Commission to Study OHRV Use in New Hampshire
MEETING Minutes Friday May 8, 2026, 10:00 AM
DNCR
172 Pembroke Rd, Concord, NH

Present:
Mike Ouellet, Chairman, Representative, Coos County District 3
Abby Evankow, Clerk, NHRTC
Allison Knab, Representative, RRD Committee
Robert Mancini, Lieutenant, NH F&G
Craig Rennie, BOT
Gary Newfield, NHACC
Claude Pigeon, NCC
Steven Wilkie, NHOHVA
Ray Gorman, NHMA
Dan Bennett, NHADA
Ann Davis, NH TOA, NH FB
Jonathon Stone, AMC, SPNHF, TNC

Absent:
David Rochefort, Senator, District 1
George Sykes, Representative, House Transportation Committee
Matthew Amatucci, NH State Police
Arnie Davis, Representative, RRD Committee
Rick Dube, NHACP
Susan Klasen, DOT

Guests – In-person: Jay O'Leary, NHADA lobbyist; Remote: Richard Parsons, NHOHVA lobbyist; Shaun Thomas & Greg Gulliver, Kalkomey.

Action Items to Carry Forward:

1. **Commission's 2025 Annual Report**
2. **Abutter notification language, inputs from NHMA and DOT**
3. **Develop Best Management Practices for tire pressure**

Call to Order 10:00
Pledge of Allegiance
Introduction of new members and Guests:

Approval of Minutes of March 13, 2026 meeting, Mr. Pigeon motions to accept. Seconds by Mr. Wilkie, All in favor. Abstentions: Ms. Davis, Mr. Stone, Rep. Knab.

Discussion of Abutter Notification: Ms. Evankow gives background: abutters along town roads are notified, but those living along state roads are currently given no direct notice that the road they live on is being considered opened to OHRV riding. Abutter notification is standard in any change of use. Residents along state roads have to notify all abutters when applying to put up a fence. OHRV riding is a change in use that should trigger abutter notification. Mr. Rennie opposes as being too much work, a burden on the state, compares to DOT notifying all abutters for road work. BOT would be petitioner. petitioner shall bear expense. Mr. Newfield points out that road construction is temporary and is different from a change in use. People own homes and have certain expectations. Mr. Pigeon points out that laws are protective of people's rights. Uniformity is key, it should not matter whether state road or town road, this is a matter of common sense and fairness. All should be afforded same protection by law. Discussion of connector along state road vs. crossing of state road.

Lieutenant Mancini refers to

RSA 215-A:15 - Regulations of Political Subdivisions

RSA 236:56, II (e) - Prohibition of Certain Vehicles Within Highway Rights of Way

RSA 215-A:9 - Limitations of OHRV Operation on Class I, II and III Highways

RSA 215-A:3 - Bureau Responsibilities

Mr. Rennie: points out these roads are to connect to established trails and they get permission from DOT. Mr. Pigeon asks if those residents entitled to less protection? That is the subject germane. What are people entitled to and why tolerate any level of equality? Rep Ouellet: the big 3 complaints are dust/noise/traffic. On class I, II, and III roads there is no dust. Re: noise: motorcycles and ATVs are the same. when 2500 cars a day, add 125 ATVs = not significant. Mr Pigeon disagrees, except for bike week only, 1 or 2 Harleys go by at a time, but when opening up a road as an OHRV connector - that is a concentrating OHRVs significantly and the decibels go up. 1 ATV is 86 dB, 2 ATVs = 1.5x, 3 ATVs 2x. OHRVs commonly travel in groups. Rep Ouellet references speed limit. Mr Pigeon points out that the RSA noise limit is not when vehicle is at full revolution. Gorham & Berlin have high OHRV traffic. Colebrook has lower numbers. Trail counter in Nash Stream State Park, Kelsey Notch Trail, showed,7000 OHRVs in 1 season. Videos have shown 800-900 on a weekend day on Back Road in Pittsburg - changing the character of the road. The town of Dummer chose to close its roads. Ms. Evankow will talk w/ Mr. Rennie about the distinction between road crossing and road connectors.

