

Commission to Study OHRV Use in New Hampshire

MEETING Minutes Friday March 21, 2025, 10:00 AM

**Department of Natural and Cultural Resources 172 Pembroke Road, Concord,
NH 03301**

Present:

Mike Ouellet, Chairman, Representative, Coos County District 3
Abby Evankow, Clerk, NH Rail Trails Coalition
Senator Rochefort via remote
Arnie Davis, RRD Committee
Allison Knab, RRD Committee via remote
David Rodrique, DOT
Matthew Amatucci, NH State Police via remote
Alexis Rudko, BOT
Captain Michael Eastman, NH F&G
Steven Wilkie, NHOHVA
Gary Newfield, NHACC
Claude Pigeon, NCC via remote
Ann Davis, NH TOA / NH FBF
Dan Bennett, NHADA

Excused:

Dan Buteau, NHAPC, Chief of Berlin police

Absent:

Paul Doscher, SPNHF/ AMC/ TNC
George Sykes, Representative, House Transportation Committee
NHMA vacant

Guests: Rep Suzanne Vail, House RRD Committee; Rich Parsons NHOHVA; Jay O'Leary, NHADA; Jackson Bouley Lobbyist NHADA

Call to Order 10:02; Pledge of Allegiance; Introduction of Guests

Ms. Davis: NHTOA and NHFBF are unhappy with Commission's lack of progress. Requests that the Chairman invite members to submit topics for agenda at least two weeks prior to meetings and related documents be sent to Clerk for distribution at least one week prior. Requests abutter issues be on May's agenda. Suggests commission start recording findings and recommended legislation now for November deadline.

Rep Ouellet: Agenda is open and he welcomes inputs. Agrees abutter issues will be on May's agenda.

Discussion of Commission meeting with abutters trailside on a Saturday: Mr Pigeon says it's important for commission to experience what abutters are living with; we can't breathe the dust from a video. Rep Ouellet: we know what goes on, we know what abutters are going through; doesn't think we should give up meeting time for site visit. Mr. Rodrigue: DOT is empathetic w/ all abutters. DOT testifies for need for local town support for OHRV use of state roads. Understands value of a meeting on a Saturday, has personally experienced the dust, the noise while fly fishing, but he does not make decisions. Legislature and communities make the decisions - DOT follows. Rep Ouellet agrees it is very difficult for some of the abutters and is open to hearing any kind of solution, suggestions. Mr. Wilkie recommends residents with dust complaints contact the club. Clubs put in grants for dust mitigation measures. NHOHVA and BOT have contact information for clubs on their websites. NHOHVA.org [BOT website](#). For example, in Sullivan County - town created dust problems on one road. Club used \$38,000 in grant money to repair.

Rep Ouellet - reads Mr. Robitaille's resignation letter from commission. He has asked NHMA for a replacement.

Approval of Minutes from January 10, 2025 meeting: Mr Newfield motions to approve, Mr. Wilkie seconds. Unanimous vote.

Legislative Update

HB 127 - passed through Senate Committee, 5-0, amended to include Columbus Day and specific to that trail. Bill is on Senate Consent Calendar. Ms. Evankow-disappointed by Chairman Ouellet's straw poll in favor of HB 127 - was not part of poll. Wants commission to review legislation. Mr. Bennett disagrees, technically - legislation review is not in mandate.

Ms. Davis suggests HB 174, increasing UTV weight limit had north country landowners very concerned and could have benefitted from Commission review - compromise might have been found that would have enabled its success. Rep Ouellet said not discussing bills was an oversight. He will correct next session.

Mr. Wilkie pointed out commission meets every 2 months - not fast enough to address unknown bills; suggests on-line meeting in-between to discuss specific bill. Ms. Davis urges Representatives to let colleagues know to send bills to them. OHRV Bills usually go to House committees: Resource Recreation and Development, Fish and Game and Marine Resources, Public Works and Highways. Ms Davis opposed HB 683, as land owner - did not want to lose abutter notification. Discussion commission should have had - if open 5 more counties to OHRVs - will that dilute north country economic benefit?

NHOHVA - Presentation - Mr. Wilkie: because commission has lost members - wants to do a reset on education. Offering 3 teachings over next meetings; today is landowner

permission. Next - all the different machines that fall under the OHRV definition in NH; Lastly - municipalities, ordinances and local control. NH believes in local control.

