



Responsible Riding

PROTECTING WETLANDS: HOW TO PRESERVE FRAGILE HABITAT WHILE RIDING OFF-ROAD



One of the greatest things about riding off-highway vehicles (OHVs) is that we are able to explore and recreate in many of America's remote and beautiful backcountry areas. In one day, outdoorsmen and women who utilize ATVs and Side-by-Side (SxS) utility vehicles can cover territory that would take days to do on foot. To preserve our spectacular OHV opportunities throughout the country, however, care must be taken to leave the smallest possible footprint, especially when we are close to or traversing wetlands.

Here's a short list of easy-to-follow guidelines that will help you to protect wetlands while riding an off-highway vehicle:

1. Cross streams only at designated fording points or where the trail crosses the stream. Be mindful of how deep the water is at its deepest point. Ideally, water levels should stay below the floorboards or footpegs of your ATV or SxS.

2. Take it slow and steady while crossing streams. Try to identify big rocks or other obstacles before you begin to cross. If you experience an unexpected deep section, shut off the engine immediately. This will help prevent water from entering the vehicle's air box, engine or transmission.

3. Traversing streams at high speeds is bad for fish and other aquatic life, not to mention your engine. Stirring up the sediment in the stream bottom hurts water quality, which can adversely affect fish. Crossing streams at high speeds can also cause water to enter your ATV or SxS vehicle's air or transmission intakes, causing damage to the engine or other key components.

4. Comply with all trail signs and barriers. Never stray off the designated trails.

5. Restrict your use of off-highway vehicles during periods of wet or muddy soil conditions to reduce route damage.

6. Throttle down. Many riders think that using more throttle will get them through slick or wet trails more easily. Usually, the opposite is true. What's more, high wheel spin can often lead to damaged terrain. It's much better to finesse the throttle for maximum traction.

7. Use an anchor strap while winching. If you are using a live tree as an anchor while winching your machine out of a mudhole, use a wide tree strap to avoid damaging the trunk of the tree.

8. Avoid sensitive areas such as meadows, lakeshores, wetlands and streams, unless on designated routes. This protects wildlife habitat and sensitive soils from damage.

9. Practice minimum-impact camping by using established sites and camping 200 feet from water resources and trails. Do not wash in lakes or streams. Detergents, toothpaste and soap harm fish and other aquatic life. Scatter wash water.

10. Don't be a carrier. Following a ride, wash your ATV and support vehicle to reduce the spread of invasive species.

QUICK TIP: Be aware of seasonal closures. Many ride areas prohibit OHV use during wet or snowy times of the year. Some even close down at times during the summer if conditions get bad, so be sure to call ahead of time.



STREAMS: Be careful to cross streams slowly and where the trail crosses the stream at a 90-degree angle. Never trail ride up or down a stream!



OBSTACLES: Always drive over and through, not around, obstacles such as mudholes and small rocks and logs, to avoid widening the trail.

Courtesy of Tread Lightly!



The Yamaha OHV Access Initiative is a proactive, grassroots program supported by Yamaha dealers and customers nationwide promoting safe, responsible riding and sustainable, open riding areas.

Through the OHV Access Initiative, Yamaha Motor Corp., U.S.A., is providing GRANTS to deserving organizations to help further the program's goal of Guaranteeing Responsible Access to our Nations Trails.

Recent OHV Access Initiative GRANT funds have been given to projects that are taking a considered, responsible approach toward protecting sensitive wetlands in recreational areas. The Northern Traxx ATV Club of Chisholm, Minnesota, is one such GRANT recipient. Working with the state's Department of Natural Resources, St. Louis County and the City of Chisholm, Northern Traxx is spearheading an effort to create a 10-mile multi-use trail near a designated wetland. GRANT funds will be used to:

- Hire a certified environmental engineer to establish the exact boundaries of the wetland area and negotiate an appropriate protective boundary.
- Satisfy a matching funds requirement needed to secure state and federal grant requests of more than \$176,000 for the construction of the trail and trailhead.

Construction of the Chisholm ATV Trail is planned for the fall of 2009, with the intent of opening it up to the public by spring of 2010.

To learn more about the Yamaha OHV Access Initiative, please visit www.yamaha-motor.com/ohvaccess, call the dedicated hotline at 877-OHV-TRAIL (877-648-8724), or e-mail OHVAccess@yamaha-motor.com.

RIDING TIP: Be aware of animal habitat including streams, food sources and nesting areas, and stay off sensitive terrain.

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