WHAT CAN I DO?

The public is encouraged to enjoy public forests and range lands. Stay safe, tread lightly, and know your obligations under the law to protect the environment. Here are some ideas:

- *Join a local recreation club to stay informed about your rights and obligations*
- *Find out if there are areas that are permitted for off-road vehicle use by contacting your local office of the Integrated Land Management Bureau or the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts*
- *If you are unsure if your activities are legal or are damaging an ecosystem, contact your local Ministry of Forests and Range office*

REPORT FOREST CRIMES AND FIRES

Everyone has a stake in protecting our public forest and range lands. Report suspicious activities and environmental damage to local authorities:

Ministry of Forests and Range
*Find District offices online at **www.gov.bc.ca/for** or toll-free during business hours through Enquiry B.C. at **1-800-663-7867***

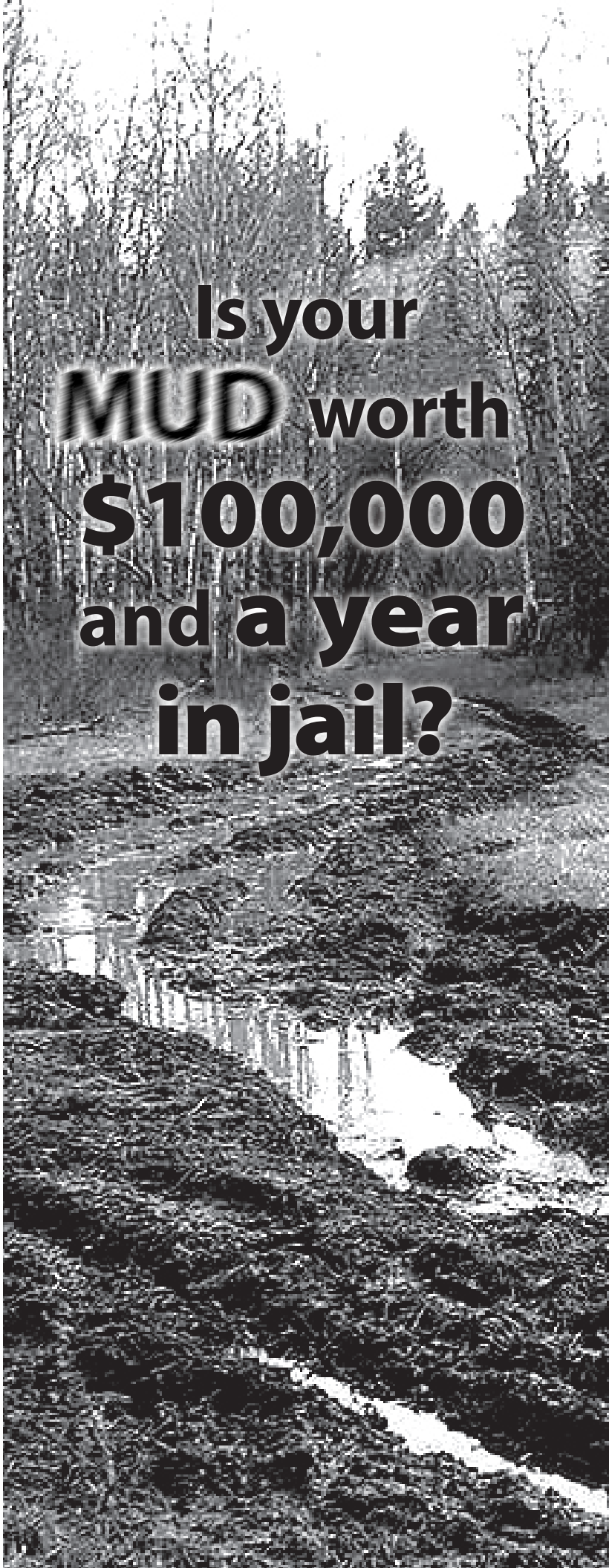
RAPP - Report All Poachers and Polluters
*Online at www.rapp.bc.ca, or 24-hours a day at **1-877-952-RAPP (7277)***

CrimeStoppers
1-800-222-8477

Report a wildfire
1-800-663-5555 or ****5555*** from a cellular phone

BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

May 2007



Your muddin' might be causing environmental damage

DAMAGING THE ENVIRONMENT IS PROHIBITED BY LAW IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Just as littering and setting fires is illegal, so is adversely impacting an ecosystem. Recent changes to forestry legislation make individuals who damage an ecosystem subject to penalties of up to $100,000. If cases are prosecuted in the criminal courts, they carry a maximum fine of $100,000, up to one year in jail, or both.

The goal is to prevent damage to the environment, not stop all recreational activities. Most people who use Crown land act responsibly – these penalties are targeted at those who do not.

Wetland soil is easily disturbed by just a few loops.

The soil at this wetland site has been significantly damaged.

THE PROBLEM WITH OFF-ROADING

Whenever you drive off-road, you are disrupting the ecological foundation of our natural areas -- the soil. In sensitive sites, the damage can be catastrophic.

- *In wetlands, repeated driving or driving at certain times of the year can cause irreparable changes to wetland functions. Off-roading can change the very structure of the soil, making it difficult for plants to take root and grow because of a lack of air or nutrients.*
- *Off-roading in wetlands kills birds and amphibians. Damaged wetlands may impact many generations of wildlife due to the lack of plant life and clean water.*
- *Using ATVs, motorbikes and trucks in the alpine destroys plant cover and causes erosion. The alpine has a very shallow layer of growing soil that takes decades to rebuild.*
- *Noxious weeds and invasive plants take root in disturbed soil, displacing native plants and reducing food sources for wildlife and cattle.*

Just because it's Crown land does NOT mean anything goes!

Damaged wetlands are of little use to wildlife due to lack of plant life and clean water.

OBJECTIVES FOR OFF-ROAD VEHICLE USE

Government regulates recreational activities on Crown land to protect the environment and encourage the sustainable use of our valuable and precious natural resources.

Overall decisions about recreation use on public land are made in land use plans, which are written in consultation with area residents. Some land use plans seek to keep motorized recreation out of the backcountry, while others acknowledge that in some specific areas, recreational motorized vehicle use is agreeable. Even in these areas, however, damaging an ecosystem is illegal.

Guided by the objectives in land use plans, the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts is teaming up with local recreation groups to identify areas where off-road activities may take place. Given the competing uses for public land, such agreements help safeguard the environment while ensuring the needs of recreational users are met.

Law enforcement officials, including Compliance and Enforcement officials with the Ministry of Forests and Range, members of the Conservation Officer Service, and members of the RCMP all have the right to take action in instances of environmental damage caused by recreational activities.