

Montana Back Roads 4x4 Club meeting, at Perkins Restaurant, Missoula, June 26, 2013.

Members present: James Riggs, Bruce Erickson, Willie Worthy, Jay Schweitzer, Jason Summerfield, Steve Gehring, Steve Knutsen and Brittany, Dick Riebe, plus guests Leroy Brown, Wade Rall, and Joseph Colasanti.

Rich and Owen Hood went up to the Blacktail/Wild Bill trail, middle of the week as that is when Owen is off work, getting back tonight. They'll post pix on facebook.

This brings up the subject of trips. I assume every one here bought their 4x4 to actually use in the dirt and not just for "look what I own". So why hasn't any one put together trips for this summer? Don't look at me to do it. I have done two this spring, what's wrong with everyone else putting one together. Most of my summer is going to be in the Dillon area working on a new book but any one is welcome to join me.

What do I have to do to get people to lead trails? What is the point of belonging to a club if you don't take advantage of the perks? We have I believe like 30 members. There is most likely another 30 or more on our e mail list that want to be involved in club activities. Out of this many people just how many have ever said, "Hey guys, I am going to such and such place this weekend. Want to come along?" Don't have the email list posted in your computer? Tell me and I will send the info out for you.

Bruce said he'd do a probably mostly scenic trip in Superior area probably late July. Mark Pickles has plans to do the Carruthers lake trip and extend it on to the short class 4 section to Mountain Ben Lake. Email notification will be sent to all.

Do you need some advice or help on your vehicle? Call on a fellow club member. I use other people's help a lot any more. There are lots of resources within our club's membership.

Come over to my house and use the ramp. Lots of people have. It's a great way to not just check articulation but to make sure things are in the proper location when articulating, such as brake lines, shock length etc. Just the other day I had my JK on the ramp and realized that my sway bar links were too short.

You say you don't know many of the members to ask for help? Go on or plan a trip, it's a great way to get to know each other.

Some clubs have two trips a month, what is wrong with our members? Any suggestions on what do we need to do to encourage more participation?

Trail etiquette. Just a reminder. I hate people that tail gate either up or down hill! Don't forget to wait for the guy behind you when a turn is made. I'm guilty of this.... If the leader is driving too fast and you're not comfortable, tell him to slow down. Again guilty of driving too fast. ...

Do you really realize how much open land access we have available to us in Montana? The other day I was looking at a map that showed all the public lands across the US. Do you realize that most of it is in the states of Montana, Idaho, WY, CO, Utah NV, AZ and NM.

KY, OK, TX, NB and just about anything east has very little public lands and I do mean very little.

Unfortunately the map did not list directly areas that were wilderness or closed to vehicle access. Yes there is a lot but way, way more areas that were open to vehicle travel.

There are most likely more 4x4 vehicles in California than in all the other states combined. Yes they have some great trails such as the Rubicon and others. However, try going on one of them, it's bumper to bumper traffic. Its like Easter week in Moab but all year long!

Now let me give you some figures. As most of you know we have only been in MT about 23 years now. We grew up in Southern California. In the 60s about 65% of the desert lands were open. Up until about 1976 about 50% of the California desert was open to vehicle travel. Now hang on --- By 1994 that number was now 25%. In 2007 there was only 12% open! But now guess what? Only 2% of the desert land in California is now open and half of that is within the Johnson Valley OHV area and the Marines want to expand their huge training complex and take half of that away.

How could this happen. The off road vehicle owners of all types let it happen! Let's not let it happen in Montana. Vote the right people in, write letters to the governor, state legislators, U S government legislators, BLM and USFS supervisors when ever you hear of land closures, even if they don't affect you directly.

Dick spoke on the Rainbow family gathering down in Jackson (1700 attendees currently and expecting maybe 10,000!) and how the Forest Service cannot do a thing to limit them even though they do not follow the rules, never obtain a permit, stress services, and totally abuse the land. In jest, he suggested that the Montana 4x4 Association and Montana clubs should do the same, and just do what ever they wish.