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Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks
Ministry of Forests

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES DAMAGE FRAGILE GRASSLANDS

WILLIAMS LAKE –Important grassland and alpine ecosystems in the Cariboo Region are suffering severe damage from off-road vehicles and the ministries of Forests and Environment, Lands and Parks are considering access closures as a result

Public awareness and co-operation are key to solving this problem, however, the ministries do have the option to close sensitive areas to off-road vehicles. Closures may be necessary in some areas and are currently being considered to address the problem around Yanks Peak near Horsefly.

Recent damage to locations west of Lac La Hache, the Sheep Creek grasslands west of Williams Lake, and the Churn Creek area in the South Chilcotin have also been brought to the attention of Forest Service and BC Environment staff.

Sensitive grassland and alpine habitats are extremely susceptible to vehicle damage and may take decades to recover. Some of the effects of off-road vehicle damage include:

- Native plants and ground cover are destroyed, affecting soil temperature and moisture
- Noxious weeds that grow better on compacted, dry sites quickly out-compete native plants, ruining important natural forage for wildlife and livestock

Soils are compacted and disturbed increasing water runoff, erosion and sedimentation

The public can help protect these sensitive environments by staying on well-established roads and trails. When it is necessary to go off-road, avoid grassland and alpine areas where plants and soils are fragile, and observe all signs. Fresh ruts and tracks are clear evidence damage has been done.

Anyone witnessing damage to the environment are asked to call the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks toll-free 'Observe, Record, Report' line at 1-800-663-WILD (9453). All information received will remain confidential.

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