

Rescue Tellico

Save Tellico Now

Before There Is Nothing Left To Save

SFWDA, UFWDA, BRC files Law Suit

On Thursday, May 22, 2008, The Southern Four Wheel Drive Association (SFWDA) along with United Four Wheel Drive Associations (UFWDA) and the Blue Ribbon Coalition (BRC) filed suit in US District Court Western District of North Carolina against the US Forest Service to restore access to improperly closed off-highway recreation trails located in the Upper Tellico Off-highway Vehicle (OHV) Area in North Carolina.

A Little Background

On June 28, 2007, Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) filed a "notice of intent to sue" the USFS on behalf of the North Carolina and Tennessee Councils of Trout Unlimited, as well as Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility and the Southern Appalachian Biodiversity Project. SELC's threat demanded that the Forest Service permanently close trails, and seasonally close the entire system.

Caving under the pressure of SELC and TU, the Forest Service announced on December 18, 2007 there would be a seasonal closure of the entire trail system and Trails Lower 2, 7, and 9 would be closed for a year to assess the condition of the trails to see what needs to be done.

Closing trails does not address the issues and SFWDA feels that the Forest Service took steps that are not correct. This lawsuit is intended to reopen the trails that were improperly closed.

SFWDA has worked with the US Forest Service in the Tellico OHV area for over 20 years, providing free maintenance and restoration work to address the agency-wide maintenance backlog estimated nationwide at over \$100 billion. The trail maintenance, clean up, and volunteer work we have donated to the area is well over \$100,000 just in the past few years. SFWDA values the relationship we have with the US Forest Service and plan to continue the work, volunteering and cleaning up as we've done in the past.

What are the effects of the closures?

The impact of closing the trails has greatly wounded the economy in the area. Not only are there fewer places to ride in the Upper Tellico area, but local businesses have felt the impact. Cabin Rentals, Campgrounds, parts stores have all seen a decrease in business. Outside of the impact to the economy, this act sets a precedent for large special interest groups to bully our government to preferentially close access to public land to one user group.

What you can do

Frankly, law suits are not cheap. We need your donations. You can donate online at www.SFWDA.org or Tax deductible at www.sharetrails.org/rescue-tellico or donate tax deductible through the United Land Action Fund at P.O. Box 15696, Chesapeake, VA 23328. You can purchase Rescue Tellico Items at www.cafepress.com/rescuetellico. All proceeds are donated to the Rescue Tellico Fund.

At the very least we need your membership. If you are not a member of any or all the below mentioned groups we need you. Please join us so that you can have your voice counted in unison with ours. If you have always wondered, what does my membership get me, here is your answer. SFWDA, UFWDA, and BRC are fighting to keep trails open so we have places to ride.

Please spread the word. This is not only a 4x4 problem but ATV, Motorcycle and UTV's are affected as well.

Who's Who

The Blue Ribbon Coalition is a national recreation group that champions responsible use of public and private lands, and encourages individual environmental stewardship. It represents over 10,000 individual members and 1,200 organization and business members, for a combined total of over 600,000 recreationists nationwide. 1-800-258-3742. www.sharetrails.org

United Four Wheel Drive Associations is an international organization comprised of four wheel drive enthusiasts, clubs, associations, and businesses dedicated to providing community services around the world, education in responsible land use and safe vehicle operation, and protection of our natural resources through conservation practices. 1-800-448-3932. www.ufwda.org

Southern Four Wheel Drive Association (SFWDA) was founded in 1987 to promote responsible land use and to keep public lands accessible for motorized recreation. Since the formation of Southern Four Wheel Drive Association, the focus and mission is to promote responsible land use and to help keep public lands open for motorized recreation. For more information on the activities and accomplishments of Southern Four Wheel Drive Association, please visit www.sfwda.org or contact us at 1483 N. Mt. Juliet Road, PMB # 222, Mt. Juliet, TN 37122