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## **Tina Nappe**

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DATE: March 6, 2003

TO: Ray Schaeffer, Chair, Senate Committee on Transportation

FROM: Tina Nappe

SUBJECT: Support for SB 117 – Provides for titling & registration of off-road vehicles

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In 1975, T.H. Watkins and Charles Watson were the authors of a published book called "The Land No One Knows". The authors were speaking of the neglected open space administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

This year National Geographic published "Wildlands of the West" addressing the use of BLM lands. Traditional uses like mining, ranching, and hunting and fishing are mentioned but these uses appear to be taking a back seat to the growing use of public lands for recreation.

Our extraordinary scenery draws many; opportunity to explore places with minimal restrictions draws others. The others include probably all of us in this room. Hikers, backpackers, gem stone collectors, 4-wheelers, and motorcyclists.

Most of us use licensed vehicles. If we are doing something inappropriate or need assistance, we have car licenses and driver's licenses to identify us. A license denotes at least a minimal level of responsibility for oneself and for others.

With unlicensed vehicles we are, in effect, demeaning the value of our open space and encouraging irresponsible behavior. Open space can mean BLM lands; it can also mean state administered lands and in some cases private lands. We are also subsidizing users of unlicensed vehicles since one purpose of licenses is to partially underwrite the cost of enforcement services, the people we turn to if someone is doing something possibly illegal or is injured and needs help. It is irresponsible behavior that eventually forces private land owners to close gates, to designate unprotected lands into state and local parks, designate wilderness, and national conservation areas.

As other states begin to address the tremendous growth of OHV and the impact they have on the land and other uses of that land, do we want Nevada to be the sinkhole of disregard. If we are ultimately to address the issue of weeds on public lands, prevention of fires, education on harassment of wildlife, we need to be able to contact the people who use public lands.

This bill seems to be a reasonable first step. A new piece of legislation like this takes several years to develop and enforce. I suggest in conjunction with passage of this bill, this committee consider setting up an interim legislative committee to address the state's responsibilities and opportunities in addressing, weeds, range protection, OHV use, and other impacts on public lands. The federal agencies lack the resources to address these issues alone. If the state is not willing to be partner by stepping up to the plate with a sense of responsibility and a way to fund programs, then why should the federal agencies try. We are seeing such a significant impact on public lands through weeds, fires, increased public recreation use, that we may soon place sagebrush on the sensitive species list.