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GAO Report on Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Federal Lands Highlights Need for Better Maps and Signs and for Increased Resources

Also Cites Need for Consistent Penalties for Bad Actors

Washington, D.C., July 31, 2009 – A recent report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) titled “*Enhanced Planning Could Assist Agencies in Managing Increased Use of Off-Highway Vehicles*” highlights many of the same issues and solutions regarding the management of off-highway vehicles (OHV) that the Motorcycle Industry Council (MIC) and other responsible OHV groups have been advocating for years. The report was requested by the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands.

The report focuses on a survey of federal lands managers that notes, “environmental impacts of OHV use occur on less than one-fifth of federal lands.” MIC Senior Vice President, Government Relations, Kathy Van Kleeck said, “MIC and responsible OHV enthusiasts have worked for years and will continue to do our part to decrease irresponsible actions by a minority of enthusiasts, but GAO’s findings indicate that this may be a smaller problem than many in the anti-access community would have us believe.”

Duane Taylor, Director, Federal Affairs said, “MIC applauds the GAO for including a recommendation to enhance communication between the agencies and the public by developing user-friendly signs and maps. Adequate maps and signs are an absolute necessity for the success of moving to systems of designated trails and areas on public lands.”

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GAO Report on Off-Highway Vehicle Use – Page 2

Specifically, the report mentions that “...officials at three Forests we visited expressed concerns that the public has difficulty using motor vehicle use maps,” or MVUMs. Taylor continued, “MIC has expressed concerns about the inadequacies of using MVUMs as user maps and, while the Forest Service has been responsive, it is helpful to have the GAO focus attention on this issue.”

Another area addressed by the report, that MIC and other responsible OHV groups have weighed in on, is the lack of resources for OHV trail management. Van Kleeck said, “The OHV community has consistently called for increased funding for implementation of the Travel Management Rule with regard to the Forest Service, and always supports increased funding for trails and recreation across all land management agencies.”

Van Kleeck also noted, “MIC is also pleased to see the GAO call for consistent fines and penalties across federal lands management agencies for those who harm our public lands. MIC and others have supported legislation in the last several Congress’ that would significantly increase fines and penalties that can be levied against the most egregious offenders and that provides the consistency GAO recommends in the report.”

The Motorcycle Industry Council exists to preserve, protect and promote motorcycling through government relations, communications and media relations, statistics and research, aftermarket programs, development of data communications standards, and activities surrounding technical and regulatory issues.

It is a not-for-profit, national trade association representing manufacturers and distributors of motorcycles, scooters, motorcycle/ATV/ROV parts and accessories, and members of allied trades such as publishing companies, advertising agencies, insurance firms and consultants.

The MIC is headquartered in Irvine, Calif., with a government relations office adjacent to Washington, D.C. First called the MIC in 1970, the organization has been in operation since 1914.

