
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

ORV legislation will keep B.C.'s backcountry safe

VICTORIA – Bill 13, the Off Road Vehicle Act introduced today, promises certainty, safety and regulatory structure for thousands of off-road enthusiasts.

The proposed Off Road Vehicle – or ORV – Act replaces the 40-year-old Motor Vehicle (All Terrain) Act with a modern management structure, designed to align with existing regulatory regimes at minimal cost.

Increased use of quads, snowmobiles and other ORVs has helped British Columbians get out and enjoy the beauty of the province's backcountry. Bill 13 will help ensure these vehicles are driven in a safe and environmentally responsible manner.

The act, if passed and brought into force, will:

- Establish a one-time registration system specifically designed to integrate with the pre-existing structure of the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia's vehicle registry, reducing implementation costs. ORVs will have to be registered and display a clearly visible number plate before they can be operated on Crown or other public land.
- Allow the development of regulations on the rules of operation (such as wearing helmets), safety standards and conditions of use for a wide range of modern ORVs, including snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles or "quads", dirt bikes and utility terrain vehicles.
- Assist in identifying stolen or abandoned ORVs, by requiring ORVs to be registered in a database that is accessible to peace officers at all times.
- Provide officers with more effective enforcement tools to target the small number of irresponsible ORV owners that endanger others or damage sensitive habitat. This includes the ability to stop and inspect ORVs for violations, seize an ORV for safety or evidence purposes, and increase the maximum fine for offences from \$500 to \$5,000.

Included in the proposed ORV legislation is an amendment to the Special Accounts Appropriation and Control Act establishing the ORV Trail Management Sub-account. This will ease the process of providing future investments directly into developing and maintaining trails, delivering lasting benefits to the ORV tourism industry in rural communities.

The proposed ORV Act is the result of extensive consultation, and represents a fair compromise for all user groups. Implementation, including registration provisions, is anticipated in the fall of 2014.

Quotes:

Steve Thomson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations –

“Whether hunting, fishing, getting back to nature or just getting to work, many outdoor enthusiasts rely on off-road vehicles to augment their rural experience. The Off-Road Vehicle Act will secure the future of off-road vehicle use in a way that is self-sustaining, safe and environmentally responsible.”

Rhona Martin, president, Union of B.C. Municipalities –

“The framework set out in this legislation responds to a number of issues raised by local governments. Together, these new measures will increase safety, enhance community connectivity through trail networks, and safeguard the beauty and integrity of B.C.’s wilderness. The extensive consultation undertaken by the province on this issue has resulted in legislation that balances the interests of many different groups.”

Jeremy McCall, executive director, Outdoor Recreation Council of British Columbia –

“The announcement of the ORV legislation is a tremendous tribute to the dedicated members of non-government organizations who formed the Coalition for Licensing and Registration of Off Road Vehicles in 2002. The coalition published its 47 recommendations in 2006. Many of those individuals continue to assist the ministry with the feedback it needs to prepare this legislation. Among other benefits, this legislation will offer security of ownership and improved safety standards for the riders of ORVs and it will provide for higher standards of compliance and enforcement which will benefit non-motorized recreationists.”

Scott Benton, executive director, Grasslands Conservation Council of BC –

“The requirement for registration is the cornerstone for future management and enforcement of ORV activities and theft prevention. This legislation provides a solid platform to develop comprehensive regulations that will address safety, operator conduct and environmental protection in the future. The Grasslands Conservation Council of BC looks forward to working with the Province and others in developing the accompanying regulations. The Grassland Conservation Council of BC has been working with a coalition of 10 other interests towards improving the management of off road vehicles for over 10 years.”

Bob Ramsay, president, Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council –

“We are pleased that the Province of B.C. has taken this important measure to promote the safe and responsible use of Off Road Vehicles. The proposed ORV Act is designed to recognize existing vehicles while flexible enough to ensure new models can be accounted for as new designs become available.”

Quick Facts:

- The proposed ORV Act implements recommendations from the Off Road Vehicle Management Framework released in 2009, including one-time vehicle registration, operator safety rules and environmental protection measures.
- An estimated 200,000 ORVs are used in the province.
- Snowmobiles have been registered in British Columbia since the 1970s.
- British Columbia is currently one of the last provinces in Canada that does not require registration of off-road vehicles.
- ORVs are used in a variety of sectors in British Columbia, including farming, ranching, forestry, oil and gas, mining, sport, tourism, transportation and search and rescue.

Learn More:

To view a copy of the bill and view its progress through debate, visit:

<http://www.leg.bc.ca/40th2nd/4-4-40-2.htm>

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