Mr. Wilkie distributed packet with Sullivan County ATV Club letter, BOT Landowner Partnership policy, including laws that protect land owners, contact information, club information, maps, NH F&G OHRV & Snowmobile Digest of Regulations. New digest will come out in a month (published on [F&G's OHRV website](#)). Permission for trails on private property is Club's responsibility. BOT encourages written permission but only requires it for grant funded projects. BOT carries \$2 million for landowner insurance.

Clubs are responsible for maintenance.

Mr. Wilkie offers to give another overview of grants and trail funding at future meeting.

Mud season is loss of continuous snow cover until May 23rd.

Mr. Wilkie keeps NHOHVA.org updated with relevant links to BOT, F&G, Clubs.

Questions about rack card: why hand signals for the road only? F&G wants both hands on handles/ steering wheel on bumpy trails.

Questions about "\$5-\$2 Agent transaction fee" \$5 money goes to agent. \$2 transaction fee goes to on-line vendor. Card could be more clear.

Discussion of BOT 2014 map, "State of New Hampshire OHRV Trails." Width restrictions listed on back. UTV definition was created to close the tractor plate loop-hole that was being abused. UTV was changed from 62" - 65."

Is weight limit enforced? 2000 lb definition is dry unladen weight = impossible to test out in field. Would have to look up manufacturers' dry weight estimates = impractical and inaccurate. For over 5 years, heavier machines have been out on trails. Widths are easier to enforce. Main complaints to F&G is speed and noise = enforceable w/ radar gun and ears. F&G prioritizes education to reduce speed, prevent accidents. Width is easier to regular with physical barriers.

Why discuss weight then? NHOHVA wants weight removed from definition. Does weight increase damage to trails? State has 25 mph to limit damage to land. Faster speeds = more wear and tear on trails. 3500 lb side by side is not hammering through trails like dirt bike. It is behavior not weight; a 14 year old on a 400 lb raptor ATV can do more damage than family of 4 on Polaris RZR.

Mr. Wilkie: half our trails are class V & VI roads. Even with narrow windy trails built for smaller ATVs in Sullivan county has not found more wear and tear. Weather is the worst for trails.

Rep Davis: there are 10 miles of OHRV trails on Ct. Headwaters land. Heavier logging trucks are already on these roads.

Recent legislation in Maine and Vt: Maine 2 bills to increase the weight of an 'Overweight ATV' from 2000 lbs. One to increase to 2500 lbs. and one to increase it to 3500 lbs. .Vt is considering a bill to define an 'ATV' as up to 72" wide.

Ms. Evankow asks if manufacturers can retool OHRVs for NH rentals to make them quieter as Polaris did in Arizona. Mr. Wilkie agrees that noise is the #1 complaint. Machines used to be 2 stroke now 95% now 4-stroke. Manufacturers are also working on mellowing tire noise.

Rep Davis suggests adding OHRV Study Commission to upcoming joint RRD / F&G committee field trip. Ms. Evankow asks to include an abutter visit.

Mr Parsons invites all to May 15th OHRV Day at State House, Thursday. NHOHVA, BOT, F&G will be there. Dealers will trailer machines to be parked on plaza in front of state house. Like "touch a truck day."

Subcommittee Update - pass over

Law Enforcement F&G received decals. They are sub-par: incorrect sizes not perforated, not sticking, not weather resistant. Lowest bidder = poor quality. The decals will not stand up to mud, dust, temperature. It is only 2 weeks before F&G has to send decals to vendors. Administrative services chooses cheapest bidder, regardless of quality and specifications. No quality control. If word gets out this sticker doesn't stick then we anticipate an increase in unregistered OHRVs - rider can just claim decal fell off. Ms. Rudko confirms quality problems. Snowmobile signs fell apart a month after paid for. Admin services changes department bid specifications resulting in departments receiving lesser quality and sometimes unusable items. BOT wants to blacklist these vendors and has asked Commissioner to address these purchasing problems. Rep Ouellet asks for a name to talk to. Rep Arnie also wants to address.

BOT update: Ms. Rudko: [Administrative rule hearing](#) for Parks & Trails rules is next week. Grants are coming up. Legislative season is winding down.

Next Meetings:

Monday, May 19, 10am; [NH Automobile dealers' association](#). 507 South St., Bow, NH 03304. (Exit 1 off I-89)

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Friday July 18 Lancaster 10:00am Fish & Game Department, 629 Main St Ste B,
Lancaster, NH 03584

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Motion to Adjourn: Rep Davis, seconded by Mr. Bennett. Adjourn 11:56 am.

Respectfully submitted, Abby Evankow, Clerk