

HIKE ONTARIO POSITION ON NEW MOTORIZED TRAILS ON CROWN LAND

BACKGROUND

Hike Ontario is a non-profit organization that represents the interests of walkers and hikers in Ontario. Walking and hiking are the most popular outdoor activities in the province and are an important tourist activity.

The Ministry of Natural Resources, according to its 2000-01 business plan, pursues a mission of managing our natural resources in an ecologically sustainable way by safeguarding nature's capacity to renew itself ... for the enjoyment and use of future generations. The use of trails on Crown land is one aspect of the enjoyment and the building and management of trails is controlled by licenses granted through the district offices of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Owners of snowmobiles, ATVs and other motorized recreational vehicles are legitimate trail users and need trails for their recreational activity. However, trails for motorized recreational vehicles cause problems for walkers and hikers for several reasons:

1. Their use creates noise. For many hikers and walkers it is the peace of the outdoors which provides their enjoyment.
2. The man-made structures, the trail-bed and the bridge, alter and mar the natural beauty through which they pass. Trails may be up to 30 feet wide and may develop multiple strands.
3. The trails destroy the area of vegetation where they are built and open up part of the forest canopy, changing the habitat.
4. The machines cause chemical pollution with nitrogen, sulfate, hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide from the burning and spilling of gas and oil.
5. Motorized trails are often associated with significant amounts of carry-in garbage.
6. Hikers and walkers may be at risk of accident if motorized trails cross footpaths.

Most of these problems have an impact not only on hikers and walkers but on other quiet recreationists and on sustainable use of the environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore Hike Ontario has adopted the following policies:

1. **New trails for motorized use should not be approved in provincial parks or conservation reserves.**
2. **On other Crown land, any trail plan for a new motorized trail should be submitted to full consultation with local and provincial representatives of quiet recreationists and environmental organizations and their concerns should be addressed.**
3. **Any new motorized trails should be located with care, avoiding areas with significant quiet recreational use, areas of environmental sensitivity and areas where the construction of a motorized trail would degrade the natural beauty.**
4. **Every effort should be made to mitigate the inevitable adverse effects of the building and use of trails for motorized recreational vehicles.**

Hike Ontario requests that these policies be adopted by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Approved by the Board of Hike Ontario on Feb 10th 2001.

For more information contact:

Hike Ontario
Phone: 1-800-894-7249 or (905) 833-1787
Email: info@hikeontario.com

