

## History of the first ATV club in Coos County

In April of 1998, a group of ATV enthusiasts from North Stratford, New Hampshire came together, creating a non-profit organization called North Country ATV Club. The first Club Officers were; Mike Lynch as President, Paul Haynes as Trail Master, Karen Chapple as Secretary and Treasurer and Ted Burns as Trail Administrator.

The group had an ideal of what their ATV Club should be, what it should promote and to whom the Club would seek to have as members. The Club's mission statement is as follows, "1) To promote and foster all terrain vehicles (ATV'S) as a family sport and recreation for its members, 2) To create, maintain, mark and map a system of multi-recreational trails, public and private for the use of ATV's, 3) To promote good conduct, sportsmanship, safety and conservation practices, and 4) To assist in rescue details". North Country ATV Club statement in short became, SAFE-LEGAL-FUN.

To facilitate a trail system, Club Officers worked together with the Stratford Night Hawks Snowmobile Club using existing snowmobile trails, gained permission from private landowners, logging companies and collaborated with state officials of New Hampshire Trail Bureau and New Hampshire Fish and Game. This resulted in a trail system of over 100 miles from Columbia, New Hampshire, encompassing all of Stratford, New Hampshire, and then east including a portion of the Nash Stream Forest, and South to Groveton, New Hampshire. This made it the longest linear ATV Trail System in New England.

To promote safety, the Club initiated a Trail Patrol. The first Trail Patrol consisted of 17 volunteers made up of Club Officers, Club Directors and regular members. The Trail Patrol wore green vests, so they would be easily identifiable to the public while riding the trails. They were to provide and assist with directions, assess trail conditions and have a common knowledge of the area. The mere presence of a green vest promotes security and acts as a deterrent to renegade behavior. Both public and private landowners are pleased to know the trails are being monitored for multiple reasons.

Every spring Club hosts an OHRV Safety Course. The Club Instructors train young and old on the proper way to operate an ATV. Another step the Club takes to ensure and encourage safety on the trail system. To fund their efforts, monies are obtained through Club Memberships, local business sponsorships and the application and acceptance of State Recreational Trail Program Grants and New Hampshire Trails Bureaus Grants in Aid, written by Ted Burns, Trail Administrator. The Club hosts multiple events each year, some for public enjoyment, and other events held to raise money for local charity organizations. The following are local charities that the Club has helped: Ole Stratford Home Day, local community churches, Make-A-Wish Foundation, The Vershire Center, Two River Habitat for Humanity and the Stratford Youth Fund.

In 2000, North Country ATV held their first "Quad Rodeo" on the second Saturday in August. This event included ATV Dealers, food vendors, helicopter rides, a mud pit, a challenge course and an ATV-pull. For the youngsters, an obstacle course was also a popular event. The idea was a spin-off from the SnoDeo, a popular snowmobile winter version held in Stewartstown. It soon became a summertime favorite event. As the years went by the "Quad Rodeo" became the New England ATV Rodeo, as we know today.

In 2001 North Country ATV Officers were E. Harlan Connary, President; Robert Paradis, Vice President; Mike Bennett, Treasurer; Sonya Zanes, Secretary; Paul Haynes, Trail Master; and Ted Burns, Trail Administrator. Directors were William Adair, Bill Simpson, Ken Adair, Joseph Melanson and Everett Stanton. Through dedication and tireless efforts of the Club Officers, the Club has become a strong and viable entity.

In 2004 with membership of approximately 1,200 and an estimated 3,000 users of the trail system, the Club prided itself on patrolling over 25,000 acres of public and private lands, volunteers logging over 3,100 hours and utilizing their personal ATV's to travel over 2,500 miles. The trail patrol provided a safe and naturally beautiful network of trails, complete with picnic areas on Bear Bait and Morse Mountains. In 2010, the Club sought and obtained permission from the Town of Groveton for ATV traffic into the town center. This permission allowed ATV riders access to restaurants and gas, boosting the economic economy in town.

In 2011, the Club became a founding member of the North Country OHRV Coalition in hopes of facilitating a trail system that would connect all the systems in Coos County. In two short years, this vision is now a reality – Ride the Wilds of Coos County NH – 1,000+ miles of interconnecting ATV Trails. In closing, North Country ATV Club has operated as a non-profit, IRS 501c(3), for fifteen years. In this time allotment, one man has been there through it all.

Every year, Ted Burns has strived to make the North Country ATV Club SAFE –LEGAL –FUN by his steadfastness in trail maintenance, applying for RTP grants, GIA grants, and attending town meetings to ensure continued support for this activity in the Towns utilized by the clubs. He has continually worked to maintain excellent working relationships with the Hew Hampshire Trails Bureau, the Department of Environmental services, New Hampshire Fish and Game, along with others. Without his dedication and the tenacious fortitude given by many other club officers and club members, our great trail system would not exist.

