

From: Christopher Lish
To: <smcconnell@waterboards.ca.gov>
Date: 3/24/2009 11:56 AM
Subject: Support for the Rubicon Trail Cleanup and Abatement Order

I am writing to express my support for the draft Cleanup and Abatement Order issued on January 23, 2009 by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board to the Eldorado County Department of Transportation. I am concerned about the destructive and unchecked off-road vehicle use resulting in ongoing resource damage on the Rubicon Trail. The Board must act to stop increased erosion, soil compaction, and damage to plants and animals. I support the Regional Board's effort to prevent this situation from worsening even further and believe that such actions are long overdue.

?Our duty to the whole, including to the unborn generations, bids us to restrain an unprincipled present-day minority from wasting the heritage of these unborn generations. The movement for the conservation of wildlife and the larger movement for the conservation of all our natural resources are essentially democratic in spirit, purpose and method.?
-- Theodore Roosevelt

If adopted, the order would be a positive first step in addressing the off-road vehicle use that is degrading water quality in the area and threatening both human and environmental health, including the destruction of rare riparian habitat. A move to prevent these impacts is especially important because the lands surrounding the Rubicon include many national forest lands -- lands that belong to the public and make up our national heritage. These areas are being irreparably damaged by off-roaders who refuse to stay on the trail and the failure of the Forest Service to implement and enforce strong regulations.

?Our government is like a rich and foolish spendthrift who has inherited a magnificent estate in perfect order, and then has left his fields and meadows, forests and parks to be sold and plundered and wasted.?
-- John Muir

I support the adoption of the Order and ask that its adoption be complemented by closure of the Rubicon Trail until such time as a full environmental review can be conducted and appropriate measures are taken to minimize impacts from future motorized use of the trail, if such use must occur. Even if the Regional Board determines that complete trail closure is not necessary at this time, at minimum the trail should be closed to all wet season use and any ongoing use should be limited to street legal vehicles in order to minimize erosion and subsequent waterway sedimentation. Wet season use of these fragile areas is particularly damaging and contributes heavily to the sediment discharge and non-street-legal vehicles tend to cause greater damage than street legal vehicles. These important interim measures will have immediate and noticeable benefits to the ecosystem and the water quality.

?A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.?
-- Aldo Leopold

Off-road groups argue that they can police themselves and that a formal order is unnecessary because the environmental impacts of off-road vehicles can be mitigated by volunteer efforts. Efforts by volunteers to pick up their own trash are well-intentioned; however, these efforts cannot solve the problems caused by inappropriate use. Furthermore, self-policing and volunteer efforts have proven largely ineffective in preventing environmental damage and illegal behavior.

"Every man who appreciates the majesty and beauty of the wilderness and of wild life, should strike hands with the farsighted men who wish to preserve our material resources, in the effort to keep our forests and our game beasts, game-birds, and game-fish-indeed, all the living creatures of prairie and woodland and seashore-from wanton destruction. Above all, we should realize that the effort toward this end is essentially a democratic movement."
-- Theodore Roosevelt

I commend the Regional Board and staff for your excellent assessment of the impacts on the Rubicon from off-road vehicle use and initiating the process needed to stop this damage from continuing. I also applaud you for finally taking action -- action that is long overdue -- and ask that the draft Cleanup and Abatement Order be formally adopted.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. Please do NOT add my name to your mailing list. I will learn about future developments on this issue from other sources.

Christopher Lish