

Yuma (AZ) Sun

Decline in dunes crowd bad sign for season

November 06, 2009

Communities have different ways of assessing the impact of what has come to be called the "Great Recession" of the past year or so. In Yuma, one way to measure it is the number of people on the sand.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) reported there was a significant drop in the number of people off-roading and relaxing in the Imperial Sand Dunes west of Yuma this past Halloween weekend.

Thanksgiving weekend has traditionally been seen as the big kick-off of the winter sand duning season as huge numbers of local people and others from California and elsewhere take their RVs, dune buggies and all-terrain vehicles out for some fun.

Lately, however, the time around Halloween has attracted a large crowd too, and it is something of a pre-Thanksgiving indicator of what the season will be like.

That indication was not very good this year, with a 45 percent drop in the number of people in the dunes for Halloween. BLM officials are hopeful that is not a sign of what is to come.

They said the likely culprit is the economy. Off-roading in the dunes is an expensive excursion, especially for those who come from long distances. Like other leisure activities, it tends to be sacrificed during hard times.

But we wonder if something more is happening. A complaint we have heard is that stricter enforcement of rules in the dunes has made it less fun to go there. Of course, some rules need to be enforced for safety reasons and to prevent misbehavior, but a balance is needed - and some say that balance is now missing.

Whatever the reason, if the decline continues it bodes ill for local merchants who benefit from the crowds who trek to the dunes each winter.

Reader comments

yumadoppelganger wrote:

How can reduced use of that delicate natural area be a bad thing ever?

11/11/2009 12:44 PM MST on YumaSun.com

butofcourse wrote:

Maybe people are getting tired of winding up dead there too.

11/8/2009 10:46 AM MST on YumaSun.com

turbolean wrote:

The decline of people at dunes is for several reason yes one is cost if coming from a distance but I believe its not only the cost of travel but of the huge amount of fees the BIM is charging for entry and then for every offroad, onroad, sleeping and or any other drivable, towable vehicle. They said these fees were to go for improvements at the Dunes but have not seen anything except trash cans which they are threatening to remove. The multiple agency patrols, that I have seen over step the boundaries for what they are

supposed to be for yes they do need some rules enforced for a safe environment. People that frequent the Dunes go there to RECREATE in general too have fun, let there hair down, blow off steam that has been building since last season from everyday life which we all know has not been easy these past few years. So if the BLM would drop some of their fees and the multiple agencies would ease up a bit remember they are there to protect and serve not to harass fine or jail. The numbers just might return to years past or above. Thanks for letting me voice my opinion and there might be some people that agree.