

# TRAIL TALK

Newsletter of the Alberta Off Highway Vehicle Association

**Winter/Spring 2008**

## Provincial Election 2008

So far, it seems like the provincial election is not an exciting contest. But it is an important part of our way of life. The next legislative assembly will be dealing with a number of issues that affect the OHV community directly, and **it is important that all of us make sure that our local MLA is up to date on the issues and understands our point of view.**

AOHVA has sent all candidates a short but important questionnaire for their response. Replies are coming in slowly, and most are positive. Please have a look at our summary of results for those received by publishing date.

### Survey Questions:

1. Do you believe that all Albertans should enjoy the right of responsible access and use of public lands?
2. Do you believe that Albertans with mobility limitations should have the opportunity to use OHV's to access and enjoy Alberta's backcountry recreational opportunities?
3. Do you believe that over 130,000 registered OHV's deserve government approved/designated trails and related facilities to enable environmentally responsible motorized family oriented recreation?
4. Do you believe the province has a responsibility to help fund the infrastructure and provincial volunteer organisations that provide outdoor recreational activities and backcountry stewardship for all Albertans?
5. Do you enjoy recreational activities in Alberta's backcountry?

Responses to date:

### Robin Campbell, Progressive Conservative:

1. Yes, 2. Yes, 3. Yes, 4. Yes, 5. Yes

### Doug Elniski, Progressive Conservative:

1. Yes, 2. With exceptions, 3. No answer 4. No answer, 5. Yes (wanted more detail on questions not answered)

### Dave Quest, Progressive Conservative:

1. If compatible 2. Yes 3. Refers to Rec Corridors and Land Use Framework 4. Feels current programs are available 5. very limited

### Ray Prins, Progressive Conservative:

1. Yes, 2. Yes, 3. Yes 4. Matching funds 5. Yes

### Ray Danyluk, Progressive Conservative:

1. Yes, 2. Yes 3. Yes 4. Yes, 5. Yes

### Rob Renner, Progressive Conservative:

1. Yes 2. Yes 3. Yes 4. Yes 5. Yes

### Geroge VanderBurg, Progressive Conservative:

1. yes 2. Designated Trails 3. Yes 4. Partnerships 5. Yes

### Art Johnston, Progressive Conservative:

1. NO 2. NO 3. NO 4. NO 5. Hiking only

So far, we have had no responses from any other parties candidates nor an official position from them.

## **Early Notice of Annual Meeting**

Please join us for the AOHVA Annual Meeting. Nominations are now open for the 2008 Board of Directors, and we are looking for new members that are willing to take on some of the very important duties required to continue the growth of the association and to continue our mandate of working to keep you riding.

Tentative Dates/Schedule, Official Notice to follow

**Date: Sunday April 27, 2008**  
**Time: 10:00 AM**

**Location: AOHVA/Quad Squad Office**  
**Blairmore, Alberta**

Crows Nest Quad Squad will be our host and may plan a ride for Saturday April 26.

## **AOHVA UPDATE MESSAGE FROM THE TECHNICAL DIRECTOR**

This past summer was extremely busy for me on behalf of you the members of AOHVA. In Alberta's race-horse economy, land use planning has become a high priority for the provincial government.

After a year of public information sessions and workbooks, the Land Use Framework

([www.landuse.gov.ab.ca](http://www.landuse.gov.ab.ca)) moved into a phase of gathering knowledgeable Albertan's from all sectors of society to prepare reports to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development (SRD). These Working Group reports are on the topics of:

- Growth and Resource Management
- Planning and Decision-making Processes
- Conservation and Stewardship
- Monitoring and Evaluation.

And after a summer of Working Group meetings, each group presented their final reports to Minister Ted Morton on Oct 9<sup>th</sup> in Red Deer. The Minister will now be taking the recommendations and preparing his final report to Premier Ed Stelmach in December on how to move the province forward.

The operational component of the Land Use Framework is the Integrated Land Management Program (ILM). AOHVA has been actively involved in this program for the past two years. This program is the on-the-ground thinking to integrate forestry, oil&gas along with other users

on the land to minimize the footprint of all these activities. At this point in time the folks within SRD are beginning to integrate the process of ILM with those presented in the Land Use Framework. This will be an ongoing process and AOHVA will continue to work to ensure recreationalist input is heard.

After a year of inactivity, the Alberta Recreational Corridors Coordinating Committee has been reactivated with a new Chair, MLA Jack Hayden. The purpose of this committee is to develop a provincial trail designation system that will designate trails and provide a process for trail builders and stewards to take an active role in building and maintaining trails. The final report and recommendations from this work is also due on Premier Stelmach's desk in December.

