

Crackdown on Destruction of Public Lands

A July Order in Council allows enforcement officials to issue violation tickets under the Public Lands Administration Regulation. The Order came into effect on August 6 and specifies 41 penalties which may be assessed for contravening a provision of the Public Lands Administration Regulation within Public Land Recreation Areas (PLRAs), Public Land Use Zones (PLUZs), and Public Land Recreation Trails. Tickets range from \$100 for failing to properly leash your pet to up to \$500 for discharging a firearm that endangers people/resources in a Public Land Recreation Area (PLRA).

Other offenses for which officers can now issue violation tickets include a \$250 ticket for driving within 100 metres of a lakeshore in a Public Land Use Zone and \$250 for interfering with the right of others to quiet enjoyment in a Public Land Recreation Area.

This is a step forward in adding more enforcement capacity onto our public lands. Administrative delays when the Public Lands Act Regulation (PLAR) arrived in 2011 meant officers could no longer issue on-the-spot fines. They instead had to send violators to court months after the offence occurred. It's also possible enforcement officers were unwilling to take individuals to court for offences such as failing to leash your pet or failing to comply with kitchen shelter rules,

when it took away from valuable time in the field. That time helps to ensure that our public lands are protected and that people are safe on public lands.

In this way, these ticketable offences also add to the strength of rulings like the \$1,500 fine levied last year against OHV joyriders in the Clearwater River. It allows enforcement officials and judges to focus scarce court time on the big offenders, instead of on the "no-brainers".

Unfortunately, these tickets only apply to PLUZs and PLRAs, which only comprise a

small percentage of the total area of public lands in Alberta. More administrative action is needed to help on-the-ground enforcement do its job.

As AWA has long maintained, enforcement is education: this Order in Council, and we hope another soon to come, will deter further destruction, mismanagement, and lawless behaviour in Alberta's public lands – we hope it won't take people long to learn to behave better when they have to pay fines.

- Joanna Skrajny



Irresponsible OHV users such as this one received a \$1,500 fine for riding in the Clearwater River last year. PHOTO: © W. HOWSE.