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Don Inverarity, MLA
P.O. Box 2703
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January 11, 2010

Dear Sir,

The Laberge Renewable Resources Council (LRRC) has been made aware of the fact that a working Committee of the legislature is planning a series of meetings regarding ATV safety and practices, and that you will be the chair of this committee.

We want to congratulate the legislature to finally address a concern that has been a contentious issue for many years and dealing with it is long overdue.

While no doubt, safety and registration are topics that need to be addressed as they are in many other Canadian and American jurisdictions, our LRRC is more concerned about the impacts these vehicles have on wildlife, their habitats, sensitive eco-systems such as alpine areas and wetlands and on other hinterland users, who like to experience our pristine wilderness in its natural condition, unaffected by man- and who hope that our children and their children will still have that opportunity as well.

The maintenance of our wilderness is also important for many of our businesses such as wilderness tourism and outfitting, for recreational activities such as hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing, and for traditional pursuits such as trapping and subsistence wildlife use.

Our LRRC has some experience with trying to reduce ATV impacts, when we made a proposal two years ago to government to restrict the use of ATVs on Pilot Mountain, for hunting purposes at alpine elevations. However, the Government rejected our proposal. Pilot Mountain is located just north of Whitehorse, and it has a population of about 170 Dall's sheep. These sheep are very popular to local hunters because their range is so close to town. Since ATVs first came into use in the Yukon in the mid 80's, the number of trails developed onto the Pilot Mountain area had risen from two to seven, the hunting pressure of the sheep has greatly increased and has resulted in over-harvest.


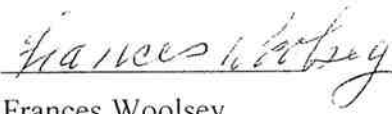
A study done by government during the 2008 hunting season, when automatic cameras were installed along two of the access trails onto the mountain, documented some 200 people using close to 100 all-terrain vehicles ascended the mountain during the hunting season. With such a traffic volume, disturbance of sheep and other wildlife, impacts on the terrain, as well as interference of traditional hunters, who like to hunt on foot or with horses, can not be avoided. As part of the Pilot Mountain investigation, our LRRC interviewed more than fifty local residents during a workshop or through door-to-door interviews. For the great majority of them, uncontrolled use of ATV was the most serious concern in the alpine area.

Negative public reaction to the uncontrolled use of these vehicles is not new. They were first pointed out by D. Loeks in assessments done for The Yukon Government and the Fish and Wildlife Management Board more than ten years ago. Already in 1997, the Yukon Government interviewed over a hundred sheep hunters to assess their attitude towards these machines. 26% of them wanted an outright ban of ORV's, while another 39% did not want them in alpine areas or only if they were restricted to designated trails. Last year, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board conducted a large inquiry, which they termed the 20:20 Vision analysis. It was an attempt to determine the attitude of the Yukon public toward wildlife and its management and what the public would like to see in place by the year 2020. One of the questions raised was the use of ATVs. Of 163 Yukoners who answered that question of the Board's questionnaire, 88% wanted controlled access routes for ATVs and/or elevation restrictions.

It is our opinion, that the majority of Yukon residents feel that enough damage has been done by the unregulated use of these machines, and that the government should finally follow the lead of other jurisdictions and take the necessary steps to regulate their use, which would entail registration, education of ATV owners, imposing of safety standards, and restricting their use in sensitive areas such as the alpine or wetlands by developing a designated trails network.

We wish your committee a successful public consultation exercise and we hope in the interest of all Yukoners and their children, that your endeavour will result in steps being taken to preserve Yukon's wilderness in its pristine condition.

Sincerely

 and 
Dorothy Bradley Frances Woolsey
Co-chair Co-chair