

# FAR

**FRANKLIN ALL-TERRAIN RIDERS, INC. 1552 CR 27 OWLS HEAD, NY 12969**

The Franklin All Terrain Riders (FAR) plan to join a huge statewide rally of ATV owners at the Capitol in Albany on Tuesday, June 15 to demand reversal of New York State's discrimination against the ATV community over the past 14 years. The rally, at which hundreds of riders from across the North Country are expected to join thousands from around the state, is also intended to underline for state legislators and the Pataki Administration the growing economic and cultural importance of all terrain vehicles for work and recreation in New York State generally and especially to this area.

Discrimination began in 1990 when an ATV Trail Fund, authorized in 1986 to dedicate half of annual registration fees for trail development and maintenance, was revoked in an attempt to balance the state budget. Several subsequent attempts to reinstate trail fund legislation have failed. The most recent try is Governor Pataki's current budget proposal, which mandates a 350% increase in fees, from \$10 to \$45 annually. Only 11% of the increase is slated for actual trail development, however, with much of the remainder going to local governments to offset timber company tax relief. Since the 2004 budget is now two months late with no discernible movement toward passage, hope for a fair return on their registration fees is again fading in the ATV community.

The unfair treatment does not end with repeated denial of an equitable trail fund, however. New York State has spent many millions of dollars over the past several years acquiring land both in fee ownership and easement rights for recreational use. The 1999 purchase of recreational rights on the 76,000 acre Champion Lands in Santa Clara was supposed to open hundreds of miles of logging roads for ATV access. To date not a single mile has been made available, despite the wholehearted cooperation by leaders in the ATV community and repeated promises by Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) officials. Most recently the state has purchased the rights on over 250,000 acres owned by the International Paper Company, where signs are again being posted prohibiting ATVs.

There is more. At any number of DEC Unit Management Plan meetings, at which ATV owners have been well represented, officials have promised ATV access to state owned or managed lands. The net result is the recent *loss* of nearly 50 roads formerly open. The only state land now available is a very limited trail system in the Brasher State Forest, located well outside the Adirondack Park in St. Lawrence County. Trails in the Brasher State Forest suffer from a severe lack of maintenance. After more than two years of repeated requests, the TriTown Trailriders of Brasher Falls, a FAR member club, has been authorized to make much-needed repairs on Saturday, June 12. The FAR Board of Directors this week voted to support its member club with a \$200 donation as well as manpower. More support in both categories—money and manpower—is needed.

Both the work bee on Saturday, June 12 and the statewide rally on Tuesday, June 15 are of critical importance to the North Country ATV community. Call John LaMay at 315-389-4470 for information on the Brasher State Forest work detail. Information on the statewide rally is available at [www.nysorva.org](http://www.nysorva.org) or from Brad Plummer at 518-237-8349. Both events may decide ATV access for years to come.

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