

# Debate Rages Over Use of

A fierce battle is being waged across the country.

On one side stands fun-loving recreationalists and the industries that sell them their toys. On the other stands determined environmentalists, bent on protecting our National Park System.

At the core of this debate lies an issue of recreational and environmental rights. Should the use of recreational vehicles such as jet skis, snowmobiles and ATVs be restricted in America's national parks, or do these forms of recreation have a place in our public lands?

AMSOIL INC. is sensitive to the conflicts that can arise between these two seemingly opposing points of view. In its unique position as an environmental company that produces motor oils and supports power racing and recreation, AMSOIL closely watches the turns of this debate. As a corporation, AMSOIL asks only that whatever decision is ultimately handed down be based on sound science, the results of up-to-date information and testing.

The argument gained momentum in 2000 when Congress, under the Clinton Administration, passed a law mandating assessment and development of new rules governing the use of the vehicles in the nation's park system. The law gave the National Park Service two years to conduct environmental impact studies and assessments of the parks before it went into effect. The National Park Service is the agency charged with oversight of more than 380 national parks. Of those, approximately 80 allow the use of motorized vehicles. Personal watercraft are allowed in 21 of those parks. Those parks are the center of the controversy.

The contenders, big hitters in their respective fields, bring compelling arguments to the table.

## The Personal Watercraft Debate

On the side of the environment is Earth Island Institute and Bluewater Network of San Francisco. Bluewater is a former affiliate of Earth Island, the powerful environmental agency that was responsible for the campaign that demands "dolphin friendly" tuna fishing practices and labels. That campaign successfully spread to nearly every tuna supplier worldwide. Vocal constituents care deeply

about protecting and preserving the environment. They are joined by more than 60 other organizations that favor a ban on the use of all three types of recreational vehicles in all national parks.

Passionate recreationalists are supported by the powerful Personal Watercraft Industry Association, an affiliate of the National Marine Manufacturers Association that represents the four major PWC manufacturers: Bombardier Recreational Products; Kawasaki Motors Corp. U.S.A.; Polaris Industries Inc. and Yamaha Motor Corp., U.S.A. The American Watercraft Association and the International Snowmobile Association also are among their backers.

Each side asks the National Park Service to be fairminded, scientific and evenhanded. Each claims the other exaggerates its position, is shortsighted and selfish.

Bluewater cites damage to air and water quality, public safety, wildlife and visitor enjoyment of the parks as reasons to ban the watercraft throughout the system. It cites those same concerns regarding snowmobiles and ATVs.

Recreationalists say statistics released by environmentalists are outdated. They cite improvements in watercraft in the past five years that reduced emissions by 75 percent and noise by 70 percent from 1998 models.

Watercraft manufacturers have worked diligently in recent years to implement improved technology in two-stroke engines, said Rob Schuetz, manager of public affairs for Bombardier in Sarasota, FL. Engines are semi-direct injection, direct injection and straight carburetion.

"That's the progression of cleaning up emissions," Schuetz said. "Your direct injection engines are as clean as the four strokes that are produced today, and even cleaner than some four strokes. We are making clean two-stroke direct injection engines today."

Caught in the middle, NPS says its focus is its mandate to preserve and protect the parks. It aims to design regulations accordingly, without bending to pressure from either side.

"We are committed to protecting the National Park System's cultural and natural resources, so if personal watercraft are allowed at a site, it may be restricted to certain areas of that site," said NPS Deputy Director Randy Jones.

The two-year grace period for NPS to conduct its studies and write rules for each of the 21 parks ended on April 22.

Just ahead of that deadline, NPS announced that five parks would be permanently closed to personal watercraft use, effective April 22. The decision was based on environmental study and review that began under the 2000 federal law (36 CFR 3.24)

However, the park service hadn't completed assessments for all of the parks by the deadline, and eight more parks are now closed to personal watercraft. That leaves only eight parks in the entire park system that allow the use of the motorized watercraft.

This is where the battle heats up. Environmentalists are calling the closures a coup, while recreationalists cry foul.

"Environmental industry groups often push for environmental assessments to help agencies make the right decisions," said Monita Fontaine, executive director of the

