

LETTER TO THE EDITOR
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ARE THE BENEFITS WORTH THE PRICE
OF ALLOWING ATVs ON PUBLIC ROADS?

To the editor:

After much agonizing, many local people, especially those who live in the countryside, are beginning to marshal their thoughts on the massive influx of ATVs and their use on public roads. The dilemma is how to welcome ATVers, but hang onto the qualities that make the North Country so appealing to all.

Why the agonizing? Because many of us have friends and family whose jobs and businesses depend on ATVs, or have family and friends whose peace and quiet and way of life have been utterly ruined by them.

Yes, in some ways the ATV story mirrors the evolution of snowmobiling 50 years ago. One big difference, however, is that many landowners who welcomed snowmobiles want no part of ATVs. The other difference, of course, is the ATVers' request to use public roads to link up trail systems.

Yes, voters raised their hands at town meetings three years ago to give ATVs a try. But that was on a strictly experimental basis. How long is this "experiment" supposed to last?

Like many other landowners on South Hill and throughout the region, we've kept our lands open for hunting, fishing, hiking, and all other

recreation on foot. And like many other landowners, we've worked with snowmobile clubs to find ways for trails to cross our property. In return, the snowmobile clubs speedily address problems, and stress respect for landowners, whose cooperation is essential for snowmobiling's very existence.

In recent months I've been urged to take a stand on ATVs. This kind of thing is suspiciously easy for bystanders to suggest. And I don't want to be unfair to friends and visitors who enjoy ATVs and riding the trails. But most of those I've talked with have concluded that the collective "we" must work together to get these machines off the roads and back onto the trails where they were designed to be (the off-road industry itself, by the way, heartily concurs).

If ATVers hope to be a viable part of northern New Hampshire's outdoor scene, they face hard work for a place at the table and on the land. In the meantime, we owe it to friends and neighbors

to help find new locations for trails, and redress the injustices our “experiment” has caused.

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