



MEDIA RELEASE

Off-road Motorbikes Out of Control

The Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA) is appealing to off-road motorbike riders to use designated motorbike riding facilities in the Alice Springs region.

In the wake of this month's 2007 Finke Desert Race, NRETA's Senior Natural Resource Scientist Dave Waterson said the environmental damage caused by the use of off-road motorbikes was something the Alice Springs community should not be proud of.

Mr Waterson said the most significant environmental impact of the Finke Desert Race weekend is the damage caused by large numbers of off-road motorbike riders on non-designated tracks.

"Off-road motorbikes damage vegetation and cause soil erosion," Mr Waterson said.

"Over the long-term, this ultimately leads to the loss of vegetation, hardening of the ground surface and loss of the shallow and fragile soils.

"With the soils exposed to the elements of wind and water, there is a real risk of long term desertification occurring south of the town."

Mr Waterson said large dust storms experienced in Alice Springs in the 1960s and 1970s were caused by desertification south of the town and there is a real risk this could occur again.

"Large areas along the length of the Finke track are becoming barren, despite above average rainfall this year," Mr Waterson said.

"The process of desertification has already begun and the long-term impacts could affect the residents of Alice Springs by creating health problems from dust and reduced tourism appeal.

"There are designated motorbike riding facilities close to Alice Springs and we encourage people to use these for their own safety and to lessen the impact on the environment."

Mr Waterson said that on a positive note, the condition of campsites down the Finke track was generally good.

"The majority of people are doing the right thing, despite some repeat offenders leaving their camps in a disgraceful manner," Mr Waterson said.

"NRETA will continue to promote responsible camping and make people aware of the impacts of their actions on our fragile landscape."

Ends

Media Note – For more information, including photographs of the impacts from the 2007 Finke Desert Race, contact Dave Waterson:

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