



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Proposes Legislation to Create Statewide ATV Trail System

PATTY RITCHIE June 5, 2015

| ISSUE: **RECREATION AND TOURISM**



Uses Rider Fees to Link, Build New Trails; OKs Popular Side-by-Side ATVs

*****[CLICK HERE TO SIGN THE PETITION IN SUPPORT OF SENATOR RITCHIE'S ATV TRAIL SYSTEM BILL](#)*****

Senator Patty Ritchie today announced that she's introduced legislation that would create a statewide ATV trail system, using fees already paid by riders, to create new riding opportunities, and link new and existing trails as a way to boost tourism through the growing popularity of the outdoor recreational vehicles.

The bill, S.5821, would allow New Yorkers to legally register and use the increasingly popular side-by-side ATV models, which are currently banned in New York—the only state with such a law.

“From young adults to retirees, families and sportsmen, people are looking for more ways to get outside and enjoy everything our state has to offer in terms of natural scenic views, fresh air and outdoor fun—and they’re increasingly looking at ATVs as a way to enhance their fun and enjoyment,” said Senator Ritchie.

“My bill, which is modeled on New York’s successful snowmobile trail fund as well as programs in other states, would provide more riding opportunities for New Yorkers by creating a world-class trail network that will attract riders from across the Northeast, allow newer and more popular side-by-side models to legally be used in the state, and create a better outdoor experience for riders and non-riders, alike,” Senator Ritchie said.

Using existing registration fees for the more than 100,000 ATVs currently in the state—including 13,800 in Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties—Senator Ritchie’s plan would generate millions of dollars to develop and maintain ATV trails, and promote responsible riding and outdoor recreation.

An integrated trail system would help boost the Upstate economy by luring tourists from surrounding states. Similar trail systems in states like Pennsylvania, Maine, Wisconsin, Minnesota and many other states annually pour hundreds of millions of dollars into local economies there.

Here are some key provisions of Senator Ritchie’s plan:

- --Increases the maximum allowable weight for ATVs from the current 1,000 pounds to 1,800 pounds, to accommodate newer side-by-side models as well as those that rely on greener battery power. New York is the only state that imposes the current low limit, which means that side-by-sides and many other models have not been allowed here;
- --Improve rider safety and environmental protection with creation of a new safety certificate program for junior riders and those currently without a driver’s license, as well as a rider education program to encourage responsible ATV use and good stewardship of trails and the surrounding environment;
- ---Sets a minimum age for ATV operators, and requires adult or parental supervision for riders aged 10 to 14;
- € -- Directs that revenues from a new graduated series of fines—with higher fines for repeat violations of environmental and safety laws—would be reinvested in trail development and maintenance, as well as to promote rider safety;
- Includes protections for the most environmentally sensitive areas of the state, by excluding ATVs from the Long Island Pine Barrens, the Pine Bush in Albany, and state-owned forest preserve lands designated as “canoe areas” and “primitive.” The DEC commissioner would retain authority to authorize trails on other state owned lands, including in the Adirondack and Catskills Parks;

- Eliminate a requirement that ATV owners obtain and pay for a registration if their machines are to used exclusively on their own property.

An avid ATV rider herself, along with her family, Senator Ritchie has been a leading champion of expanding opportunities for ATV riders. She has sponsored legislation to allow side-by-side ATVs for five years, repeatedly passing the bill in the Senate, but the measure has been blocked from becoming law by the Assembly.