

**COPY**

November 11, 2019

Mr. Michael York  
State Librarian  
20 Park Street  
Concord, New Hampshire 03301-6314

Dear Mr. York

Pursuant to RSA 215-A:3 IX and RSA 215-C:2 X, enclosed is the annual report that the Executive Director of the Fish and Game Department is required to file with the State Library. This report encompasses the time period from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019.

Registration totals for FY 2019 are as follows:

	<u>RESIDENT</u>	<u>NON-RESIDENT</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>
Snowmobile	27,370	16,594	43,964
ATV/UTV	19,569	11,876	31,445
Temporary OHRV	NA	2,927	2,927
Trail Bike	2,435	1,222	3,657
Transfers	1,195		
Dealer/Rental	873		
Antique/Event	650		

38031

## **Enforcement**

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department is the primary OHRV/Snowmobile enforcement agency. Conservation Officers conducted enforcement patrols totaling 11,753 regular hours and 3,168 overtime hours through a twelve month period and checked approximately 19,498 vehicles for compliance. During this period, Conservation Officers issued 1064 summonses and 848 warnings for violations of Chapters 215-A and 215-C.

During the winter, Conservation Officers continued snowmobile enforcement efforts to control excessive speed, unlawful operation, and modified exhausts while working cooperatively with landowners and snowmobile clubs to keep the trails safe. The statewide snowmobile trail system exceeds 7,000 miles. Loud exhausts and operating without landowner permission (off trail) are the primary complaints leading to the closing of snowmobile trails on private property. Modified exhausts, excessive speed and irresponsible off-trail riding are areas of continued concern. Conservation Officers focus patrol efforts on these problems through speed enforcement details, trail patrols and community policing initiatives.

Conservation Officers conduct wheeled vehicle or Off Highway Recreational Vehicle (All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV), Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV), and trail bike) enforcement patrols from spring through fall to improve overall trail safety and address unlawful operation. Officers work with riders, landowners, clubs and local law enforcement to control illegal operation, illegal/loud exhaust, and help ensure safety on a growing network of maintained and approved trails on state and private land. Currently, NH has over 1,000 miles of OHRV trails on several interconnected systems, the largest trail network in the Northeast.

In addition, many of these OHRV trail systems provide extensive use of local and state public roadways to access services and provide further interconnectivity. These significant increases in ATV/UTV riding opportunities have significantly increased our enforcement, administrative and coordination responsibilities particularly in Coos County. In addition to existing trail systems, many towns statewide are opening their roadways to OHRVs.

OHRV registrations continue to set records with FY 2019 registrations exceeding 36,000 machines, an all-time high. However, budget restrictions, past and present, have prevented filling vacant Conservation Officer patrol areas and open/unfunded Conservation Officer positions needed to keep up with the increase in activity. This has negatively impacted our ability to meet constituent demands for adequate enforcement patrol coverage and constituent complaints. There is substantial justification to fill several vacant patrol positions. Numerous attempts to do so have been unsuccessful. Currently there are only thirty-four (34) Conservation Officers statewide including four (4) assigned to administrative duties at Headquarters and four (4) trainees.

Due to normal day-on/day-off rotations, on any given day there are only fifteen (15) to twenty (20) Conservation Officers covering the entire state. This coverage is not limited to OHRV/Snowmobile enforcement but also includes their primary duties of wildlife law enforcement as well as search and rescue obligations. This low number of Conservation Officers (34) is equal to the number of Conservation Officers New Hampshire had in 1950. This low number, despite the significant increase in duties, responsibilities, and population underscores the need to revise our funding model and establish a new source of stable, dedicated funding for the Department.

### **OHRV/Snowmobile Safety Education**

The Law Enforcement Division, through the Safety Education Program, actively promotes the safe and responsible operation of all recreational vehicles, facilitating this objective through enhanced enforcement patrols and safety education classes. The objective is to modify the behavior of the irresponsible rider and to promote safe trail systems. This is accomplished with the cooperation of the Bureau of Trails (DNCR), OHRV and snowmobile clubs, and statewide associations.

