

10/3/19 ATV Task Force meeting Summary

Discussion of ATV trails on state funded roadways

- Brian Bronson explained the process for ATV clubs requesting trail access to roadways which are fully or partially funded by the state of Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT). Currently ATV clubs are required to make roadway access requests directly to the state ATV Program before contacting MDOT. A set of guidelines for trail access on state funded roadways were cooperatively developed with MDOT, the state ATV program, and the clubs.
- Stephen Landry from MDOT addressed the Task Force about concerns they have with allowing ATVs on state roadways; more requests to access are coming in, riders want the ability to leave their home and access a trail anywhere, not just use roadway access to connect a trail or access fuel or food. Greatest concern on roadways with posted speeds at 45 or above; MDOT has allowed some trails on 45 mph roadways with low traffic volume; MDOT greatest concerns are speed differential of traffic vs. ATV; road shoulder damage for non-paved shoulders; MDOT concerned about width of paved shoulders as width of ATVs increases; planning for ATV use is important as MDOT work program is scheduled 3 years ahead. Currently 110 miles of ATV access trails on state or DOT funded roads. The longest stretch is 8 miles on a roadway in Aroostook County. MDOT would rather have ATV trails off the roadway, the back slope of a road ditch is the best location; MDOT has had landowner conflicts when establishing trails off the road in the state right of way.
- The state of Maine currently has 550 miles of additional ATV access trails on roads in addition to the state funded roads; this does not include towns that have opened all roads to ATV use. Some trails have been developed off the roadway but inside the state right of way

Comment: Cost of repairs from damage to shoulders will be an issue for public roads

Comment: Homework for next meeting is to review the current law on designating a roadway as an ATV access route

Comment: There are a lot of economic issues related to real estate, camps etc. access to ATV and snowmobile trails

Trail Type/Classification Discussion

- Discussed having an ATV trail system designation similar to the ITS trail system for snowmobiles; there is currently a Maine ATV Trail System (MATS) but it is not well defined as to a standard for the MATS designation
- Discussed trail widths, should there be a width standard for the more heavily used trails, how do we establish compliance with trail widths? Estimate that 60-70% of existing trails are not wide enough to pass two machines; overall trail width has not been a problem.

Comment: It could be a challenge to get an agreed upon width standard for trails

- Discussed establishing multi-use trails; how do landowners view multi-use trails; discussed potential and current conflicts with ATV's and other trail users;

Comment: There is a permissive use of land by other persons when you have an ATV or snowmobile trail on your land.

Comment: The Task Force should make a statement on multi-use recreational vehicle trails.

- Discussed establishing (agreeing upon) trail classification; Task Force agreed that larger, high traffic trails that connect communities or destinations are one classification; Could be termed "connector trails", "MATS trails"; such trails would be constructed to a higher BMP standard
- Discussed having a second classification (name yet determined), perhaps less of a construction standard that fed into the larger trail system; Task Force agreed to recommend two types of trail standards

Comment: It would be important that landowner would have the ability to close sections of trail at any time.

Comment: Aroostook County currently has a good trail system; trail classification and amount of trail traffic are less of an issue.

- Discussed "sport riding parks" where ATVs have more of a free run to operate, not part of a "trail system", in a gravel pit area etc; a lot of support that it could be a valuable ATV riding experience; question on whether if should be part of the state program infrastructure.

Comment: If ATV types are limited from portions of the state trail system, sport parks would be a good place to ride.

- Chris Gamache, Supervisor, New Hampshire Off Highway Recreational Vehicle, Trails Division; NH has two sport riding areas, (1) 7500 acres (2) 750 acres, provide riding opportunities that private landowners are generally not supportive of (mud, challenging trails, etc), 4X4 vehicles (trucks, jeeps etc) are allowed in these sport riding areas; NH has a master plan for these riding areas that allows varied use; they compete for funding with other trail types
- NH has a max speed limit of 35 mph for ATV for safety reasons and impact to trails on corners, many of the accidents in NH are speed related; NH has different ATV definitions based on size and weight; NH is split north and south, southern NH has a 50" width limit on ATV's, northern NH has 65" width limit and 2000 lb. weight limit; dirt (trail) bikes have limited access to state ATV trails and have a reduced registration fee.
- NH has 1300 miles of state trails and registers about 36,000 ATVs
- NH has a \$680K trail grant budget, ATV registrations generate approx. \$2 million in funding

Best Management Practices

- The Task Force agreed to recommend adopting the *Best Management Practices “Maine Motorized Trail Construction and Maintenance Manual*, Prepared by the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, Off Road Vehicle Division as a trail standard, with a caveat of reviewing the portions on “water crossings, culvert sizing, bridges”; these standards should be compared to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) standard and other LUPC and DEP regulations.

ATV/UTV Size:

- The Task Force agrees to recommend a maximum ATV/UTV width of 65 inches and a maximum weight of 2000 lbs. for use on state supported trails.
- Discussed how this would be measured using manufacturers standard or widest point (overall width). Task Force focused on the overall width rather than manufacturers standard due to alternations using aftermarket accessories.
- Discussed grandfathering current registrations over 65 inches to allow them on trails, not a lot of support with the Task Force for “grandfathering” ATV/UTV’s over 65 inches.
- Task Force agreed that at this point it is not necessary to regulate tire size and tire air pressure.

Trail Bikes/Dirt Bikes

- Discussed whether trail/dirt bikes should be considered an ATV for the purpose of riding on state supported trails.
- New Hampshire uses signage to eliminate trail/dirt bikes on certain trails

Comment: Many landowners do not think that trail/dirt bikes are ATVs, perhaps have a separate registration like New Hampshire, they pay less for less opportunity.

- A lot of discussion on where trail/dirt bikes fit into the conversation; perhaps classifications in the ATV definition? ATV, UTV, trail bike, antique, etc?

Comment: sport riding parks could be an area where trail/dirt bikes and other vehicles outside of the ATV definition could ride.

Public Comment:

- Doug Barr, Kingfield Maine, owns and rides dirt bikes and feels that rider behavior is more of an issue than the size and type of the ATV/UTV.

Next Meeting: 10/24/19 Maine Forest Service Central Region Headquarters and Air Operations Hanger, 87 Airport Rd., Old Town