One of the most exciting initiatives that the AOHVA has become involved in is the Alberta Outdoors Coalition (AOC). This group was born in the need for outdoors users to unite and question the processes that the Alberta Parks and Protected Areas bureaucracy was going about the

parcs planning and lack of effective public consultation. Currently with a membership of AOHVA, AB Snowmobile Association (ASA), AB Fish and Game Association (AFGA), AB Trappers Association (ATA), Wilmore Wilderness Foundation (WWF), Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS), AB Professional Outfitters Society (APOS), AB Outfitters Association (AOA), AB Bowhunters Association (ABA), and soon to join Safari International – AB Chapter (SCI) and Métis Nation of Alberta – Grand Cache Local (MNA), outdoorsmen and women of Alberta have joined forces to look at our bush in a unified approach. In a meeting last April with Ministers Ted Morton- Sustainable Resource development and Hector Goudreau – Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture we have secured recognition of the expertise held within all these groups, a willingness to utilize this knowledge in planning as well a dialogue at the Executive level with the AOC and Government

. Maurice Nadeau – President of AFGA and myself have been trusted with the role of co-chairs. We have already been brought into the preliminary discussion of the new Plan for Parks that is being developed. At this point this Plan remain rather ambiguous, but we have been assured AOC will remain part of this process.

And of course to throw a nut into the gears, we are looking at a possible provincial election in the spring of 2008. Where this will leave all this hard work only remains to be seen as we will have to re-acquaint our selves with a new government and Ministers? As with all work that your provincial organizations engage in, the ever changing faces of our elected officials is part of the game. AOHVA remains committed to keep you riding.

Cal Rakach  
AOHVA – Technical Director

## **Conservation Through Trail Stewardship**

Probably the first thing we notice when head into the bush is the significant degradation of our trails over the last few years. Some of the places we used to get into moose camp were enough of challenge getting our gear in, but now there is

the added chore of deep water holes and chewed up muskegs that are in the way. Of course the easiest is to blame all others for this but it is important to recognize the reasons for the state of the trails are numerous and solutions are available.

In recent years, the government has been very active in access management and Forest Land Use Zone (FLUZ) planning. Starting with the implementation of Kananaskis Country in the 1970's, motorized access into that backcountry was sharply curtailed. In more recent years we have seen the implementation of the Castle Special Management Area, Ghost FLUZ, Bighorn Backcountry and the Coal Branch FLUZ. Along with this process Special Places 2000 set up many more protected areas; a planning process that continues today under a different name. In each one of these plans our ability to access the bush in our 4X4's, ATV's and snowmobiles were further restricted. Now add the unexpected popularity for off highway vehicles (OHV's) and the rapid population growth to man our rampant economy. Combine the impacts of displaced users from the access restrictions, increase in recreational usership and extreme weather of late; the limited trails that we have left get the brunt of the traffic.

Since the government has been very slow to provide effective planning for the increased traffic in the bush; access closure has been used as the short-term tool of choice. Add in the 'Divide and Conquer' strategy where you have hunters against outfitters, trappers targeted and if you use a 4x4, ATV or snowmobile, you're automatically out. Soon hunting, fishing and horse users are systematically eliminated with everybody losing. Examples of this strategy are numerous with the most significant being the Caribou Mountains Wildland Park planning process.

Solutions are available, with the important one being that of participation. During the access planning processes, it is critical to stand up and become voice, either as an individual or as a member of an outdoors organization. As always there is strength in numbers. In most of the planning processes the restrictions are targeted at recreational users but the impacts of trail closures affects us as hunters, fishermen, trappers and outfitters. The opportunity here is to become part of the solution through dialogue with other user groups to build relationships and

understanding, thereby addressing issues surrounding access to public lands.

Also there are opportunities to participate in trail development such as the Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) Adopt a Trail Program. This allows interested groups to take 'ownership' of a trail and steward it over time through bridge building and trail maintenance. Throughout the province ATV, snowmobile, community and fish & game groups have been busy installing bridges over creeks, boardwalks over sensitive areas and general trail reconstruction.

Trail designation and proper design are now being viewed as effective conservation projects. The construction of a bridge over a fish-bearing stream has an immediate impact on water quality and habitat. The installation of boardwalks over muskegs, such as those found in the Lakeland PRA, provide a low impact path over riparian areas that tend to be severely braided out over time. Routes that are planned can be managed for time restrictions or re-routed to address wildlife issues.

Taking on such projects requires dedication and passion. Alberta is a big place and things will get worse before they get better. Unless we step up to take on the task at hand by showing leadership to solve problems, we will continue to see our public land access further eroded. Then our children will lose out.

