

Respondents of Public Comment SurveyMonkey Form

Method:

SurveyMonkey was utilized to create a public comment form for the ATV Task Force. Despite the name SurveyMonkey, this program can be used to collect and organize data in the format of a form rather than as a survey. This tool was implemented to ease the ability of the Task Force to organize and consume public comment.

The SurveyMonkey form was built with prompts addressing the specific charges of the ATV Task Force followed by open-ended comment fields. The charges were rephrased as questions:

- What are your thoughts on creating an ATV trail system with consideration to ATV size, weight, environmental impact, and other relevant factors?
- What are your thoughts on construction and maintenance standards for Maine's ATV trail system?
- What are your thoughts on enforcement of trail maintenance standards by the State?
- What are your thoughts on outreach efforts to educate the public on responsible ATV operation?
- What are your thoughts on ATV registration requirements based on size, width, weight and/or value?
- What are your thoughts on funding for the oversight, construction, and maintenance of the Maine ATV trail network?

Follow-up questions were added only to help organize the open-ended questions posed in the first part of the form. The results of the follow-up questions are not viable as survey data. These questions help reviewers of the public comment organize and understand the information provided.

Results:

Between 9/30/2019 and 10/14/2019, 1067 respondents completed the form before the form was closed for review. The completion rate, the percentage of respondents that answered every question, was 97%. The average time spent filling out the form was 11 minutes.

Analysis of Landowner Respondents:

368 respondents indicated they owned 10-1000+ acres. The results were filtered to isolated respondents who indicated they were a landowner or manage lands between 10-1000+ acres *and* who do not ride ATV, UTV, and/or dirt bike off their property. Applying these filters isolated 39 individual responses

On the subject of allowing ATVs, UTVs, and/or dirt bikes on properties owned or managed by respondents (Question 12):

- 44.12% allowed ATVs
- 29.41% allowed UTVs
- 20.59% allowed dirt bikes
- 76.47% selected Other
 - In general, those that clarified their response of Other indicated that they allowed snowmobiles on the property.
 - Other themes in responses: noise or damage complaints; lack of respect as a landowner/manager.
 - “ATV trails exist on some of the property I manage”
 - “no but they won't stop”
 - “They use it without permission. I do not want to deal with them”
 - “My property is now closed to all ATVs and snowsleds because of the abuse and mess left behind.”
 - “Do not allow on my land; have no control over use of the public easement I am forced to maintain for access to my home and land, but don't mind those who putt up and down at low speed without leaving significant marks; it's the yahoos in mud season that I wish I could exclude.”

Attitudes in open-ended questions:

Q1 What are your thoughts on creating an ATV trail system with consideration to ATV size, weight, environmental impact, and other relevant factors?

- "I think it is prudent to control the size and weight of ATV's I think that ATV's accessing the roadways is way out of hand. Keep it separate from walking and hiking and biking trails. The ATVs too often run rampant and injure hikers."
- "good idea since use of ATVs on poorly designed trails is a problem"
- "Damage occurs no matter the size and weight of and ATV. Small 2 stroke 2 wheel drive atvs can cause more damage than a 1500 pound side by side depending on the user."
- "The new increased registration fees will help bolster trail maintenance. I feel the funding is there, the issue is proper spending of that funding on the ground in an efficient manor. I personally have witnessed several projects that clubs spent way more than was necessary. This was because of the lack of experience in doing that type of work."
- "Good idea if it means that other trails can be designated "no ATV's or motorized allowed ". We need quiet trails for hiking, snowshoeing, etc."
- "I think closures of trails due to wet ground need better enforcement. Erosion effects our waterways, fish, and of course they land impacted. I think there should be greater restrictions on ATV's in general."
- "I would like to see a system created and monitored, with consideration for the impact size and weight have on the surrounding land."

Q2 What are your thoughts on construction and maintenance standards for Maine's ATV trail system?

- "I don't want to see the state forced into creating wider trails because of the popularity and prevalence of larger, wider ATV's. As the trails get wider, they become passable to other vehicles (trucks etc.), causing related problems of trash, erosion, and vandalism."
- "Many ATV trails are on private lands. If private landowners are willing, then make the cost of an ATV permit adequate to fully fund any ATV construction or maintenance. Standards should be developed to minimize impacts from ATV's with limits on weight, size. Large and heavy ATV's do not belong in Maine. On trails where the privilege to use ATV's is abused, those trails should receive no funding for repairs or continuance. If the abuse continues, the trails should be discontinued."
- "Some ATV trails are not properly constructed and clubs often lack the funding, expertise or capacity to maintain trails that are environmentally sustainable. Clubs sometimes increase their trail miles to get more funding which only exacerbates the problem."
- "Those who use something should bear the cost of maintenance. Currently, ATV's often use abandoned or discontinued roads, not considering the fact that those who live on those roads or own property on those roads depend on them for access. ATV's can damage that access, and unless they can be caught in the act, there is little the landowner can do, other than rebuild the road at his own expense so that someone else can tear it up again. If the State is willing to build these roads to a standard that will hold up under use by ATV's, and that will not interfere with use by land owners, great! But don't put in an ATV trail that's too narrow for the land owner to drive in with his vehicle, or that has bridges that are only suitable for ATV's"
- "As a land owner, I'm all for it. The section of trail on my property is deteriorated considerably. Time was when the club would make it right, I haven't seen that in almost 10 years. Fix what they are tearing up."

