

Off-road vehicles cause damage

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(O2A)

AR—Off-road vehicles are leaving a trail of \$1.2 billion in damage to vegetation, soil and wildlife habitat on Michigan land, according to a new report.

At least 642,000 acres of land, water and wildlife habitat in 22 counties have been damaged by ORVs, according to a survey by the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts. The group represents soil conservation officials in all 83 Michigan counties, but only 42 counties responded to the survey.

Restoring land damaged by ORVs would cost between \$2,000 and \$20,000 per acre, depending upon the extent of harm, said Executive Director Debra Bogar. Property owners

and government agencies would get stuck with the tab, she said.

"There is a lot of damage out there and it's not just the trails that are being affected; the soil erosion caused by ORVs is affecting bodies of water and a lot of wildlife habitat," Bogar said.

Many counties, including at least 11 in the northern Lower Peninsula with ORV problems, did not respond to the survey because they lack the personnel to assess ORV impact, she said. She said the 642,000-acre estimate is conservative.

"I think we could probably double that number and be accurate," said

Richard Jameson, assistant executive director of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs.

But Mike Burlingham, president of the Cycle Conservation Club, said the study was not a scientific assessment of damage caused by irresponsible ORV riders.

"Even if there was 1 square foot of damage on an acre of land, they called it an area of damage," said Burlingham, who had not seen the report. His group represents 2,800 ORV users in Michigan.

Soil conservation officials reported damage in all regions of the state. Any area where ORVs had destroyed

vegetation, eroded soil or disrupted wildlife habitat or recreation activities was considered damaged.

The Michigan Association of Conservation Districts is part of an 11-member coalition of environmental, agricultural and law enforcement groups seeking tighter regulation of ORVs, including motorcycles, three- and four-wheel all-terrain vehicles and four-wheel-drive trucks.

The House Conservation, Recreation and Environment Committee plans to resume hearings Nov. 13 on a bill to restrict ORV use on state forest land, said state Rep. Tom Alvey, D-West Branch.

OU hosts seminar

Ed Hustoles, senior planner for the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, will speak at a land use seminar Friday, Nov. 16, at the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College.

Hustoles will speak on "Southeast Michigan — the Year 2010," including predictions about transportation, population distribution, schools, service and infrastructure. The discussions include concerns, challenges and possible solutions.

Co-sponsors of the seminar are the East Michigan Environmental

Action Council, SEMCOG, the Cooperative Extension Service of Oakland County and OCC's Future Institute.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. Friday in J Building. The \$17 registration fee includes lunch and materials.

Additional information is available at 258-5188 or 340-6525.

The Orchard Ridge Campus is at 27055 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington near the intersection of I-696.



Barbara Aswad

Middle east group elects WSU scholar

Dr. Barbara C. Aswad, professor of Middle Eastern Anthropology at Wayne State University, has been elected president-elect of the Middle East Studies Association of North America.

Aswad, a Birmingham resident, was elected to the position earlier this week during the association's annual meeting in San Antonio. The association includes professors from the United States and the Middle East and publishes the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies.

Aswad has a doctorate from the University of Michigan and has taught at Wayne State for 25 years. She has done research on Arab villages near the Syrian-Turkish border as well as Arab communities in Dearborn. In October Aswad moderated a teach-in at Wayne State on the situation in the Persian Gulf.

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