If any individual or group is interested in taking on the challenge to make a difference, you can contact your local SRD office or the Alberta Off Highway Vehicle Association (AOHVA) at [www.aohva.com](http://www.aohva.com) to find out more on helping out.

Cal Rakach  
Technical Director - AOHVA

## **From the Desk of the President**

Another year is upon us, my how time flies. Although it seems like there is no time anymore to accomplish anything, after having a look at this year's activities it is obvious that our volunteers and staff have made some significant progress.

You will notice that AOHVA has a number of partners these days. This did not occur by accident. Your executive and the association staff have been active in soliciting these other groups in order to create a larger impact while working with the various levels of government. The national associations that we have been very active in the creation of are now fully functioning. The Motorcyclists Confederations of Canada has formed an Off Road Council that AOHVA is a very important part of. Both the MCC and the ATV Quad Council of Canada have invested significant dollars on behalf of ATV and off road motorcyclists in Canada to research the health benefits of our sport. In addition to MCC and AQCC, this research has the support of the Province of Nova Scotia, the Province of Ontario, and the off highway vehicle manufacturers association. The Province of Alberta has been asked for their support, but to date has declined.

As we have reached the end of 2007, now is the time to list some of the accomplishments of AOHVA for the past year.

- Completed the NE Trail Map Pilot Project. Maps should be available to the public early in 2008. This pilot project will eventually lead to a province wide mapping of trails.
- There are now 3 instructors bringing ATV safety lessons into the classrooms of Alberta. This pilot project is growing and is showing good results. Hopefully it will become ever more comprehensive in the future and be available in all schools.
- Input into the Land Use Framework process that will be the basis of future access plans throughout the province
- Opening a business office in Edmonton. Have also hired an administrative assistant to help out with membership, etc.
- Opened a walk in office in conjunction with the Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad. If you are in that area drop in. You will find lots of information available. This office is working very hard and has found funding to build numerous bridges and trails. Also very involved in working with the community and local enforcement agencies to protect an area that is under significant pressure from many sides.
- Hired a contractor to develop funding sources for the association and its member clubs. Chris is very familiar with the

process. Some clubs have already taken advantage of his abilities and are investing in trail development and maintenance. Look forward to many more successes from this initiative.

- Involved in the development of the Alberta Outdoors Coalition. More details of this will be found in Cal's message's, but this is a very powerful group in that it's membership includes the actual users of the backcountry. It will work at the very highest levels of government to protect your access.
- Although there have been some breaks in the process, the Recreational Corridors Committee is about to go back to work. This committee will be a major force in what the future of trails in Alberta, and AOHVA is very well represented.
- AOHVA has also developed an informal working group of legislators and users that will discuss issues affecting the regions of Alberta, British Columbia, Montana, and Idaho. We have some very common problems and need to work together to find common solutions.
- The association is now more available to government departments than ever before and is consulting on a number of issues that may affect our sport. Recent discussions have been held regarding new license plates, grizzly bears, and youth safety issues.
- Throughout 2007, the association has been attending shows and community events around the province with a safety trailer built and supplied by Honda Canada. This trailer includes a full audio-visual presentation as well as examples of proper safety gear and riding techniques.

There are a couple of issues that your executive would like to improve though, and that will require your help.

- Membership. Although our membership has grown over the last few years, it is still a tiny percentage of the ATV, UTV, and off road motorcycle users on the trails. It is important in so many ways that we all become involved by joining the association either through local clubs or on an individual basis. If government does not see that users are concerned enough to be involved, they tend to move very important issues to the backburner or worse, decide

that the users do not really have any concerns about losing prime trails.

- Funding. Although tremendously important to the continued operations of the association, membership may never be able to provide all of the dollars needed to do the work required to improve our sport. It takes a huge amount of money to build and maintain trails (this year alone, a quick guess at money spent by our member clubs on trails would be in the millions). In addition there are the day to day costs associated with operating a growing organization and the increased responsibilities that are both taken on and given to us. Volunteers are needed, but there are only so many that have the time and resources to help out, and they are very susceptible to burn out. We need the help of all OHV riders to identify sources of funding and contribute what they can. Make sure that your dealers, distributors, and any other company that benefits from your OHV riding (truck dealers, trailer dealers, fuel suppliers) understands the need to preserve the sport to preserve your business.

Bob Smith, President AOHVA 2007/2008

## **Contact Us**

- Web site: [www.aohva.com](http://www.aohva.com)
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- Mail:

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**Reminder: 2008 Membership renewals are now being accepted**

**\$30 per person or \$50 for a family membership**

*Note: If your membership is through your local club, please check with your membership director to make sure you are up to date and on our current membership list. No need to send additional fees.*