

## **TRAIL ETHICS** by Bill Burke

Proper etiquette is not just using the right salad fork. When we venture forth into the back country-- whether we're hikers, bikers, 4-wheelers, snowmobilers, horse riders, or llama packers-- why do we sometimes leave our manners at home?



Temperatures boil. Personalities clash.

We forget that there are very diverse types of recreational forest users. No matter how much we disagree with somebody else's way, we all have something in common. We're there to appreciate our country's spectacular mountain passes and to savor our "day in the woods."

As an Outfitter Guide using 4-wheel drives and an Outdoor Educator of 4-wheeling safety, "Planning and Scoping Actions" frequently cross my desk explaining the wide spectrum of land use, from wilderness selection to logging operation, to proposed trail/road openings and CLOSURES. Yes, closures! Part of "the plan" is to close roads and trails that we all know and love.

To help limit closures and develop cooperative attitudes between backwoods travelers, as users of 4-wheel drive sport utility vehicles, it's critical to bring common courtesy and proper trail use ethics with you on the trail. Don't leave home without them! All 4-wheelers must share responsibility for using public lands.

- Operate motor vehicles as slow as possible, but as fast as necessary.
- Be prepared. Have proper maps and equipment. Know how to use them.
- Give people going uphill the right-of-way due to the "gravity thing."
- Keep your vehicle as level as possible, which allows all tires to be in contact with the ground. This prevents wheelspin, digging holes and erosion from starting.

- Stay on white arrow trails and marked forest development roads. There are more than enough challenging trails for every skill level without seeking your own track.
- If you come upon horse riders or llama packers, turn off your engine and let them by. Take time to chat. You might find something in common, or a new area to explore.

Become informed. Educate your children. Become involved. Volunteers with TREAD Lightly!, Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition, Colorado Association of 4-Wheel Drive Clubs, and United 4-Wheel Drive Association donate countless hours for "Adopt-a-Trail" trail clean-up, maintenance, and documentation projects, campground renovation, goodwill trips for the disabled. They work with the Forest Service, state and local governments, and the Bureau of Land Management to help keep our access to public lands and can use your help. In turn, you and future generations of off-highway vehicle users will benefit.

We all want to shed the grime of the city and enjoy the solace Mother Nature offers from her smorgasbord of beauty. ***It's for all of us, no matter what transportation mode we choose.***

Drive responsibly. TREAD Lightly! Ask First. And don't be a stick-in-the-mud!

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