

AOHVA

**Alberta
Off-Highway
Vehicle Association**



January 2018

AOHVA 4-Point Plan for Environmentally Responsible OHV Use

Presenting the rationale for a much needed solution

Updated January 2018

Preface

This document is intended to inform the broader OHV community about impending decisions that threaten to eliminate the recreation activity of choice for many Albertans – OHV trail riding on public lands.

An estimated loss of 80% of traditional OHV trails in southwest Alberta and the Eastern Slopes is expected to be announced by the government in 2018.

The Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association (AOHVA) offers solutions to the issues and concerns raised by government and people not familiar with the work of our group as the rider federation, our member clubs, volunteers and OHV riders.

AOHVA has worked diligently and in collaboration with the government for the past 7+ years to establish a dedicated and focused organization to ensure the appropriate development, enhancement and maintenance of user-funded, designated trails for all off-highway recreation enthusiasts in Alberta. Most jurisdictions in Canada and the United States have a solution. Why would a government that promotes collaboration and transparency shut out the OHV community instead of working with them to find solutions that allow everyone to enjoy Alberta's trails?

We see this as a critical time for all of us. AOHVA, as the provincial rider federation, OHV Clubs across the province and OHV riders and volunteers, need to come together – to work as a team. With a solid plan, our drive, our passion, our time and our effort, we can ensure the back country remains accessible as a form of recreation that has become a way of life for many Albertans, part of our culture – OHV trail riding on public lands.

Alberta is one of the last jurisdictions in the country to establish a formal structure to facilitate financially sustainable, environmentally responsible OHV use.

Our Goal is to implement The AOHVA 4-Point Plan for Responsible OHV Use retaining all Albertans' opportunity to recreate on public lands.

To make that happen, we need YOU to **Be Informed, Get Engaged and TAKE ACTION!**

1. **Read** this document, The AOHVA 4-Point Plan for Environmentally Responsible OHV Use.
 - Visit **AOHVA.COM** for more information about these issues and the work we do.
2. **Support** the 4-Point Plan.
 - Join in the public dialogue, like, share and comment on relevant Facebook posts, write your local paper.
3. **Join** an OHV club in your area or support a club in the area in which you ride.
4. **Recruit** others to actively participate in the work that lies ahead.
5. **Talk** to your provincial and municipal elected officials, express your concerns and your desire for a sustainable trail network.

Introduction Summary

Since January 2017, AOHVA has been communicating with our members, the OHV user community and Albertans about impending changes to recreation on Alberta public lands. The Government is working to develop and implement a province-wide Land Use Framework, enacting the biggest change to land use in the province in 30 years. AOHVA believes in 2018, Albertans will be facing a significant reduction to their access and enjoyment of Alberta's outdoor spaces.

We believe that now is the time to come together in support of common goals:

- To ensure that as many trails as possible across the province remain open to all Albertans, closing illegal trails and trails that threaten environmentally sensitive areas.
- To place greater emphasis on **enforcement and education** so that people who recklessly abuse our wilderness do not tarnish the reputations of those of us who care deeply for it.

AOHVA, in collaboration with our member clubs and other Albertans have repeatedly informed the provincial government of our interest:

- To rapidly develop the framework for an OHV user-funded, sustainable, environmentally responsible trail network.
- To create a system that could not only improve Alberta's environment but also act as a significant economic driver through increased tourism – a model proven successful in other provinces.

It is our intent to establish a genuine partnership with the Government of Alberta and municipal governments across the province to collectively work to protect and preserve Alberta's outdoor spaces alongside the outdoor pursuits enjoyed by all Albertans. We believe the AOHVA 4-Point Plan for Environmentally Responsible OHV Use provides the framework required to achieve success.

The AOHVA 4-Point Plan for Environmentally Responsible OHV Use

AOHVA supports a solution that strikes a balance between environmental stewardship and sustainable recreation management. We believe that parks and public spaces in Alberta should be for all Albertans to enjoy - they should be inclusive rather than exclusive.

By incorporating best practices from across North America and by implementing innovative approaches, we can make Alberta the model for sustainable, shared recreational trail development and management.

There are four elements to our plan that we are committed to.

1. Design and Development

Working with the Government of Alberta, municipalities, Land Use Framework staff and AOHVA's experienced members in designing and developing trails and trail heads that are sustainable and environmentally-sound; and repairing damaged trails.

