

## MY TURN

## Off-road vehicles ruining quiet town

By **ABBY EVANKOW**  
For the Monitor

The news is full of stories of all the happy ATV riders flocking to Jericho Mountain State Park and lining Berlin's Main Street. But no one is hearing about the much different scene playing out at the Gorham OHRV trailhead.

The problem is simple. This trailhead brings off-highway recreational vehicle traffic, along with its noise, dust, and exhaust fumes, right into residential properties. One friend is in his home, windows shut, earplugs in, trying to pretend that hundreds of OHRVs are not revving past his home. Another neighbor is distraught because her mother was just diagnosed with cancer, and she realizes she has not had a summer family barbecue in their backyard for six years. Then there's the woman sick in bed for weeks with the windows to her formerly beautiful backyard

shut, because it's no longer fresh summer air blowing in, but OHRV dust, exhaust and noise.

Our neighbors are leaving their homes most weekends of our short summer to find peace and quiet elsewhere. They have been talking to local and state officials for years, explaining that the ability to enjoy their own homes and property has been taken from them without due process. Picture hundreds of OHRVs driving down your street, through your neighborhood, past your yard in a day.

Is this what you would want?

It is against the law to own a rooster in Gorham. A butler notification by certified letter along with a Zoning Board hearing and vote is required for a flock of chickens. "Fowl will not be a nuisance to any neighbors by means of odors or noise."

Why is the Ride the Wilds OHRV Trail not being held to this standard? We aren't the "Wilds." We are a community, on paper

at least, that cares about noise and quality of life.

The Jericho Mountain State Park Riding Area Master Trail Development Plan, 2006 states, "in order to preserve some sense of solitude for riders we have attempted to keep trails a minimum of 500 feet apart from one another."

There is no 500-foot zone of solitude between this trail and the homes it passes. In fact, the trail is within 45 feet of multiple homes, not to mention their yards, gardens, picnic tables and swing sets. The opening of the Ride the Wilds Trail has turned neighbor against neighbor.

Do Gorham and the state of New Hampshire really value the privilege of ATV riding over the rights of tax-paying residents? It's past time to restore this neighborhood. Build a proper OHRV trailhead and welcome center away from our homes.

*Abby Evankow lives in Gorham.*