

# I am an ORV Enthusiast

## Why Should I Care About Invasive Species?

As an Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) enthusiast, it is important to make sure that you do not accidentally move invasive species from place to place. Environments with low productivity, such as boreal habitats, have low resilience and resistance to ORV impacts. Reducing the threat of invasive species requires that we identify and understand the ways that they are transported and become established in new areas.

While vegetation and soil damage from ORVs can often be reversed over several years (except for damage causing permafrost degradation), invasive plants are difficult to eradicate once they become established. While ORV damage to soils and vegetation is often localized, invasive species frequently spread beyond points of colonization once they become established. Plant species most likely to be transported by ORVs are those with small seeds that are gravity or wind-dispersed, have high seed production, and form persistent seed banks.

ORV users can access a variety of environments from low elevation wetlands to high elevation, alpine terrain. All are sensitive to ORV disturbance and susceptible to colonization by invasive plant species. Understanding the sensitivity of different ecosystems is an important step in preventing the introduction and spread of invasive plant species in these areas.

Alpine terrain is environmentally sensitive and damage by ORVs can lead to invasion by non-native species. Soils in alpine areas are typically shallow and vegetation growth is slow because of low moisture, cold temperatures and short growing seasons. This means that the effects of ORVs can be drastic and long-lasting in this type of environment. Similarly, wetlands are sensitive to disturbance because ruts form quickly from wheel traffic on water saturated ground. These

ruts and exposed soil create the perfect habitat for invasive plant species to get established.



*If possible do not drive through wetlands.*

*Photo: A. Altherr*

### If I am an ORV enthusiast, what can I do?

- Come clean – before leaving home, take some time to inspect and remove dirt, plants and bugs from clothing, boots, gear and vehicles.
- Stay on designated and existing trails to avoid disturbing soil and damaging sensitive habitats, especially in wetlands and in alpine areas.
- If possible, do not drive through wetlands; go around if there is another existing trail option. If the only option is through the wetland, avoid widening the trail to minimize ground cover damage.
- If you do get stuck, use a winch to extricate your vehicle instead of accelerating out of mud holes. This reduces disturbance rutting and reduces potential places for invasive plants to establish.
- Cross only at established points in creeks and streams. Cross slowly to prevent streambank erosion and creating new places for invasive plants to establish.
- Reduce travel when soil is wet or muddy to reduce damage to the ground – ruts can lead to permafrost degradation and also provide microsites for colonization of invasive plant species.
- Stay on hard-bottomed trails where possible.
- Follow local regulations regarding authorized ORV use of trails – in Whitehorse, ORVs are permitted on trails between April 1st and October 31st.
- Leave clean – before leaving the backcountry, inspect your belongings and remove any dirt, plants, or bugs.



*Reduce travel when soil is wet or muddy to reduce damage to the ground*

*Photo: Trails Only*

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More info on [www.yukoninvasives.com](http://www.yukoninvasives.com)