Q3 What are your thoughts on enforcement of trail maintenance standards by the State?

- “There is no enforcement of trail maintenance standards to my knowledge. Enforcement usually occurs when a landowner complains of an issue on their property and threatens to close the trail.”
- “Maine needs far more enforcement that it currently has. Enforcement of speed limits, as well as trail condition and maintenance standards. Funding for ATV enforcement should be paid for with revenue from registration.”
- “I do not believe the state has the capacity to adequately enforce such standards.”
- “Does the state have the manpower?”

Q4 What are your thoughts on outreach efforts to educate the public on responsible ATV operation?

- “Overdue. Enforcement of responsible operation will be a huge task”
- “Responsible riders will always be responsible and it's always hard to reach the irresponsible riders because they tend to be immune to education efforts. There needs to be a combination of education and enforcement.”
- “Spend more money for enforcement. Stupid people will ignore PSAs.”
- “Need to be better enforced. As a landowner, we have had trouble for years with people not respecting our property and will probably close access to our land because of it.”
- “If there is any outreach it has failed”

Q5 What are your thoughts on ATV registration requirements based on size, width, weight and/or value?

- “Bigger and more expensive ATVS should definitely pay more. Over a certain size and weight they should be considered like regular vehicles and pay the same excise tax..”
- “I don’t agree with costs differing on those criteria until infrastructure can accommodate. I don’t think size, weight or value is a factor with snowmobile registrations.”
- “Good way to put an end to the sport”
- “Might be the revenue stream needed for the enforcement you are talking about....”
- “limit the size and weight”
- “I think registration requirements and fees should be based on the size, width, weight of the ATV, and be expensive enough to cover trail and property damage done by larger vehicles.”

Q6 What are your thoughts on funding for the oversight, construction, and maintenance of the Maine ATV trail network?

- “ATV’s often use the parts that are privately maintained in order to get to the remote parts that are not maintained, and in so doing they cause wear and tear on the privately maintained parts.”
- “I would oppose any public funding of a Maine ATV trail network.”
- “This could be funded through a tax on the ATVs themselves and products for them, or through part of the taxes on gasoline.”
- “The people that are using the trails, should pay a fee.”
- “People that wish to use should fund, not those that simply own an ATV. I own an ATV and UTV, use them on my own property and never have been on an ATV trail available to the public.”
- “To encourage ATV riders in Maine the Legislature should fund the trail network and show a commitment to the sport.”

Q13 Please use this space to provide any additional comments:

- "I think the club do a good job with the trail ,but in the future the younger people are not interested in doing there part on maintenance"
- "I hope the rights of the peace and quiet lovers can be balanced with the rights of the noise Makers"
- "UTVs are too big for low-impact trails, especially stream crossings and steep or twisting trails that erode."
- "It is time to protect private lands from abuse by off road vehicles including ATV,s and off road vehicles. It needs to be done in statute and there needs to be enforcement. Multi use trails must have all motorized vehicles prohibited. If you are planning motorized trails, the users need to pay for construction, maintenance, and enforcement."
- "Our land is posted and has no easements or right-away for ATV use. However, individuals have made their own path through our land, causing erosion damage. They have crossed a stream using rocks and limbs to build a bridge. They have left debris and cut tress down to widen the path."
- "ATVs and UTVs are only allowed on a small percentage of the lands I manage and the trails could be improved to protect both the trail surface (mostly existing gravel haul roads) and stream crossings. On other lands I manage, illegal ATV use is a problem."

Conclusion:

In general, respondents who indicated they were a landowner or manage lands between 10-1000+ acres *and* who do not ride ATV, UTV, and/or dirt bike off their property are concerned with noise, damage, and property degradation by ATV and UTV riders, in particular by those who access their land without permission or despite signage. Landowners are frustrated with what appears to be a lack of enforcement, funding, and support which they feel correlates to misuse. Landowners are not supportive of paying for maintenance of trails either as landowners or taxpayers; they, in general, believe this expense should be the burden of the riders and clubs.

Landowners will likely need to see obvious attempts to enforce laws and regulations as well as preventative work (such as safety class requirements) in addition to reassurances and support from the state in the vein of landowner relations. There is some doubt among the respondents that the state or one single entity has the capacity to implement and maintain efforts. This public comment form may be reopened at any time to continue collecting feedback pertinent to the charge of the Task Force.