



**Newport Township OHV Recreational Park Feasibility Study  
Public Meeting #1 Meeting Notes  
When: Thursday, February 11, 2020 from 6:00-8:00  
Location: Virtual Conference via ZOOM**

**ATTENDEES (Team Members):**

Jim Laird, RLA, LAIRD  
Jessica Hepner; Env.  
Jason Tarnowski; EC  
Elizabeth Hughes; EC  
Geoff Shaw, EC

Terence Ostrowski, EC  
Angelika Laird, CPRP, LAIRD  
Megan Stachowiak; The Institute  
Bill Ritting; WAR Landscape Architecture

Terry introduced committee members, thanked everyone for attending and explained the meeting's agenda. He provided a project overview explaining the history of Earth Conservancy's (EC) organization and how this project came to be. Terry discussed the Open Space Master Plan in 1999, the ATV Feasibility Study in 2005, and the Newport Township Master Plan in 2019. Terry explained that ownership and management of the OHV park will need to be determined for the project to be feasible. The scope of the study done in 2005 determined which lands would be appropriate for OHV use but it did not create conceptual plans. There has also been an increase in OHV ridership in PA and in 2020 DCNR revised the policy "to explore new ATV trails and connectors on state forest lands" (see PowerPoint presentation). Terry went on to discuss the goals of the project (see PowerPoint presentation).

Jim introduced the LAIRD team members and explained the planning and implementation process involved with the project (see PowerPoint presentation). Jim also noted that the goal is not to design trails but rather determine ownership, management, maintenance, programs, facilities, and feasibility. Jim went on to discuss the feasibility study tasks and timeline and the potential results of the study (see PowerPoint presentation).

Megan introduced the OHV public survey and presented the public feedback that the survey has generated so far. She then summarized the key findings of the survey results (see PowerPoint presentation). Megan also noted that many respondents think there should be a difference in cost for local vs out of town/state passes, family passes, and passenger passes.

Jim showed some photos of the team on site and described the beauty of the landscape, the quality of the existing trail system and the environmental education potential. Jim discussed the inventory map and summarized the findings of the two site visits that the LAIRD team has conducted. He went on to show the ICV ATV club demand analysis map, explaining the need for ATV/OHV recreation opportunities across the commonwealth.

## Q&A Session:

**Q1:** An ATV user and rock climber stated that he has been climbing on the site for years and participates in trail maintenance and trash clean up. He asked if volunteer models will be investigated (he noted that the "Access Fund" is a good example).

**Response:** Jim noted that the ATV restricted fund will develop and support projects for all users and that volunteerism and "comp time" will be considered.

**Q2:** Will there be rules/restrictions on how close the trails/ATVs can be from someone's home? His house as well as many others in Newport twp. are adjacent to the riding areas of the map and many people have noise concerns.

**Responses:** Jim noted that the team understands the noise concerns and related frustration. He advised David to stay involved with the project and provide the location of his home so that buffers can be incorporated near residential areas.

Dave Porzi of AAOA, stated that this public meeting reminds him of when they were going through these things. He mentioned he is very willing to help and considers it to be addition to what AOAA has, not competition. He fully supports outdoor recreation of all types.

**Q3:** Will this effect hunting?

**Responses:** Terry stated that EC Lands are open for hunting during respective seasons. There are ways we can accommodate hunters during hunting season.

Dave Porzi stated that AOAA shuts down during rifle season (no OHV access, only hunting). Outside of rifle season they do allow walk ins for hunting before the park opens. Hunters have total public access.

Jim noted that dusk and dawn is best for deer hunting so mid-day could be open for riding.

**Q4:** An attendee suggested allowing volunteers do work and get free access. He also noted that having access to restaurants and gas stations is very important.

**Response:** Jim mentioned that we do not want to reinvent wheels, so we are looking to use other models as examples. Snowshoe is good example.

**Q5:** An attendee commented an off-highway vehicle rental company in the OHV park can generate economic growth for the community.

**Response:** Jim echoed, yes, very true. Rentals and campgrounds will be huge. People who do not own can still participate.

**Q6:** Will there be designated access points? He also asked if he will be able to ride his ATV over from his home if he has a pass.

**Responses:** Jim noted that this will depend on how many ATV friendly streets there are. Jim also mentioned that a future goal is to create a statewide pass to ride ATVs on any ATV trail system.

Dave Porzi noted that access comes down to insurance. You must access through trail head for AAOA. You can only ride on ATV friendly streets to get to the trail head. If you

are connected by ATV friendly streets, yes, if you live too far away, then you will have to trailer up and drive over. AAOA also has regulations for safety reasons. New riding areas should reduce the need to ride streets.

**Q7:** Are there plans to charge for non-motorized riders?

**Response:** Jim answered, currently no but something to consider.

**Q8:** Residential homeowners are concerned about noise and proximity of the park to residential areas. She believes that ATVs in town will be disruptive. She also noted that she is against fencing because it blocks her view and access to the woods.

**Responses:** Jim noted that access control will need to be very well planned with private property owners in consideration. Telephone pole fencing is the best way to keep riders on trail, ATVs cannot get over, but deer can still pass through and this type of fencing does not block visibly. Noise will only be an issue when there are large groups. More trails mean riders will be more spread out and less likely to cause noise. ATVs will need to meet state decibel ratings. Speed limits and no dust warning signs should be put up near residential areas. Future of trails depend upon behavior of users. Most users will follow rules and respect private lands.

Terry mentioned that the steering committee for the project is already taking community into consideration. Buffer areas from residential will be implemented as well as low speed areas.

Bill noted that physical landscape barriers will also reduce noise.

**Q9:** Who will be responsible for policing this OHV park and will extra money be given to local police departments?

**Response:** Jim noted that park management will need to hire patrols.

In closing, Jim discussed potential funding sources for the project (see PowerPoint presentation).

Terry thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

A recording of the meeting will be made available on the EC website for the Newport Township OHV Study project page.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

1. Questions and comments that were not able to be addressed during the meeting will be answered via email.
2. Schedule key person interviews with those who would be willing to provide additional information that would benefit the project.
3. Continue to promote the public survey and collect public feedback.
4. Schedule meeting with County Planning Commission to discuss zoning issues.