

Mauna Kea Recreational Users Group

"Public Lands for Public Use."

Submitted by: Robert Duerr



A broad based coalition of Hawaii Island outdoor recreational clubs has formed the Mauna Kea Recreational Users Group, MKRUG to promote public land access and education. MKRUG's goal is to maintain the public's right of access and promote responsible public use of Hawaii public lands.

The initial spark for forming the public access group came with a problem with Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) on Mauna Kea. Citing critical habitat destruction by ATVs and enduro motorcycles, state officials want Mauna Kea's summit further closed to off road riding. With threat of OHV bans, long time off road motorcyclists and Rock Island Riders Wayne Blyth and Dennis Vierra launched the user group.

Both Blyth and Vierra gained fame as founders and riders in the Mauna Kea 200, an off road cycle event labelled as one of the toughest on the planet. Blyth has been meeting with officials to try and find a way to keep riders at the higher altitudes. The task is tough trying to mix two-cycle engines with The Mauna Kea Comprehensive Management Plan's stated goal which is to: "Develop a policy that maintains current prohibitions on off-road vehicle use in the Science Reserve and that strengthens measures to prevent or deter vehicles from leaving established roads and designated parking areas."

Outdoor groups that have joined MKRUG include Wildlife Conservation Association of Hawaii-Steve Aroujo, Big Island Gun Dogs-Richard Hoeflinger, Hawaii Island Archery Club- Alan Alatan, Shandon Pestano, Pig Hunters of Hawaii- Matt Hoeflinger, Big Island Mountain Bike Association- Chris Seymour, ATV/Motorcycle Riders Association- Tony Ferreira, Big Island Gun Club- Tom Lodge, Fishing Groups-Bob Duerr, Rock Island Riders- Dennis Vierra, Wayne Blyth,

Richard Hoeflinger, knowledgeable hunter and public land use activist, says that a goal of MKRUG is to "Ensure Recreational User representation and participation in land use policy development." Hoeflinger sees education as a group mainstay. For him the "public has responsibilities associated with public land." With state budget cuts the group hopes to "promote recreational user group self-regulation and policing." Citizens taking more responsibility with public lands has been a keystone of the Department of Land and Natural Resources "Recreational Renaissance" program.

Blyth speaks to why outdoor recreational users would want to be a part Mauna Kea Recreational Users Group: "Work to re-order public land management priorities to put the people first. Right now we are lucky if we even get a seat at the table. Recreation is a human need and not an option; it is the governments duty to provide for recreational use of public lands." He finishes with the group's slogan: "Public Lands for Public Use."

To raise money for the group Matt Hoeflinger, Richard's son, will host a pig hunting tournament on January 9th. Entry will be \$50 with half of the entry money for prizes and the remainder as a MKRUG donation. For tournament information contact Matt at 966-4876 or (cell) 640-6578. If you or your club are interested in joining MKRUG contact Wayne Blyth at 961-3033. *Left MK200 race photos, courtesy of MK200.com Right: David Richard from Long Beach, CA. Photo by Matt Hoeflinger*



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