Ms. Davis agrees that all homeowners deserve equal protections. Multiple OHRVs traveling past homes could be considered a taking.

Commission will ask for NHMA & DOT inputs for July meeting. Mr. Wilkie also wants NHMA inputs on getting towns in line w/ current state law.

Mr. Wilkie: points out redundancy in draft language and prefers verified mail instead of certified mail.

Mr. Pigeon asks what is abutter notification if not mail? in paper? No daily papers in Colebrook & Berlin - only 1x week. Notice in library, town hall, website are not enough.

Rep Ouellet agrees that abutters have standing and are regularly notified by planning boards. He wants the commission to come up w/ the concept and then send to LSR office for specific language.

Legislative Update, Rich Parsons:

HB 113: relative to OHRV operation on certain highways within the town of Windsor. Left over from last year. Senate committee recommended interim study, put on consent calendar, taken off consent calendar - waiting to hear from town of Windsor - re: town ordinances.

SB505: Temporary Registrations: Senate concurred w/ House amendment which added technical changes - heads to Governor's desk. Also eliminates cap on law enforcement grants, no longer $2500.

HB1074: extending the time period for the remission of certain OHRV and snowmobile fees. ITLed.

HB1095: Changing UTV weight definition - passed Senate w/ amendment moves effective date to May 1, 2028. want to work out deal w/ Timberland Association for solution, TOA members are concerned with impact on lands. It heads back to House to concur or not.

HB1037: Extending the HB1188 commission: enrolled, on Governor's desk

DUI law got passed, this impacts OHRV as motor vehicles.

E-bike bills, being studied.

Law Enforcement, Lieutenant Mancini:

4 hour overtime patrols in Districts 4,5,6. Proactive enforcement patrols in Districts 1 & 5, Coos County & Clough State park. 10 hours on officer's day off - just OHRV law enforcement, focusing on lawn owner/abutter complaints and safety; no Search &Rescie, no wildlife. This has been standard for last several years, nothing new. F&G does not have enough staffing. Officers are working 6 days on, 3 days off.

2 new officers are currently being hired. 46 is full staff. 22 officers are on schedule on any day. They are doing their best w/ limited staff - being pulled in all directions.

Rep Ouellet does not like OHRV riders paying overtime rates for enforcement. He sees OHRVs as a cash cow. Lt. Mancini disputes. Rep Ouellet wants to change rules to make more effective.

Mr. Wilkie: Captain Eastman was going to work on white sheet re: electric dirt bikes vs. e-bikes. Some towns on right track - others not.

Electric bicycle have 3 classes, defined by NH statute:

Class 1: Pedal-assist only, with no throttle. The maximum assisted speed is 20 mph.

Class 2: Throttle-assisted with a maximum speed of 20 mph.
Class 3: Pedal assist only with no throttle. The motor stops assisting at 28 mph. A speedometer is required.

Anything over 750 watts, and going over 28 mph is an OHRV as is any bike w/ pegs, by definition RSA 259:6, 259:27, 265:144, effective as of August 18, 2019.

Tricycles, unicycles etc are considered same as bicycle.

Ms. Evankow encourages Mr. Wilkie to keep in touch w/ Dave Topham of NHRTC who has been working on this issue for the last several years.

Mr. Rennie is seeing a lot of electric vehicles of all sorts on rail trails.

If witnessing speeding call: F&G: 603/ 271-3361 The violation is operating w/out landowner permission. All OHRVs on public lands need to be registered and they are permitted on specific trails.

Update: Trails Bureau, Mr. Rennie:

Field crews are readying for May 23rd opening - working on signage, wash-outs etc. Spring grant rounds are due May 1. Clubs have applied for GIA. Advisory committee meets end of May. Mostly requests for trail maintenance, culverts, grading. RTP grants can be used for equipment purchase. Opening Day of May 23rd is in statute. Closure dates are much more varied.

