

April 15, 2020

## Presidents Message - Temporary OHV Restrictions on Public Lands (Forestry Protection Zones)

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We recognize all Albertans are facing difficult and challenging times. The COVID-19 virus has isolated families, friends, and the many activities they enjoy. As well as the unfortunate impacts on our economy, jobs, and the unfortunate loss of life due to. The strain on provincial resources to ensure the health and safety of Albertans, affects resources for other provincial services including forest fire fighting.

For many, getting out into the backcountry is their way to recharge from the stresses of life through connecting with the outdoors. Whether using an OHV for recreation or access to other recreational activities – its about being in the outdoors, and the mental well being coming from. Across the province Provincial Parks and Federal parks have been closed. No one is unaffected by measures to contain the virus and preserve resources, and all of us are in this together. And know that all of which is temporary.

The AOHVA fully supports efforts to reduce the potential of forest fires by implementing “fire bans” during high risk conditions, and at this time of limited resources to deal with those resulting.

Regarding the temporary recreational OHV ban, we were in contact with the Minister of Agriculture last evening. Minister Dreeshen has assured us that this is a temporary, short term measure. We are also using this opportunity to work with his ministry both in education of OHV use, and in future options and recommendations to fire season regarding.

For background, the departments historical data from 2006-2018 regarding forest fires identified there has been 19,588 forest fires affecting just over 2.7 Million Hectares. Notable major causes (by # fires) are: Lightning 36% (7061), Cooking/Campfires 21% (4317), Industry Activities 12% (2424), Refuse/Garbage/Debris ~10%. Breaking down the numbers classed as “Recreation”, almost 91% of this category were caused by campfires/cooking - whether unsafe, unattended or abandoned.

Regarding OHV related fires, they attributed to 1.4% (281) of the total 19,588 forest fires from 2006-2018, with 89% of those hectares burned caused by Industry related OHV use, and 11% from Recreational OHV use. Source info is available here: (<https://wildfire.alberta.ca/resources/historical-data/historical-wildfire-database.aspx>)

Some may question the effectiveness and rational in temporary restriction to the recreation, we are working with the Minster of Agriculture's office in recommendations moving forward. Many activities have been temporarily suspended through these times, and we are focusing on the positive long term outcomes we are working towards for the recreation in or province – less on the short term restriction.

Once we are back out on the trails, to reduce risk of creating fires please ensure your OHV's have functional spark arrestors and service/clean them regularly. Always make sure campfires are out – whether yours or any you come across left unattended. This is the number one cause of forest fires next to lightning, and one that can be prevented.

Stay safe, these measures are temporary – and will provide updates as available.



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Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association (AOHVA)