

15 January, 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am sending this letter to inform you of my grave concerns about the back country on the Eastern Slopes; suggestions of user fees for Off Road Vehicle (ORV) owners; and my proposal of how we as Albertans, might be able to save this once pristine area.

My journey of trying to share these concerns began in September 2016 and has included no less than 38 phone calls in the last three months to the various departments of Environment, Fish and Wildlife and Forestry. The impetus of now placing this in writing is because:

- I have left four detailed messages for the Minister of Environment either in Lethbridge, Edmonton or with the Deputy Minister and have yet to hear back...
- I have spoken with the various provincial departments named above only to discover the frustration, lack of knowledge and/or the inability for the staff to act on these issues in a collaborative manner....
- I am truly appalled at the conditions of these areas and am genuinely concerned for the long-term destruction of this environment.

The opinions and suggestions I am sharing are based on personal experiences in some of these areas and the knowledge of present legislation.

My understanding is that there are approximately 160,000 registered ORV (Off Road Vehicles- quads, dirt bikes, skidoos, etc) in Alberta, which constitutes less than 5% of the population. This population (with the exception of users on their own private land or Reserve) is presently using any public land designated as a multi-use area. The other small population of users in these areas might be hikers, bikers and/or equestrians who leave a very small imprint on the environment as a whole.

Unfortunately, the multi-use trails such as Bighorn and Southesk are now unsafe for hikers, bikers and equestrians because of the abuse and overuse of quad activity. This is only one of the areas where the trails between Cochrane and

Hinton, West of the Forestry Trunk Road (HWY 40), have been decimated to include the general trail, watershed and embankments that make it a safety and environmental hazard for all users and future generations.

To my knowledge there is no designated quad use areas in the back country (such as logging roads, cut lines, etc) so it is understandable why they use the multi-use trails. However, these trails are destroyed due to:

- overuse of quads
- lack of other designated space for quad use
- lack of enforcement of the Public Land Act
- lack of personnel resources to enforce the Public Land Act
- no monetary surcharge to enhance or maintain the natural resources
- lack of monetary recoup for the province to hire the personnel resources to enforce the Act

As it stands at the present time, the laws are in place but there is no way to enforce these violations or hire the manpower to even patrol and monitor the damage.

Common sense would dictate that the smallest population making the most damage should at least provide some sort of compensation for the privilege of using these areas. General public pay each day for the right to use various other venues (parking meters, recreational facilities, educational institutions, etc) to help offset the maintenance for specific infrastructure.

My proposals are as follows:

- that quad registration include a user fee for Public Land Use of \$100
- that 50% of this fee be used for rehabilitation of trails and 50% for the cost of enforcement of the Public Land Use Act in these areas.
- that the rehab and enforcement fees be used by provincial departments already in existence and not by a specific interest group.
- that there be collaboration among provincial departments including:
 - Environment (protection)
 - Fish and Wildlife (protection and assessments)
 - Finance (collect user fee)
 - Solicitor General (enforcement)

Infrastructure (issue tenders to repair designated trails already damaged and/or to maintain future use)

Please note that each one of these departments do things well but not one can do everything nor do it alone, hence the collaboration!

- that Fish and Wildlife officers be given the jurisdiction/authority to patrol and enforce the Act: as they are in the best position to understand the Eastern slopes needs, present damage, as well as their frequency of patrol for fishing and big game hunters. Parks and Environment are not equipped to deal with enforcement alone.
- that the public land use immediately West of the Forestry Trunk road be assessed and closed as needed to ensure that the riparian areas that feed the streams/fish habitat, etc are repaired and/or protected

To ensure uniform enforcement of existing policy, all land West of the Trunk Road must be considered as one region.

In our present era of environmental concerns, carbon tax issues and general challenges with keeping our imprint in check, we have neglected to be proper stewards of the pristine forestry areas against unlimited, unregulated and over indulgence by quads....for free!! One would think that as we enter the second generation of quad users, that we could learn from the past and ensure the future.

Public Land must be protected and laws must be enforced. Any other public area would not be used to this extent without user fees and consequences for abuse.

The trail system must be acknowledged now and before the Regional Watershed Management plans are implemented. There must be fees associated with this plan and enforcement of the abuse...to be successful and to have a better infrastructure in place for the future generation. The trails and environment cannot wait until this plan is deemed in effect or for any public consultation as there will be nothing left to save!

I would implore you to consider these proposals for the sake of areas which we as Albertans have always shared with pride. This can be a very simple fix...we only need three components - cash, collaboration and common sense.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr Radke

cc. - undisclosed