Fish and Game continues to coordinate over 150 volunteer OHRV and snowmobile instructors who, along with part-time OHRV Regional Coordinators, conduct safety classes across the state with the assistance of local clubs, police/fire agencies and volunteers. Safety Education Certification is required of any rider who operates off of their land and is over the age of twelve (12) who does not possess a valid driver's license. Program staff continues to work with interested individuals, state associations and national organizations to develop new safety initiatives. The Department certified 1,334 students in FY 2019. The OHRV Online Safety Education certification program is growing in popularity. This alternative method of certification supplements the long standing traditional classroom course taught by volunteer instructors and part-time regional coordinators. The online course was implemented as a result of constituent demand for readily available methods of certification for non-residents traveling to NH to ride as well as resident's desire for modernized, flexible certification options. In compliance with RSA 215-A:19, IX and RSA 215-C:34, VIII, the Law Enforcement Division continues to administer the statutorily required Responsible Riders Safety Education Class, as needed, to those who are convicted of operating while intoxicated, disobeying a police officer, skimming open water or operating to endanger any person or property.

The Law Enforcement Division's OHRV/Snowmobile Program funds a full time Conservation Officer Program Coordinator, one full-time program assistant, and part-time regional coordinators to perform OHRV/snowmobile related duties. In addition, the Division is attempting to implement, at the suggestion of the Joint Legislative Fiscal

Committee, two full time Conservation Officers dedicated to OHRV/Snowmobile enforcement.

### **Registrations and Revenue**

There were 43,964 snowmobiles registered in the FY 2019 season, compared to only 22,880 snowmobiles in FY 2016. Snowmobile registrations have almost doubled in between 2016 to 2019. OHRV (wheeled vehicle) registration numbers continue to climb and reached another historic high with a total of 36,736 in FY 2018. With this increase in registered machines comes an increase in calls to service/complaints; responding to landowner complaints, accident investigations and reports continue to take up a large component of a Conservation Officer's time. Pursuant to RSA 215-A: 32-a and RSA 215-C:53, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department is required to furnish OHRV and Snowmobile death and injury statistics to the Registrar of Vital Records. Copies of these statistical reports are attached.

In accordance with RSA 215-A: 23 and RSA 215-C: 39, the Fish and Game Department collected \$5,940,760.70 in registration fees and permits in FY 2019. A breakdown of fees collected per OHRV Category is attached. Pursuant to RSA 215-A: 23 and RSA 215-C: 39, the Fish and Game Department forwarded \$3,754,655.17 to the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Bureau of Trails. The Fish and Game Department retained the remaining amount of \$1,551,408.63 for OHRV/Snowmobile enforcement, OHRV Safety Education and Training, Wheeled Vehicle Enforcement Contracts, and processing of Registration materials. Funds available to the department were as follows: \$1,326,408.63 for OHRV and Snowmobile Enforcement, Education and Training, and \$225,000.00 for the administration of the OHRV and Snowmobile Registration Program.

These funds are non-lapsing and are utilized conservatively, in part to help offset minimal snow winters when snowmobile registrations and related funds can dip substantially. This scenario occurred during FY 2016 when only 22,880 snowmobile registrations were sold, representing a 53% decrease from the previous FY 2015 and 107% less than FY 2017. This carry-over funding process from one year to the next is vital to the stability and sustainability of the program.

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department also entered into OHRV Law Enforcement Contracts with 24 local police agencies for a total of \$39,960.00. These contracts aid in providing patrol coverage and mitigating landowner complaints.

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The following are attached for FY 2019 (7/2018-6/2019):

1. Off Highway Recreational Vehicle Safety Education Courses that were conducted by Department personnel and volunteers, as well as online.
2. Vital Statistics Report
3. OHRV and Snowmobile Accident Statistics Reports
4. Fee Table

You may contact Captain Michael Eastman at 603-271-3129 if you need additional information regarding this report.

Sincerely,

Glenn Normandeau  
Executive Director

Original Copies to:

Chair, House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee  
Chair, House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee  
Chair, House Transportation Committee  
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee  
Chair, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
Chair, Senate Ways and Means Committee