

ATV Regional Trail Connector Pilot FAQs

7/19/2021

Background

In response to growing ATV purchases, registrations, inventory of township roads designated open for ATV use and demand for connected, regional trail opportunities, DCNR recently revised its ATV trail policy and lifted the moratorium on new trails that had been in place since 2003. As municipalities and private organizations develop ATV trails and designate ATV public roads, the state forest system has the potential to strategically link multi-ownership, regional ATV trails, increasing motorized recreational opportunity while connecting communities and rural businesses.

Section 1720-E of the Commonwealth's Fiscal Code, passed into law on November 3, 2020, called for DCNR to "establish a regional pilot program for ATV use on department lands."

How did the ATV Regional Trail Connector Pilot originate?

The pilot is a way for DCNR to implement its new ATV policy and to comply with the commonwealth's fiscal code that is established state law. Lessons learned will inform future efforts.

A 2021 fiscal code amendment (HB 2536) provided that DCNR establish a two-year "pilot program" for ATV use on commonwealth lands to be opened by the 2021 summer riding season and to be monitored over time, with a report due to the General Assembly before December 2023. The amendment also states that DCNR may charge a tag fee to users for riding the pilot area, and DCNR will commit to monitoring the project for the two (2) year duration.

What is the ATV Regional Trail Connector Pilot Area Program?

The ATV Pilot Program is an effort to connect and enhance regional ATV riding opportunities through collaboration with public and private partners. The pilot aims to offer long-distance riding opportunities, contribute to local economies, and maintain the many uses and values of the state forest system.

Townships in Pennsylvania have the authority to designate their roads opened to ATV use through the PA ATV Code. Many have done so over the last decade, creating separated networks of roads within individual townships. In some limited areas, designation of state forest roads for ATV use can provide legal connections between township road networks opened to ATV use. More often, these connections require cooperation among state forests, PennDOT, townships and occasionally private landowners.

Sections of designated state forest roads may serve as important strategic connectors for regional ATV networks on a limited, case-by-case basis. These are determined through careful analysis with a focus on limiting the amount of state forest road needed while avoiding/minimizing the necessity of using PennDOT roads to connect to the designated township ATV roads. In some cases, DCNR is examining snowmobile trails or administrative roads instead of state forest public use roads. Widespread or

universal use of state forests for ATV trails is not compatible with public safety and other state forest uses and values.

The use of existing linear features to connect legal ATV riding opportunities is generally preferable to establishing new ones. Through its approach, DCNR's Bureau of Forestry focused upon connecting established ATV trails to other available ATV riding opportunities, local businesses, and/or points of interest.

The ATV Pilot Program allows DCNR to sell and issue permit "tags" at fair market value to offset implementation and management costs.

Where is the ATV Regional Trail Connector Pilot?

The ATV Regional Trail Connector Pilot for 2021 is primarily located in Tioga and Potter counties and includes a combination of township and PennDOT roads, state forest roads, and existing state forest ATV trails. The 2021 pilot area centers upon the Susquehannock ATV Trail System and also links to Lyman Run and Colton Point State parks.

The ATV Pilot Trail System, consisting of predominantly designated township roads and ATV Connectors, together account for an estimated **214 miles** of opportunities along with **50 miles** of DCNR trail for a total estimated network of **264 miles**.

The breakdown of the pilot area trail composition is as follows: Township roads, 195 miles; PennDOT designated ATV Connector Roads, 12 miles; DCNR Bureau of Forestry designated ATV Connector Roads, 7 Miles; DCNR Susquehannock ATV Trail, 50 miles.

When will it open?

The pilot trail system will open on July 16, 2021.

How long will the pilot be opened in 2021?

The pilot coincides with the DCNR Bureau of Forestry summer riding season, which runs from the Friday of Memorial Day weekend to the final Sunday in September. In 2021, the last day to ride in the pilot area is Sunday, September 26th.

How long will this pilot program run?

Once it opens, the ATV Regional Trail Connector Pilot coincides with the Bureau of Forestry's summer ATV riding seasons in 2021 and 2022. The 2022 Pilot Area is slated to expand into Tiadaghton State Forest in Lycoming and Clinton counties and connect with the BOF's Haneyville ATV Trail System.

How will the pilot program be evaluated and monitored?

The Bureau of Forestry is implementing a comprehensive monitoring program that will evaluate the impact of the trail on local communities, ecological values, other state forest users and recreational values; Bureau of Forestry operations, staffing, and law enforcement capacity; public safety, and

impacts to adjacent public lands and natural resources. The monitoring program will also evaluate the effectiveness of the special permit, the adequacy of funding for continued operation of the trail, and the need for additional education, outreach, and trail marketing.

