



Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council
Conseil Canadien des Distributeurs de Véhicules Hors Route

INDUSTRY WATCH

Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council (COHV)

By Jo-Anne Farquhar

Once again, Jamie Burr, and his team at York University's Physical Activity and Chronic Disease Unit, Faculty of Health, has confirmed, through the Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Health Benefit study, what ORV riders have been saying for years! That off-road riding is not only physically demanding but enriches their quality of life!

In the health benefit study's second publication entitled "Health-related Quality of Life of Habitual Recreational Off-Road Vehicle Riders" (Health & Fitness Journal of Canada, June 2010) it was determined through scientific data, that overall, habitual off-road riders had "higher levels of physical functioning than Canadian population norms" and that it was possible that the higher levels of vitality, general happiness and quality of life of recreational off-road vehicle riders is a consequence of participation in the sport.

It's a well-known fact that participation in traditional forms of physical activities (i.e.: jogging, swimming, resistance training) has the ability to increase health-related quality of life. Now, through the data derived from this in-depth study, ORV riding can be added to the list of activities that can contribute to a person's health-related quality of life. These published conclusions support York University's earlier findings that off-road vehicle riding is considered similar in aerobic demand to many other recreational, self-paced, sporting activities such as golf, rock climbing and alpine skiing.

We all recognize and agree that exercise and stress relief are key to our general health. We also know that not everyone likes going to a gym, running or an indoor environment of physical fitness. There are so many people who get their energy from the outdoors and we need to recognize that what one person enjoys should not be discounted because it doesn't fit into another person's definition of physical activity.

This certainly applies to recreational ATV and off-road motorcycle riding. The reality is, non-traditional forms of physical activity such as ORV riding are becoming more popular and those living in rural and northern Canada are choosing ORV riding as an alternate choice because traditional forms of physical activity might be impractical, unavailable or just plain unappealing.

The social aspect to ORV riding is the other part of the equation. Most recreational ORV riders join local clubs and become involved in community activities, club activities, charity events and ORV safety education programs. These same people also become involved in trail development and refurbishment because they recognize that well maintained recreational trails are vital to the safe enjoyment of outdoor activities.

As trail use popularity increases so does the demand for trails that can accommodate the many different uses. Collaboration rather than exclusionary practices is where the future of trail development is headed.

The National Trails Coalition (NTC) made up of motorized and non-motorized trail groups recognized the importance of bringing the broad spectrum of trail-users together and were successful in implementing a cooperative model for nation-wide trail development.

The NTC model to strategically plan trail projects in a coordinated manner was used when allocating the Federal Government's EAP/NTC funding support of 25 million dollar for trail development. The final results translated into over 474 recreational trail projects that were completed across Canada in the allocated one year timeframe.

Further proof that the NTC model for trail development is a success shows in the numbers. The federal government initial \$25 million investment in these projects amounted to a \$58 million investment in trails and this unprecedented level of investment built, upgraded or rehabilitated 20,128 km of trails including 766 bridges.

Not bad for a year's work! The NTC and trails communities across Canada are committed to building on this collaborative model. As Canadians who value trails for supporting economic growth and encouraging active living, the NTC through its membership look forward to developing a common long-term vision that will allow Canada's trail systems to become a key international tourism attraction.

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