



North Country ATV Association, Inc.



December 2, 2006

We have concerns with VAST's Management plan for the LVRT. One of our concerns is with section 20.0- Law Enforcement. Specifically where it states, "Discussions will be taken to the General Assembly to look at revenue sources for law enforcement." In an earlier draft of the management plan, VAST Executive Director Bryant Watson wanted to raise the price of ATV registrations to help pay for law enforcement on the LVRT even though ATV's are not allowed. That wording has been removed in this latest draft but we fear the idea may still be there.

Had all parties working to plan the LVRT been more inviting to the ATV community, we might feel differently about Mr. Watson's idea. There was no one outside the ATV community that put forth one ounce of effort to help out with what little the ATV riders were asking for. It does not seem that gaining legal access to cross the LVRT was given much thought by anyone except the ATV organizations. Having to jump through hoops and deal with the public process for crossings that have existed for years is certainly going to open up a can of worms. We have all seen what a heated debate ATV activity in our state can be.

The LVRT has become a 96-mile long wall dividing the State into two sections. It seems that everyone including VAST have taken the high road on ATV usage so we feel that trying to tie ATV dollars into law enforcement for the LVRT is wrong. There is not enough law enforcement to cover the entire length of the LVRT constantly and unfortunately ATV riders will continue to cross it. We came to the table trying to establish a workable solution for legal ATV crossings but no one much cared. We're going to bet more people will care when illegal ATV activity on the LVRT continues and the clubs will be able to do little or nothing to help stop it.

In a time where we are trying to increase the number of ATV registrations in Vermont, we feel using any funding related to ATVs would help steer people from wanting to register their ATVs. We would like to know what discussions are being planned to take to the General Assembly and if funds from anything ATV related are a part of those discussions.

How about funding for the balance of the \$1.2 million? So how is VAST going to get this money? Many organizations do not pay to access these types of trails currently. If the ATV community had been involved and seen as a positive solution there may have been ways to help VAST come up with additional funding and volunteers to maintain and patrol this trail. We have an established volunteer Trail Patrol program to help educate and inform illegal riders or trespassers to the rules of this trail that could have been used during the non-snowmobile season to offset law enforcement time and cost. The North Country ATV Association with members and trails in Franklin County performed over 1,000 hours of trail patrol this year without a single incident. ATV's are seen as trouble all of the time, which is not fair to the majority of us who follow the rules.

Another issue stems from what Mr. Watson said at the beginning of the Management Plan meeting. He mentioned there were still a lot of loose ends. In a plan like this on a project of this size, with the amount of time VAST has had to work things out, there should not be loose ends. We heard many people voicing opinions about the use of herbicides. We also heard a lot about the hours of operation for the snowmobiles and the proximity of the trail to residences.

We feel that the next version of the draft should be up for review before being signed. It is understandable that all parties are not going to agree on every aspect of the plan, but the final draft should be reviewed with all interested just to see what the final changes/wording will be. Not to rush into it just to have a two year wait for the next review period, as Mr. Watson led to. Is it possible to have the first review period after year one then at year two with two-year increments thereafter? We feel a lot will change in the first year once this process gets rolling.

It's unfortunate that VAST doesn't have to claw and scratch for every foot of trail like they had to 30+ years ago. This has been handed to them on a silver platter and they don't care whose feet they step on to get "their" trail. There needs to be a lot more thought put into issues on the LVRT or there will certainly be a lot more complaints and headaches.

North Country ATV Association, Inc. Board of Director's

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