Conway Branch Rail Trail Advisory meeting last week - to develop rail trail. Immediate project is to build 2.8 mile from Ossipee village north towards Conway. They will leave the rails in place and build 8’ wide trail next to the rails. This is major snowmobile corridor. Put-put cars also want to keep using trails.

Snowmobiles: In WMNF - replacing 2 bridges in Chatham, NH. Federal standard is higher than state standard. Feds are helping with funding. $800,000 for 2 bridges in the woods. Cost share agreement w/ WMNF about to go to Executive Council.

RTP grants no longer expire Dec 31. Extensions are now available to following September.

F&G using RTP grants to get AED in cruisers.

New ATVs/ snowmobiles are 2x cost of 6 years ago.

Off Road Vehicles vs. On Road Vehicles, Steve Wilkie:

UTV is different from OHRV - manufactured for off-road. Off road tire is lower pressure than on-road DOT tire.

Unsprung weight differentiates weight that goes through the springs. Makes difference for jeeps and trucks. Jeeps and trucks are 2x as heavy as OHRVs. DOT tires are 10-20lbs heavier than off-road tires; they are built to take higher speeds. Landowner permission forms specify what vehicles are allowed. 7 landowners allow jeeps and trucks on their land. Every user should pay into system for what they are using.

There are more jeeps on NH trails than other states because NH has fewer places to ride them. Cathole in Claremont gets 2 vehicles a year abandoned that the club has to pull out.

Noise, Mr. Newfield:

Since learning from Dr. Osborne about the physiological impacts of loud noise, he thinks it is even more important for abutter notification. Mr. Rennie - highway vehicles in general are louder. One vehicle in his neighborhood wakes up the entire neighborhood. Mr. Bennett - it's going to get worse without inspections; diesel shops are busy with adjustments. Mr. Newfield - let's work on legislation to get ahead of curve, even without vehicle inspections, we need sound protections. Mr. Pigeon: Almost every community has noise ordinances. Many towns request no jake brakes. We recognize that noise is deleterious - so let's stop arguing the minutia or that it damages our well-being and move forward. To project their health, loggers have to wear ear protection when working. If OSHA sees fit to protect workers' health, OSHA would shut down a factory. Why should we have fewer protections outside of the work place? Dr. Osborne gave us strong evidence of the process of noise damage. Mr. Wilkie wants to offer decibel reader -and then look at ways to disperse activity. We only have 1 road to Cat Hole in Claremont, there are 4 other roads that could access. It would cost the club $5,000 to notify all abutters.

Rep Ouellet -likes the idea of the decibel meter. No question - noise is a problem to abutters, our job is to find solution to it.

Mr. Pigeon recommends downloading app to phone to get reasonable result.

Mr. Wilkie: wants to sit trailside w/ camera and meter to record. Out of 397 abutters, most do no complain - only 6. His club sends abutter notice to every adult resident, not just to owner of house. Discussion that standard notification procedure is for owner, not occupants.

Rep Ouellet - it is not practical to not ride on roads.

Just one state road opened since 2019 - in 2021, Rte 145 in Colebrook. Only state roads Grafton and Coos are allowed to be opened to OHRVs. (Windsor is poised to be next state road to be opened.)

Mr. Wilkie offers solution: for Gorham/Berlin sound issue. Since everyone stays in Gorham, open Smitty's trail to trail bikes - that will eliminate loud bikes on rail trail. 10-12% of riders are trail bikes.

Next Meetings:

July 10, 10:00 AM, DNRC Lancaster - (Ms. Davis can not attend)
September 11, 10:AM DNCR Lancaster (Mr. Bennett and Mr. Stone are unable to attend)

Adjourn

Motion to Adjourn: Ms. Evankow; Seconded by Mr. Newfield. All vote in Favor.

Respectfully submitted, Abby Evankow, HB 1188 Clerk