2. Protection and Partnership

A new OHV user fee is proposed that would be dedicated to an OHV Trail Fund to tackling important issues like proper trail planning, design, construction and maintenance in partnership with AOHVA, member clubs and volunteers under an accountable, transparent AOHVA Service Delivery Structure.

3. Tools and Mandate

Ensuring the Government of Alberta provides law enforcement agencies with the tools and mandate to fully enforce the law.

4. Better Experience

Building a better environmental and trail experience. Alberta can lead the way in OHV trail development by organizations like AOHVA and its like-minded partners to be responsible for environmental stewardship as a means of eliminating improper use of the back country.

Implemented as a province-wide initiative, our plan will reinvigorate and strengthen the rider federation, local clubs, the volunteer base and the OHV community across Alberta. When all OHV users pay, everybody is part of the solution, part of the team working together to ensure responsible OHV users have continued access to public land.

AOHVA is concerned that Albertans' continued enjoyment of the province's open landscape is in jeopardy

AOHVA estimates that 800 km of OHV trails currently exist in The Castle region. These trails have been used by Albertans for decades and are now being closed to all motorized recreation.

We believe that the closure of The Castle to motorized recreation is just the first step and anticipate that OHV use and open camping in the Porcupine Hills, Livingstone and the Eastern Slopes will be severely restricted in the near future.

As a participant in the government-led Southwest Alberta Recreation Advisory Group (SARAG), AOHVA strongly believes that the approximately 1856 km of OHV trails in use today in Porcupine Hills and Livingstone will be reduced to just 456 km.

Additionally, the creation of another Provincial Park in the Bighorn region will result in the further reduction of trails.

Collectively, this represents an estimated loss of 80% of OHV trails in southwest Alberta. So, YES, we are concerned!

The impacts of these closures will be many and far reaching.

The few remaining OHV trails in Porcupine Hills and Livingstone will experience an incredible increase in traffic which will likely result in:

- increased wear and tear on the remaining trails
- decreased user enjoyment due to a poor recreation experience and over-crowding

OHV riders will then have a choice to make:

- ride in other regions of Alberta (likely experiencing a future reduction in trails)
- ride in neighbouring provinces and states
- give up OHV riding as a form of recreation

In addition to the social impact to Albertans, the economic impact to local business will be significant to many:

- OHV dealers will experience reduced revenues from both sales and service
- the local retail and hospitality businesses will experience reduced visitors and thus, reduced revenues

The OHV Community

The Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association (AOHVA) is a rider federation that represents the interests of not only the estimated 195,000 users of off-highway vehicles but of the many associated family and friends who partake in related activities.

OHVs are the central focus of recreational activities enjoyed by over 500,000 Albertans.

Outdoor pursuits, including OHV riding are considered a way of life for many Albertans. Families, people of all ages from multiple generations, actively enjoy Alberta's public lands through the opportunities that OHV riding presents. This is one of the few outdoor activities that can engage an entire family, spanning multiple generations, in the great outdoors at the same time.

The OHV community includes Albertans from rural settings and small communities close to riding areas as well as from large urban centres who travel hours to enjoy riding in the back country. AOHVA estimates the split between local and visiting riders to be 50/50.

AOHVA is a volunteer organization from across the province.

As a rider federation, our membership is made up of local OHV Clubs (also volunteer-driven organizations,) who in turn represent and support individual riders and the broader volunteer base.

Together, AOHVA, Member Clubs, Dealers and individual OHV users, alongside municipalities can establish a strong foundation to ensure safe and environmentally responsible OHV use in Alberta.

AOHVA's Position on the Alberta Government's Closure of OHV Trails

As an organization dedicated to finding the right balance between conservation and proper use of the outdoors, we know that some key parts of our province may require the reduction or removal of motorized recreation – and we accept that. However, we take issue with our government's unilateral plans to impose outright bans and significant trail closures in certain areas - because it simply doesn't make sense.

We believe that a proper balance on Alberta's public lands can be achieved; that an environmentally sustainable trail network can be derived from what exists today. At this critical time, it is important for everyone to fully understand the issues, the impacts and the options in providing outdoor recreation opportunities for all Albertans.

AOHVA, our member clubs and the OHV community have always been ready and willing to take an active role in

- Assisting the government in identifying, evaluating and either closing or reclaiming and converting illegal trails to acceptable multi-use trails.
- Working together to return areas showing the effects of mismanagement to an acceptable condition.
- Continuing our work educating the OHV community about acceptable riding practices, rider safety and environmental consideration.

