

## Give Us Back Our Gas Tax!

The Idaho Legislature, during the last two days of their latest session, stripped the recreation community of its gas tax, a beneficial tax that has been in place since 1983. Instead of raising the gas tax, our legislative leaders and the governor agreed to a package that included elimination of the 3% state fuel tax that goes to the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) for maintaining our recreation programs. This 3% represents a portion of the motor fuel excise tax collected from non-highway recreational fuel use. This is fuel used for off-highway recreation by snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, off-highway motorcycles, boats and off-highway light trucks.

As part of the package, a Legislative Task Force made up of four senators and four representatives was created to identify "alternative dedicated funding" for IDPR. If they fail to name another dedicated source then IDPR would be funded out of the general fund, competing with schools, prisons, highways, etc, for precious state dollars.

The following is how IDPR uses their portion of the state gas tax:

### **Off Road Motor Vehicle Fund (ORMV) Approximately \$1,300,000 annually**

- Approximately \$500,000 is used to purchase snowmobile trail grooming equipment (IDPR manages a fleet of 40 groomers).
- Approximately \$175,000 is used to leverage \$180,000 of additional federal gas tax funds.
- Approximately \$500,000 is made available in a competitive grant program to fund ATV, motorbike and snowmobile projects statewide.
- Approximately \$100,000 is used to purchase summertime OHV trail building equipment.
- Approximately \$25,000 is used to purchase small motorized equipment by IDPR field crews.

### **Waterways Improvement Fund – Approximately \$1,300,000**

- All of this funding is made available in a competitive grant program to fund boating improvements statewide. These projects include launch facilities, education and law enforcement.

### **Capital Improvement Fund – Approximately \$1,300,000**

- This funding is used to provide for park improvements.

### **Road and Bridge Fund (R&B) – Approximately \$600,000**

- 50% of the funds are used in state parks for road, parking lot and bridge projects.
- 50% of the funds are used outside of state parks for road, parking lot and bridge projects that benefit recreation use.

### **Search and Rescue Fund – Approximately \$48,000**

- This money is sent to the Idaho State Police to be deposited in a state search and rescue account and used to reimburse counties for search and rescue costs.

### **Administration – Approximately \$717,300 (These funds are part of the 20% that is allowed for administration.)**

The fuel tax transfer is a reasonable way for recreational users to contribute to development and maintenance of needed recreation facilities. It came about as a result of recreational users giving up their ability to get a refund of gas tax for fuel not burned on roads as long as the money was distributed to IDPR. Now the legislature has diverted the money to roads & highways making recreational users the only Idaho group required to pay fuel tax on fuel not burned on roads or highways. This is patently unfair and needs to be corrected as soon as possible.