

ORV Impacts to Water

Wetlands and Riparian Areas

Riparian areas are the vegetated areas adjacent to streams that are regularly flooded during high flows.

Wetlands are areas with saturated soils that support deep rooted, or obligate wetland plants. While riparian areas and wetlands make up just a small percentage of forestlands, they are generally more productive in plant and animal biomass and higher in diversity than the surrounding areas.

These areas are also vulnerable to ORV use. ORVs in riparian areas can disturb wildlife, cause bank erosion, and increase stream sedimentation.

ORVs in wetlands can cause similar damage to sensitive wetland soils and plants.



Water Pollution

ORV's leak a variety of pollutants, including fuel and oil into the environment that can impact the quality of water in important watersheds. Some of these pollutants include benzene, ethyl benzene, toluene, m-xylene, p-xylene, o-xylene, 1-3 butadiene and lead. In addition, nitrogen deposition from nitrogen oxides can affect water quality if nitrogen loading alters the chemical balance of nutrients in aquatic organisms.



Streambeds



ORV routes are often established in historic roadbeds that were established for logging and mining. Many of these roads were pioneered in sensitive areas such as stream corridors where ORV routes would be prohibited under current environmental standards. This photo shows ORVs driving through an active streambed causing soil erosion and water quality degradation.

Aquatic Ecosystems

Where ORV activity occurs, networks of ORV routes proliferate. Wheel cuts and tracks within these networks may serve as water conduits that channel and direct water flow containing sediments and contaminants into aquatic ecosystems.

