence the continuous threat of litigation;
- Ongoing maintenance costs of infrastructure damaged by ORV users and coastal campers;
- Considerable costs associated with establishing and maintaining designated ORV-use areas;
- Some shire councillors do not believe that ORV use in their shire represents a problem, hence do not see the need to direct resources towards managing the issue;
- DEC staff blockade roads into DEC managed lands, eg Wedge Point, to prevent entry of ORVs.

## Illegal camping

- Sandy Cape north of Jurien Bay has been designed to cater for coastal campers, but it is now completely full most holidays and weekends, forcing parties to camp illegally elsewhere, including the Hill River estuary;
- Establishing coastal camping areas may impact commercial enterprises such as caravan parks;
- Wedge Island "politics" holding up effective management in that area.

## 2. Management considerations

### ORV track management

- Most ORV sites have multiple access tracks, effective management may include closing all but a single access track, thus acknowledging the demands of continued access by ORV users;
- Physical barriers are required to close tracks, options for this include
  1. Bollards - concrete, pine logs, steel;
  2. Fencing - timber posts with wire (strand or mesh), heavy duty steel posts with cable, greased star pickets with safety tape and mesh, star pickets can be inserted deeply using a pneumatic driver;
  3. Earthworks - pits and mounds, "moon scaping";
  4. Brushing – local provenance species preferred, avoid large branches that may be collected for firewood, boxthorn prunings may be effective provided they do not carry seed;





5. Revegetation – presence of numerous tree guards deters access, even if tree guards are empty (ie no trees have been planted);
  6. A combination of options above is sometimes required.
- Hidden motion-sensing cameras can be used to help identify ORV users in locations where infrastructure is continually damaged, although lack of license plates on most ORVs limits capacity to identify successfully.

### Signage

- Ideally signs should deliver their message using some humour, ie informative and fun;
- Information should be kept reasonably simple so they are more likely to be read;
- Materials, design and placement should ensure that signs attract the attention of the target audience whilst minimising their visual impact on the landscape.

### Education

- The vast majority of ORV users and coastal campers do the right thing, and of those that currently act illegally, most would conform to regulations if they were provided with correct information;
- Appropriate signage is a good way to deliver information;
- Organised trailbike rider groups could be encouraged as they usually set a good example for responsible ORV use and are often prepared to provide education to non-members;
- Local governments can work with their coastal communities to encourage their participation in managing these issues, ie neighbourhood watch for ORVs;
- Local governments can encourage an existing sense of ownership/stewardship in long-term users of their favourite coastal campsites (how this might be achieved was not discussed);
- The Recreational Trailbike Riders Association (RTRA) is working on an educational booklet encouraging responsible ORV use, although this is not yet available;
- An opportunity exists to provide information to ORV purchasers at the point of sale.

### Co-operative and regional approach

- There is a need to develop further designated ORV-use areas within the region, providing a legal option for ORV users;
- RTRA is working closely with DEC in the successful establishment of designated ORV areas elsewhere in the state eg Pinjar;
- Many local governments, particularly the Shire of Dandaragan, contain considerable land area under DEC jurisdiction, requiring a collaborative approach between local and state government agencies to achieve effective ORV management;
- Possible collaboration between adjacent local governments to fund a coastal ranger. This was tested reasonably successfully in Geraldton in 2010.

### Legislation/licensing

- The Control of Vehicles (Off Road Areas) Act 1978 can be used by local government to manage ORVs;
- The Caravan Park and Camping Grounds Act 1995 provides for the development of coastal camp grounds;





- Licensing ORVs at the point of sale is highly desirable, particularly if it includes third-party insurance as applies to road vehicle licenses.

### Illegal camping

- The WA Tourism Commission should be engaged in future management/development of coastal camping facilities;
- Sandy Cape in the SoD, and Little Bay in the SoN both represent good examples of attractive, popular and well managed coastal camping sites.

## 3. Presentations

### Review of the Natural Area By-Laws relating to ORV management in Geraldton - Konrad Seidl, Manager of Community Law and Safety, City of Greater Geraldton (CGG)

- Conducted in response to growing concerns about unregulated ORV use, particularly on UCL;
- By-laws will only apply to land vested in the CGG;
- CGG currently contains no areas gazetted for ORV use;
- Significant historical legacy issue, with ORV users resenting control of activities they have been engaged in for years and community fears that all access for ORVs would be removed;
- Good support from some organised ORV clubs who ban members caught riding illegally;
- Suggested establishment of Natural Area Advisory Groups (NAAGs) to help address the problem;
- Work with the community to assist with identifying/locating illegal ORV users;
- Advertising campaign in local media warning that rangers have the power to seize vehicles;
- Coastal Ranger funded through NACC was effective in reducing illegal ORV use, but when limited resources ran out, the problem returned;
- Potential to combine resource across jurisdictions to employ a joint Coastal ranger;
- The final report will be available to the public, probably by March 2013;
- A recommendation was included to investigate establishment of a gazetted ORV area.

### The Recreational Trailbike Riders Association (RTRA) – Steve Pretzel, President, RTRA of WA Inc.

- 50% of sports quads in Australia are sold in WA;
- While ORVs are now cheaper to buy, often purchasers don't buy essential associated equipment such as trailers or safety gear;
- While ORV ownership increases, the number of gazetted ORV use areas has fallen;
- Pinjar gazetted ORV area well used, DEC managed and fairly self-regulated;
- Pinjar signs are a good example of communicating important messages passively;
- Similar gazetted area in Karratha has been less successful as it is close to town so ORV riders ride on roads and reserves to get to the area;
- Off Road Motorcycle Industry Forum established to engage the private sector with rider groups;
- RTRA encourages riders and non-riders to complete incident reports;
- The biggest challenge facing the RTRA is rider apathy;
- RTRA follows the five E's
  1. Engagement with groups to improve understanding;



2. Engineering activities to guide behaviour;
  3. Education on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour;
  4. Enforcement as a back-up plan;
  5. Evaluation of activities and their efficacy
- What are the cost to local government of ORV management versus the cost of establishing gazetted areas?

## Next steps

- Distribute final report;
- Consider resourcing opportunities for the establishment of a regional ORV/Illegal camping network, if workshop feedback forms indicate support for this action;
- Explore and distribute information on ORVs/Illegal camping, including funding opportunities for management.



Round table discussions at the ORV and illegal coastal camping management workshop.

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