Ca. Rally File 80

DON CAPASCO RALLY ASSESSMENT

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Due for
response
15/7/74

noted with interest.

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Introduction

The Don Capasco Car Rally was held on the weekend of the 30 - 31st March 1974. About 40 competitors started in the event which was conducted on part of the road network throughout the Pine Plantations of the A.C.T.

It was decided, prior to the event, that an assessment of the impact on the forest roads should be carried out and other effects observed. This assessment has been done by the research section, Forests Branch, Department of the Capital Territory.

The weather on the weekend of the rally was fine and calm. Gentle rain fell during Sunday night after the rally had concluded.

Objectives

- To assess the effect of the Don Capasco Car Rally on forest roads in particular and on the forest in general.

- To observe the effect of, and the control of spectators.

- To observe the effect of the car rally on the other users of the forest.

Methods

The major method of assessment was to have been by photographic evidence, with transects of the road and observation as supporting evidence. Unfortunately 2 out of 3 rolls of film failed thus rendering photographic assessment impossible.

Three transects were obtained by stretching a string across the road at a convenient height. The road profile was determined by recording distances from the string to the ground. This procedure was followed at the three sites before and after the event and the results compared.

Observations were made throughout the duration of the rally. These observations were limited to the Stromlo Forest and Pierces Creek sections and dealt with crowd numbers, points on rally organization and other relevant matters.

Results and Discussion

The results of the transects are shown in Figure 1. Photographs of the sites are in Appendix 1. Transect A was on a 90^0 bend, the road surface being hard and compacted. The results here indicate an overall loss of soil from the transects. This soil loss has been accounted for as dust loss, which could be seen billowing from behind the cars as they passed, and due to slight compaction of remaining dust by rain that fell during the night after the event.

Transect B was on a 120^0 corner which also had a hard, compact surface. Slight soil movement can be seen from the inside to the outside of the curve.

Transect C was on a corner of 90^0 that had a sandy soil and with about 60% grass cover along the transect. Results of this transect show the greatest amount of soil movement from the inside to the outer side. The grass cover was reduced to less than 10%.

The overall damage indicated by these transects is very limited especially when it is considered that this is the result of about 30 cars passing over each transect four times at maximum speed. The majority of damage was not done on the sharper corners as tested, but on gentler corners where higher speeds could be maintained and/or where power was being applied. Even at these locations damage was only minimal. It is felt that damage could be expected to be much worse if the roads were soggy. This is supported by the fact that the following day, after overnight rain, damage caused by 'would-be' rally drivers appeared far more extensive than that caused by the rally competitors.

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Another effect of the rally was to coat the trees along the edge of the roads with dust. This was particularly apparent late on the last afternoon. This dust was removed by rain that fell after the event and was therefore of no consequence.

A dust haze from the rally was noticeable over the suburbs of Weston Creek and the suburb of Curtin on Sunday afternoon but no complaints were received, as far as known, by either the Forest Branch or the police. The Canberra Times received one anonymous "letter to the Editor" which was not published.

Cleaning up after the rally was not complete as a number of directional arrows, ropes and other signs are still to be found in the forest. One directional arrow in particular in Uriarra Forest pointed down a road along which is a difficult creek crossing which could have been dangerous if an inexperienced driver had followed the arrow. Better cleaning up should be insisted upon in future.

Spectator Effects and Control

Spectator counts were taken at various sample spots along the route of the rally. The results of these counts are shown in Table 1. Obviously a large number of spectators were on hand to see the rally and it would appear warranted that the whole forest be closed off for one weekend so that this recreation could take place.

The main problems regarding spectators were those of parking and spectator control. The roadside at Murray's Corner, for example, was lined with motor vehicles, creating traffic congestion. This problem was also encountered along the Cotter road near the Urriara turnoff and on Lady Denman Drive at the northern entrance to Stromlo Forest.

Crowd control at places was poor and at the Mineshaft (in Pierces Creek Forest) a dangerous situation existed where spectators line the edge of the track on the outside of a curve in a spot where drivers were having difficulty. A number of near misses occured at this viewing spot. It is evident that outside curves require particular attention for spectator control. The provision of Marshals at selected viewing points would decrease the chances of an accident involving spectators.

Impact of the rally on other forest users.

