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Somerville Forest
Shared Trails Proposal for the XC Ski Trails

The XC Ski trail system located within the Somerville Forest is no longer maintained by the MNR. The geography and topography provide for a somewhat isolated trail system within the Somerville Forest Track. Staging facilities exist and are maintained, on a limited basis, by the City of Kawartha Lakes.

The trails offered are no longer packed or track set for skiing and there is limited maintenance of the trails in the off season. We see an opportunity for a shared use arrangement between the Haliburton Trail Riders (HTR) and the XC Skiing (XCS) enthusiasts.

HTR and the OFTR are Ontario Incorporated Non-Profit organizations with the appropriate insurance for trails. We have a 'Code of Conduct', stewardship policies and trails engineering guidelines and trail building expertise. The OFTR volunteer workforce logged over 8,000 hours last year.

The HTR would like to establish the XC trails area in Somerville Forests as a "Supervised Family Riding Area" (SFRA) for small ATVs and Off Road Motorcycles. There would be guidelines that include limited speeds and mandatory adult supervision which is also a legal requirement under the Off Road Vehicles Act.

The area would not be used for regular pleasure riding by adult members. Adults would be allowed and required to accompany their children but not ride alone. The OFTR has a large amount of family based memberships. The number of children in our roster has doubled twice in the past two years and a lot of the mothers ride small slow-speed motorcycles and ATVs with their kids.

Our experience has been that children and beginner riders prefer a closed loop system of shorter trails. The OHV trail systems in the area really only allow for long treks with difficult trails. There is often a non-riding parent that would like to picnic and enjoy the outdoors while seeing their family enjoy OHV'ing.

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Our vision for this area is to maintain the trails at the current width and install/repair the facilities at the staging area. HTR would patrol this area for misuse and advise enforcement of any concerns. Part of the arrangement would include a fall inspection of the trails to ensure they are ready for the upcoming XC season. We may also have an HTR member available to run a snowmobile through the system from time to time to pack the trails in the winter, if desired, and deal with any winter tree problems. A lot of our members also ride snowmobiles.

We think this can be a win/win arrangement and illustrate that shared use can be sharing at different times and re-establish these trails as a viable XC ski area.

OHV tourism is proving to have a strong economic impact and we feel the availability of an SRFA would provide positive results for the local businesses, especially in the shoulder seasons; fall OHV riding is most popular.

If you agree with this proposal, I think the next step might be a memorandum of understanding that we could sign and then present to the Somerville Forest Advisory Committee.

Feel free to give me a call to discuss this idea.

Yours Truly,

Ken Hoeverman
Executive Director