



## Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC

Accessing the backcountry one step at a time

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The Honourable Steve Thomson  
Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations  
PO BOX 9049, STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2  
FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

*Re: Proposed legislation for Registration and Licensing of Off-Road Vehicles (ORVs)*

Dear Mr. Thomson,

Our organization, the Federation of Mountain Clubs of BC (FMCBC) is a province-wide umbrella organization of 24 outdoor recreation clubs with approximately 3500 individual members. For four decades we have represented the interests of non-motorized or self-propelled backcountry recreationists by maintaining or improving backcountry and wilderness experiences for our members and the public.

The FMCBC strongly supports legislation that would require annual licensing of all ORVs including ATVs, dirt bikes, and snowmobiles, not merely the one-time registration of vehicles at the point of sale or resale as presently proposed in the ORV Management Guidelines. As the number of ORVs increases, so does their negative impact on both the environment and non-motorized users of the backcountry. Examples of unacceptable activities are ATV mud-bogging, ghost riding of snowmobiles, riding ORVs in non-motorized areas, and riding ORVs in environmentally sensitive or closed areas. Ghost riding occurs when the rider pushes a riderless snowmobile down a slope then skis or snowboards down to get it.

The legislation should require all vehicles to display large, clearly visible license plates or decals that would facilitate reporting unsafe, destructive, or illegal activities. The license plates or decals should be mounted on both sides of the vehicle front cowling, not on the vehicle rear where it can be covered by snow or mud and rendered unreadable. ORV operators frequently move quickly while wearing full helmets with visors, and while helmet use is to be commended, it is essentially impossible to identify the operators.

Because ORVs are heavy and can travel at high speed, the potential for accidents or environmental damage is high. To make the use of ORVs safer for all concerned and to ensure operator competency, a mandatory operator or driver licensing system testing driver competency and safety awareness also needs to be implemented. This would be another part of the solution and would be similar to the Federal Pleasure Craft Operator Card (for boating) or a normal automobile driver's License. In addition, we support mandatory liability insurance for all operators of ORVs on Crown land, not just on highways or Forest Service roads as indicated in the ORV Management Guidelines. In conjunction with mandatory annual licensing of vehicles and operator licensing, a system of enforcement and compliance must be in place or the regulations will be ignored. We feel that a properly implemented annual licensing system would provide a revenue stream that

could assist in funding to help in proper enforcement of these regulations, and perhaps establish a safety education program.

While the proposed legislation as it presently stands does not meet all our wishes as outlined above, we are concerned with continuing delays and worry that the legislation may not be adopted and implemented by the extended November 2012 deadline. We have followed the strenuous efforts of the Outdoor Recreation Council and the various committees in relation to this important legislation that would help to make the backcountry much safer and enjoyable for all British Columbians. This legislation would help to align our province with most jurisdictions in North America where ORV legislation already exists. We feel it is very unsatisfactory that the decade-long work on these measures, much of it done by volunteers, is at risk of being lost due to procedural delays which undoubtedly will result in more environmental damage (as well as needless deaths) in the backcountry.

Our organization urges you to move these proposals quickly to adoption.

Yours sincerely,

Scott Webster  
President