

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**ATV ISSUES GROUP MEETING**  
**DECEMBER 1, 2004**  
**THE TIMBERVIEW, TURIN**

Forty people attended the first ATV Issues Group meeting to participate in a discussion facilitated by the Tug Hill Commission. The purpose of the meeting was to bring all the different groups in the Tug Hill region interested in ATVs (local governments, ATV user groups, business people, environmental groups, state agencies, law enforcement) together to develop some common ground and potentially identify issues/solutions to be worked on to make ATV recreation on the Hill a better experience.

This Issues Group meeting stemmed from a series of public forums facilitated by the Tug Hill Commission in Lewis County during September of 2003. From those forums came the Commission's issue paper entitled "ATVs in the Tug Hill Region: Issues to Consider" – August 2004. One of the possible actions items discussed in that paper was the convening of an Issues Group. At the request of the Lewis County Supervisors Association, the North Shore Council of Governments, and the Salmons Rivers Council of Governments, the Commission implemented that item with the December 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.

It was acknowledged that the meeting participants have different opinions on if and how much ATV use should occur on Tug Hill, but there is a reality to be dealt with. Approximately 114,000 ATVs were registered in NYS in 2003, and it is estimated that number is less than half of the actual number of ATVs owned by NYS residents. At the same time, other areas of the state are not open for a variety of reason to ATV recreation. ATV recreation is going to continue on Tug Hill, and the volume will likely increase.

Discussion began with the identification of four common goals for ATV recreation:

- Safety
- Legal Use
- Economic Benefit
- Resource Conservation

Participants were asked to try to identify impediments towards achieving those goals, actions that could be taken to overcome the impediments, and partners that need to be brought in to help with action items. *Italicized items in the executive summary below have been identified by the Commission as action items that either the Commission or other partners could begin to work on before the next ATV Issues Group meeting.*

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **SAFETY**

- *Develop a comprehensive training/certification program, age appropriate, perhaps state sponsored similar to snowmobiling/personal watercraft*
- *Involve manufacturers in public relations and safety training – consider sponsorship*
- Increase enforcement to crack down on illegal use
- Allocate more money for enforcement

### **LEGAL**

- *Clarify definition, etc. of ATVs in law (Vehicle & Traffic/Highway)*
- *Clarify use procedures on public lands*
- *Clarify use procedures on public highways*
- *Investigate using seasonal roads/low volume/ minimum maintenance roads/qualified abandoned roads as part of a trail network*
- *Educate town justices*
- Tweak the General Obligations Law to cover landowners more completely
- Increase fines/penalties
- Dedicate a percentage of a registration fee increase to an ATV trail fund

### **ECONOMIC BENEFIT**

- *Perform an economic impact study that includes both the economic benefits (sales tax, use of services, etc.) and the costs (local governments, social, maintenance)*
- *Research other ATV recreation models (i.e. Hatfield McCoy in West Virginia, Canada, etc.)*
- Create well managed/well engineered/well maintained trails
- Consider the impact on Tug Hill character concerns (social/cultural concerns/uncontrolled growth)
- Realize that solutions need to be regional
- Recognize anecdotal evident on year-round business development from increase in ATV development
- Research private ventures/entrepreneurial operations
- Provide incentives for property owners to participate in trail system

### **RESOURCE CONSERVATION**

- *Delineate & manage trails*
- Recognize that the tourism economy is more than just motorized recreation – multiple users
- Realize the critical role of clubs – assist in capacity development and stewardship role
- Create trail criteria/differentiated roads, with some areas off bounds
- Create a trail fund out of an increase to the ATV registration fee
- Create pressure relief destinations (rallies, rodeos, special events, approved ATV park)
- Provide more enforcement
- Assess, control, and mitigate adverse environmental impacts
- Increase communication and cooperation between snowmobile clubs and ATV clubs (trail clubs vs ATV or snowmobile clubs?)
- Quantify maintenance costs

**OVERRIDING THEMES:** Public Relations, Communication, & Planning

## **ALL COMMENTS**

### **ECONOMIC BENEFIT**

- Registration fees need to come back to trail management – needs real money, not just \$800,000
- West Virginia example brings in 2.5 billion per year, campsites, homes
- Need well managed/well engineered/well maintained
- If you build it they will come
- Diversified recreational interests – balance/tourism economy not only based on motorized recreation
- Why bother registering if we don't get something?
- Barnes Corners example – 9 new staff plus the multiplier effect/economic impact
- County reforestation \$ for trail development/use of county forest land
- Need to include impact assessment of down side of growing system, an example being second home development
- Revenue sharing differentials: towns, individuals, real property tax relief
- Property values going up, excluding locals – displacement phenomenon
- Invasion of land snatchers
- Changing local economics, decline of farming – recreation is a mainstay
- Secondary homes is good revenue, don't bring similar costs
- Incentives for landowners/system can develop with such incentives
- Need trail system
- Review "Adopt a Natural Resource" requirements/use in developing system
- Need economic impact studies
- Consumers must pay to ride. Realistic fees needed

### **LEGAL**

- Court cases – Adirondack Park
- Enforcement \$ needed. Real fines
- ATV – not a motor vehicle – let's make it one
- State land master plan amendment
- General obligations law review to cover new ATV system
- Multiuse trails a real possibility
- Trailhead to trailhead/Motor Vehicle/Parks & Rec clarification
- Classification of roads
- Need to define "area" in Vehicle & Traffic Law/loophole/an area could be an entire town
- All local roads are currently defined the same, need better definition of roads or alternative classifications
- Recategorize ATVs into Parks & Rec
- Question of who is managing
- Define the notion of "connecting" links better
- Mandate insurance by the state
- Redefine roads – "seasonal" roads vs highways
- Qualified abandoned could be used in ATV system
- Education of town justices needed
- Require insurance to register ATV
- Stiff fines
- GOL and incentives going to landowners (needs tweaking)
- Need technical assistance source for law enforcement (clearinghouse for technical assistance)

## **RESOURCE CONSERVATION**

- Enforcement
- Damage to the resource – has increased the past 3 years
- Need improved trail system, managed trail system
- Ecological assessments of trails
- Get ATV on abandoned/seasonal roads
- Seasonal needs use definitions
- Mud season/seasonal options/avoid certain seasons
- County reforestation lands used in trail system?
- Distributed system/connecting different locations
- Managed on different public lands
- Need more and better PR
- Adopt a natural resource – volunteer orgs
- TRP (temporary revocable permit) – municipalities (up to one year), events/management option
- Concern re: year-round nature of ATVs/could limit season on trails network
- Off trail problems/keep ATVs on trails – stiff fines needed
- More signs/education/safety/directional
- Uniform trail criteria and standards
- Fully fund DEC law enforcement and management
- Look at Trailpass methods and organization more closely as possible option for management

## **SAFETY**

- Enforcement – regional approach – 4 counties
- Safety education is not state supported, currently provided by private sector, sometimes with incentives from manufacturers, sometimes for a fee – could state take over program and not limit certification to certain size machines for youth (90cc)
- Irresponsible youth – age – criteria needs to be reviewed
- Organized ATV clubs can help – assist in enforcement/investigate options
- Need for speed – rally/rodeo, locations to accommodate this need
- Activity has outpaced enforcement personnel
- Zero tolerance policy
- Clarify training regulations
- Mandatory training
- One size does not fit all – regional solutions – might not be statewide
- Manufacturers – need good PR, education – should participate financially
- Require ATV club membership
- Cooperative education initiatives. Share PR pieces.