



Mike Tipping
Senator, District 8

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and honorable members of the Committee On Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, my name is Mike Tipping and I represent Senate District 8 in Penobscot County.

I've heard from a number of constituents who have serious concerns about LD 276 and other legislation being considered on ATV weight and width limits. In particular, members of the Coldstream Cruzers, a community organization that maintains a large trail network in my area, reached out and wanted to make sure that the committee received their testimony.

I've attached some of their comments in full in my written remarks, which should be in your folders. I won't read them all out, but I wanted to highlight a few items in particular.

The overall concern with this legislation seems to be that, even with the ATV width limits proposed in this bill, allowing the registration of larger vehicles at all will lead to them using the trails, and neither the trail clubs nor the warden service are currently equipped to enforce any trail size rules.

Vanessa Libby of Lincoln writes, "Let's remember that while we are welcoming of everyone to this sport, voting this in would essentially strip this enjoyment away from the blue collar guys and folks with fixed incomes who want to enjoy the trails too. This is far more going to negatively affect folks who are currently in regulation than ones who aren't."

"We would need to widen and add supplementary gravel and other substrate to all trails, ending in a costly nonsensical work effort that will have to be done repeatedly over seasons of weather tear. Trees will suffer, natural landscape of flowing water will suffer, and the sheer weight of vehicles on the trails will corrupt the ability for four-wheelers and side-by-sides to travel as intended on these trails," said Brandy Chenette.

"With the increase in weight limit, I believe clubs and landowners will be forced to close crucial miles of trails simply because it wouldn't be feasible to put in the man hours and steep costs to bring them up to par to support bigger, heavier machines," said Echo Grant.

"Honestly, if this bill passes then they should allow us to drive on the main roads because that's what we would have to do with the trails – build main roads instead of trails," said Scott Chenette.

I hope this committee takes concerns like these into account as it considers this legislation and consults thoroughly with the club members who spend so much time and effort maintaining trails for all to enjoy.

I appreciate your time and consideration.

The problem I have with the bill is if we raise the weight limit and the width limit, that means a lot of trails are going to be shut down for at least a year or two to reinforce bridges. A lot of them have to be torn down and built with steel I-beams to hold them.

A lot of landowners will not accept it and we will only get so much money to do stuff with. We won't have enough money to do any of the stuff they want us to. We'd have to build roads instead of trails. We'd have to redo every single trail except for the railroad beds and, honestly, if this bill passes then they should allow us to drive on the main roads because that's what we would have to do with the trails – build main roads instead of trails.

Scott Chenette, Lincoln
Vice President, Coldstream Cruzers

I am opposed to LD 276. Raising the weight limit on ATVs will be detrimental to the sport we all love. Countless man hours go into maintaining the beautiful trail systems we currently have and landowners graciously allow us to use. With the increase in weight limit, I believe clubs and landowners will be forced to close crucial miles of trails simply because it wouldn't be feasible to put in the man hours and steep costs to bring them up to par to support bigger heavier machines. My understanding is that a very high percentage of our trail system are private landowners, if these trails get shut down because of people not wanting to let bigger machines on them due to the extensive damage that will inevitably happen, then what will be left? People will stop buying machines, the tourism industry will suffer and we would very well lose out on being able to engage in the sport we all love.

I've met so many amazing people in the ATVing community, people that just want to make the world a better place, spread love and kindness and make everyone feel like they belong. I know it's changed my life, and I hope we can still be around for many years to come, but I just don't see it if LD 276 passes.

Echo Grant, Lincoln
Member of Coldstream Cruzers

I do not agree with allowing vehicles on trails, and I have reasons why. Trails in Maine are made for ATVs and snowmobiles. They are maintained and made by ATV club members. They are for fun, and outdoor sporting, not for registered vehicles that drive on roads. If we allow vehicles on trails, they will have to be made much larger, and we lose the aesthetic of nature trails. It will no longer be all terrain accessible, and will be pointless in keeping Maines trails open.

The work that will need to be put into these trails to be accessible for vehicles will be done by who? Not by the people who are maintaining them currently. No one will want to, or have the simple know how to complete this execution. We would need to widen and add supplementary gravel and other substrate to all trails, ending in a costly, nonsensical work effort that will have to be done repeatedly over seasons of weather tear. Trees will suffer, natural landscape of



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flowing water will suffer, and the sheer weight of vehicles on the trails will corrupt the ability for four-wheelers and side-by-sides to travel as intended on these trails.

The amount of money for rebuilding bridges and making them suitable for such large vehicles will have to be applied from somewhere, and not from ATV clubs. We don't have the money for the bridgework alone. Nor the material. Grants won't be enough, as we can barely do necessary work with the grant money given as is. Trails flow through not only public property but also private. Landowners have already had the ability to say no to ATVs on their land, what makes us think that we can obtain permission for roads suitable for vehicles to belong there? Wont we have to also obtain permission from them? Or does that go into the unimportant category being that the state wants what the state wants now?

The time it would take to make this happen would be so large and consuming to ATV seasons that we wouldn't be given the next 2 plus years of riding due to "trail maintenance" for any registered vehicles. Children who pass the safety courses will be put at risk to road vehicles on the trails now??? What about the minor generation who enjoy learning and having fun with families? If they cannot legally drive on the road than why would we put cars or trucks on trails? How would that even work? You are enjoying time on the trail on your 4 wheeler and then a ford truck comes around the corner? ATVs and four-wheelers already have to maneuver themselves safely when meeting one another in tight spaces on trails. You cannot be serious to say we could come across a car or truck on a trail. It's not safe; it isn't cost effective, it's not Maine.

Brandy Chenette, Lincoln
Club Secretary, Coldstream Cruzers

To not have an upper width limit on registration feels like a reckless decision. Yes, there's not many machines out there that fall into that larger size right now, it doesn't mean there won't be more in the future. Not only would we have to shift funding to build stronger infrastructure and find all of the volunteers to get that done, the clubs would be tasked with trying to get their landowners to support this, with many already saying that they won't.

Let's remember that while we are welcoming of everyone to this sport, voting this in would essentially strip this enjoyment away from the blue collar guys and folks with fixed incomes who want to enjoy the trails too. This is far more going to negatively affect folks who are currently in regulation than ones who aren't. Let's do what's best for the collective who than the minority. Let's listen to the people who are on the board and volunteer for these organizations that might have some insight.

The Maine Woodland owners already published the letter saying if a similar law passes, they are shutting down their trails, which will affect 600 miles. How many more landowners will follow

suit? Let's make this sport assessable to many, instead of taking it away from just about everybody.

Vanessa Libby, Lincoln
Board Chair, Coldstream Cruzers