DCNR will be monitoring public input and comments during the length of the pilot program through a resource email account at RA-NR-ATV-Pilot@pa.gov.

By December 31, 2023, DCNR will publish a report about the pilot project for further evaluation and stakeholder input.

I have a camp in Susquehannock/Tioga SF and ride ATVs. Will I be able to use state forest roads to get to the ATV Pilot Area?

State Forest Leased Camps which are located directly off of a designated state forest ATV connector road will be able to operate directly from their camp. Otherwise, machines must be transported to an access point elsewhere on the connector system.

The official map of the ATV Regional Trail Connector Pilot can be accessed at <https://maps.dcnr.pa.gov/geopdf/atvpilot>

Who can participate in the pilot?

Because the pilot will be making use of roads with registered, licensed motor vehicles, all ATV/UTV machine operators must be 16 years of age and hold a valid driver's license. Additionally, participants must apply for and secure an ATV Pilot Program Tag. A maximum of 10,000 permits are being issued for the 2021 program.

All machines must be properly registered and insured.

Is there a cost for permits?

The fiscal code provided DCNR the opportunity to collect a fee to offset the costs of operation. Through considering costs charged for comparable experiences in surrounding states, DCNR determined the cost for a full summer riding season to be \$40 (PA-registered ATVs) or \$60 (reciprocal state registered ATVs). Because the 2021 season is starting later than the official start of the summer riding season, DCNR will-prorate the cost of the 2021 permit to \$20 (PA-registered ATVs) or \$30 (reciprocal state registered ATVs).

How are the pilot permits going to be issued?

For the 2021 season, tags can be obtained through the following methods:

In person ONLY through the Tioga, Tiadaghton or Susquehannock State Forest offices between 8:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M. (Monday through Thursday). Expanded office hours begin on Friday, July 2, 8:00 A.M. -8:00 P.M. (Fridays for Susquehannock and Tioga only), or 10:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M. (Saturdays, all three districts) beginning July 2. Following the opening day on July 16, permits can also be obtained in Susquehannock and Tioga district offices from 10:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M. on Sundays.

Mail-in ONLY – Permit Applications can be downloaded and printed from (web site address) and along with payment in the form of a check or money order (no cash) and sent to the following address: Penn Nursery..... Envelopes should be marked “ATV Pilot” . Applications will be processed in the order they are received and mailed back to applicants within 3-5 business days of receipt.

Permits are accompanied by a decal which must be visibly displayed upon the machine for which the permit is secured.

Can I still operate an ATV on a DCNR ATV Trail System without a connector pass?

Yes, you may operate an ATV with a registered, insured machine on any other ATV Trail System without a pilot tag.

How can I provide input or comments to the ATV Pilot Area?

During the length of the pilot program DCNR will be accepting comments from the public. Email RA-NR-ATV-Pilot@pa.gov to give your input. DCNR will also be conducting meetings with advisory committees and developing surveys that will be posted on our website. Also, be on the look-out for comment cards in key locations around the pilot area.

Where can I get up-to-date information on the Pilot?

For up-to-date trail maps and information about the ATV Regional Trail Connector, please see:

<https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Recreation/WhatToDo/ATVRiding/ATVRegionalTrailConnectorPilot/Pages/default.aspx>

What types of ATVs are eligible to ride on the Pilot?

Class 1 and 2 ATVs may be ridden on Pilot area roads and trails that are designated open to ATV use.

Registered Class 2 ATVs are less than 58” in width and less than 1,200 pounds.

I've received my permit tag and my ATV is registered and insured. This means I can ride anywhere in the mapped area, right?

Wrong. There are many roads and trails throughout the mapped region that are not open to ATV travel. Riders must adhere to prohibitions.

How will the Pilot change access to Colton Point State Park?

ATVs will be permitted to ride to the boundary of Colton Point State Park via Deadman's Hollow Road, but the road will be gated at this point. ATV riders will need to park on the side of the road and walk the remaining distance to the overlook (approx. 3/8-mile). Susquehannock State Forest District and Colton Point State Park are cooperating to install a parking loop this summer(2021) which will be situated closer to the overlook and reduce the length of the walk. The overlook will be connected to the parking loop by a foot path. This access improvement project most likely will not be complete until the 2022 riding season. Deadman's Hollow Road will be closed to through traffic into the park beginning July 16, 2021. Alternative routes into the park are available.