

Testimony in Opposition to LD 276  
“An Act to Modernize ATV Classification, Registration, Trail Access and Landowner Protections”  
2/25/2026

Distinguished members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee, my name is Peter Triandafillou, and I am a resident of Orono. I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 276.

For generations, landowners large and small in Maine have made their lands open to the public. This permission for recreational use of private lands is based on trust, and an understanding that landowners have the right to manage how the public accesses land. Landowners receive no compensation for most use, and bear the financial burden of repairing ATV-caused environmental damage to stream beds, roads and bridges, and trails.

Unlike snowmobiles that by and large stay on groomed trails, ATVs have often roamed freely across the landscape. Because their use is during the summer months, they have the ability to run off trail and have on many occasions damaged winter roads, cause erosion in streams, and damaged water crossing infrastructure. The cost to repair this damage and the potential for water quality violations is entirely the landowner’s responsibility.

Progress has been made. ATV clubs have begun to operate like snowmobile clubs, and they help with trail maintenance and signage. As has always been the case, Maine landowners have done their best to accommodate the recreating public, and we are thankful for the working relationship with ATV clubs.

However, in recent years, manufacturers have been making their ATVs larger and larger. Instead of single rider machines that are small and lightweight, we now have “side by side” machines that are huge – nearly the size of some small automobiles. Their potential for damaging the landscape is much greater than single rider machines.

LD 1308 created a working group to study ATV use and the issue of oversized machines. The report was issued less than a month ago, and it has numerous good recommendations that are not incorporated in LD 276. The report found that landowners do not want oversized ATVs on their land. Increasing the legal size of these machines, whether by weight or unusual measurements will cause some landowners to restrict access. The report estimates increasing the size of ATVs will cause the loss of hundreds of miles of trail access. I think that is a conservative estimate.

Rejecting LD 276 is essential to maintaining a working relationship with landowners and keeping trails open. Bear in mind that most of the ATV trail network is on private land. Access to these lands is a privilege. Ignoring the legitimate concerns of landowners over ATV-caused environmental damage will result in trail closures, and some of the public may find that they have nowhere to use their machines. I urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 276.