BUT we have been repeatedly shut out by the government as a collaborative partner.

Rather than simply see the government install gates all across the Alberta landscape, we'd prefer to work with our government to build a trail management legacy that all Albertans can be proud of.

Most Jurisdictions Across Canada and Much of the US Have Figured This Out.

Alberta is one of the last jurisdictions to establish a formal structure to facilitate financially sustainable, environmentally responsible OHV use.

AOHVA's Position on Fees

Registration Fees

OHV Registration fees have been collected by the provincial government since the 1970's. Those fees have historically been applied to general revenues.

Between 2009 and 2017 alone, that represents more than \$50 million that was collected from OHV users and was deposited into the general revenues of the government; with very little of those funds going to manage or improve the OHV recreation trail network, OHV user programs or even enforcement.

AOHVA suggests that those fees should continue to be collected by the government and should be applied to enforcement and education initiatives directly related to OHV use.

AOHVA proposes a dedicated OHV Trail Fund for a Service Delivery Structure, 50% of which is a new OHV User Fee of \$20, to be matched 50% by \$20 dollars allocated from existing OHV registration fees. Similar funding models are used successfully in other jurisdictions.

OHV User Fee Clarification

Various Recreationalists and the different levels of government in Alberta often call for a user-pay system, singling out OHV users and open campers as those who should pay for recreation on public land. Furthermore, they expect OHV user fees to be applied to the benefit of other user groups.

AOHVA and the majority of OHV users are in favour of an OHV user fee. However, while AOHVA accepts the merits of user fees, we assert the following:

- User-Pay can and should apply to all user groups of recreation trails in Alberta - not just OHVs.
- User-Pay is commensurate with maintaining and building upon the current user experience and number of trails - people will not find value in paying additional fees for a poor or lesser user experience.
- User-Pay systems must guarantee that the funds collected from users are applied directly to benefit those users and their recreation trails - not to government programs and staff or other user groups.

A financially sustainable approach to recreation trail development and maintenance is important to ensuring that the taxpayers of Alberta do not bear the burden of the costs of the recreational pursuits of others - be they hikers, berry-pickers, photographers, campers, mountain bikers, equestrian, skiers, snowmobilers, or OHV users.

Since 2006 when discussions regarding recreation trails began, no other group representing recreationalists in Alberta has come forward with a plan to address user-pay systems supporting their group of users. AOHVA believes this is a requirement, and feel that user fees should be enacted.

The AOHVA 4-Point Plan for Environmentally Responsible OHV Use

AOHVA is as concerned as anyone about improper OHV use when it comes to the environment and peoples' safety.

We support a solution that strikes a balance between environmental stewardship and sustainable recreation opportunities in Alberta. Parks and public lands should be for all Albertans to enjoy - they should be inclusive rather than exclusive.

There are four elements to our plan that we are committed to.

1. Design and Development

Working with the Government of Alberta, municipalities, Land Use Framework staff and AOHVA's experienced members in designing and developing trails and trail heads that are sustainable and environmentally-sound; and repairing damaged trails.

2. Protection and Partnership

A new OHV user fee is proposed that would be dedicated to an OHV Trail Fund to tackling important issues like proper trail planning, design, construction and maintenance in partnership with AOHVA, member clubs and volunteers under an accountable, transparent AOHVA Service Delivery Structure.

3. Tools and Mandate

Ensuring the Government of Alberta provides law enforcement agencies with the tools and mandate to fully enforce the law.

4. Better Experience

Building a better environmental and trail experience. Alberta can lead the way in OHV trail development by organizations like AOHVA and its like-minded partners to be responsible for environmental stewardship as a means of eliminating improper use of the back country.

Implemented as a province-wide initiative, our plan will reinvigorate and strengthen the rider federation, local clubs, the volunteer base and the OHV community across Alberta. When all OHV users pay, everybody is part of the solution, part of the team working together to ensure responsible OHV users have continued access to public land.

Implementation Through Collaborative Partnership

AOHVA strongly believes that a successful solution is derived through trust, mutual respect, open discussion, transparency of processes and the input of diverse user groups who recognize that there can be environmentally responsible OHV use.

Our 4-Point Plan is based on principles and practical approaches that have worked successfully in many other jurisdictions in North America. There, Rider Federations, OHV Clubs and their members, volunteers and governments come together and work as a team to plan, build and manage sustainable trails.

Everyone contributes, everyone is engaged, everyone is energized – everyone is part of the solution and everyone benefits.

