

January 4, 2005

The Honorable David Coutts,
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development,
Legislature Office # 420, 10800-97 Avenue,
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

Dear Mr. Coutts:

I am greatly concerned about the Ghost Area Management Plan and its impact on my family, my fellow dirt bikers, and myself because I am an avid recreation and competition oriented dirt biker. I use the Ghost / Waiparous area occasionally with my family and friends for riding, racing, camping, hiking and mountain biking. I am worried that this may end or be very restricted. I consider myself a responsible user of this area, making sure that I leave the area in the same or better condition than I found it. I generally do not wilderness camp, preferring established campgrounds to stay at if there is room but, I would not like to see wilderness camping banned. It upsets me when I ride around the area and see irresponsible people abusing the area with garbage dumped anywhere, smoldering fires left behind, and leaving wrecked vehicles out in the woods. I know that these activities will only hurt my chance to enjoy the forest. There always seems to be a handful of people who ruin it for the rest of us.

I don't believe that restricting the area we ride in will be a good alternative. This will cause a higher usage of the same trails causing more erosion and damage. Also to use fewer trails could cause a safety hazard when higher traffic volumes lead to accidents with other users. We are already restricted seasonally at Maclean Creek OHV Area and have lost many trails to clear cutting. This has put more users on the trails that are left and it shows. I am told that some trails in the Bighorn area are only open 2 months of the year! Other user groups have more options than I do for riding. Horseback riders, mountain bikers and hikers have way more areas to use than I do. When it comes to a conflict with other users generally it seems that we lose out and this is not fair. I understand areas along the Eastern slopes will also be affected by any recommendations; this concerns me as I also ride in the Porcupine Hills, Crowsnest, and Indian Graves areas. Many OHV groups use these areas and each one has different needs, this must be recognized. OHV enthusiasts inject a large amount of money into Alberta's economy to the tune of about a billion dollars a year supported by approx. 18,000 jobs, as a study by Alberta Economic Development found in 2002. I myself just bought a new camper trailer and truck last spring. I work part-time in a motorcycle shop and the impact of land closures or restrictions could be detrimental to the shop and the industry in general. I had the occasion this past fall to host some friends of mine from Manitoba. I've been telling them for years about how great it is to go riding here in the Rockies. Finally five of them came up here in September. After 3 days of riding in Maclean Creek OHV area, they were so impressed with the riding that they were planning their next trip to come back next year! They usually go down south to the USA once a year for some riding but they want to come here instead because it is better riding, closer and in Canada. I would feel pretty bad if I had to tell them that because of land closures it would make another trip to Alberta not as good as their last one. They even suggested to me that I should hire myself out as a guide to take other riders from out of province on our trails. I think there could be merit in their idea. Being involved in the motorcycle industry, this could make an excellent

extension of our business. There are many riders from all over the world that would love to come and ride here. A few years ago Malcom Smith, one of the most accomplished and respected riders in the world, came here for a week of riding and he stated, after riding, that it ranked as one of the top 3 places in the world to ride! What a great recommendation for Alberta! Other users of the areas do something similar, why can't we?

I understand that ASRD employees on quads have mapped out many trails in the Ghost-Waiparous and Maclean Creek areas. I understand that these trails will be the only trails that can be ridden on legally next year. This is not fair to dirt bikers, as most of the trail we ride on is single track that is not accessible for quads. I do not like to ride on quad or 4x4 trails because I think it is too dangerous! My experience with most quad and 4x4 riders is that they don't mix well with bikes and they usually are poorly equipped with safety gear (i.e.: helmets). If you need someone to map out the existing trails we ride on there is a group that I am a member of called the Rocky Mountain Dirt Riders Association (www.rockymountaindirtriders.com). We are a new group having just formed this past fall, but our aim is to promote safe, fun trail riding in the Calgary area in cooperation with ASRD and other user groups. We think that a stewardship program of trail maintenance and education of riders will make our riding experience enjoyable and lasting so our children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy what we do. Please contact me directly if we can help by mapping out existing motorcycle single track trails to be included in the plan.

Having been a dirt biker for over 30 years, I've had to live with a stigma attached to me by many people and governments. I am NOT a noisy, unruly, unlawful biker that harasses people. I am however a responsible citizen that pays his taxes, registers his bike, has the legal equipment on my bike and makes sure that is quiet and safe. I realize that dirt bikes do have an impact on the environment and I try to lessen it as best I can. Trail maintenance and improvements such as bridges over sensitive creeks are some things that we can do as users of these areas. I realize that something must be done to preserve the areas so all can enjoy Alberta's great outdoors.

Information about GAMP has seemed to be difficult to get and requests for input from government has not come my way. Why wasn't the public more informed about the process? I have received some info from club members but I think that anyone with a registered OHV should have received info with a chance to respond to the plan. What issues does the government have with us? Are there safety concerns?

I realize that you are new to this position and a response might be at later time, however I hope to hear from you on the issue in the near future.

Thank you,

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

cc: Honourable Ralph Klein
Premier
cc: Honourable George Groeneveld
MLA, Highwood Constituency