

ORV meeting held

About 60 local landowners crowded into the Appalachian-Science in the Public Interest (ASPI) Nature Center last Wednesday (October 25th) to talk about the off-road vehicle (ORV) problems or landowner use of such vehicles. The meeting began with Connie Gross, Laurel County resident and Rockcastle County property owner, telling about the futile efforts of her family to keep the vehicles off her land. "If you put up 'no trespassing' signs, they will just tear them down," she went on to say along with others that "We do not need new law, we need law enforcement."

Jerry Waddle, of Livingston, director of Rockcastle River Rebirth, mentioned that the Rockcastle River has a "wild and scenic" designation. He said, "Every time you put a wheel into the shoals you are potentially killing endangered species, especially several varieties of mussels. He added that there were 18 different endangered species including three species of "darter", a minnow upon which many larger game fish depend for food."

John Strojjan, London District Ranger for the Daniel Boone National Forest, disputed the total lack of enforcement claim that was voiced, and said that 34 citations were issued the previous week in the Hawk Creek area of Laurel County. He went on to say that uncited vehicles were not allowed on any public and private lands without explicit permission, but these infringements are beyond the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service itself. Landowners spoke of the damage

done to fences, riverbanks, pasture lands and hillsides, and expressed their outrage at the invasion of their privacy and property. One Rockcastle County senior citizen told of his frustration: "I take care of my family's old cemetery and they have even torn down the fence and driven into the graveyard itself." Peter Ayers, a Laurel County emergency medical technician, spoke both about the noise of the ORV late at night and that there

is extreme danger from recreational vehicle accidents. He mentioned a dozen such mishaps this year alone with helicopters needed on five occasions. The situation was confirmed by a Laurel County student who said all of the boys he knew brag about ORV riding and how many near-accidents they have had.

Off-road vehicle owners present, for the most part, spoke of their respect for their neighbors' rights and indicated they would not cross their neighbors' property without permission. They also said they stuck to allowed roads and trails and did not damage surrounding terrain or river. Many blamed out-of-state riders for the damage to private and public property and mentioned how much some types of vehicles are more destructive than others when traveling across country on unprotected surfaces. They added that they often do now know where private and public property lines are located.

The rapid increase in ORV-carrying trucks (180 at the 909 site on Saturday, October 28th by ASPI counters) pose a challenge on many fronts. On weekends, trucks now line

the 909 road for over a mile, far more than used the site a year ago. Many of the trucks have out-of-state licenses. One in the audience noted that with the approach of hunting season there could be a number of gun-related accidents.

While the audience appeared divided at the beginning, a consensus was emerging before the evening was

New law requires eye exams for children

Children entering the public school system now need more than the usual required immunizations. Kentucky law requires every child entering a public school to have proof of a vision examination performed either by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist. The mandatory examinations are aimed at improving preschool education and identifying children who have special needs early.

"We hope to identify children who need glasses, have eye muscle problems, or demonstrate other vision problems, so that they can be treated appropriately as early as possible," said Julia Stevens, M.D., a pediatric ophthalmologist at the University of Kentucky Chandler Medical Center.

"If problems such as amblyopia, which is weak vision in one or both eyes, aren't caught by the time a child is seven, treatment often is difficult or not possible. Performing a vision examination early will help us fix eye problems while we have a chance," said Stevens, an associate professor of ophthalmology in the UK College

of Medicine.

For example, strabismus, which is a wandering or misalignment of one eye, is a common cause of vision loss, and it's a treatable condition.

About 3 to 5 percent of children have strabismus or amblyopia, which may not be visible to the naked eye. The new law does not require that a child's eyes be dilated for the exam, but Stevens highly recommends it.

"A dilated exam helps us pick up a hidden need for glasses and problems with the retina and the structure of the eye - problems that could be missed if a child's eyes aren't dilated during the exam," she said.

A child's physician should screen for vision problems at the six-month checkup. The ideal age for an exam by an eye care specialist is three to four years.

"By that age, children have enough verbal skills to identify items on a picture eye chart, and we can measure vision accurately and perform an eye muscle test," Stevens said.

It's even more important for a

child to have an eye exam at age three if there's a family history of poor vision or other eye problems. Children who were premature at birth and children with any type of neurological disorder are at an increased risk for eye problems.

If a parent notices a child's eyes are drifting or turning, or if the child doesn't seem to be able to recognize objects at a distance, a child should see an eye care specialist as soon as possible.

Parents sometimes make the mistake of thinking a problem will correct itself, but that frequently is not the case. Eyeglasses, medication, patches and/or surgery can be used to correct eye problems, which may take years of treatment.

Stevens said parents could take several measures to protect their children's eyesight:

- Accidents cause many serious eye injuries, including blindness. Keep potential hazards such as cleaning products, sparklers, pokers and weapons out of the reach of children.

- Children who wear glasses should use sports goggles when participating in athletics.

- Helmets often protect children's eyes as well as their heads.

- Sunglasses with UV protection and hats protect a child's eyes from sun damage. Skin cancers around the eyes are common, so be sure to apply sunscreen around the eyes.

Many parents worry that playing

video games, watching television and using a computer may affect their children's sight, but Stevens said that, in general, these activities are not harmful to vision.

"Your child's eyes are very important," Stevens said. "If you ask se-

nior citizens what sense they value the most, they'll tell you it's their eyesight. For a lifetime of good vision, it's important for a child to be screened early."

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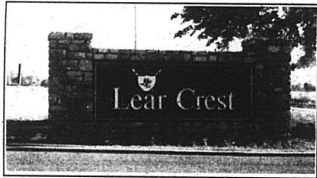
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