In order to move forward and achieve sustainable, environmentally responsible OHV use on Alberta's public lands, our next steps must be collaborative and action-oriented as outlined in the details that follow. The tables indicate the responsibilities of the government and the responsibilities of AOHVA with the support of Clubs and volunteers.

1.0 DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Working with the Government of Alberta, municipalities, Land Use Framework staff, and other stakeholder groups AOHVA experienced members in designing and developing trails and trail heads that are sustainable and environmentally-sound; and repairing damaged trails.

It is a proven fact that designed engineered trail systems mitigate environmental -concerns, offer safe, high quality experiences for users, provide links between communities and reduce or eliminate conflicts with neighboring landowners.

By incorporating best practices from across North America and by implementing innovative approaches, AOHVA will work with the provincial government and municipalities to design and develop both trails and infrastructure. AOHVA will provide funding to the clubs who will construct, manage and maintain shared trail networks to accepted standards, making Alberta the model for shared recreational trails.

Designing and developing trails and trail heads

	Requirements for successful implementation	Provincial and Local Governments	AOHVA Service Delivery Org. and Clubs
1.	Establish a new recreation trail disposition	S	S
2.	Establish standards for trail building	S	S
3.	Establish standards for trail heads	S	S
4.	Establish standards for linear footprint	S	S
5.	Establish a formal, streamlined provincial trail approval process and workflow	S	S
6.	Identify, inventory and assess existing trails	S	S
7.	Identify, inventory and assess existing staging areas	S	S
8.	Identify, inventory and assess existing infrastructure	S	S
9.	Identify requirements for new trails	S	S
10.	Identify requirements for new staging areas	S	S
11.	Identify requirements for new open camping	S	S
12.	Identify requirements for new infrastructure	S	S
13.	Establish a long term sustainable funding process	S	S
14.	Establish an implementation process	S	S
15.	Establish a conflict resolution process	S	S

Primary Responsibility – P Input Required – I Shared Responsibility – S

2.0 PROTECTION AND PARTNERSHIP

A new OHV user fee is proposed that would be dedicated to an OHV Trail Fund to tackling important issues like proper trail planning, design, construction and maintenance in partnership with AOHVA, member clubs and volunteers under an accountable, transparent AOHVA Service Delivery Structure.

AOHVA proposes a dedicated OHV Trail Fund for a Service Delivery Structure, 50% of which is a new OHV User Fee of \$20, to be matched 50% by \$20 dollars allocated from existing OHV registration fees. Similar funding models are used successfully in other jurisdictions.

- The fees will be collected through the existing OHV registration process.
- The fees will be distributed directly to the AOHVA Service Delivery Structure and will then flow through to directly support OHV Clubs and the volunteer base who are dedicating their efforts to trail development and maintenance.
- AOHVA Service Delivery Structure will direct funds to efforts to proper trail planning, design, construction and maintenance

This approach to user fees includes everybody as part of the solution. It reinvigorates the volunteer base and through additional club and industry contributions, it provides an opportunity to grow the base revenues by a multiplier of 1:2.

AOHVA, the clubs and members believe the following about a new OHV User Fee:

- User fees will improve the user experience, including access to trails and staging areas.
- User fees will work only if they directly benefit those they were collected from, those being OHV users (trails, education), and NOT the government or government programs.
- User Fees are fiscally responsible such that OHV trails will not be funded by the taxpayers of Alberta, and sustainable because they are funded by OHV users themselves.
- OHV users should not view this as a simple tax grab because the fees are dedicated to support those they are collected from.
- User-Pay systems must guarantee that the funds collected from users are applied directly to benefit those users and their recreation trails - not to government programs and staff or other user groups.

While a number of OHV bridges have been built and trails repaired in several riding areas of Alberta in recent years, it must be made clear that work was due to the efforts and hard work and financial contributions of AOHVA, Member Clubs and volunteers.

Creation of a new dedicated OHV Trail Fund to tackling important issues

	Requirements for successful implementation	Provincial and Local Governments	AOHVA Service Delivery Org.
1.	\$54 fee, current funds go to GoA general revenue (these funds have been collected for more than 30 years)	\$34 general revenues	\$20
2.	\$20 fee for AOHVA Service Delivery (new)	0	\$20 (100%)
3.	Reclamation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails • Staging Areas 	P+S	S
4.	Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails • Staging Areas 	S	P+S
5.	Infrastructure Maintenance	S	P
6.	Assumption of Liability	S	P+S
7.	Education	S	P+S

See Point #3 of the 4-Point Plan for recommendations to better use the current \$54 OHV Registration Fee.

