



Alberta Off Highway Vehicle Association

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Working to keep you riding

December 18, 2009

Hon. Jeff Johnson, Chair
Recreation Corridors Coordinating Committee
9718 107 Street
Edmonton, AB
Canada T5K 1E4

Re: Off Highway Vehicle Recreational Trails Proposal

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Thank you for meeting with the Alberta Off Highway Vehicle Association (AOHVA) on November 25, 2009, along with Bill Werry, Deputy Minister of Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation, and staff from the ministry.

As you know, this meeting was requested so that we could discuss the draft proposal submitted to you by the (AOHVA) on September 9, 2009 that is titled "Proposals / Policies regarding Financial Sustainability and Management of Off Highway Vehicle Recreation in Alberta." Based on input from those discussions, we have redrafted the proposal and are now submitting a **replacement for the Sept. 9 document** to you and your colleagues for review and consideration. We are asking for copies of the earlier document to be destroyed or returned to avoid confusion.

The new document highlights four major issues related to off highway vehicle (OHV) recreational trails and proposes solutions for each. These solutions should not cost the Government of Alberta money. Indeed, they may save money while resolving many of the conflicts arising from competing land uses. Please note that the AOHVA's proposal focuses only on recreational trails on public land: **OHVs used on private property are currently exempt from licensing and therefore outside the scope of our proposal.**

We will be sharing the attached proposal with members of our association and clubs and encouraging them to contact their MLAs to demonstrate their support of our recommendations. Thank you once again for your thoughtful input and your dedicated work on Alberta recreational trails.

Sincerely,

Brent Hodgson, AOHVA President

Cc:

Honourable Cindy Ady, Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Honourable Ted Morton, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development
All other Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta
Bill Werry, Deputy Minister, Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Eric McGhan, Deputy Minister, Sustainable Resource Development
Evan Berger, Parliamentary Assistant, Sustainable Resource Development

Revised December 14, 2009

Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association
Position Paper / Proposal:
Management of Off Highway Vehicle Recreation in Alberta

December 18, 2009

Land use management is a key priority for the Government of Alberta (GOA) and indeed, for all Albertans. Weighing competing priorities among business, industry, residential needs, recreational demand, and protection of the environment is no easy task.

The Alberta Off Highway Vehicle Association (AOHVA) is a major stakeholder in off highway vehicle (OHV) recreation, so our focus is on finding solutions to challenges and concerns related to recreation that affect the provincial government, our members and the public. We are well positioned to do so because we are provincial in scope; maintain a permanent office and staff and sound business practices; have a large, dedicated volunteer corps experienced in trail development; and are led by a board of directors who are knowledgeable and passionate about their chosen recreational activity.

This proposal examines the major issues regarding OHV recreation, OHV recreational trails, trail funding, and the need for sustainable and responsibly managed growth. Each issue is followed by our position on the issue, and recommendations for your consideration. Our goal is to work with you to develop a sustainable (self-administered, self-supporting) trail system for off highway vehicle use.

Issue 1: DEMAND FOR RECREATIONAL TRAILS HAS INCREASED

The provincial government is finding it increasingly difficult to build, maintain and manage the quantity and quality of recreation trails and trail systems that the public demands. At present, the GOA focus is on building non-motorized recreational trails in parks and protected areas. It also provides technical and financial support to recreational trail associations for specific trail projects on public and private lands. Though some of these projects are multi-use, many of them do not permit motorized use.

AOHVA position: AOHVA is prepared to take on the challenge of building and managing multi-use trails suitable for OHV use. Indeed, we have been doing so for some time. We also extend our volunteer efforts to partner with other trail associations in building non-motorized trail, e.g. Allison Creek Cross-Country Ski Trail expansion in Crownsnest Pass. These partnerships among trail user and tourism groups are becoming more frequent and enable participants to work cooperatively on trails for all users and to access major grants. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to complete these mega-projects relying solely on volunteers – trail systems are growing and new standards require costly upgrades. We cannot continue to meet the demand for new trails without a sustainable source of funds.

AOHVA Recommendation:

Levy a surcharge on OHV license fees and send the monies collected to a Delegated Administrative Organization (DAO) that could allocate funds to AOHVA, which in turn, would provide funds to its member clubs and partners for sustainable OHV trail development and maintenance.

