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ALBERTA SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Office of the Minister

AR7372

JAN 19 2005

Mr. Claude Giguere
543 Sheep River Close
Okotoks, AB T1S 1S4

Dear Mr. Giguere:

Thank you for your January 4, 2005 e-mail regarding off-highway vehicle use in the Eastern Slopes. I appreciate the opportunity to provide the following information.

Off-highway vehicle activity is a permitted use of Alberta's public land when practiced responsibly. In recent years, the popularity of many forms of recreation on public land, including off-highway vehicle use, has resulted in increased environmental impacts and conflicts among users. In 2003 Sustainable Resource Development initiated a provincial recreation management program to focus on this growing issue. The department is currently reviewing options to meet the diverse expectations for recreational land use and the challenges associated with the management of recreational activities.

The department manages recreational land use issues through a combination of regulation, enforcement and education in order to address user conflicts and balance use of the areas with protection of sensitive environments. Through the "Respect the Land" environmental stewardship education and awareness program, the department promotes responsible recreational use and encourages user groups and individuals to take responsibility for their actions. Information on this program was handed out at the 2004 and 2005 Calgary Motorcycle Shows, and directly to users through the May and September long weekends.

Access management plans, such as the Ghost-Waiparous, continue to be developed to balance conservation with recreational and economic opportunities. Through the access management planning process, the department strives for fair and consistent public involvement by listening to and documenting the range of interests. During the Ghost-Waiparous planning process, the department met with the stakeholder groups separately as the very strong and divergent opinions would not allow for a successful open forum.

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The Ghost-Waiparous planning process recognizes the differences between various types of off-highway vehicles and will continue to work on finding appropriate solutions. By assigning specific uses to certain areas and designated trails, access management plans contribute to the reduction of conflicts among recreational users and environmental impacts, improve public safety and ensure the long-term sustainability of the activity.

I appreciate being made aware of your concerns.



David C. Coutts
Minister

cc: Honourable Ralph Klein
Premier

George Groeneveld
MLA, Highwood Constituency