

BACKGROUND

ORV Tourism – Improving Social & Economic Trends in Rural Communities

Properly managed ATV destination tourism utilizes existing infrastructure and sustainable trail networks to maximize the economic development benefits for the whole community while respecting environmental and cultural values.

Many rural communities are interested in making it legally permissible to ride ATVs/SxS on a designated route in town to access fuel/food/lodging to facilitate tourism. The implementation of the Provincial ORV Management Framework, licensing, regulations and operation permits have made this possible.

The Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Act was intended to create safe and more convenient incidental access to public roads and highways to better connect BC's rural communities and support a first-rate ORV trail network, and to allow local governments to expand their trail networks to take advantage of economic development opportunities by way of tourism.

The ORV Management Framework developed by the Province of BC is a cross-government initiative, consisting primarily of the Off Road Vehicle Act, which includes changes to the Motor Vehicle Act to provide safe, convenient, incidental access to highways including free police-issued operation permits.

As intended the ORV Act is creating significant economic opportunities for rural communities to establish inter-community ORV tourism. In BC we have vast crown land and trail networks connecting our rural communities that easily allow communities to establish a designated ORV trail network that has the potential to connect thousands of kilometers of trails and communities.

For an ORV trail network to be a viable tourism product, it must provide riders the ability to access food, fuel, and lodging for extended trips, which means riders must have ride-in access to services in communities along the route. Many rural communities are now issuing the operation permits required to access these services along a designated route.

The ATV rider demographic includes family folks and mature adults, with above average income that enjoys outdoor recreation, cultural activities, dining out, with preference to camping near lakes and rivers, plans trips around specific destinations and are willing to travel. In short, they are they perfect tourist, as many are retired with lots of time to travel, utilizing all four seasons in many areas.

ATV tourism contributes hundreds of millions to the BC economy through product and service purchase from fuel, gear, accessories, to food, accommodation and more. There are roughly 125,000 ATV riders in BC with an additional 495,000 estimated to be within a one day drive of the province. A 2015 economic impact study indicates the combined investment and operating expenditure of ATV/SxS activities in BC has an annual impact of \$502 million.

Vera Vukelich, the Manager Responsible for ORVs, Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, issued a letter advising:

"I would also encourage your members to continue to work collaboratively with local staff from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, and local governments on proposals for ORV trails/routes that provide safe incidental access to highways (i.e. ORV travels along portions of the highway right-of-way to access a trail, ability to access gas stations and signage is in place for ORVs that may need to travel on the road for a short distance – of course, local circumstances will vary)"

For further information please visit www.atvbc.ca or contact kim@atvbc.ca