Issue 2: THERE ARE INSUFFICIENT TRAILS DESIGNATED FOR OHV USE

There are only a limited number of recreational trails that are suited to or permit off highway vehicle use. Because of this, OHV riders travel over public lands, which can result in environmental damage, litter, liability issues and unwanted noise. As a result, there is pressure to restrict OHV use on public land but this will only relocate the problems, not resolve them. Nor will it realize the recreational and economic potential associated with properly planned, managed and enforced multi-use trail systems.

AOHVA Position: Developing and upgrading multi-use recreational trails suitable for OHVs will encourage riders to participate in using managed trail systems. This will help mitigate damage to the environment, and enable education and enforcement to take place. AOHVA is well positioned to educate our user groups about the environmental and enforcement issues.

AOHVA Recommendations:

- 1. Develop more sustainable, managed multi-use trail systems for OHV use; AOHVA is uniquely positioned to do this work and has demonstrated expertise to offer.**
- 2. The provincial government or DAO would partner with AOHVA to find ways to build or expand OHV trails and resolve OHV related trail issues.**

Issue 3: THE ABSENCE OF A PROVINCIAL TRAIL AUTHORITY TO MANAGE TRAIL STEWARDSHIP AND LIABILITY ISSUES

The infrastructure to support sustainable multi-user OHV recreational trails does not exist. There is no provincial trail authority that can assume responsibility for trail infrastructure and liability, or provide continuity in building OHV trail systems. Trail user groups cannot install infrastructure such as bridges, so many trails cannot be connected to construct loops or expanded. If a volunteer-based clubs folds, there may be trail stewardship and liability issues.

AOHVA Position: Currently, trail building and maintenance on public lands is being left to volunteer-run clubs and associations with some financial support from government. This includes the building of bridges across waterways and/or other infrastructure.

If the volunteer club dissolves, someone needs to assume responsibility for the trails and the infrastructure. As well, some industry-reclaimed access roads could be used for recreational trails; this would reduce surface disturbance and would provide trail builders with a responsible environmental way to minimize linear disturbance.

AOHVA Recommendation:

Establish a Delegated Administrative Organization (DAO) to manage stewardship, assume liability issues, allocate funding, monitor trail development projects, hold common infrastructure, and accept GOA land transfers, donated land or other gifts related to multi-use OHV recreational trails.

Issue 4: INCREASING COSTS OF TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

Administering and financing trail development has become an increasing burden on government and taxpayers, especially in the current climate of fiscal restraint. Funding that does exist is often allocated on a per project basis, making it difficult for trail associations to sustain their operations or work toward developing comprehensive trail systems. The Alberta Recreation Corridor and/or Trails Classification System has set new guidelines for trail development, which will result in increased cost as existing trails are upgraded and new trails are being constructed.

AOHVA Position: AOHVA has a strong track record in developing and upgrading multi-use trails in Alberta. We can build trail significantly faster than government and often at a fraction of the cost. However, we are finding that increased demand for trails, the complexity of projects and more exacting standards are raising costs and making it difficult to complete these tasks relying solely on volunteers. Though we would continue to mobilize our volunteer workforce, we need sustainable funding to purchase equipment, supplies and services to meet the new design, engineering and construction guidelines coming into place.

There are only a limited number of grants available and they are based on matching funds raised by the volunteer organization. It is increasingly difficult for volunteer organizations to raise these funds while also doing the work of trail building.

AOHVA Recommendations:

- 1. Levy and segregate a surcharge on OHV license fees that will go back into trail development and maintenance. This will result in a user pay system that will cost the government and taxpayers less money, while enabling trail associations like AOHVA to remain sustainable.**
- 2. Establish a (DAO) with fiduciary responsibility to both receive and allocate these funds; this will take a burden from government.**

We appreciate your consideration of our proposal and recommendations. AOHVA shares the same commitment as the Government of Alberta: to develop a sustainable and managed trail system for all recreation trail users. We hope to partner with you while moving towards the realization of this goal. We put forward basic principles that offer solutions that are manageable and cost effective for the government. We look forward to discussing them with you in the near future and fleshing out a workable structure for multi-use OHV trail systems province-wide.

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Respectfully submitted by the Alberta Off Highway Vehicle Association on
December 14, 2009:

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On behalf of other organizations:

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