

# READER'S CORNER: ATVers unfairly vilified

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The Nova Scotia government recently announced it is reopening Bowater lands to public use. Our letter writer wants to dispel some misconceptions about the announcement. (ERIC WYNNE / Staff)

Once again, my blood boils when I see misinformation being spread about the government reopening (to the public) the lands it recently bought from Bowater. First, let's remember this applies to all Nova Scotians. This should be cause for widespread celebration. Sadly, we have more negativity instead. Because this announcement was made at an ATV club, it has quickly and incorrectly become an ATV issue. Here are a few things worth mentioning:

- These roads have been in place for decades. They were used by the public until about 10 years ago and have been used since by OHV groups that obtained permits. This access is to travel established roads. This is not about opening new trails in protected, high-risk areas. So what is the potential harm in having them open to the public?
- Since the last attack on the ATV community, many changes have been made. Riders are trained and machines are licensed and insured. (That includes dirt bikes.)
- Laws are enforced. I've been stopped on several occasions in the last year by DNR.
- As a Nova Scotia trail warden, I can tell you that the ATV and off-road motorcycle communities are comprised of law-abiding, conservation-minded, charitable, taxpaying individuals, many of whom are seniors.
- An entire segment of our population has been vilified and made to feel like criminals as a result of the false information that has been published about the off-highway community over the last 10 years in Nova Scotia.

Please, before you take a stand on this issue, consider all the facts and then the human side of this story. If I may speak for the ATV and OHV community, we are also the folks who teach your kids, coach them, help care for your parents, donate to charities and shake your hand each week at church. Simply put, we are people like you. We may not agree on how we like to travel in the woods, but we all enjoy being there.

**Rob Poirier, Dartmouth**