Primary Responsibility – P Input Required – I Shared Responsibility – S

Implemented as a province-wide initiative, our plan will reinvigorate and strengthen the rider federation, local clubs, the volunteer base and the OHV community across Alberta. When all OHV users pay, everybody is part of the solution, part of the team working together to ensure responsible OHV users have continued access to public land.

3.0 TOOLS AND MANDATE

Ensuring the Government of Alberta provides law enforcement agencies with the tools and mandate to fully enforce the law.

Law enforcement related initiatives could be funded by the existing \$34 OHV registration fees.

Those fees are estimated to contribute \$4.4 million annually to the general revenues of the government

Giving Law Enforcement the required tools and mandate

	Requirements for successful implementation	Provincial and Local Governments	AOHVA Service Delivery Org.
1.	Review current laws	P	I
2.	Evaluate current results	P	I
3.	Identify required changes	S	S
4.	Pass New Legislation: Trails Act	P	I
5.	Develop standards as required	P	I
6.	Develop common, consistent OHV user information	S	S
7.	Distribute OHV user information	S	S
8.	Prepare law enforcement agencies	P	

Primary Responsibility – P Input Required – I Shared Responsibility – S

4.0 BETTER EXPERIENCE

Building a better environmental and trail experience. Alberta can lead the way in OHV trail development by organizations like AOHVA and its like-minded partners to be responsible for environmental stewardship as a means of eliminating improper use of the back country.

The delivery of education-related initiatives will be funded through the new OHV fees.

Such initiatives include:

- OHV User Training
- Safety Education
- Environmental Education
- Member Club Support

Building a better environmental and trail experience

	Requirements for successful implementation	Provincial and Local Governments	AOHVA Service Delivery Org. and Clubs
1.	Review education efforts	S	S
2.	Identify required changes	S	S
3.	Develop materials	S	S
4.	Distribute materials	S	S
5.	Promote education initiatives	S	S
6.	Deliver education and training		P

Primary Responsibility – P Input Required – I Shared Responsibility – S

Conclusion

Today, the collective representation, knowledge base and experiences of AOHVA, our members clubs, OHV users and volunteers ensure a solid foundation from which to partake in important discussions, to inform important decisions and to collaborate on important initiatives. Our understanding of and appreciation for the over-arching outdoor experience OHV users and their families seek in combination with our expertise in developing, managing and maintaining shared trail networks, positions AOHVA as a strong partner for the provincial government and municipalities to deliver a much needed and viable solution.

That viable solution is the AOHVA 4-Point Plan for Environmentally Responsible OHV Use.

Implemented as a province-wide initiative, our plan will reinvigorate and strengthen the rider federation, local clubs, the volunteer base, the OHV community across Alberta and local businesses. When all OHV users pay, everybody is part of the solution, part of the team working together to ensure responsible OHV users have continued access to public land.

AOHVA's approach is not new. We have been proposing this for years. We have watched over the course of the past 10-20 years, other jurisdictions figure out how to:

- Collect fees
- Work with OHV clubs and volunteers
- Support Rider Federations
- Manage trails as a team

The benefits of the 4-Point Plan would be:

- Significant decrease in environmental damage
- Increase in the number of trails available and the types of user experiences offered for OHV riding
- Significant contribution to economy attributed to motorized recreation
- Unauthorized private land use by OHV users is rare.
- A thriving OHV community with a strong support for the Rider Federation, OHV Clubs and volunteer base

Here in Alberta we have an informed, willing and able rider federation in AOHVA, along with member clubs, volunteers, dealers and an engaged OHV community. We are ready to work with the government to strengthen our foundation for implementing the AOHVA 4-Point Plan for Environmentally Responsible OHV Use.

BE INFORMED

Read our Information

- **AOHVA.COM** has important information about activities impacting OHV use in Alberta

GET ENGAGED

Share the information

- Like and share AOHVA Facebook posts

TAKE ACTION!

Make your concerns known

- Call and meet with both provincial and local elected officials in your area

Your support of the 4-Point Plan is needed

Everyone contributes, everyone is engaged, everyone is energized – everyone is part of the solution and everyone benefits.

In order to move forward and achieve sustainable, environmentally responsible OHV use on Alberta's public lands, our next steps must be collaborative and action-oriented.

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