



FORESTS FOREVER

50 First St. Suite 401, San Francisco, California 94105

Phone: 415/974-3636 FAX: 415/974-3664

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 31, 2006

Contact:

*Paul Hughes, executive director: (415) 974-4201; paul@forestsforever.org
Marc Lecard, communications manager: (415) 974-4202; marc@forestsforever.org*

Getting rid of off-road oversight

Bill would dissolve watchdog off-road vehicle commission

A California legislator is trying to put an important body regulating off-road vehicles on public lands out of commission.

In February 2006 Assemblymember Nicole Parra (D-Hanford) introduced A.B. 2784, which would eliminate the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Commission.

The commission was established in 1982 to allocate funding for the management of off-road vehicles (ORVs) on public lands. It is an important factor in keeping ORVs from spinning out of control on our forests and parklands. The commission has also provided grants for restoring areas damaged by ORV misuse.

Off-road vehicles can increase soil erosion, pollute streams with gas and oil, churn meadows and streams into mud bogs, and kill or scatter wildlife. They have also been blamed for causing forest fires.

“Off-road vehicles are and always have been a potential threat to California’s forests and wildlife,” said Paul Hughes, executive director of Forests Forever. “There needs to be a publicly responsive forum for regulating their use.”

The seats on the commission are reserved for ORV interests, biologists or soil scientists, landowners, law enforcement, environmental organizations, and non-motorized recreation interests. Three of the commission’s seven members are

– more –

Restore • Reinhabit • Re-enchanted

appointed by the governor; two are appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, and two by the Speaker of the Assembly.

“To ensure that environmental protections receive at least as much attention as the wishes of ORV users, California should keep the current commission in place,” Hughes said.

The commission works under the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and is funded from fuel taxes on the recreational use of ORVs, ORV registration fees, and fees collected at state recreation areas.

Currently in the Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife, A.B. 2784 could come to the floor of the Assembly as early as April.

Forests Forever is in favor of retaining the California OHMVR Commission, and opposes A.B. 2784.