

Hello, Members of the Joint Committee on IF&W. I am writing in FULL support of an increase to the allowed weight and the proposals before you this session. I think that the northern part of the state as you know has the infrastructure to handle the increase and I hope you choose one.

The ATV market has drastically changed since 2019. The Government is actually largely responsible for that. Covid recommendations suggested that people get outdoors and isolate at the same time. That sounded like a hard thing to do until you consider the ways families could spend time in a 4-6 person ATV/ UTV. Now you were isolating together, Outside. Perfect! The UTV manufacturer's listened and since the Task Force, now even MORE companies have entered their hat into the larger UTV market, such as Kawasaki, Arctic Cat, John Deere, Kubota, Mahindra, Honda, CF Moto, joining major competitors, Yamaha, CanAm (BRP) and Polaris.

I have 2 properties in Maine, both properties in Aroostook County near trails. There certainly are "2 Maines". Anything north of Bangor is unlike anything south of it. For the State to implement a blanket restriction on weight was a drastic change in which the riding community had Very Little say on the final amount. The task force was made up of landowners / State officials over 2-1. The people who buy, ride and support the economy of this industry were shadowed from the start. The person supposedly representing Maine Dealers from what I understand, was just an employee at Fort Kent Motorsports. Not the owner. I am sure any business owner would have had a more personal interest. Especially with introduction of all electric models now out. Since the law's passage in 2022, there have been 3 attempts including this one to overturn or expand it. That obviously means something is Wrong. It has been not only a REStriCTION to the northern part of the state, but a CONStriction to the economy, dealers and registrants, both In-State and OUT OF STATE. Remember, out of state fees are double that of in-state ones.

Information that I have recently heard from a UTV owner who had their registration Revoked was that there are roughly 7,000 "overweight" registrations which have been allowed since the law was enacted. That is 10% of the registrations! I know that the State allowed them to be registered initially and there have been 65 revoked, (even though the Warden at the last hearing said they were holding off on that until this law was discussed). A 2000lb 4-seater with full occupancy of average 200 pound persons and their gear would be about 2800 pounds or more if it was a 6 passenger, yet a newer, more efficient, more expensive 2 seat machine is not allowed. Some of these "legal" vehicles look like the Beverly Hillbillies driving down the trail all overloaded with 6 passengers and tents, gear, a deer topping out at over 3000 pounds and it is discrimination to the other products that are out there which weigh less, but are not considered "legal" in the eyes of the State of Maine. It's crazy that this is how it's being handled. This law might be good in essence, but it is missing the point. The letter of the law is not functioning also as the spirit of the law. There needs to be a weight CAP, not use it as a starting point.

Almost all of my riding is done on railbeds. State owned. I seldom ride on private land. If I do, I am respectful, stay on the trail and generally go slowly and enjoy the beauty that surrounds me. I'm not out ripping up people's flowerbeds. This myth that larger machines are doing the damage is actually false. Larger machines have better weight displacement, more power to get through things without spinning tires and the newer they are, the more efficient they are. I really don't want to be restricted to stale 25 year old clunky technology, when there are far better options out there. Isn't that one of My rights as well? To be able to purchase something that is better than what I previously had if it's within reason? You can't legislate bad behavior by a weight limit on what people can purchase. Laws don't stop people from being jackwagons. Enforcement of them does. If the laws are reasonable, generally the people will be as well. If they are not put into place properly from the start, then that falls on the State. Now it needs to be fixed for good. This is seemingly the perfect time to do that. Here's the chance.

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Ultimately, all I would like to be able to do is enjoy an afternoon on the trails and go for a picnic with my family or something. Sounds pretty normal to me. Enclosed cabs extend the season.

If there is to be a fair metric of weight, it should be with scales. They make 4 wheel scales for race cars and also vehicles like this and they are collapsible into the size of a small suitcase. They are battery and bluetooth operable and could be the answer to "overweight", not "over-registered" vehicles. They cost about \$700 a set and would last IF&W years after the one time fee which is about the cost of 7 out of state registrations. Issue them to where the problem is.

The State roll out of how to deal with the law was never going to work and the results of that failure are clear based on the above numbers. NO machine, in or out of state which was allowed to be registered, should be revoked, or not allowed a renewal. I have had conversations with about a dozen dealers all over New England and the consensus of ALL of them regarding Maine were, if you can get it registered, then you're "all set". I KNOW that this was also told to many other people as well who then went on to purchase these units. Look at dealer's websites to this day, there are "overweight" machines being advertised, photographed with their new buyers and all over club and personal pages with these machines "in the environment". The worms are way out of the can and it is only fair to implement a policy that works and is fair to all. If there needs to be another "grandfathering" & new deadline, that should include non-residents as well and be a reasonable window to allow folks to get straightened out.

If that is not deemed feasible, than the only other "fair" way if manufacturer's weight is the number used would be to increase it to 2500 or 3500 pounds OR allow the state to be divided into "zones". Perhaps the congressional district line could be the dividing line. Northern areas would get a yellow sticker, restricting them only to certain areas where weight is not an issue and the remaining registrants would receive a green sticker and be allowed everywhere. Another idea is to allow it in only Aroostook, Penobscot and Washington counties to start.

If Total weight or sticker system is not something people are willing to consider, then keeping it the way it is just prolongs the issue and it will be back before the committee before the end of the session or the beginning of next year. There has been enough time since the Task Force to see that this system is definitely not working for anyone. Any Dealer will tell you the same and it is not only hurting Maine's economy / tourism, but the revenues from sales as well. Imagine how many there would be out there if the weight number was higher and allowed as, "legal".

It is also not mentioned enough that Landowners ALWAYS reserve the right to restrict what is allowed on their land at any time. So, this should be an individual club issue working with that party and the wardens, not one generally regulated by the State. It's like grounding everyone.

-Vermont has a weight limit of 2500 pounds (Maine is over 3 ½ times bigger than Vermont)
Maine ATV's cannot be used in VT between this range because they cannot be registered. VT uses the state of issuance registration like a motor vehicle and that is a 500 pound difference.

-Aroostook County is the size of CT and RI combined

-Maine is almost equivalent to the size of all 5 other New England States combined!

-New Brunswick has NO restrictions, only asks that the machine be insured.

-People, especially in Maine don't like change. This Law WAS the change altering it to make it better or more fair and inclusive is not a change, as much as it is a correction.

-It is over 400 miles to drive from Kittery to Estcourt, imagine the variation of trails in between.

Thank you for your time, efforts, dedication, understanding and consideration for this matter.