Task Force to identify alternative funding for the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.
August 11, 2009 Testimony of
Clark L. Collins
Founder, BlueRibbon Coalition
President Gem State ATV Association

My family and I are among the nearly 280,000 registered off-highway motorcycle, ATV, snowmobile and boating enthusiasts. I was personally involved in 1987-1988 in the legislative effort to increase gas tax funding for IDP&R trail programs. We were very disappointed to learn that our legislature has decided to take away the fuel tax money that has been going to IDP&R.

Idaho's fuel tax program is based on the "user pay – user benefit" principle. Before we voted to have the tax on fuel used for OHV recreation sent to IDP&R for trail improvements we could apply for a refund just as farmers, loggers and ranchers do today. If we can't have the money go to trail improvements we want it back in our pockets.

The fuel tax money that has been going to IDP&R for trail improvements benefits the entire trail recreation community. Non-motorized as well as motorized trail users enjoy the facilities paid for by that funding.

The trail improvements funded by fuel taxes through Parks and Recreation are a significant factor in bringing OHV tourists to our state. Without that funding our snowmobile/ATV/trailbike tourism industry will suffer. We compete with other states for those visitors. Improvements to our trails will bring in more tourism dollars.

The amount of funding diverted from IDP&R to the highway fund will not pay for many miles of new asphalt. However, the loss of that amount of money will have a very serious negative effect on Idaho's trails.

No hard feelings, we understand how the legislature got cornered into a hasty vote to sidetrack the fuel tax funding that has been going to our trails. There is no fair way to replace that funding from other sources. I just hope that there are no hard feelings, now, when we say **"we want our gas tax back".**