

State Motor Vehicle Laws in National Park System Units

National Park System regulations promulgated in 1987 provide that “traffic and the use of vehicles within a park area are governed by State law.” However, National Park superintendents and managers have continued status quo closures to off-highway vehicle use in National Park System units, even when State laws have changed to allow them, claiming that to allow OHVs would conflict with other, conservation-first, management requirements.

Senator Lee introduced a bill to amend title 54, United States Code, to provide that State law shall apply to the use of motor vehicles on roads within units of the National Park System. In effect, the passage of this bill will make state motor vehicle law operable on roads within all national parks, increasing access to the parks, and allowing visitors to choose the vehicle most suited to their adventure as allowed by the laws of the state in which the park is located.

Bill Specifics

- Define “off-highway vehicle” as defined by the State in which the applicable National Park System unit is located.
- Define “road” as the main-traveled surface of a roadway open to motor vehicles that is owned, controlled, or otherwise administered by the National Park Service.
- Apply State laws regarding motor vehicles, including off-highway vehicles, to the National Park System units within the State.