



## **ORV Act Implementation: Current 5x8 metal plates vehicle identification requirement is inoperable**

### **Problem**

Current British Columbia ORV vehicle identification requirements for off-road motorcycles does not meet best practices criteria for North America, are unsafe, not easily implementable by the rider, does not fit for numerous classes of off-road motorcycles,, and is causing a visceral public backlash against implementation the new ORV Act.

### **Current Situation**

The ORV Act was passed in Spring 2014. The Government is now bringing in voluntary registration, with mandatory registration in 2015. The voluntary registration period started on November 17, 2014 and mandatory registration will start on June 1, 2015.

Ken McClelland, BCORMA President, and Peter Sprague, BCORMA Executive Director, have been working with Government to design and implement the ORV Act that will have the strongest success. Our stand has always been that riders need to see actual benefits to them and their trails from this legislation for it to be widely accepted.

BCORMA continues to work on key details of the rules and regulations surrounding the ORV legislation as members of the ORV Joint Advisory Group. Many additional regulatory and policy components still need to be worked on prior to mandatory registration on June 1, 2015. This includes vehicle identification and insurance requirements for road crossings among others.

Plates, particularly the current ICBC issue 5x8 inch metal plate, are a very visceral issue for dirt bikers and snowmobilers that all MLA need to be made well aware of it. BCORMA continues to work diligently on the issue to make vehicle identification requirements realistic and usable for youth, family, competitors, and visiting riders.

Locally, there is a vibrant growing family and tourism-based recreation around multi-use single track and off-road motorcycling in the British Columbia. If recommendations from the ORV community are not well implemented under the ORV Act, Government risks discouraging continued tourist and local family participation in healthy outdoor recreation that benefits both citizens and business of British Columbia.

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## Background

- BC ORV trail recreation represents upwards of \$1 billion per year to the BC economy
- Upwards of 15% of BC households have one or more ORV
- ORV recreation in BC is growing, particularly with women and youth, bringing the whole family outdoors for scientifically proven healthy exercise on BC's vast world-class trail networks
- BCORMA represents approximately 40,000 BC off-road motorcyclists, who spend on average \$3,000 per year on their sport. That equates to \$120 million per year of expenditures, plus all the health benefits, reducing costs to the Government health system.
- Off-road motorcycling is unique in its focus on multi-use single-track, sharing trail with mountain bikers, hikers, horseback riders, trail runners and others
- Vast majority of trails are built and maintained by volunteer stewards. Off-road motorcyclists steward and co-manage over 5,000 km of multi-use single-track trails all across BC. With over 400,000 km of trails in BC by Government estimates, trails represent a \$100 million public infrastructure for the benefit and use of all BC.

## Discussion

- Most US jurisdictions issue decals for off-highway motorcycles. When plates are issued, they are for on highway use.
- The State of California has more off-road vehicles than all of Canada, and they use a decal system, like all the rest of the West Coast States for off-road motorcycles.
- In Minnesota, the Government pushed for full size plates, then smaller motorcycle plates, but now have decals. The deciding factor was when their State Representative was asked how far he could read the license plate on the car in front of him. Not very far it turned out. Decals on the top of the fork tube are now used, plainly visible to enforcement personnel as needed.
- In Idaho, the state provides a metal plate that the actual identification sticker can be affixed to. ORM there install the decal to the fork tubes and store the plate, and they can ride everywhere except State and Federal Highways with that identification. Similar story across many of the States.

- A 5 x 8 plate will not fit on the front number plate above the headlight, even on a full size modern off-road motorcycle that is street legal in Europe. The corners will stick out beyond the front number plate 1/2 – 1". Those sharp corners are hanging out just waiting to lacerate the rider next time they fall, which happens often off-road.
- Even more problematic is the idea of putting a 5 x 8 inch tin plate on a youth or kids bike after the manufactures and Canada Safety Council have spent so much time engineering and approving the vehicle to be as safe as possible.
- BCORMA has been asked for safety statistics for youth crashes with metal plates by Government staff. A more telling story would unfold if you look at all the competition regulations for the FIM, AMA, and other major governing bodies. Look at their safety regulations and no where do they say that number plates will be metal for safety. Even a vintage 1979 Husky has round plastic number plates.
- Where on a trials bike is that going to be fit? Have Government staff actually examined a trials bike? Seen where and how they ride? Now imagine on a youth or kids bike. Right where their hands and arms could be in a crash.
- BCORMA has offered to escort Government staff to Victoria dealers and try to fit that 5 x 8 plate onto a PW50 or like youth bike? They should see Dave Fair at Gas Gas Canada and ask him where the trials riders would fit that plate.
- Russ Ehness, Executive Director of National Off Highway Vehicle Conservation Council in Montana, feels that the use of metal plates retro fitted to machines that were not designed for them is a very problematic idea for safety and risk reasons. Russ has asked that Government staff call him and he can provide Government directly all the specific information required to back our 5 year insistence that decals for ORM is the only viable option of identification. He has decades of experience on OHV issues. His cell phone number is: 406-899-0898 To the best of BCORMA's knowledge Government staff have not availed them of his expertise.
- The ORM community and its representatives have never really discussed and come to a mutually acceptable conclusion on vehicle identification with Government. From our perspective, the only viable and safe vehicle identification for off-road motorcycles is a decal mounted on the fork tube.
- ORV community representatives need to have an honest and open discussion about vehicle

identification with Ministers who can and will make the actual decisions on this very important matter.

- One of the key goals for the ORV Joint Advisory Group has been compliance, but Government seems to be taking the path of highest resistance. Having tin plates that break, get destroyed, blooded, lost, and stolen is of questionable decision making from BCORMA's perspective. BCORMA has recommended against plates for over 5 years.
- BCORMA continues to ask for more public discussion and input on vehicle identification from riders. Their input and acceptance of that input is vital if our present government wants this new legislation to be a success.

## **Solutions (by priority)**

1. Move completely to a decal ORV vehicle identification appropriately placed according to vehicle type, with optional plate use
2. Allow use of vehicle identification by decal appropriately placed according to vehicle type , with issued regulatory 5x8 metal plate being stored by vehicle owner
3. Issue and use of a properly sized to vehicle composite plate. Mounting of plate would be appropriate according to vehicle type. Note: current 5x8 size plate is not appropriately sized for modern vehicle mounting. BCORMA has recommended that if cost is an objection, that composite plates could be provided as optional vanity plates, with additional funds raised going to an ORV Trails Trust, as defined in the ORV Act.

## **Recommendation**

BCORMA continues to recommend to Government that ORV vehicle identification be with a decal appropriately placed according to vehicle type, with optional plate use.

This would be backed up with a copy of the registration that could be carried on person or under the seat in a plastic bag. If stopped, and the identification number is false, then the rider would have a bunch of explaining to do to the CO. Government agents could make these decals available to riders. This would help when we ride in other jurisdictions that recognize out of state decals.