This sort of impact is very difficult to assess as the number of people affected cannot be determined. The following observations were made, however. Two groups of horseriders had to cut short their rides in Green Hills even though this area was open to the public. They had entered the area through Smith's gate at the northern end of Green Hills and this was to be locked before the rally began and remain locked for the duration of the rally. Thus the riders would have had difficulty getting home had they not been seen by forestry personnel shortly before the event started.

Picnic groups were still using Southwell's Crossing and Holden's Creek picnic sites, although the latter were probably rally spectators.

Although the rally was well publicised, it is felt that more explicit details should be given to those members of the public who may be inconvenienced by the event. This would include advertisements in the local newspapers indicating areas to be closed to the public and other arrangements associated with the event. Contact with clubs, such as the horseriding, trailriding and orienteering clubs, that use the forest should be formalised. (This procedure should be followed in every situation where one recreation activity seriously affects other recreation activities.)

Other Considerations

The monetary cost incurred by Forest Branch as a result of holding this event was minimal. For example, additional costs as a result of the rally were nil for Uriarra Forest and about $120 for Stromlo Forest, being for additional ranger patrols over the two day period. The benefit of publicity from the rally would ha have been greater for the Forest Branch if the press had emphasised the use of forest roads as a major prerequisite for the success of the rally. Even so, a good deal of support for forestry was no doubt gained.

Police reactions to the rally were not unfavourable. It is believed that occasional rally drivers exceeded speed limits on public roads between sections and similarly private drivers between vantage points.

Conclusions

The effect of the rally cars on the forest roads dry conditions was to shift road material, particularly on faster bends. Under wet conditions the roads would be more susceptible and greater damage could be expected.

Spectator control needs more detailed planning in future events and better provision made for spectators, e.g. safer parking and viewing areas.

The effects on other users, although not ascertainable, is not felt to be high enough to warrant the exclusion of this type of occasional recreation event considering the numbers of people that this activity catered for.

It is concluded that the overall effect of the rally was negligible and that, subject to suitable weather conditions, future rallies should be permitted within the forest.

The overall benefits of the rally to Forestry, the participants and spectators are largely intangible. It is considered, however, that these intangible benefits outweigh the monetary costs incurred, inconvenience to others, and the impact on the forest, provided the events are restricted in number.

Recommendations

- that this form of recreation be allowed under supervision, within the A.C.T. forests. The number of events allowed should be restricted (e.g. 1 major event (day and night) per year utilising all or most of the A.C.T. forests, up to ten events (mainly night events) that utilise only a small portion of the forests.

- that where spectator participation is encouraged, specific areas for viewing be allotted, a temporary carpark be provided and a marshal be appointed to control the crowd at each area.

- that the whole of any particular forest area being used be closed off, except for allocated spectator access and/or the provision of better barriers to prevent access.

- that more and better signposting be used to direct and control crowds.

- that a greater number of temporary rubbish bins be provided for the control of litter.

- that rally organizers undertake to clean up all signposts, ropes and other equipment immediately after the event.

- that more publicity be given to the Forests Branch for allowing an event to take place.

- that consideration be given to persuading organizers to take out a rain insurance policy as a pre-requisite for permission to hold a rally. Money from such insurance could be used to advertise the postponement and the new dates for the event or, if the event is allowed to continue, to help to pay for repair of the roads.

- that assessment of impact be carried out on future rallies, especially if rain has fallen prior to the event.

SPECTATOR COUNTS DURING RALLY AT SELECTED PLACES

TABLE 1:

Time	Place	Car Count	Spectator Count
12.05 Sat.	Smith's Gate (Stromlo)	-	32
1.30 Sat.	Holden's Creek (Stromlo)	27	57
3.15	Mineshaft (Pierces Creek)	-	120 (approx)
4.30	Uriarra Turnoff (Cotter Road)	62	180 (approx)
2.30 Sun.	Murray's Corner	80 (approx)	320 (approx)
3.15 Sun.	Mineshaft (Pierces Creek)	-	160 (approx)
4.30 Sun.	Uriarra Turnoff (Cotter Road)	256	Uncountable due to constant changes in numbers and the amount of traffic.
5.00 Sun.	Smith's Gate (Stromlo)	24	78