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Seeking solutions to destruction in forests

One of the pleasures of living along the Front Range in Colorado is being able to gaze up at the mountains to the west and idly dream of being in the green forest, with clean running water, clean air and just getting away from it all. But there's something happening in that forest that is disturbing.

They call it ``mud bogging." After 10 or 12 four-wheel-drive vehicles have tried to make it through a wet meadow, it's neither lush nor green anymore. After several more attempts, it is nothing but a worn-out mud hole. These private natural-resources demolition teams move over a few feet and try it again. These mud holes can be very costly for the Forest Service to clean up and revegetate, if even possible. Often times, adjacent to the mud hole, is an area where other equally disturbing activities take place: indiscriminate shooting and the dumping of trash. In a few cases, there has been no natural backstop to this shooting, which could put people several miles away in jeopardy. This is not what you or I envision as we gaze up at the mountains. Policing these areas to stop the activity works, but perpetrators often merely move to a new area. Policing the whole Rampart Range at one time is virtually impossible. We must have a new means of managing these degrading and dangerous activities. Everyone should be able to enjoy these precious public lands. It should be a place to ``get away from it all" and feel safe. It's the Forest Service's responsibility to provide such an environment. Therefore, I cannot ignore the problem, but must provide a solution. Coloradans will no doubt hear more about this in the future as we solicit their opinions and ideas. In the meantime, if anyone sees people engaging in these activities, please report the incident and the description of any vehicles to the nearest Forest Service ranger district office or county sheriff's office.

Bob Leaverton

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