

11/21/19 ATV Task Force Meeting Summary

Discussion of ATV Education and Outreach Plan (Objective #4)

- IFW Information Education Director Emily Maccabe provided an overview on what the Department had for opportunities to communicate with landowners and ATV riders using digital advertising and social media format.
- It was recognized that many landowners that have ATV trails on their property do not receive appropriate updates/information on what is happening related to recreational use on their property
- It was discussed that ATV clubs could be used as a communication outlet to landowners and land users. Requiring permission for trails to be obtained each year would provide an opportunity for clubs to communicate with landowners

Comment: Many clubs have landowner appreciation suppers once a year. Club grants from the state provide some funding for landowner relations suppers or other recognition. Suppers often have poor attendance the important part is the invitation to come and be recognized.

Comment: IFW and ACF should combine landowner contact lists and coordinate talking points and messages.

Comment: The ATV clubs need more coordination on outreach efforts

Comment: The landowner supper invitation is a good opportunity to provide other messaging to landowners about what is happening related to recreational use of private land. A *“this is what we’re doing for you”* type of message. Include impact to the state economy, landowners would appreciate hearing how important they are to the economics of the state.

Comment: Communication to landowners needs to be on a more frequent basis, once a year is not enough. Beginning of ATV season, midway through the season and the end would be a starting point.

Comment: Private sector outreach through land trusts and other organizations should not be overlooked as an opportunity to reach landowners on a variety of issues

Comment: Press conferences at key times of the year are effective at getting awareness on issues

Comment: We need to encourage landowners to provide contact information in any format to allow communication with them on various issues.

- It was discussed that part of the outreach plan should be to train clubs on appropriate communication/outreach methods including the use of social media when communicating club related activities.

Comment: Getting more club membership will be important. Irving Woodlands requires club membership to ride trails on Irving Woodlands property.

- Discussed ATV laws and the need for one page handouts of laws to provide non-resident riders who are unfamiliar with our trails and regulations.

Comment: The annual trail inspection process would be a good time to reach out to landowners

- Discussed current FOIA law around providing landowner contact information. Brian Bronson will follow up on issues related to confidentiality of landowner contact information.

Discussed Draft Task Force Objective Matrix.

- Objective #1 discussion on grandfathering ATVs over 65 inches wide and/or a weight over 2000 lbs; there was mixed feelings on grandfathering currently registered ATVs wider than the proposed Task Force recommendation to limit registration to 65 “maximum width and 2000 lbs. maximum weight.
- Task Force agreed to further consider (3) options:
 - 1) Grandfather Maine residents with previously registered ATVs over 65” they will not be allowed on the state trail system but could ride off the trail system with landowner permission.
 - 2) Grandfather Maine residents with previously registered ATVs over 65” for as long as they own it they will not be allowed on the state trail system but could ride off the trail system with landowner permission.
 - 3) Not allow ATVs over 65 inches wide and/or a weight over 2000 lbs. to be registered and only allow use on the ATV owners property or frozen public waters.
- Discussed the use of dirt bikes; the general concern of landowners is the ability for motorcycles/dirt bikes to go off the organized trail system; the landowner permission law may need to be amended related to dirt bikes (higher fines for off trail riding); some large landowner policies do not allow motorcycles; It may be a matter of creating a trail system that connects properties where all types of ATVs are allowed. Ultimately the landowners will have the final word on allowing motorcycles on their property.

Objective #2

- Task Force agrees to adopt the current Best Management Practices for ATV trail construction with a full review of the document related to current laws and other trail related details

Objective #3

- Task Force agrees that a well-trained “3rd party” should do the trail inspections; it will be important to have a solid inspection process in place that supports landowner concerns of trail

conditions. The process must contain a protocol for dealing with non-compliant trails; a trail audit form should be created.

- The Task Force was divided on the Maine Forest Service Rangers being the appropriate entity to inspect trails due to concerns of stretching resources during a time of year that already has time constraints.

Comment: We need to have the annual inspection and it must be before compliance with standards not just identifying environmental damage.

Objective #4

- Discussed earlier in the meeting

Objective #5 and #6 Discussed Together

- Discussed registration fee primarily related to trail funding. Brian Bronson presented an average cost/mile for trail maintenance at \$658. Task Force ask to confirm this per mile cost one last time; Brian Bronson indicated that a reduction in existing trails would be necessary unless appropriate funding is available to maintain existing trails to BMP standards.
- Discussed revenue projections from a \$20 increase to resident registrations and \$30 increase to non-resident registrations across the board as there was not a lot of public or Task Force support for a tiered registration system (58% of ATV Maine survey showed people were against a tiered system). There was support to create an “antique ATV registration similar to the current snowmobile antique registration. There would be cuts to current trail mileage under this registration increase scenario.
- Brian Bronson will prepare additional registration fee increase models related to trail mileage.

Comment: We should look at the matching money requirement for ATV trail grants as the increase in funding needed will require more match and the clubs would not be able to keep up. Perhaps move from a 70%-30% match to 80% - 20%.

Comment: I think we are underestimating the amount of money we will need to maintain the current trail system.

Comment: with less trail miles we could consider reducing enforcement funding

Comment: We need to consider economic value to the state with this discussion

Comment: We need to make sure we ask for full costs as clubs will likely not be able to come up with the match

Comment: The Task Force need to present a solution that is sustainable.

Comment: The state needs to provide quality trails, just like snowmobiling

Comment: Should a trail pass be considered?

Comment: Additional comment on the necessity to present trail costs at 100% to alleviate the match required by the clubs

Comment: There needs to be more coordination between ATV and snowmobile clubs to get the most value from money spent on trails.

Comment: Fines for off trail riding could be used for trail funding or a landowner mitigation fund

- Discussion on who should be doing the trail maintenance to ensure money is being spent appropriately; There was support for the state having oversight over construction and maintenance projects with clubs providing support to keep costs down.

Public Comment:

- Consider training college interns to be trail inspectors

Next Meeting: Friday December 6, 2019, Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Office, 650 State Street, Bangor, Maine